

INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 133320

Headteacher: Mr P A Towey

Reporting inspector: Mr B Tyrer
23101

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 249053

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Clinton View Hough Green Widnes Cheshire
Postcode:	WA8 8JW
Telephone number:	(0151) 424 6130
Fax number:	(0151) 420 6214
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr W Redmond

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23101	Mr B Tyrer	Registered Inspector	Art and design Music	The school's results and pupils achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
11072	Ms S Elomari	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30677	Mrs P Waterston	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English Physical education	
2756	Mr M Barron	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
29378	Mr K Watson	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Geography History	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5 - 8
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	9 - 12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12 - 13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	13 - 15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	15 - 16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	16 - 17
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	17 - 18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	19
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	20 - 24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25 - 37

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in Halton. There are 232 pupils in this recently amalgamated Primary school, of whom 109 are boys and 123 are girls. This is about average in size. The catchment area is one of high deprivation but, despite this, the proportion of pupils who are identified as being eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils having a statement of special educational needs is below the national average, as is the total number of pupils identified as having special educational needs. The special needs of pupils relate in the main to moderate learning difficulties. Almost all the pupils are white and only one pupil is defined as belonging to a different ethnic group. There are no travellers or refugees on roll and no pupils have English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the reception class is below what might be expected.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This recently amalgamated school shows good levels of effectiveness and is providing good value for money. Standards well above average were attained by pupils aged 11 in National Curriculum tests in the school's first year and inspection shows that teaching is good in all phases. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The school is careful to see that pupils of all abilities are catered for so that all pupils make good progress. Those pupils who have special educational needs are well provided for and also make good progress. The school has effective policies to promote equal opportunity and racial equality. Boys and girls achieve well, regardless of gender.

What the school does well

- Standards for pupils aged 11 are above expectations in English, mathematics and science.
- Behaviour is excellent, relationships are very good and pupils display very good attitudes.
- The school is offering a good curriculum and the overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Procedures for child welfare are very good.
- The headteacher is providing very good leadership and the governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

What could be improved

- The objectives outlined in the school development plan now need to deal with more specific issues, to which clearer and more demanding success criteria can be attached.
- The role of the subject co-ordinator should now be extended.
- Whilst the procedures for assessment of progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are satisfactory, there is now a need to develop and implement similar procedures for subjects in the rest of the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is a new school and one that has not previously been inspected. The inspection team feels that the amalgamation has gone well, particularly, for example, in the way that the staff has been unified, considerable initial building obstacles overcome and in the way that high standards were achieved for pupils aged 11 in National Curriculum tests.

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	N/a	N/a	A	A*
mathematics	N/a	N/a	A	A
science	N/a	N/a	A	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Children enter the reception class with levels of attainment which are slightly below those seen nationally and achieve well in their first year, so that with the exception of communication, language and literacy and mathematics, the standards they achieve are in line with expectations on entry to Year 1. The attainment of pupils aged 11 in National Curriculum tests in 2002 was well above average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, the attainment in mathematics and science was well above average and in English was very high (in the top five per cent). Because this is a new school, there is no data available to show how pupils have performed over recent years. Inspection shows that standards in English, mathematics and science are above average, the overall ability of the two cohorts being responsible for the difference. Pupils aged seven achieved average scores in National Curriculum tests in 2002 in reading and writing and below-average standards in mathematics and teacher-assessed science. When compared with similar schools, the position remained unchanged. Inspection shows that attainment has improved so that pupils are attaining levels that are expected for them at age seven in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Inspection shows that all pupils are achieving well, as are those pupils with special educational needs. Standards in other subjects of the curriculum are as expected for pupils aged seven and 11, with the exception of physical education for pupils aged seven, where they are above expectation. The attainment of pupils in religious education is the subject of a separate report. The school has set reasonable targets for pupils taking National Curriculum tests in 2003.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils maintain the highest standard wherever they are.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils willingly take on responsibility and are kind, careful and considerate to one another.
Attendance	Good. It is above average. The level of unauthorised absence is higher than the median.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. The provision for the development of communication, language and literacy skills and mathematics for children in the reception class is also good. The teaching of basic skills is good, as is the teaching of English and mathematics. All pupils are effectively included because of good planning and teachers manage pupils well with the result that relationships are very good. Pupils respond well, and enjoy their lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a need to ensure that provision can be made for pupils to learn to swim and that a full range of materials is made available for pupils to study control technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual education plans effectively cater for these pupils and procedures for reviewing their progress are effectively carried out.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good overall. This reflects the aims of the school and impacts strongly on pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good, but there is a need to extend procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress to all subjects of the curriculum.

The school enjoys a very good partnership with parents, who in turn are very supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is providing very good leadership. He is well supported by the senior management team, those with curricular and other responsibilities and all staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body has a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is effective in shaping its direction. Governors need to ensure that all the required information is included in documents such as their annual report to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is a need to ensure that in the future the school development planning shows more specific and detailed objectives and that the criteria by which the success of their achievement is judged are tighter and more specific.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has managed its transitional phase well and the governing body is aware of how budget shares will affect the school in the future.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate. The school is careful to ensure that, where the

purchase of goods and services are involved, the principles of best value are applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the school has high expectations.• That the school is well led and managed.• That teaching is good.• That their children like school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No significant points were raised.

The response to the questionnaire and the parents' meeting was very positive and supportive of the school. The team endorses the parents' views of what they find pleasing. A small number of parents raised the issue of dissatisfaction with homework via the questionnaire but this was not the view of those who attended the meeting. The view of the inspection team is that the provision of homework is generally adequate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Foundation Stage in the reception class with levels of attainment which are slightly below average. About half are average or just above, but the range of their ability is restricted to the just-above-average position, whereas there is a greater range for those under the average. Inspection shows that these children make good progress in their first year so that many but not all will reach the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. The areas of communication, language and literacy and mathematics are those in which pupils are least likely to achieve the expected standard, whilst areas like creative development, physical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development are as would be expected for that age. The strength lies in children's personal and social development, which is set to exceed expectations.
2. Children make good progress in all aspects of learning. They form good relationships and can share and take turns. They listen and watch when others speak and have quickly learned the conventions and routines of the class. Children are able to speak clearly and in sentences, when appropriate. They are taking an interest in books and show that whilst handling them with care they are beginning to understand how they work. They enjoy stories and are beginning the early stages of mark making and writing. In mathematics they recognise and put in order numbers up to 20 and can count forwards and backwards. They enjoy visits from people who help them to understand aspects of their life in the world beyond school and extend this knowledge further by, for example, very well organised visits to the local library. Children enjoy a wide range opportunities to learn about how things can be made and also about how other people have values and beliefs that are different to theirs. They have good opportunities to learn about how to control their bodies when making big movements such as in running and jumping and in how to gain control over tools and instruments that require quite delicate movements. Children enjoy the provision that is made for their creative development. They enjoy making sounds and singing and know a good range of songs and nursery rhymes. They quickly pick up and join in where there is a repeated theme. They also exercise some choice over colours and use different media in their work.
3. The results for National Curriculum tests for pupils aged seven in 2002 showed that:
 - standards in reading and writing were average;
 - standards in mathematics were below average;
 - standards in science were below average in teacher assessments; and
 - the results were the same when compared with similar schools.
4. Because this is a new school it is not possible to show trends in standards over time but analysis of data shows that boys and girls are performing equally well.
5. The attainment of pupils aged 11 in National Curriculum tests showed that:
 - standards in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average;
 - in comparison with similar schools, attainment in English was very high (in the top five per cent) and was well above average in mathematics and science; and
 - once again, it was evident that both boys and girls were attaining equally well.
6. Inspection shows that pupils aged seven are now attaining at the expected level and in line with the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils aged 11 are achieving standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science. Whilst this achievement compares less favourably with that of the pupils in the previous year, it does represent good progress for that particular year group.

