

INSPECTION REPORT

DARNHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Winsford

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111133

Headteacher: Mr C Pritchard

Lead inspector: Mr A Giles

Dates of inspection: 28th June – 1st July 2004

Inspection number: 255950

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	294
School address:	Sandyhill Road Darnhall Winsford Cheshire
Postcode:	CW7 1JL
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Tipple
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Darnhall School has 294 full time pupils and 50 part time children in the nursery. It admits pupils from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and is located in a region recognised by the school and the Local Education Authority as an area of high family stress. Thirty per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above the national average. Forty one per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational needs. This figure is well above the national average. The school has a unit that caters for seven pupils who have statements for emotional and behavioural problems. The attainment of children entering into the main school is very variable. Many enter with delayed development and lower than expected abilities in speaking and listening and reading skills. A significant number have well below expected development in personal, social and emotional skills, writing and number awareness. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Gold Artsmark in recognition of the work it does in these areas. It received a Schools Achievement Award in 2001. It is a Beacon School and has worked with all the schools in the Winsford area developing inclusive learning practices, race awareness and the promotion of learning through the 'arts'.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17709	Mr Alan Giles	Lead inspector	Mathematics
			Science
			Physical education
			English as an additional language
17941	Mr Trevor Smith	Lay inspector	
32138	Mr Tim Plant	Team inspector	English
			History
			Geography
			Music
30834	Mrs Ann Lowson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage
			Art and design
			Design and technology
			Religious education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Darnhall Primary is a good school. It is a school that has a very good atmosphere for learning because staff are very well aware of the varied and diverse learning needs of all its pupils. Since the last inspection the school has developed an innovative, creative and very well enriched curriculum by which it delivers its vision and values. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Its commitment to the pastoral and learning needs of all pupils.
- The excellent arts provision that underpins many aspects of its work, including the standards attained in art and design that are well above those expected nationally.
- Good achievement by the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- Good teaching, although marking and homework are sometimes inconsistently used.
- Present standards are higher than recent years, but standards in Year 2 mathematics are too low and further challenges are needed to improve writing skills.
- Very good quality of education for pupils in the nursery and reception years, although outdoor provision for the reception class is not meeting children's needs as well as it should.
- Good overall leadership and management systems that would be improved by more consistent reviewing of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- Inconsistent emphasis placed on practical and investigative work in mathematics and science.
- Excellent communication with other schools that has created effective partnerships and linked provision.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. There have been very good improvements in the way the curriculum is planned in the Foundation Stage. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved and now match national expectations. The governing body report to parents and the school prospectus still have statutory omissions an issue raised at the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	D	E	E	C
mathematics	D	D	E	C
science	C	B	C	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

The achievement of pupils is good. Standards seen during the inspection in the Foundation Stage are above the expectations for their age in personal and social development, language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical and creative development. Present standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with those expected nationally. Standards are higher in reading and speaking and listening than in writing throughout the school. Present mathematical standards in Year 2 are below the national average.

Standards were lower in 2003. This is because there were a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs sitting the tests. The standards achieved by these pupils were satisfactory compared to similar schools and higher in science. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain standards in ICT and religious education that match national and local expectations. Pupils reach standards in art and design that are well above those typically found in both the infants and the

juniors. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, including their work in the unit, is good.

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Encouragement through the arts enables pupils to stimulate their own creativity and desire to learn. Curriculum experiences develop their independence and social skills very effectively. The provision that is made to help pupils understand other cultures is excellent, particularly through the well established links with Bopanang School in Soweto, South Africa. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good overall. Children benefit from very good teaching in the nursery and in both reception classes. Teacher's planning and very good knowledge encourage, stimulate and engage pupils in their learning very well. However, in the older classes, there is inconsistent use of marking and of homework, and pupils are not always given enough opportunity to develop their writing skills. Although teaching is good there is inconsistent emphasis placed on practical and investigative work in mathematics and science. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of all pupils, especially those with special educational needs. There is a very good breadth of curriculum opportunities. The curriculum is exciting and innovative. The school provides very well for the care and welfare of its pupils and has excellent partnerships with schools in the locality.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The very good leadership and vision provided by the headteacher has helped the school to further develop the inclusive policies that help and promote pupil's all round development. Ably supported by other leaders the headteacher has worked tirelessly to underpin children's learning through an innovative, exciting and creative arts provision. Management procedures are successful in monitoring the action plans that the school has prioritised, although further monitoring of teaching and pupils' work would improve the evaluation of their impact on standards. Although governance is satisfactory the governing body needs to further involve itself in the decision processes of the school in improving the quality of provision. Recent deficit budgets have provided barriers to learning but very good financial management procedures have limited the negative impact this has had on pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Both talk positively about the wide range of activities on offer and about the caring nature of staff. The school has identified listening to pupils' views as an area to develop. Although questionnaires report incidents of bad behaviour, inspection findings judge the behaviour of pupils to be very good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Develop a more consistent approach in mathematics and science in developing practical and investigative work to encourage pupils to think, explore and research for themselves.
- Improve standards of writing by creating more extended opportunities for pupils to write at length, to develop their use of descriptive language and improve handwriting and presentation of their work.
- Use homework more consistently throughout the school to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