7. The good and improving standards seen in Years 1 and 2 are due to the consistently good teaching seen across the school and the good use made of staff with particular strengths in these areas. It is also clear that this has been the case since the amalgamation.
8. Pupils generally speak with confidence because they know that what they have to contribute will be listened to and valued by the others in the class or group. They tend to listen well to instructions, partly because they are clearly given by the teacher but also because of the interest that the lesson has generated. They are good at discussing with a partner, and as they become older show maturity in their speech with adults. Whilst they are developing good vocabularies, the ability to express themselves is not so well defined. Many pupils enter Year 1 with a knowledge that print carries meaning and a sight vocabulary. They have good attitudes to reading and enjoy stories. This interest is built on so that by the age of seven they are reading regularly at home and have some reading skills, such as those for decoding words at their disposal. The most able at this age read with fluency and are beginning to use expression. Older pupils in Year 6 are able to talk about styles of writing and can use words like 'genre' and 'setting' when discussing stories. They know how non-fiction materials can be used to find information and can generally précis what they have read. By the time they are seven, pupils are beginning to use joined script and can write using simple sentences. A much greater range of writing is evident for pupils aged 11, who are using imaginative vocabulary and writing in prescribed styles. Punctuation is accurate, as is the spelling of commonly used words. Care with presentation is evident in pupils of all ages and by the time they are 11, pupils are writing with a neat, fluent and joined script.
9. Pupils in Year 1 are able to recall addition and subtraction facts for numbers to ten, and those in Year 2 are able to understand the concept of symmetry. In Year 4, they partition numbers and understand the values of digits within a given number in the thousands. Pupils in Year 6 are able to multiply and divide numbers which can be large or include decimals. They are aware of basic rules for probability and use computers and their knowledge of graphs and data handling to produce clear results. In science, the youngest pupils are asked to make predictions and by the time they are in Year 2, they can say why or why not a circuit will light up a bulb. In doing this they use appropriate scientific language and show that they can record and present their findings. In Year 6, they are able to devise tests that are fair and have a range of strategies for displaying their results. They describe the properties of solids, liquids and gases and can refer to molecules accurately when doing so.
10. Attainment for the rest of the curriculum is as expected, with the exception of physical education for pupils aged seven, where attainment exceeds the expectation. Attainment in religious education is the subject of a separate report.
11. There is nothing to suggest that boys and girls are learning at different rates. Pupils with differing abilities all make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs learn well and make good progress throughout the school. This is because teaching and non-teaching staff are aware of each pupil's particular needs and plan carefully to make sure those needs are met. Almost all the extra support is given within the classroom, and because behaviour and relationships are so good, pupils with special needs are given the confidence to try hard and reach the highest standard of which they are capable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning throughout the school. They enjoy their lessons and appreciate the individual help and support of staff. They develop a high level of concentration and independence because they listen well and are able to follow the teachers' instructions. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding and is a major strength of the school's work. Pupils know what is expected of them and, almost without exception, comply willingly. They respond very positively to the praise and encouragement given to them. Attendance is good, although the level of unauthorised absence is above the national average.
13. Children are very keen to come to school because they enjoy their lessons and other activities.

Almost without exception, the parents who responded to the questionnaire stated that their child liked school. Children in the reception class have already developed a positive attitude towards learning. Pupils maintain this enthusiasm throughout their time in school. Pupils listen very attentively to their teacher and to one another. They try hard and almost always concentrate very well so that they complete their work in the time set. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in every aspect of school life because they are consistently well supported. Positive attitudes to learning and a purposeful working atmosphere have a significant effect on the good progress made by all pupils.

14. Behaviour in lessons is exceptionally good. No unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during the inspection. Teachers manage behaviour very well and pupils respond positively to the praise and rewards they receive. The consistent repetition of routines and the stimulating lessons mean that the children settle quickly and work hard. Almost all pupils come to school well prepared to learn and staff ensure that all pupils are enabled to give their best. Because teachers rarely have to spend time managing unacceptable behaviour, the pace of lessons is usually good and this helps pupils to learn well.
15. Behaviour at playtimes and lunchtime is often exemplary and rarely less than very good. Pupils play very well together in the playground and take care to try to avoid bumping into others when running around. Groups of pupils chat together while others play ball or use the play equipment provided. Lunchtime is a pleasant social occasion. Junior pupils sit together in mixed-age groups and the older pupils help the younger ones when necessary. Movement around the school is extremely orderly and quiet. Pupils are polite and considerate, willing to help others, for example, by holding doors open. There is calm atmosphere in the school. There have been no exclusions since the school opened.
16. Almost without exception, parents state that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. From the reception class onwards, children are encouraged to grow in self-confidence by the respectful way staff listen to their ideas and value their input into activities. Pupils enjoy being chosen to help their teacher and take a pride in carrying out their tasks well. They are confident in sharing their feelings with others because teachers instil a sense of social and moral responsibility. Pupils show a high level of respect for the feelings of others and learn to value opinions that may differ from their own.
17. Two pupils from each class in Years 2 to 6 represent the class on the school council. They take this responsibility very seriously because the council makes positive changes and contributions to school life. For example, it is involved in the plans to redesign and improve the playground and is currently starting to plan a Health Day to take place in the summer term. The council follows up its concerns with the headteacher as well as taking into account the views of the whole pupil body, and this provides pupils with a good opportunity to experience democracy in action.
18. Pupils enjoy the frequent opportunities they have to work together in pairs or small groups. Pupils almost always work very sensibly together, helping one another with their work and sharing equipment equably. They are particularly good at discussing issues in order to reach a conclusion. For example, in a Year 4 numeracy lesson a group of pupils successfully solved some challenging problems by sharing their ideas. Pupils' sensible attitudes enable them to benefit from the many opportunities they have to work independently. While the teacher is focusing on another group, pupils rarely ask for attention and continue to work diligently. Older pupils are expected to set a good example to younger ones and to take care of them; they do so willingly and well. Pupils raise money for a range of charities and often take responsibility for organising the events, such as the successful toy sale that took place during the inspection in aid of the Blue Peter fund.
19. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and the school is a very caring community. There are very high levels of mutual respect between staff and pupils. Teachers and other staff support pupils very well and use praise very well to motivate pupils. Pupils' high level of respect for others means that they develop a growing understanding of the impact of their actions on others as they move through the school. Bullying occurs very rarely, was not observed during the

inspection, and is not tolerated. Pupils feel safe in school, are free from racism and sexism, and are confident that there is always an adult to turn to in time of need. The excellent relationships make a very significant contribution to the very high standards of independence shown by pupils.

20. Attendance is above the national average. However, the level of unauthorised absence is slightly above the national average. The school has strategies in place to reduce the incidence of unauthorised absence and is involving parents appropriately. Almost all pupils routinely attend on time in the morning and lessons begin promptly throughout the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory in just over a quarter of lessons, good in half and very good in the remainder. Teaching is good in all phases. Some very good teaching was seen in all phases. The teaching in the Foundation Stage was never less than good. The proportion of good teaching was similar for pupils up to age seven and for pupils up to age 11 but the younger pupils received a higher proportion of very good teaching. The high standard of teaching contributes significantly to the good rates of progress and levels of achievement seen during the inspection. The school has been diligent, even in the early stages of amalgamation, in monitoring teaching and this also has contributed to the good standards seen. As this is a new school, it is not possible to refer to a previous report in order to gauge how teaching may have improved.
22. The teaching in the reception class is good and it is often very good. The teacher plans lessons well, ensuring that the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage are appropriately addressed. The teacher and learning support staff work well together, making good use of their knowledge of the children to provide activities and opportunities appropriate to their abilities. The support staff are well deployed to assist groups of children while the teacher works on specific objectives with others in the class. Notes are made of children's progress and achievements, and this information helps to inform lesson planning so that their learning needs are met. The range of attainment on entry is quite wide and more detailed records of progress against the stepping stones towards the early learning goals are needed to help to focus teaching and learning even more closely on individual children's needs. Children with special educational needs are identified early and their needs are appropriately met so they are fully included in class lessons and activities. One child with a statement is integrated very well within the learning opportunities provided for the class. However, funded support for her is only provided for three hours per day and this is not adequate to fully meet her particular needs. Class learning support staff make up this deficiency but this means they cannot always give the attention required both to the statemented child and the rest of the class.
23. The teaching of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good for pupils in both key stages. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are securely in place and the teaching of basic skills is good. Teachers are good at using other subjects of the curriculum to develop the skills of literacy and numeracy.
24. Pupils with special educational needs are invariably given good support within lessons, often by a classroom assistant. Most teachers are very skilled at targeting questions at pupils of different abilities so that all feel fully involved in the lessons. The progress of individual pupils towards meeting their targets is detailed in a daily diary that is filled in by support teachers or assistants. The best of these contain evaluative comments and suggestions for future work, and the co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop this skill further. The behaviour, even of those pupils identified as having behavioural problems, is usually very good because the constructive and ordered atmosphere in most lessons encourages all pupils to give of their best.
25. Teachers have been very successful in overcoming the disruptive effects of settling in and have then coped very well with further disruption in the first term caused by a building programme in the heart of the school. Teaching is a great strength of the school and this is so for many reasons.
26. All staff have high expectations in terms of how pupils are to work and how they are to behave. As

a result, relationships are very good and behaviour is excellent. Teachers plan well and good use is made of the talents of individual teachers. In this way, for example, the teaching of literacy and numeracy can be shared to guarantee the greatest impact on pupils in Years 5 and 6. Lessons are planned in such a way as to meet the needs of pupils with differing levels of attainment. In the best lessons, the objectives of the lesson are made clear to the pupils and are revisited both during and at the end of the lesson so as to enable pupils to assess for themselves the progress they have made.

27. Many lessons showed that teachers have good knowledge of what they are teaching and this enables them to engage the pupils in such a way as to show the pupils how their work can be refined or improved. A particularly pleasing aspect of teaching is the partnership that exists between teachers and classroom assistants. Classroom assistants are good at developing lesson themes with small groups and also at meeting the needs of pupils who from time to time require individual attention whilst the whole class is working with the teacher.
28. Given that all teaching was satisfactory or better, there were still individual lessons with weaknesses. These tended to relate to the particular lesson and no pattern of overall weakness could be identified. There were occasions when the pace of the lesson was allowed to drop or when the opportunity to review progress at the end of the lesson was weak, but these concerns should be addressed through the school's monitoring programme.
29. Pupils are willing participants in the learning process. They know that their teachers work hard for them and they know that they are expected to be considerate and work hard in return. They enjoy their lessons and enjoy the respect they receive.

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

30. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements in all subject areas with the exception of physical education, where the school, through no fault of its own, is no longer able to provide swimming tuition for pupils because the local swimming pool has closed. There is presently no alternative venue available. With this one exception, the quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils are good throughout the school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory for pupils aged under five and good throughout the rest of the school. The provision in the Foundation Stage is securely based on the appropriate areas of learning for children of that age.
31. This is a school that very effectively meets the needs of all its pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and almost always receive extra support alongside their peers in the classroom. These pupils benefit with others from the very strong emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Procedures for assessing the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good. Individual education plans contain appropriate achievable targets for literacy, numeracy or behaviour that are reviewed at regular intervals. The practice of keeping a diary is particularly useful in keeping track of pupils' day-to-day progress and informing the next stage of planning. Assessment of pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is not as strong.
32. The school has effectively integrated the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies into whole-school planning. As a result, standards of attainment in these subject areas are satisfactory in Year 1 and Year 2 and good from Year 3 to Year 6. The quality of teachers' lesson planning is good overall and work set usually reinforces and builds on previous learning. Teachers work co-operatively to plan the curriculum on a whole-school basis and the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. This assists pupils to achieve well in all year groups.
33. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good overall and pupils have access to a wide range of sporting activities including a well-attended choir, football, rugby, cricket and netball clubs. In addition, the school provides pupils with opportunities to broaden their awareness and

understanding of the wider world with visits to interesting places. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are given opportunities to visit, for example, Chester Zoo, whilst older pupils go on residential trips to Anglesey and the Lake District.

34. The school actively promotes equality of access to and opportunity in the curriculum for all pupils. This is directly reflected in the school's ethos and can be seen in most lesson planning in numeracy and literacy, where tasks are matched to pupils' abilities and learning needs. In addition, the school has recently constructed both a ramped access to the school and also special toilets for the disabled.
35. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good overall. The school has created a happy, secure environment and staff spend time supporting pupils who have personal problems. Sex education and drugs awareness education is provided to older pupils, and pupils in all year groups have regular opportunities to discuss problems and personal feelings during regular timetabled 'Circle Times'. During the inspection, pupils were very polite and eager to be of assistance. They respected others and would happily help other pupils if the need arose.
36. The school has very good links with the community and especially close links with the local Catholic Church. Money has been raised for school improvements through joint ventures with local industries, and the new ICT suite has been financed to a greater part through the school's involvement in the local Excellence in Cities initiative. In addition, the school has made use of funding from the Children's Fund to finance the services of a learning mentor for two days per week. This has had a beneficial effect on the performance of disaffected pupils.
37. Relationships between the school and partner institutions are good overall. The school is involved in several partnerships with other schools. Children from the nearby pre-school are integrated into school life before they join the reception class and older pupils are given good opportunities to integrate into the local secondary school because of good liaison between these two institutions. The school's curriculum is enhanced through involvement with other primary schools in the annual 'Small School Arts' project and during the inspection, Year 6 pupils took part in a video-conferencing quiz with other primary schools, which had been organised by the local high school.
38. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall and this reflects the values and attitudes of the school.
39. Pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school has developed a Christian ethos which permeates the whole of school life and has successfully developed a climate in which pupils respect both themselves and others and feel valued. Staff try to ensure that all pupils feel part of the school's extended family in order that they may grow and flourish. Pupils are encouraged to explore and develop what animates themselves and others through, for example, periods of reflection, and self-esteem is continuously promoted throughout the school through the use of praise and by respect for individual differences.
40. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good and is reflected in the excellent behaviour of pupils and also in the excellent relationships pupils have achieved, both with adults and with each other. The school promotes a caring attitude and actively fosters a strong sense of community. The success of pupils is celebrated on a regular basis. Older pupils understand and also appreciate the need to set good examples to younger pupils. A climate of respect and tolerance exists within the school and pupils are taught the differences between right and wrong and encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. In many classes, pupils are given regular opportunities to learn about the importance of co-operating with others in group work or in pairs. They do so enthusiastically and in several lessons pupils went out of their way to help their fellow pupils overcome problems or offer them well-meant advice. In addition, the School Council, a body elected to represent the views of pupils, now gives pupils a chance to have a say in aspects of school life.
41. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good overall. Pupils are given very good opportunities to explore their own culture, both within school and during off-site activities,

including residential visits to places such as York and Anglesey, in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding of a wider society. They also have access to a wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball and rugby clubs and choir and also benefit from the school's very close relationship with the local Catholic Church. However opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their understanding of cultures other than their own are more limited. The school teaches about other ways of life in subjects such as religious education and art. It does not yet provide pupils with regular opportunities to fully reflect the multicultural nature of society or enable pupils to have meaningful opportunities to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures.

42. There are, as yet, few procedures for the school to monitor in simple, pragmatic ways the success of what it is providing in the provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. No action on future monitoring arrangements is included in the present school action plan.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The school provides a very high standard of care for all its pupils. All pupils are very well cared for and their individual needs are well met by all staff. The climate of care is established in the aims of the school and pervades its work. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory. The school is beginning to make good use of the information gained from assessment in English and mathematics to plan the next stage of learning for pupils. However, the use of assessment in other subjects is not sufficiently well developed.
44. The school has a strong commitment to the well-being and welfare of its pupils. The procedures for child protection are very good and comply fully with legal requirements. The headteacher takes responsibility and has received relevant training, regularly updated. Staff are kept aware of changes in procedures. The school has thorough policies and procedures covering health and safety. Regular health and safety checks and emergency drills are carried out. Staff pay good attention to issues of health and safety in lessons. For example, when the reception class were putting out the apparatus in a physical education lesson, the teacher took care to ensure that they lifted and carried it safely. Emergency and electrical equipment is tested in accordance with requirements. Clear procedures are in place for any pupil who becomes ill in school and for dealing with accidents. The school is currently working towards becoming a "Healthy School" and pupils are encouraged to make healthy choices about diet. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after. The excellent relationships between staff, pupils and their parents contribute to the effectiveness of the care they give. The programme of visits before children enter the reception class ensures that they settle well into school and its routines, quickly becoming confident members of the school community. There are sound policies in place to promote race equality and the safe use of the Internet.
45. The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good throughout the school. Teachers and support staff work well as a team to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Special educational needs are identified at an early stage. Parents are involved at all stages and encouraged to support their child's work at home. Individual education plans are clear and well focused so that pupils are able to make good progress. All children are able to take part in the full range of activities.
46. The school promotes the importance of prompt, regular attendance very well so that almost all pupils attend regularly and on time. Since the recent introduction of electronically recorded registers, absence is monitored very well. In almost all cases, parents are meticulous about informing the school of the reason for absence, but all unexplained absences are followed up. The school is currently working hard and with some success to reduce the level of unauthorised absence, which is slightly higher than the national average. Lateness is also monitored well. The school works closely with the education welfare officer when any concerns arise.
47. The behaviour policy has clear aims and sets high expectations. Teachers manage behaviour very well. Pupils clearly understand what is expected of them. They appreciate the house points

and other rewards they receive and understand the consequences if they choose to misbehave. Teachers and other adults provide excellent role models for pupils. All adults in school treat pupils with respect. They listen to pupils' views and take time to sort out any problems. Pupils are confident that teachers and other adults are always available and willing to help, whether with work or when someone is worried or upset. Procedures for eliminating bullying and other forms of harassment are securely based on the respect pupils are encouraged to show to others. Teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to discuss feelings so that they grow in understanding of the consequences of their actions and words on others. Pupils and their parents are confident that, when bullying does occur, it is dealt with promptly and well.

48. Children are assessed when they start school and the outcomes are used to plan their work. Assessment procedures are fully in place for English and mathematics and are being developed in science. The school decided to focus on assessment procedures for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in the first year of its life. The need to develop assessment procedures in the other subjects of the National Curriculum is recognised and is included in the current school improvement plan. However, currently, assessment procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are a weakness. The school has good systems in place to analyse its results.
49. In English and mathematics, the results of assessment are used to track pupils' progress. This year, a mid-year review is planned so that appropriate targets can be set for all pupils in these subjects. Assessment information is not yet used in science to track progress. Teachers judge the knowledge and understanding of their pupils well in lessons and use this information well when planning for future learning. The school has an effective marking policy. There is some inconsistency in the way teachers mark books. In the best examples, pupils' work is evaluated and ways are suggested for making improvement. However, in other examples, the comments made by the teacher are insufficiently detailed to be helpful to the pupil. The school has started to use target setting as a way of involving pupils more in understanding what they need to do in order to improve. However, this is at an early stage and pupils are not yet fully aware of their targets nor are they sure of how to use them. Targets for improvement are not included in pupils' annual reports.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The responses to the parents' questionnaire and comments at the parents' meeting show a very high level of satisfaction with the school and support for it. Without exception, parents state that the school has high expectations for their children. Virtually all parents say that their children like school. Parents are very comfortable in approaching staff with queries or problems. They feel that the school works closely with parents and believe that it is well led and managed. Parents state that their children make good progress and that the teaching is good. They are confident that the school achieves a high standard of good behaviour, that they are kept well informed about the progress their children are making and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible individuals. A small number of parents feel that the school does not provide the right amount of homework and a few stated that the school did not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.
51. Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views of the school. Appropriate homework is regularly set and parents are kept informed about it through the homework diary and reading record books. There is a good range of activities outside lessons, such as clubs, trips and visitors to school.
52. The school encourages parents to become active partners in their children's education. Parents are well informed about what the school has to offer and are encouraged to visit before the child starts school. The home-school agreement is clear and appropriate. Almost all parents show their support for the school by returning the signed document to the school. Parents are encouraged to help their children at home and are kept informed about homework. Meetings have been held for parents about a range of topics, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies, and

the school is planning other such meetings. Parents have two opportunities each year to consult formally with their child's teacher but are also welcome to talk to the teacher at any time, by arrangement. Many parents make use of the time at the beginning and end of the school day to talk to the teacher. Pupils' homework diaries and reading record books provide an additional channel for communication between home and school.