And to meet statutory requirements

- Ensure that the annual report from governors and the prospectus includes all statutory items.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Since the last inspection test results for Year 2 pupils have been generally below the national average compared to all schools in English, with a stronger picture in reading than writing. Mathematics' results have been well below the national average at this age. English and mathematics results in Year 6 test have had a similar profile of results during the same period. Science results at this age have been in line or above the national average. The rate of improvement in school's results has been below that of the national trend at both ages since the last inspection. The trend of results show standards in comparison to similar schools to be satisfactory in English and mathematics and very good in science. The same trend shows standards in mathematics at Year 2 to be unsatisfactory compared with similar schools. Pupils are able to achieve well in the special needs unit through the effective support that they are given. These pupils achieve well in mathematics and science but less well in English where their lack of confidence to write hampers progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement in science compared to similar schools.
- Present standards in English and mathematics (Year 6) are in line with those expected for all schools nationally. This represents good achievement.
- Writing standards have been the weakest area within English and in Year 6 are still below those expected.
- Insufficient emphasis on practical and investigative work in mathematics and science.
- Mathematical achievement in Year 2 is still below that expected.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.1 (15.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.5 (14.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.8 (15.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 33 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.8 (25.7)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.2 (26.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.0 (29.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 47 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Commentary

1 Since the last inspection the test results for Year 2 pupils show standards that range from below average to average in reading and writing compared to all schools nationally. During the same period standards in mathematics have generally been well below the national averages. In comparison to similar schools, especially considering the socio-economic context of the school and the low to very low attainment on entry to the school, achievement has been satisfactory in reading and writing. Using the same comparisons achievement in mathematics has been unsatisfactory. These levels of achievement remained the same in 2003 in spite of standards being lower due to a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, sitting the tests.

Since the last inspection Year 6 standards in English and mathematics have generally been below the national average. In science they have been in line or above. Although the overall levels of improvement at this age are slightly lower than the national figures, pupils are making at least satisfactory progress compared to their achievements in their Year 2 tests.

2 On entry to the reception classes children have skills that are below those expected and they are well below in key areas such as in speaking and listening and calculation skills. The majority of children now reach standards above the expectations for their age in personal and social development, language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical and creative development, particularly in their musical ability. All children achieve very well in these areas of learning. Most children reach the standards expected for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world and in physical development. They achieve well in these areas. Achievement in physical development in the reception classes is not as good because children do not have regular access to a stimulating outdoors area.

3 Standards of reading and speaking and listening are in line with those expected in Year 2. Year 6 standards in English are also in line with those expected nationally. English skills, knowledge and understanding are enhanced considerably by links to the creative arts. Visits by performance artists to school encourage pupils to develop a wide range of literacy skills. Theatre visits enthuse pupils to write their own poetry and play scripts. There are also many planned opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening through discussion and drama. In both Years 2 and 6 writing standards are below those expected. The school recognises the need for more extended opportunities for pupils to write at length, to develop their use of descriptive language and improve handwriting and presentation of their work.

4 Present standards in mathematics are below those expected in Year 2, although pupils are making satisfactory progress in relation to the poor calculating and counting skills that many have on entry to full-time education. Present standards in Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally, a significant improvement on recent results. The majority of these pupils have made satisfactory progress using the indications from their national test results in 2000. Recent test results also show an increase in the number of pupils who achieve the higher national curriculum levels compared to the last three years. Inspection findings agree with the school development plan that has identified the need to further develop mathematical understanding by the promotion of thinking and problem solving skills. Inconsistency of challenge in this area is preventing a small number of pupils, who showed potential to make above expected progress in Year 2, from attaining the higher National Curriculum levels in their Year 6 tests.