53. The school provides a wide range of information for parents. The school brochure is full of useful information and provides parents with a clear overview of the curriculum and the expectations for behaviour. However, the information about special educational needs is insufficiently detailed. The governors' annual report to parents is well presented but contains a number of omissions; for example, there is no information concerning the school's admission of pupils with a physical disability, the section on special educational needs does not provide sufficient detail and there is no statement about school security. Newsletters are frequent and informative. They create a good balance between information and celebration, as well as reminding parents of their responsibilities, for example, ensuring that their child arrives at school on time. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed and involved at all stages.
54. The quality of the annual reports on pupils is satisfactory overall. Reception class reports are good, providing a clear picture of the child's attitude to learning and of their progress. In other years, comments on English and mathematics are usually detailed and provide a clear picture of attainment. However, comments about science are not usually as detailed. Comments in other subjects are brief and focus on attitude and the curriculum rather than the progress the pupil has made. Reports are generally clear about what each pupil knows and can do but there are few comments to help parents understand the progress made by their child. All reports clearly show the very good knowledge teachers have of their pupils as individuals. However, although strengths are identified, areas for improvement are not consistently made clear. Parents are able to discuss their child's progress with his or her teacher on request. The parents' evening during the spring term is used to discuss areas for improvement so that parents are able to help their child during the school year.
55. Parents are welcome to help in school in a variety of ways and a good number provide regular support. Other parents help on a less frequent basis, for example, during the inspection a number of parents helped to escort the reception class children on their visit to the local library. The parent-teacher association (PTA) is a successful group that holds social and fund-raising events throughout the year. The money raised is used to support the work of the school in a variety of ways; for example, the PTA subsidised the cost of the coach when pupils went to the pantomime after Christmas. Parents support events, such as class assemblies and parents' meetings, very well indeed. The turnout is always well in excess of 90 per cent.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher has provided very good leadership since the amalgamation which took place in September 2001. When the school opened, it was in circumstances that were less than satisfactory and which would have made the task of bringing two schools together much more difficult. Essentially the school building was not ready and this meant that the disruptive effects of a major building programme had to be overcome as well. At the time of the inspection, the school was functioning well and teaching and learning were good. Pupils aged 11 had recorded standards in National Curriculum tests that were well above average in English, mathematics and science and which overall were in the top five per cent when judged against similar schools.
57. The staff and pupils of the two former schools have been very effectively brought together and all concerned have played a constructive part. Staff have shown themselves adept at taking on change whilst maintaining high standards and expectations. Those who have areas of responsibility have done well in establishing themselves and the process has been further helped by the positive contributions made by governors, parents and pupils.
58. Now that the initial phase of amalgamation has been speedily and effectively achieved, it is

necessary to ensure that, in line with the school's development planning, co-ordinators are given more extensive roles. At present, they are not able to monitor teaching and learning of their subject at classroom level.

59. The governors have shown, from the point of their incorporation, that they have a commitment and vision for the school and show a very good understanding of where the school is up to and where it needs to go next. They play an important role in looking at and contributing to the priorities that the school sets for itself. Governors have quickly grasped the financial complications arising from two organisations bringing budget shares with them into an amalgamation, and are now clear about what the future holds. They make good use of the specific grant monies that they receive and make effective use of funding that arrives – often at short notice – during the financial year. The current surplus, which can be said to have been inherited, is being usefully earmarked to counter the effect of a falling roll. Whilst the school is currently budgeting above its income, the governing body recognises that this cannot continue and has put contingency plans into place. The school is careful to apply the principles of best value in securing goods and services. The governors are fulfilling their statutory duties satisfactorily but they need to ensure that all the required information that should appear in their annual report to parents is included.
60. The headteacher has done well to devolve responsibility to the senior management team, who are in turn making a good contribution via their respective duties and responsibilities. Monitoring of teaching has been effective and has led to the adoption of common practices and has also contributed to the good teaching seen during the inspection.
61. The leadership of the co-ordinator for special educational needs is good. She has been instrumental in establishing a system that ensures pupils' needs are identified and then met. The fundamental principles of the revised Code of Practice, such as the need for parents and children to be fully involved in the process, have been taken into account. She has good-contacts with local support services and makes sure that pupils who need specialist help, in particular statemented pupils, are given the appropriate support.
62. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been effectively carried out by senior staff and co-ordinators for English and mathematics but this has not yet been extended to other areas of the curriculum. One of the school's early achievements has seen the effective unification of the staff, who all show a strong commitment to making the school succeed and to providing good quality education. The school is very well positioned to continue to make improvements based on its mission statement and clear aims.
63. The school's development planning has allowed the amalgamation to proceed well, having identified appropriate priorities and now needs to reflect a school that is in a position to deal with more detailed and more specific issues.
64. The school has successfully introduced a system for appraisal, and the newly qualified teacher is being well supported in her initial year. The school provides good opportunities for teachers in training and is in a good position to continue to do so. The school makes good use of latest technology so that, for instance, information on attendance can be quickly provided. Documents can be transmitted and pupils and staff can talk to other schools via a video link.
65. There remain minor building works to be completed but the accommodation can now be described as satisfactory. There are plans to develop the grounds, and the school council is usefully engaged in giving the matter some thought. Resources too are adequate, although library provision is inadequate. Staffing is well matched to the needs of the pupils, although where part-time provision is made for a statemented child, the remaining provision made by the school in that class is stretched when the individual provision is absent. However, the school and the staff have shown a very strong commitment to providing for the needs of all pupils and this effectively ensures that they make the same good progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to maintain the good start that this new school has made and to help to raise standards in the future, the senior management team and the governing body should:

- i) Produce school development planning which utilises the more detailed information arising from the development of the role of co-ordinators so that more specific objectives and more demanding success criteria can be established;

(Paragraph 63)

- ii) Extend the role of the co-ordinators in accordance with the provisions outlined in school development planning so that they are able to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom; and

(Paragraphs 58,62, 90, 108, 112, 124, 131, 137, 144)

- iii) Introduce systems of assessment in those subject areas where they currently do not adequately exist.

(Paragraphs 48, 49, 112, 124, 137)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	13	30	15	0	0	0
Percentage	0	22	52	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	232
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42

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	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

FTE means full-time equivalent

Attendance

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	18	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	16	15
	Girls	19	19	18
	Total	34	35	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92	95	89
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	15	16
	Girls	19	18	17
	Total	34	33	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92	89	89
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	28	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	27	26
	Girls	22	18	23
	Total	46	45	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90	88	96
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	25	25
	Girls	18	17	17
	Total	41	42	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80	82	82
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	232
Number of questionnaires returned	119

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	28	0	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	65	32	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	39	1	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	40	15	0	0
The teaching is good.	68	30	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	37	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	23	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	32	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	31	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	32	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	34	8	3	1