5 In Year 6 standards in science are in line with those expected nationally. Work shows a sound understanding of scientific vocabulary and the majority of pupils have very good observational skills and record details, for example, parts of the human skeleton and plant life, very well. Standards would be higher if the older pupils were more involved in a range of experiments, especially planning, interpreting and recording their findings. The writing-up of their findings is a particular weakness.

6 Pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain standards in ICT that match national expectations. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The improvement is due to the increasing opportunities to use ICT within the curriculum and staff training which has led to increasing levels of competence and confidence. Standards of attainment in religious education remain in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. An improvement is the way key elements of major world faiths are learnt and understood through effective links with other subjects. Creative work improves understanding. Pupils explore and design mehndi hand paintings to extend their cultural awareness, dress up in beautiful silk saris and write about how this makes them feel.

7 Pupils reach standards in art and design that are well above those typically found in both the infants and the juniors and they have very good knowledge of the work of famous artists. They can knowledgeably compare their painting styles and mix colours to simulate the designs.

8 The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. They are supported well by teachers, teaching assistants and external support that ensure that these pupils make good progress. Many reach the expected level of attainment of all pupils by the end of Year 6.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils’ personal development is very good. The majority of pupils’ have very good attitudes to learning. Pupils’ behaviour is very good. Their attendance is satisfactory and their punctuality is good. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils’ awareness of multi-cultural issues is excellent.
- Drama and role-play are used very well to develop pupils’ confidence, self-esteem and personal responsibilities.
- Unauthorised attendance is higher than the national figure.
- Pupils’ views on their learning are not regularly sought.

Commentary

9 Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards school and parents strongly endorse the view that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils work and play together very well. In the playground they are no signs of unacceptable conduct. A small number of incidents of over-boisterous behaviour are dealt with effectively. Pupils move around the buildings sensibly and they are knowledgeable about routines. If pupils do misbehave they are given an opportunity to explain themselves and to understand the consequences of their actions. Relationships are very good and everyone helps each other to take a full part in the life and work of the school and to do their best.

10 The school has identified listening to pupils’ views as an area to develop. At the moment there are no formal structures, for example, a school council, to allow pupils to express their views and opinions about how the school is run. However, pupils are often given a chance to talk through issues of common interest with others in their classes. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given opportunities to take responsibility in other ways such as, acting as ‘buddies’ at the beginning of the Autumn Term when younger pupils move into Year 3. They did much of the work to organise the harvest festival and many have had significant roles and responsibilities in the recent Arts Festival. Pupils’ self esteem and learning skills are developed well because teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to provide a positive climate for pupils with special educational needs. The efforts of these pupils are praised and they respond well and their confidence grows.

11 The attendance rate is broadly in-line with the national average nationally. Unauthorised absence is above the national average. Absence patterns for these and other pupils are noted as cause for concern and followed-up, but not on a day to day basis.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94.1%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9	School data	1.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	289	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Information not obtained	1	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Exclusions

12 There have been no exclusions in the last school year.

13 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school provides many first hand experiences that allow pupils to meet and work with performance artists and others to stimulate their own creativity and desire to learn. From an early age pupils are encouraged to 'perform', in its widest sense, from reading out a piece of work to taking part in a school production. This has a positive impact on their self-confidence and belief in themselves as individuals. There is a strong moral code and pupils know what is expected of them. They recognise that there are rules, many unstated, to be followed, and they respond to these arrangements very well. Residential visits, for all of the pupils in school, enrich their curriculum experiences and develop their independence and social skills very effectively. The provision that is made for everyone in school to know and understand other cultures is excellent, particularly through the well established links with a school in South Africa. Local fundraising enabled teachers and pupils from Bopanang School, Soweto to come to England to forge personal friendships and promote understanding of what it is really like to live in a South African township. Music and dance workshops were also used to great effect during their recent visit to England, culminating in an impressive performance involving pupils from all of the schools in Winsford.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment of pupils' work is good. The curriculum is very good. Pupils are very well cared for and the school has established excellent links with other schools.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good. Pupils learn well. The quality of assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in the Foundation Stage.
- Teachers encourage and engage pupils in their learning very well.
- A stronger emphasis is needed on practical and investigative work in mathematics and science.
- Inconsistent use of marking to make pupils aware of their achievements and next stage targets.
- The use of a wide range of resources successfully engages pupils in their learning.
- Inconsistent use of homework to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	7	14	6	1	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Commentary

14 The quality of teaching is good overall. There are major strengths in the way teachers encourage, stimulate and challenge their pupils. They are especially innovative in using the arts and other creative mediums to make work more interesting. In addition they deliver lessons that benefit from well planned activities enhanced both by a range of visitors to the school and by the way the local environment is used to stimulate learning. Many opportunities are given to pupils to experiment and explore in their art, literacy, drama and musical learning. This results in a confidence to try new ideas and to explain their ideas. As a result speaking, listening and thinking skills are developed very well from a low start. In mathematics and science there is less emphasis placed on practical and investigative work and further encouragement is needed to give pupils time to explore and research for themselves. Work in books show inconsistent examples of tasks that require pupils to use thinking skills by learning through problem solving.

15 All children benefit from very good teaching in the nursery and in both reception classes. A strength of teaching is the quality of planning, which is very good, and teachers' very good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Liaison with learning support staff is very good and they make a positive contribution to the overall achievement of the children. Throughout the school teachers' planning for pupils with special educational needs is good. They use support effectively to ensure that pupils listen and respond well in lessons. The effective teaching of basic skills ensures that pupils make good progress. Teaching shows a good knowledge of the needs of pupils in the unit and behaviour is effectively managed. Lessons are well planned for the wide range of age and ability in the class. There are individually planned learning opportunities as well as shared opportunities for pupils to work together on topics. The teacher provides effective support to pupils when they return to mainstream classes. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed in relation to their individual education plans in English and mathematics but not in enough detail in other subjects.

16 In almost all lessons there is a positive atmosphere for learning. The strengths in science teaching can be linked to a very good Year 3 lesson where pupils of all abilities record growth patterns of plants and describe how a test remains fair when you change and compare growing conditions. Similar very positive responses were seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils designed and cut the nets of shapes to calculate their areas. In a Year 6 English lesson based on an African legend the teacher effectively demonstrated the impact sound effects can have in radio and television plays so that pupils could then use these in their own work. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have the unique opportunity to have visits from a Jewish headmaster and two of his pupils, who show pupils how Jews celebrate Shabbat. Pupils listen respectfully to songs and chants in Hebrew and they share the Shabbat bread with the Jewish pupils. All these examples show how creatively teachers plan promoting skills from more than one subject and how pupils respond positively to these ideas. Further opportunities are needed for pupils to write at length about these experiences. There is a need to further develop pupils' use of descriptive language and to improve their handwriting and the presentation of their work. Opportunities are also missed to consistently extend their learning by the use of appropriate homework.

17 Overall assessment procedures are good. Individual targets for improvement are established in the core subjects and pupils are involved in helping to set their own targets. There are good procedures to track pupils' progress and each pupil has a record of achievement that includes samples of their work. Test results are carefully analysed to identify any patterns in strengths and weaknesses to inform the subject action plan. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent, with some good examples and some evidence of poor marking. As a result, pupils are

not consistently given enough guidance about what the next steps to learning are and what they need to do most to improve their work.

The curriculum

The school provides a very good curriculum, which is innovative and exciting. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment, through the school's use of visits and visitors, are very good. The provision for creative arts is excellent. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The school's accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is based on supporting all learning through the creative arts and this results in work that is often innovative and exciting.
- The Foundation Stage curriculum is very good and children benefit from a broad range of activities.
- Very good opportunities are provided for all pupils to have first-hand learning experiences through a rich programme of visits and visitors.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- Resources for ICT have not kept up with new initiatives and are barely satisfactory.
- Outdoor provision for the reception class is not meeting children's needs as well as it should.

Commentary

18 Teachers and learning support staff plan together to provide a curriculum based on supporting pupils learning through the creative arts. This has not been an easy task, because the major challenge for the school has been to ensure that key skills within each subject are taught in sufficient depth. Literacy and Numeracy are planned following national guidance and all pupils achieve well over time in these subjects. However, a knowledge and skills audit has been undertaken in all other subjects to ensure that when activities are planned over a term, pupils in mixed year groups are taught knowledge and skills progressively. This does need to be rigorously monitored, but inspection evidence indicates that the school provides a very broad, balanced curriculum and in some subjects, such as in art and design, outstanding opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their creativity. The curriculum for ICT, which did not meet requirements at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. The quality of display throughout the school gives clear evidence that pupils benefit from a curriculum that gives them many unique opportunities to develop their artistic and creative skills.