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

67. At the time of the inspection there were 27 children in the Foundation Stage. Children enter the school at the beginning of year in which they are five and join a reception class. Most children join the school having previously attended the pre-school 'First Steps', which is situated on the school site. Children are admitted in a sensitive manner, making induction visits in the term before they school and being phased in gradually in the first weeks of the term. The pre-school shares information effectively with the reception teacher. Assessments are made during the child's first half term in the school and these inform lesson planning. Children's individual targets for learning are shared with parents so they can contribute to their child's education at home. The school works hard to ensure parents are fully informed of the planned learning experiences for the class. Useful profiles are maintained containing annotated samples of children's work, and these are added to as pupils move up the school. There is a broad range of attainment on entry to the reception class; most children, however, have standards of attainment which are slightly below average, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The majority of children in the reception year may not reach the expected standards for five-year-olds in these areas of learning. Provision for learning is good and the expected standards are likely to be achieved in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.
68. The accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The available space is well used and organised. The teacher has worked extremely hard to ensure that the classroom provides an attractive and stimulating environment for learning. The main area is of an adequate size. There is a satisfactory range of well-organised resources for learning which are accessible to the children and which they care for well. The outside area is rather small but it is enclosed and provides an additional teaching space, weather permitting. At present there is no covered outdoor area to facilitate outdoor activities in winter or in rain. There is a lack of suitable equipment to promote exploration and physical development in this area, but children have the opportunity to use such equipment in the school hall.
69. Management of the Foundation Stage is efficient and effective; provision for children's learning is good and they make good progress in all six areas of learning. The staff are adept at making meaningful links between activities in the six areas of learning. All the activities in which the children take part have a specific focus so that learning is constantly being taken forward. The teacher is knowledgeable about good early years practice; she works well with the co-ordinator for the next phase to ensure that the opportunities for learning provided in the Foundation Stage are a good basis for future learning when the children enter Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. Nearly all children are likely to meet expectations by the time they are five, and some children will exceed them. This is because they enter the reception class with personal and social skills that are broadly in line with expectations for their age group, and they are provided with good opportunities to develop these skills further before they are five. They form good relationships with adults and with their peers, maintain concentration and sit quietly when appropriate. They work well as part of a group, and take turns, sharing fairly. Children develop independence and a sense of responsibility when they tidy the equipment they have been using, and they treat property appropriately. Good routines have been established so children dress and undress independently. They are beginning to help each other and enjoy playing imaginatively together. Teaching is good. The teacher and learning support staff provide good role models for the children and are good at helping them to achieve standards which are at least average in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

71. Children make progress in this area of learning which is at least satisfactory, and sometimes it is good. Nevertheless, the majority of children are unlikely to achieve expected standards by the time they are five, although a significant minority is on course to exceed them. This is because most children enter the reception class with skills which are below average for their age group, and, although teaching in this area of learning is often good, the pace at which some children learn is not sufficient to enable them to attain average standards. Children use language confidently for communication, speak clearly, respond sensibly to instructions and are beginning to use more complex sentences. They are developing an interest in books and some children choose the reading area when there is a choice of things to do. They handle books appropriately and take books home to share. They enjoy listening to stories in class. They hear and say initial sounds in words and link sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet. Some children have a developing sight vocabulary. They ascribe meaning to marks and copy letters and words with an increasing degree of accuracy.
72. Teaching is good. In the lessons seen, good planning of reading activities provided opportunities for children to share books with adults, helping them to become used to interpreting the sequence of pictures and extending their sight vocabulary of familiar words. They are also able, with help, to sequence sentences correctly to retell a story. On another occasion, group activities involved matching objects to initial letters; the children enjoyed finding little objects in individual bags and matching them to letters. Speaking and listening skills are well promoted and opportunities are taken to extend vocabulary, such as when a lesson focusing on road safety led to words such as 'reflective' and 'fluorescent'. The teacher and support staff have, quite rightly, worked hard to ensure children are well integrated socially and learn with increasing confidence and independence. Some children are now ready to learn at a faster pace; they should be encouraged to do so through the use of tasks which are more closely tailored to their particular needs and abilities, thus challenging them and increasing their rate of progress.

Mathematical development

73. Most children are unlikely to achieve all the early learning goals for mathematical development by the time they enter Year 1. They enter the reception class with skills in this area of the curriculum which are slightly below those expected for their age. Progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes it is good. Now that early school routines are well established, children need to be given more opportunities to work at a faster rate. They show an interest in numbers, count forwards and backwards to 20 and recognise most numerals.
74. Teaching is good. Lessons are well organised, with appropriate tasks to develop and consolidate learning. In a lesson seen during the inspection, children worked in groups to recognise and place number cards in the correct sequence up to 20. The teacher and support staff used focused questioning well, according to the ability of the child. A range of attainment was evident within the groups.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

75. Children are making good progress towards the expected standards for five-year-olds and most children are likely to achieve them by the end of the Foundation Stage. This is because the teacher has planned lessons, both within the school and in the local area, which enable children to become interested and involved in a range of activities, leading to a growing understanding of their world. During the inspection, a parent who is a crossing patrol warden visited the class, bringing with her the equipment to demonstrate road safety and raise awareness of safe crossing points. This lesson was well planned to take place the day before a class visit to the local library. Children have planted bulbs for spring flowering, which are tended in the outside play area. They have regular opportunities to use computers and do so with interest, using a mouse to good effect.

76. Teaching is very good. The class teacher manages the children very well, ensuring that their interest and concentration are sustained for an appropriate amount of time to take their learning forward. She is good at finding ways to engage children's interest and whet their appetites to learn more. Following the library visit, the children made simple pictorial maps to a good standard for their age and experience, played at being librarians and used a floor map to move cars in different directions. During 'choosing time' children joined construction equipment together, chose to use the computers and occupied the role-play area co-operatively, talking and extending each other's ideas. They gain awareness of their own cultures and beliefs, and those of other people, through stories, discussion and prayer. A quiet reflective period while music played provided a spiritual experience, following which children turned to each other and said 'Peace be with you' in a meaningful way.

Physical development

77. Children have ample opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills. The good provision evident through well-planned lessons, across a broad physical curriculum, should result in children attaining the expected standards in this area by the end of the Foundation Stage. They take part in lessons in the hall during which they have opportunities to travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment. In a very good lesson in the hall, children tried very hard to improve their performance as they combined stretching and curling movements on apparatus. In another hall lesson, the children responded well, in movement, to the sounds and words of the story 'We're going on a bear hunt', which they had previously enjoyed in the classroom. At break and lunchtime they were seen to use space with an awareness of others. They have wheeled toys which they are able to use on a rota basis, sharing and co-operating sensibly.
78. Children have plenty of opportunities to use small tools such as scissors, pencils and paintbrushes. They manipulate malleable materials and use small construction equipment with increasing control. Teaching is good. Children are well guided by staff so that they begin to use their hands and fingers more effectively.

Creative development

79. Teaching in the area of creative development is at least satisfactory. During the inspection week, a library visit and a visitor to the class meant there was less time than usual for children to take part in focused creative activities. Nevertheless, the children were seen to make posters about road safety, to colour pictures associated with this, to draw pictorial maps and to make crossing 'lollipops' from paper plates and cylinders. In using crayons, the children demonstrated awareness of the appropriate colours to use for particular purposes. They practised folding and curling paper in preparation for making masks at a later date. This latter activity helped children to understand the properties of paper. Over time, children are taught a wide range of techniques and are provided with experiences which enable them to explore through a variety of media and materials. In addition, they have opportunities to use their imagination in role-play, in response to music, and to sounds and text.
80. Provision is good and most children are likely to achieve the expected standards in this area of learning before entering Year 1.

ENGLISH

81. In the year 2002 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was average. This performance was also average when compared with similar schools. Pupils' test results when they are 11 years old show attainment to be well above the national average. When compared with similar schools, this performance was very high (within the top five per cent). The school's target of 91 per cent Level 4 and above for 2002 was met and the school is on course to achieve a similar target in 2003.
82. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in reading and writing are similar to those expected

nationally for pupils aged seven and above expectations for pupils aged 11. Differences in levels of attainment between tests and the findings of the inspection are accounted for by the differences in the ability of the cohorts of pupils concerned. The guidance in the National Literacy Strategy has had a positive impact, ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum for English, which the school follows closely.

83. Most pupils enter Year 1 with speaking and listening skills which are similar to those expected nationally. They speak confidently but have some difficulty expressing their ideas. Progress is satisfactory overall and, for some pupils, it is good. As pupils move through the school, their confidence in speaking grows and they listen attentively to adults, following instructions well. Pupils were seen working effectively in pairs, showing courtesy and consideration for others. They listen patiently when others are talking and many pupils acquire an extensive vocabulary. Although provision for the development of speaking and listening skills is often good, standards by the time pupils are 11 remain broadly similar to those expected nationally of this age group. The weakness is in pupils' ability to express their ideas and to give coherent explanations.
84. Standards in reading are slightly below average when pupils enter Year 1, average by the end of Year 2, and above average by the end of Year 6. Provision for reading development is good throughout the school and pupils make steady progress. Teachers and learning support staff continue to listen to pupils read individually on a fairly regular basis and pupils take books home to share. This individual attention contributes to pupils' generally positive attitudes to reading. Daily shared reading sessions in the literacy hour are well managed. The development of reading skills and comprehension in guided reading groups is not as effective as it might be. This may be because guided reading continues to take place in the literacy hour, sharing a 20-minute time slot with guided writing; teachers and ability groups thus meet once a fortnight to share a book and discuss text. Sometimes the inability of other pupils in the class to work independently inhibits the teachers' concentration on the needs of a reading group. Pupils' ability to discuss their reading is rather limited and they tend to lack real enthusiasm for books. Unsatisfactory focus on group discussion of text means that pupils are not expressing themselves as effectively as they might in this regard. The lack of a library and of a good range of non-fiction texts inhibits independent learning.
85. Pupils make good progress to attain standards in writing which are average by the time they are seven, and well above average by the time they are 11. Efforts to raise standards in writing have met with considerable success. Progress is good throughout the school. Group targets for three ability levels, related to progress through the literacy strategy, have been identified and shared with pupils and parents. The range of purposes for which pupils write is broad throughout the school, and the programmes of study for English are covered well. Younger pupils have written 'news', simple instructions and reports, retold stories and explained what is happening in a picture. They have ample opportunity to write at length and take pride in presenting their work well. Older pupils write for a very wide range of purposes, including recounting experiences on outside visits, book reviews and character studies, non-chronological reports about Shakespeare, and character studies of Macbeth before and after he met the witches. Teachers' weekly lesson planning indicates good cross-curricular links. Pupils in Year 2 planned their own story using characters from the Isle of Struay, which they had studied in geography; in Year 5, work on myths linked well with studies of Ancient Greeks, and Year 6 pupils used computers to plan a suspense story. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because learning support staff are skilled at motivating them and ensuring their attention to tasks. Standards in spelling are above national expectations. This is because pupils' knowledge of how to use letter sounds to decode unfamiliar words is systematically developed throughout the school. Pupils learn spellings for homework and are tested on recall. Most pupils are careful to write neatly; handwriting is regularly taught, and most pupils achieve the level expected for this aspect of writing. Teachers' high expectations ensure pupils take pride in presenting their written work well in all subject areas.
86. The quality of teaching is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. All teachers plan their lessons well, providing tasks which build upon pupils' previous learning and setting appropriate challenges for pupils with different levels of attainment. Pupils are well managed. Most