19 In the Foundation Stage, children benefit from a very good variety of experiences that are very well planned and organised. The inside accommodation and learning resources are good for younger children in the school, although the outdoors accommodation is uninspiring and is currently under-developed. There have been very good improvements in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection and children get a good start to their education.

20 What the school does very well and what is a key feature of its work, is to work with other local schools, a range of theatre groups, local and national artists and musicians to provide all pupils with learning opportunities that challenge and inspire them. The school works extensively with groups and individuals to develop pupils' understanding and skills in art and design, music, dance, poetry, story telling and creative writing. The school has been awarded local and national awards for its innovative work in the creative arts. Recently, pupils have worked with seventeen local schools and teachers, pupils and artists from Soweto in South Africa to study multicultural dance, story telling and drumming, culminating in a community performance. Pupils' appreciation of multicultural influences on the arts is impressive.

21 The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, health and social education. Personal and social education is developed extensively by the school's commitment to providing opportunities for all pupils and staff to take part in residential visits from Year 1 onwards. Staff and pupils show mutual respect and relationships are very positive. Personal responsibility develops

well as pupils have many opportunities to work on shared tasks with pupils with special educational needs and by doing so, learn to appreciate their unique talents. The school provides its own health and sex educational programme because staff feel that they know their pupils well enough to do this. Drugs and alcohol programmes are taught with assistance from local community police and local theatre groups, so pupils learn to consider the impact of their choices. The curriculum effectively supports the learning of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems who are based in the unit. This support enables these pupils to integrate well into the mainstream of the school for many lessons. When these arrangements happen the pupils display a high level of interest and motivation.

22 There are sufficient teaching and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is very good liaison between all staff, and this has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Learning resources are satisfactory in most subjects and they are good in art and design. However, in lessons, teachers use learning resources very well and make the very best use of what they have. This is a very positive feature of many lessons and supports learning well. Resources are barely satisfactory in ICT. In subjects such as mathematics and science achievement would be further improved by additional software that challenges and deepens understanding. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and it is better inside the school than outside. In both the junior and infant school, the outdoors accommodation lacks interest because it is generally dull and uninspiring and is a stark contrast to the vibrancy of classrooms and corridors.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for pupils very well. It provides good guidance and support. The involvement of pupils in the work of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good work of the school and other agencies to ensure that the highest level of care and support for all pupils is maintained.
- The school has yet to fully explore how it can seek the views of pupils about future developments of the school.
- Very good health and safety features.
- Information and guidance for pupils on academic targets as they move through the school is underdeveloped.

Commentary

23 The school has successfully maintained its very good ethos for support and learning since the last inspection. The very good relationships between pupils and adults underpin an atmosphere of trust and pupils know that they are valued and cared for. This is because teachers are very committed to the needs of all individuals. They plan many activities that embrace personal, social, citizenship and health education. Pupils' learning is often connected to the arts, race awareness, festivals and a wide breadth of festivals and cultural traditions. As a result they become curious and imaginative and have a strong understanding of other beliefs and the consequences of their actions. Much work is done to promote healthy lifestyles in subjects and whole-school risk assessments are indicative of the very good health and safety features of the school.

24 The school offers a very good standard of care for all its pupils. It recognises the essential role of monitoring children's progress beyond the academic to the personal and social, although guidance for pupils in targets setting is not yet systematic. There are very good induction procedures for those children entering the nursery. The school is very aware of the many problems of individual families. Its work with outside agencies in dealing with these issues is both extensive and necessary. Although teachers have access to extensive monitoring records there is still further scope to analyse the academic progress being made by pupils to evaluate whether their achievements could be improved.

25 The school has successfully developed a reputation for the support and learning of pupils with special educational needs. The support given to pupils in the Emotional and Behavioural Unit enables these pupils to integrate well into the main school for many lessons. Pupils have well constructed individual education plans that are regularly reviewed and evaluated.

26 Pupils feel very well involved in the extensive creative elements of the school. In their questionnaires they state they enjoy the variation in their work. They also confirm that there is always an adult they can go to for advice. The school recognises not enough is done to formally listen to the views of pupils on decisions that affect their learning and on the future developments of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Links with other schools are excellent. There are also very good links with the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 'Beacon School' partnership with all local schools produces excellent linked provision and impacts very positively on pupils' learning.
- Some information for parents does not meet statutory regulations.
- Some good examples of parents sharing in their children's learning, although not enough information to help the parents of pupils following individual education plans.
- Homework is not used consistently throughout the school to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

Commentary

27 The school shares many of its innovatory practices with parents. Curriculum information is provided regularly in each year group and detailed information is given to parents of new starters. Parents give good support to school activities, such as plays, social gatherings, class assemblies and parents' evenings. There is very good liaison with parents of pre-school children to help develop basic skills in speaking and listening. This also helps parents develop an understanding of how to help their children learn at home. As well as home visits there is a teacher responsible for consulting with parents about the teaching of key skills and areas of personal development. Pupils' end-of-year reports are clear and informative and suitable targets are woven into the scripts as considered necessary. Some parents feel that not enough homework is given to their children. Inspection findings concur with this and find that not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to extend their experiences and learning by more consistently completing regular and appropriate homework.

28 The school is heavily involved with all other Winsford schools through its Beacon School Status and as a member of the Winsford Learning Network. During the week of the inspection 17 local schools joined at Darnhall for an afternoon of drama and multi-cultural music. This was a culmination of many years work in sharing expertise of learning through the arts, race awareness and multi-cultural education. They were accompanied by staff and children from Bopanang School in Soweto. Teachers and pupils maintain regular contact and exchanges with this school. Extensive use is made of agencies and experts outside of school to enhance pupils' learning. A wide range of theatre groups, local and national artists and musicians provide all pupils with learning opportunities that challenge and inspire them. The school works extensively with groups and individuals to develop pupils' understanding and skills in art and design, music, dance, poetry, story telling and creative writing.

29 The school acts as an important resource in catering for the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems from other schools in the Local Education Authority. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have positive views on the way in which the school meets the needs of these pupils. Individual education plans are shared with parents though there is not enough information provided on the way in which parents can best help pupils at home.

30 The governors' annual report for parents has many omissions or statements which are too brief. This was an issue raised at the last inspection. The prospectus does not meet requirements, specifically because it wrongly states that parents can withdraw their children from assembly. There is no national standards assessment test data provided for parents, again an issue raised at the last inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The leadership of the key staff is good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The school is dealing with aids or barriers to learning very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent inclusive policies that successfully promote pupils' all round abilities.
- Very good vision and direction by the headteacher.
- Although governance is satisfactory, the governing body is not yet sufficiently auditing the quality of provision.
- School and subject development planning have identified relevant priorities for future development.
- Management procedures are successful in establishing initiatives that improve standards.
- The reviewing of assessment records inconsistently feeds into practices that challenge all pupils to make maximum progress.
- Recent deficit budgets have resulted in diminishing resources and less access for additional training for teachers.
- The annual report from governors and the school prospectus does not include all statutory items.

Commentary

31 The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has allowed the school to further develop its mission and values since the last inspection. These include excellent inclusive policies that continue to lay the foundations for the very successful promotion of pupil's personal, social, emotional and cultural development. These are also reflected in the way all staff have worked tirelessly to underpin children's learning through an innovative, exciting and creative arts provision. The school has gained much from its Beacon School activities and partnerships with all the local schools. Teachers consistently share the outcomes of these experiences in proactive professional development. The senior management team and leaders of year groups are respected and good teamwork and working ethos is affecting change. Further monitoring of learning by key leaders is needed to make teaching and learning more effective to ensure that the highest possible standards and achievements are ensured, especially in English and mathematics.

32 Management structures within the school are good, although the information gathered on pupils' performances in the core subjects still needs further reviewing and action planning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the consistent way subject co-ordinators identify and evaluate the priorities in their areas. Regular meetings and quality assurance procedures in year groups is an important factor in the overall success of the curriculum. Recent developments in identifying and tracking key skills in all subject areas and the planning for cross-subject themes are very good examples of such procedures impacting positively on the achievements of pupils. Whole-school self-evaluation is good. For example the identification of the need to improve pupils' writing and the use of investigative work to improve understanding in mathematics and science is an integral part of the present development plan. Further extension of the monitoring of teaching and learning linked to assessment records would give further insights of the progress being made by pupils and to judge whether they are achieving as well as they can. The leadership and management of special educational needs in the school are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides good support to colleagues. The school is committed to providing an inclusive ethos and there are very positive expectations that all pupils will make good progress.