teachers use good questioning skills, helping pupils to develop their ideas and ensuring the involvement of all ability levels during whole-class sessions. Purposeful talk in pairs is encouraged; it is a good strategy for promoting interest, co-operation and speaking and listening. During the inspection, the shared reading focus in the lower junior classes was upon instructional writing. Teachers used demonstration and practical activities well to help pupils understand the importance of clarity and correct order. A particular strength is teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour, effort and achievement; in the best lessons, pupils are set challenging tasks which extend their previous learning well. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were asked to identify strategies which contribute to building a suspense story, compare their effectiveness in two texts, and use the techniques in their own stories. Sometimes the pace of lessons is slow and teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve when working independently are not as high as they might be. Learning support staff contribute well to pupils' learning during group and independent activities; during lesson introductions and shared reading sessions, their time is not often used as efficiently as it might be. The additional literacy support programmes have been effective in improving the attainment of slower-learning pupils.

87. The school's assessment procedures and the use that is made of assessments in lessons, to take pupils' learning forward, are good. Pupils' writing is assessed termly and the results used to set future learning targets; the written work is retained and contributes to useful individual files which clearly show progress over time. Pupils' progress, as measured annually by standardised or nationally recognised tests, is tracked and analysed; the results are used to set group learning targets and to make predictions about whole-school numerical targets. Test results are also used to form groups for programmes such as the Additional Literacy Support initiative.
88. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. In the classroom situation, slower-learning pupils are well supported by experienced assistants who work closely with teachers to ensure appropriate learning opportunities. When withdrawal takes place so that pupils may take part in additional support programmes, this is in the pupils' best interests.
89. Resources for teaching English are adequate. The school has correctly identified the need to improve stocks of non-fiction books and of small sets of books for guided reading groups. Information books related to current topics are well displayed in classrooms but there is no library for pupils to use for independent learning. The wide entrance corridor houses shelves of reference books for junior pupils; these are kept in good order by monitors. The lack of a dedicated library means pupils' information retrieval skills are not as good as they might be. Teachers have no opportunity at present to teach pupils how to use a library, either for enjoyment or reference. Discussion with older pupils indicates pupils make little use of public library facilities.
90. The co-ordinator is experienced and knowledgeable. He monitors teachers' curriculum plans and is able to advise when required, particularly for classes for pupils in Years 3 to 6. He is aware of some of the strengths and weaknesses in current provision through an analysis of end-of-key stage test papers, through looking at samples of pupils' assessed writing, and through staff discussion. However, he has had little opportunity to monitor teaching and learning through systematically observing lessons. The school's evaluation of its effectiveness in teaching English requires further development.

MATHEMATICS

91. In 2002, pupils aged seven achieved standards in National Curriculum tests that were below the national average and which were also below average when compared with similar schools. Pupils aged 11 achieved standards which were well above the national average and which were also well above average when compared with similar schools. Inspection evidence, based on a review of pupils' work during the present academic year and on lesson observations, confirms that standards of attainment in mathematics in Year 6 are presently above the national average and are comparable to the national average in Year 2. The quality and range of coverage of all areas of mathematics are good and nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good overall progress in building up their knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject in all

year groups. Pupils of differing abilities all make good progress because of the quality of planning and those with special needs do so because they are well provided for and supported.

92. The difference between current achievement and previous standards is due to the different overall ability of the cohorts of pupils in question. The standards the school achieves are in many ways linked to the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the good teaching of the subject in most year groups. Even so, the school aims to increase the attainment of pupils in this subject area further and, as a result, mathematics has a high profile in current school improvement planning.
93. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well and is aware of the continuing need to improve standards. She has ensured that this requirement for improvement in attainment has a high profile in school development planning and that all staff share this commitment to succeed in raising standards.
94. The school's successful implementation of the numeracy strategy has enabled most pupils to develop proficiency and confidence in number work. In all lessons it was clear that pupils' achievement in this area was good. Year 1 pupils easily recall addition and subtraction facts to 10, Year 4 pupils partition numbers and understand place value to 1000, whilst Year 6 pupils use known facts in order to multiply and divide decimal numbers mentally.
95. Pupils make good, if uneven, progress in their understanding of shape, space and measure as they progress through the school. There is only limited evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 2 of progress in this aspect of mathematics. It is evident from the work of older pupils that, by Year 6, most are able to measure and construct obtuse, acute and right-angled triangles and measure angles to the nearest degree. Nearly all know the angle sum of a triangle and that of angles at a point and most have a good understanding of symmetry. Whilst lower-attaining pupils find the area of shapes by simple methods, most pupils are capable of using a formula to find the area of a rectangle.
96. Pupils learn to handle data effectively in a variety of situations so that, by Year 5 most pupils understand terms such as *mode* and *mean* and construct and interpret simple line graphs. Year 6 pupils use ICT well to interpret graphs and diagrams and draw conclusions. Most pupils in this age group understand simple probability and are able to represent data in frequency diagrams.
97. A common element of pupils' work in mathematics is the usually good standard of presentation and the good use of marking to aid and reinforce learning in most classes. Pupils display very good attitudes to the subject and they enjoy their mathematics lessons. This is, in many ways, a reflection of the interesting ways many lessons are taught.
98. The standard of teaching in the lessons ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall. Planning always catered for the needs of different abilities of pupils; expectations were usually high and lessons suitably challenging. When teaching was very good, the pace of lessons was brisk and teachers used a variety of interesting strategies to develop understanding and to assess learning. In a Year 1 lesson the teacher used adult helpers well as '*Mrs Tens*' and '*Mr Units*' to aid learning of what each digit in a number represented. All the elements of very good teaching were present in a very well-taught Year 2 lesson on symmetry. Planning was very detailed and the content of the briskly paced session was well linked to the previous experiences and knowledge of pupils. The class teacher structured the session very well and her introduction was very clear. This helped pupils to understand both the content of the lesson and the nature of the tasks they were about to undertake. Very good use was made of the effective teaching assistant to help those pupils who needed support and the teacher used the discussion period at the end of the lesson very well to ensure objectives had been achieved and to reinforce learning.
99. When teaching was less successful, the pace of lessons was slower, teaching assistants were not always used to support learning throughout the lessons and the discussion periods at the end of lessons were not always used to assess or reinforce learning.

100. Resources for teaching mathematics are good overall, although resources to link mathematics to ICT are more limited. The resources the school presently has are well managed and easily accessed and cover all aspects of the National Curriculum programme of study. Many are stored centrally but resources for younger pupils are kept in classrooms. Some of the more popular ones are very well used and are beginning to look their age.
101. The use of ICT to support the teaching of mathematics varies between classes and this is an area for future development. Although the school has programs to aid the development of some areas of mathematics, such as *'Maths Invaders'*, resources to adequately cover other aspects of the subject are still developing.

SCIENCE

102. Standards in science are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Taking into account the slightly lower-than-average starting point, this represents good achievement by pupils throughout the school. The results of the national tests taken last year support this view. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 showed pupils' attainment to be broadly average, while in the tests taken at the end of Year 6, pupils achieved above, or in the case of the higher level (Level 5), well-above national averages. Differences are reflected in the overall abilities of the two Year 6 cohorts involved.
103. When learning about light sources, pupils in Year 1 are being challenged to say what they think will happen, for instance, when predicting which materials will allow light to shine through. By Year 2, they are developing this skill through their studies of electrical circuits and most are able to say which circuits will cause a bulb to light and which will not. By the end of the year, they are able to sort living things into groups or sort materials using terms such as hard, shiny or bendy. They are learning that some materials occur naturally and some do not, and the more able can explain that some natural materials are changed, for instance, the shaping of a piece of wood to make it suitable for a specific purpose. They are able to use simple scientific language to describe their observations, and record using simple tables or diagrams.
104. By Year 6, most understand how to devise a fair test to answer a question in their own investigations. They are used to making predictions and presenting results clearly through tables or graphs. In a Year 6 lesson, all pupils were able to make sensible predictions about how different materials would react when mixed with water. The more able are beginning to make connections to previous scientific learning, for instance, when suggesting that evaporation could be used to separate the salt from a solution. By the end of the year, most are able to classify living things and describe their likely habitats. They can describe the properties of solids, liquids and gases, and talk about forces such as gravitation or magnetism. In one lesson observed, many of the pupils were able to talk with confidence about molecules being packed closely together in a solid and being, as one pupil put it, 'out of control' in a gas.
105. The youngest pupils are encouraged to talk about the world around them and to record their observations clearly. The very good behaviour observed in nearly all lessons and the good relationships fostered within the classroom enable pupils to discuss their findings in a calm and confident way. Even the youngest pupils are encouraged to discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups, so everyone has a chance to contribute. This is important in enabling all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. The frequent opportunities for co-operative work and, as the pupils get older, independence and initiative, give pupils confidence and contribute very well to their personal development.
106. Teaching in the subject is good and often very good. In most lessons there is an effective review of previous learning and objectives are made clear. The most effective lessons are where the teachers are confident in their own subject knowledge so that questions can be answered clearly using appropriate scientific language. Class management is invariably very good and class routines well established so that pupils can carry out investigations without fuss and no time is wasted. In the calm and ordered atmosphere, pupils are able to learn well because they are not

distracted by any inappropriate behaviour or excessive noise. Teachers have very high expectations, both for behaviour and the standard of pupils' work. By the time pupils reach the top end of the school, they are all able to record their observations or findings in a neat and ordered way, using a layout appropriate for the task. The subject is very effective in promoting the literacy skills of speaking, listening and writing and also makes a sound contribution to the development of mathematical and information and communication technology skills.

107. The headteacher, who is acting co-ordinator at present, has introduced a review and assessment sheet to be used by teachers at the end of each unit of work. As this system is established, it should enable the tracking of pupils' skills and knowledge to be more effective than it is at present. Where pupils in Years 3 and 4 are working on the same topic, it is sometimes difficult to see how those in Year 4 are building on the skills learned in Year 3, and the same can sometimes be said of Years 5 and 6. A start should be made on a portfolio of pupils' work so that teachers can become more confident about what can be expected from each year group, even when they are studying the same topic.
108. There is room for improvement in the way the school environment is exploited to enhance pupils' learning. There are plans to improve the school grounds, and pupils are being effectively involved in the planning process, and it is important that the impact on the science curriculum is carefully considered. It is hoped too that an area of local woodland will be improved sufficiently to make it safe for environmental science. The adoption of a nationally approved scheme of work has ensured consistent coverage of the science curriculum, but work remains to be done on adapting this scheme for school use. Whilst the monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom is satisfactory, further opportunities are needed in order to make sure that the very good practice evident in some classrooms is more consistent throughout the school.

ART AND DESIGN

109. Attainment in art and design is in line with expectations for pupils at age seven and 11. The school has managed to keep art and design going through the amalgamation phase at a time when the subject would not have been a priority.
110. Pupils are being given a suitable curriculum based the school's interpretation of a nationally approved scheme of work. The school is beginning to make use of the display of art but this is restricted by virtue of the limited volume produced to date. Pupils have sketchbooks and they are beginning to use them but there is need to make the sketchbook more central so that it can act as a diary for items of interest right across the curriculum. It will, as it continues through the school with the pupil, also serve as a record of work and provide good evidence of progress.
111. Pupils in Year 1 responded well to a lesson that was designed to build on work they had done on colour mixing as they looked at how patterns worked in book illustrations. There were good opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills and for developing specific vocabulary such as "swirls". The lesson was well planned and allowed for the maximum impact to be gained from two classroom assistants. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 used what they had learned about the life and work of Braque and Matisse in producing a collage in Braque's style. The lesson was well planned and very well resourced. This meant that the teacher was able to give a clear exposition and pupils were quickly able to begin work on the task. Due attention was paid to health and safety issues and the very good range of materials that was available to be applied ensured that, although not completed, very good progress was made. Pupils' work does not currently show that, for example, in observational drawing they are systematically building on previous skills and knowledge.
112. Systems of assessment are currently unsatisfactory. This is due in part to the fact that there is no permanent co-ordinator for the subject. As a result, the teaching of the subject and monitoring of its procedures are not undertaken. There is no portfolio of work and consequently teachers are left to decide standards for themselves. The school's strategic development plan makes provision for the development of the role of the co-ordinator and this is an appropriate objective.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

113. It was only possible to see a limited number of lessons in design and technology during the period of the inspection. Evidence from these, together with available evidence from both a scrutiny of pupils' work in design and technology and discussions with older pupils, confirmed that standards of attainment are presently comparable with national expectations in both Year 2 and in Year 6. The overall achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory in all year groups even though younger pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to build up skills and expertise in working with suitable tools and materials. This was apparent in a lesson where the limited sewing skills displayed by Year 2 pupils led to some struggling to even complete, in part, the simple tasks they were engaged in.
114. Overall, however, though, pupils enjoy design and technology and have developed very good attitudes towards the subject. They work well and help each other when necessary. Year 2 pupils talked enthusiastically about what they were doing and explained how to thread needles during a well-structured session on designing and making glove puppets. Year 3 pupils displayed a sense of pride in what they achieved and were eager to show others the pop-up cards they had designed and made.
115. Year 6 pupils had constructed working models of fairground equipment, some powered by electric motors, and these contained evidence of working with accuracy from plans whilst using a suitable range of tools, materials and components and paying attention to functional qualities. Many models were of good quality and there was evidence of the use of good evaluation techniques.
116. The quality of teaching of design and technology was satisfactory overall. It is good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Planning was effective, resources were used well and pupils displayed interest, concentration and independence whilst working but, as stated previously, the level of challenge was too high for some pupils because of limited skill development in handling a range of tools and this adversely affected their achievement.
117. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject in a satisfactory manner. Even though staff have not received recent in-service training in teaching design and technology, most have a satisfactory understanding of the subject and have the confidence to teach it. Assessment, however, is only carried out on an *informal* basis and is not used to update planning, as there are presently no whole-school arrangements for assessing or recording pupils' work in a meaningful way. Monitoring of subject delivery is still embryonic and the co-ordinator has therefore only limited means of assessing standards in the subject. The school is aware that this is an area for future development.
118. Resources for teaching design and technology are satisfactory overall and cover all areas of study associated with the National Curriculum but some of the more well used resources are now in need of replacement. Resources to link design and technology to ICT are very limited and this affects the breadth of the design and technology programme of study, especially that of older pupils. Because of this lack of suitable software and hardware, there was no evidence of, for example, pupils being given opportunities to develop their understanding and skills in computer-aided design. The development of links between ICT and design and technology therefore remains an area for improvement.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

119. Very little history was observed during the inspection because most classes were concentrating on geography during the current half term. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching for these subjects. However, evidence gained from observations of the lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work in both subjects and discussions with pupils and staff make it possible to say that standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6.

120. Pupils in Year 1 are beginning to demonstrate an understanding of the difference between the present and the past, for instance, when drawing pictures of themselves and writing captions to show how they have changed. In their work on different types of weather they are beginning to express opinions such as, 'My favourite weather is snowy because....' By Year 2, they are beginning to sequence events in history, for example, the way in which the events of the gunpowder plot unfolded, and to understand some of the reasons why people acted as they did. In geography, they are studying an imaginary island and confidently identifying features and symbols on a map such as paths, roads, houses and hills. The more able can express clear opinions about the types of transport that are common in Widnes but would be no good on the island.
121. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have been studying the Viking invasions. They are using a time line to place these events in a historical context, and are beginning to understand how different sorts of archaeological evidence can be used to find out about the past. They are looking at the school environment and devising ways in which it could be improved. During the previous term, their study on European countries involved interviewing a resident of France in order to find out more about life in a different country. In Years 5 and 6, they have been studying the more recent history of the 1950's. They are using different sources to gather evidence about the period, and debating the issues of the time such as the arguments for and against grammar schools. In geography too, they are looking at issues that affect people's lives, for example, whether a second Runcorn bridge should be built.
122. Pupils recording skills are above average. Work in books and on display shows a high level of skill in their ability to set out information using diagrams, tables and informative writing. In this way, the subjects make a particularly good contribution to the development of writing and presentational skills. ICT skills are also used, for instance, when using a computer program to plan a new layout for the infant playground, but there is room for more use of this kind of technology. Another good feature is the way pupils throughout the school are encouraged to express opinions, and the way in which their ideas are listened to and treated with respect. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were comparing the attitude of the Ancient Greeks towards women with attitudes today. All were able to contribute well to the discussion because the teacher created an atmosphere that was conducive to pupils expressing themselves with confidence. This kind of open discussion is helping to make pupils more aware of social and cultural issues.
123. Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are very good. Classroom assistants are used well to give support where necessary, and most teachers are very skilled at targeting questions at pupils of different abilities. The result is that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in all activities and are able to make sound progress.
124. There is no system in place at present for assessing the development of historical and geographical skills through the school. The geography co-ordinator has made a start by collecting samples of work from each year group, but these have not been assessed according to National Curriculum levels. The curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is organised on a two-year cycle to take account of the mixed-age classes. Where two year groups are following the same unit of work, it is important that teachers' planning makes clear that there are higher expectations for the older year or more able group. In this way, the skills and knowledge acquired in one year can be built on in the following year regardless of which particular unit the pupils are studying. The adoption of nationally approved schemes of work has ensured adequate coverage in both subjects, but more needs to be done to adapt the schemes to suit the needs of pupils in this school. Visits, such as the outing to the Runcorn Bridge, are used constructively, but these need to be built into the long-term planning so that all pupils gain maximum benefit. The role of the co-ordinators is currently unsatisfactory and needs to be developed to the point where their evaluation of the standards of teaching and learning can inform the school development plan, and ensure that specific areas of weakness are rigorously addressed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