33 The governance of the school is satisfactory. The governing body is well informed about how the school is performing and have developed policies that reflect the individual character of the school. However, the influences it has on the strategic development of the school in terms of raising standards are underdeveloped although it has supported the school very well with budgetary advice. There are also some statutory issues within the prospectus and the governors annual report that have still to be resolved.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	921,554	Balance from previous year	97,098
Total expenditure	860,514	Balance carried forward to the next	61,040
Expenditure per pupil	1890		

34 The school has very good systems for managing its finances. The finance officer has devised systems for the varying daily financial and administrative demands and also deals very efficiently with the day-to-day correspondence and visitors. These systems enable the headteacher and governors to have a very good understanding of the school's financial position and the way in which the school identifies financial priorities. Budget figures, including carry-over amounts, historically have been carefully considered in the light of falling rolls. The 2002-2003 budget was set, with the local authority auditor's approval, with a carry-over of approximately £61,000 to maintain staffing levels. Within a short period of time the school was informed that the budget was in effect a £180,000 deficit. The reasons for the discrepancies have never been fully established. However, since this period the school has established a rigorous policy of best value practices and have all but eliminated the full deficit. The impact on pupils' learning has been minimal but resources in some areas are now barely satisfactory and teachers have had less access to professional development courses than in previous years. The school provides good value for money when the educational provision and pupils' levels of achievement are set against the financial circumstances in which the school operates.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

39 The school makes very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Since the previous inspection, there have been very good improvements in the way the curriculum is planned, the quality of teaching and the standards reached by most children. The outdoors accommodation is now better than it was, particularly for the nursery children. However, for reception children it is adequate but uninspiring and does little to promote the development of physical skills through imaginative activities.

40 The majority of children now reach standards above the expectations for their age in personal and social development, language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical and creative development, (particularly in their musical ability). All children achieve very well in these areas of learning. When children enter the school, they have skills that are below those expected and they are well below in key areas such as in speaking and listening and calculation skills. The school is taking a very positive approach in tackling these weaknesses by working very closely with parents. Most children reach the standards expected for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world and in physical development. They achieve well in these areas. Achievement in physical development is held back because children do not have regular access to a stimulating outdoors area.

41 All children benefit from very good teaching in the nursery and in both reception classes. A strength of teaching is the quality of planning, which is very good, and teachers' very good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Liaison with learning support staff is very good and they make a positive contribution to the overall achievement of the children. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well. A very good feature of leadership has been the very positive collaboration between staff in Year 1 to ensure that in the final term of the reception year, all children benefit from a challenging curriculum. This is having a very positive effect on how well they are achieving. The co-ordinator has ensured that children have a smooth progression of work as they move into Year 1. Resources for the Foundation Stage curriculum are good and teachers use them very well. The accommodation is good overall.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given very good opportunities to work with others and act responsibly.
- Rules and routines are few, but children are encouraged to be considerate to others in all they do.

Commentary

42 This area of learning is taught very well and by the time they leave the reception class, most children are likely to reach standards above those expected for their age. In the nursery, children learn that there needs to be agreed values and codes of behaviour to enable them to work with others. This is taught skilfully through play, so children soon learn how to share resources and large toys with others. Older children in the reception classes are given many opportunities to take part in activities with other children. This ensures that they learn good social skills and develop very good relationships. Children persevere when given challenging tasks and are not afraid to ask other children to help them. Boys and girls often work together in mixed pairs and establish positive relationships with each other. Children are encouraged to be considerate in tidying away activities and leaving things ready for others and they do this well.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective strategies are in place to tackle weaknesses in speaking and listening skills.
- Resources are used very well to encourage children to write for a purpose.
- Lessons are planned to provide further challenging activities that build on what children already know and can do.

Commentary

43 Most children are likely to reach standards above the expectations for their age and they achieve very well from a low starting point on entry to school. Teaching is very good throughout the Foundation Stage. In the nursery, children are constantly engaged in conversation to extend their language development. Very positive relationships mean that children happily chat to adults and other children. The nursery teacher uses the children's natural curiosity in things new to them to extend their vocabulary, for example, she shows children a basket of exotic fruits related to the story "Handa's Surprise" and children learn to recognise and name mangoes, apricots and passion fruit.