125. Levels of attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) are comparable to those expected nationally for pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6. Achievement is satisfactory in all year groups and pupils enjoy using computers and most are confident when doing so. This reflects the overall good standard of teaching of the subject and the way pupils' understanding of ICT has been enhanced through the build-up of staff expertise. The school has also made good use of its very recently equipped ICT suite, which is well stocked with a range of up-to-date computers, peripheral equipment and relevant programs. In addition, pupils are usually encouraged to make good use of class-based computers in lessons and this has contributed to the build-up of good links between ICT and several other subject areas.
126. The school is now well resourced to teach most aspects of ICT but is still lacking the necessary equipment to provide meaningful opportunities for older pupils to increase their proficiency in the use of control technology. This limitation has been recognised by the school and the purchase of suitable equipment is included in current school developmental planning.
127. Even so, most aspects of the subject are delivered systematically and teachers are enthusiastic about teaching ICT. Pupils are given regular opportunities to gradually build up their knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT in all classes and make satisfactory progress. Whilst Year 1 pupils learn that sounds can carry information, pupils in Year 3 work proficiently with databases and Year 6 pupils use word processing well, for instance, to write critiques of plays they have seen.
128. In all the lessons observed in the ICT suite, pupils were very enthusiastic about using computers. They worked well, both individually and in pairs, and always helped each other when necessary. The sense of achievement they felt when they completed various tasks was evident. In a Year 6 graphics lesson in which pupils achieved well, many were very reluctant to stop working at the end of the lesson "But Sir, I just want to..."
129. Pupils' enthusiasm in many ways reflects the standard of teaching of ICT observed during the inspection, which ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall, and was reflected in pupils' achievement. When teaching was very good, planning was effective, objectives clearly stated and lessons briskly paced. All these elements of good teaching were evident in a very well taught Year 3 lesson in which pupils learned about 'fields' and 'files':
- Planning was detailed and contained opportunities for assessment;
 - Lesson delivery matched tasks to pupils' abilities and previous knowledge;
 - The lesson was well structured and briskly paced; and
 - The teacher's subject knowledge and pupil management was very good.
130. Good use was also made of the teaching assistant to support the learning of less able pupils and, as a result, all pupils made at least satisfactory progress. By the end of the session, lesson objectives had been reached, effective learning had taken place and the achievement of pupils reflected this.
131. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well and has worked hard to ensure that ICT has a high profile, both within the school and also in current school improvement planning. Pupils' progress is usually assessed by teachers at the end of each unit of work or each term. The co-ordinator has still to be given the necessary role of monitoring subject planning and lesson delivery or assessing pupils' achievement and attainment on a whole-school basis, and this remains an area for future development.
132. Links between ICT and other subject areas, such as mathematics and art, vary from satisfactory to good, but meaningful links between ICT and design and technology have yet to be fully developed.

MUSIC

133. Standards in music are at the expected level for pupils aged seven and 11. The pupils are provided with a satisfactory curriculum and teachers and pupils benefit from the skills of a talented musical co-ordinator. A particular strength is the quality and range of singing that was seen in pupils in the junior phase.
134. An assembly for younger pupils and children in the reception class showed that they sang well with guitar accompaniment and that they knew a good selection of hymns and songs. The pupils were attentive and enjoyed singing, which they extended to their journey back to the class.
135. Year 2 pupils made good progress in a lesson in which they looked at the suitability of instruments when choosing to make long or short sounds. They also did well to compose short sequences with a partner. Pupils in Year 3 were given a clear understanding of how two phrases can be linked with a bridge. They listened attentively to their own work being played back and clearly enjoyed the experience. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 also made good progress in developing their knowledge of musical patterns – how some are cyclic and others are not. They had opportunities to give their opinions about music they were hearing but were not always able to explain clearly how they felt.
136. The teaching is generally good and this is due in part to the input of the co-ordinator. Lessons are well planned and pupils are given opportunities to be creative. There is also the advantage that comes from having accomplished musicians on the staff. A singing practice for the older pupils was very well conducted. Pupils were led through a series of warm-up exercises and left in no doubt that what was being asked of them in terms of range was attainable. The influence and benefit of having an accomplished school choir was also evident at this time. Teaching also makes use, through its choice of adventurous material, of opportunities to develop pupils' cultural and multicultural awareness. Weaknesses become apparent when the teacher is sticking closely to a good lesson plan but does not have the experience to support work with the appropriate vocabulary or to cause pupils to reflect on their performances and improve them. Relationships with the pupils are very good and they respond very well in return.
137. The subject is supported well in a limited way by the co-ordinator, who is a talented musician. At present, there is not a suitable system for assessing progress. The co-ordinator is not in a position to monitor teaching and learning and so has no real knowledge of standards in other classes. The school's strategic plan allows for the extension and development of the role of the co-ordinator and this is an appropriate objective. The subject is well resourced and makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural and multicultural awareness, as well as contributing well to their spiritual, moral and social development. The school makes satisfactory use of aspects of information and communication technology in teaching music and because of the generally good quality of teaching, pupils of differing abilities and those who have special needs are all able to make the same rates of progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138. In the lessons seen during the inspection, standards were above those expected nationally for pupils aged seven and broadly in line with expectations for pupils aged 11. In the two lessons seen in Years 5 and 6, pupils were being taught rugby skills. All four lessons in Years 1 to 4 related to dance. School teams take part in a number of local competitions and achieve very well, winning trophies for netball, football and cricket.
139. Good and very good teaching of dance for pupils aged six and seven led to above-average attainment in this aspect. Teachers' high expectations ensured good responses from the pupils. Pupils in Year 1 showed they could move to music like characters in 'Sleeping Beauty', repeating their attempts until performance improved. Year 2 pupils continued a series of country dancing lessons. They had learned how to clap to beats of eight, do right and left hand turns, promenade, and two handshakes. They discussed, in pairs, making a sequence of three moves, counting to eight before changing the action. Most of the pupils achieved this successfully, sometimes using

imaginative moves rather than those learned originally, indicating attainment above expectations in this aspect. In the dance lessons seen in Years 3 and 4, the standards achieved were broadly average. In these lessons, pupils were improvising movements to music, following the beat and mood. Although the teaching was satisfactory overall in these lessons, there was a too ready acceptance of mediocre or poor performance from pupils who were capable of better.

140. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were learning the skills required to play rugby, using the playground because the field was extremely wet. Some of the pupils learn to play rugby with local clubs; in a very good lesson, the teacher used pupils' skills well to demonstrate passing the ball in various ways, and other moves, to others. These more advanced pupils had extension activities to perform while the rest of the class practised more basic techniques, a good example of teaching according to need. With the exception of the club rugby players, the standards attained were similar to those expected nationally for this age group. All pupils work safely alone, in pairs and in groups. They co-operate well with each other and usually try hard to refine performance, with good effect.
141. At the time of the inspection there was no provision for swimming. This is because the local pool was closed last term, without notice, for health and safety reasons. The school is concerned that a few pupils in Year 6 are unable to swim the expected 25 metres with confidence, and will not have the opportunity to learn under the school's auspices before they move to secondary school. The pool the school used previously was adequate for teaching pupils in the early stages of learning to swim but was too shallow to accommodate provision for higher awards.
142. The school has a long-term curriculum plan for year groups to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study for physical education. The time allocation to the different aspects of the subject is clearly identified and teachers make use of nationally recognised guidance in planning their lessons. Progression in skills is, therefore, built into the school's provision.
143. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum, with the exception of the lack of access to a swimming pool. So far it has not been possible to find an alternative facility so the school does not currently meet the requirement to teach swimming. The playground areas are of an adequate size for PE lessons and they are level. They are, however, in need of re-marking. There is a good-sized field. Good use has been made of the training and equipment provided by the Top Play and Top Sport initiatives. The school lacks storage space and so access to equipment is difficult.
144. The co-ordinator is a keen and committed PE specialist with the expertise to advise and do demonstration lessons. His leadership and management have led to considerable involvement by the school in the organisation of, and participation in, sports competitions in the local area. Most teachers are involved in extra-curricular sport in some way. School teams have done very well in leagues and tournaments, winning at football, netball and Kwik cricket, and participating to a high standard in cross country, swimming and rounders events. The co-ordinator monitors teaching occasionally but has not had the opportunity to do so in a systematic way; there is thus no plan for school improvement in PE at present.