44 Reception teachers plan activities so that speaking and listening skills are always promoted. Many children come to school with speech and language difficulties. Specific programs are provided for children with identified needs to help them speak clearly. Liaison with the speech therapy service is very good and learning support staff follow a programme in school for some children. Other children have special "circle time" activities, which are planned to extend children's vocabulary. Some resources, such as the "Lola" programme, have been purchased to help young children, particularly those with special educational needs, develop clear speaking and early writing skills. Lola is a toy leopard and children love to write letters to her or talk to her about what they are doing, so they are very motivated to speak and write. Early writing and reading skills are taught very effectively, with children being taught to write for a range of purposes. Higher attaining children write clear sentences and they are beginning to add simple punctuation. Children achieve well in early reading skills and can identify and use the contents page in an information book.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use resources very well to teach new concepts and deepen knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons are planned very well, with effective opportunities for children to use ICT skills to support their learning.

Commentary

45 Children achieve very well in their mathematical development, because they are taught new skills very thoroughly. As a result, the majority of children are likely to reach standards above those expected for their age. Teachers use questioning very effectively to probe the children's existing knowledge and understanding of how to add or subtract, then they subtly move the learning on. This is done well because lessons are so well planned. Resources are used very well, for example, in one lesson the teacher said "Show me how you would work out this number sentence $3+4=7$ ". Children used hoops, small bears and mathematical signs to show how they would arrive at the correct answer to this problem. Most children know how to use apparatus to construct an addition or subtraction problem and they have good knowledge of the correct mathematical symbols to use. Children are given opportunities to use a mathematics program on the computer, which deepens their knowledge and understanding of simple calculations. Younger children in the nursery

are given number problems to solve as part of their day to day activities, for example, they are asked to count the number of children present at the beginning of sessions, then work out how many children are absent. Throughout the Foundation Stage, lessons are brisk and lively and precise questions motivate and interest children.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of interesting activities are planned to provide first-hand learning experiences.
- Resources are used very effectively to deepen knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

46 Teaching is good and most children are likely to reach the standards expected for their age. Children achieve well because a very good variety of appropriate and interesting activities are planned to build upon the children's lively curiosity. In one lesson in the nursery, children learnt about new technology as they were shown how the photocopier could be used to copy their observational drawings, or make them larger or smaller. Children's eyes sparkled and they gasped with astonishment as their drawings emerged from the photocopier! In reception, early science skills are developed as children explore forces by looking at toys, which can be pulled or pushed. In history, they learn about changes over time as they brought in photographs of themselves as babies and compared later pictures of themselves. Design and technology skills developed well as children worked together to design a toy that would move. They used information and communication technology skills to merge text and graphics to draw and write about toys that move with wheels. Geography skills develop as children learn about India and Africa by looking at maps and artefacts and learn songs from other cultures.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outdoors area is under-developed, particularly for children in the reception classes.
- Children have a good awareness of healthy living, which is helped by the provision of fresh fruit every day.

Commentary

47 Teaching is good and activities are planned well to support children's physical development. Most children are likely to reach the standards expected for their age. They achieve well overall, but their skills are hampered because they do not have access to a more stimulating outdoors learning environment. The area outdoors is spacious, but is very uninspiring and does little to develop children's physical skills, although staff ensure that children have access to a range of resources which enable them to climb, balance and slide. Children are provided with fresh fruit every day and can identify some of the foods that keep them fit and healthy. Most children show good skills when using scissors.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Music teaching is a strength and children perform with confidence.

- Children are encouraged to appreciate the work of famous artists.

Commentary

48 Most children are likely to reach standards above expectations for their age and they achieve very well, particularly in their musical ability. Teaching is very good, based on thorough planning of interesting activities to engage the interest of the children. In a very good music lesson with all the reception children, all could clap and tap a rhythm and follow a beat with ease and confidence. They sing well, and are able to perform songs in English, French and African! In art and design, nursery and reception children worked together to recreate a painting by the Flemish artist Theodorus van Brussel. Children have used a range of techniques and media to make a 3D collage.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing are not high enough.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well from a low starting point, although marking is not always consistent.
- Enrichment of the curriculum is very good.
- Effective leadership has audited provision and identified appropriate targets for improvement.
- There are good examples of English being used in other curriculum areas, although the use of ICT is underdeveloped.

Commentary

49 Present standards in reading and speaking and listening are in line with those expected nationally at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but writing is below this standard. There are good procedures to track pupils' progress and development in English and each pupil has a record of achievement that includes samples of their work. Individual targets for improvement are established and pupils are involved in helping to set their own targets. However, the school recognises that standards of writing need to be improved by creating more extended opportunities for pupils to write at length, to develop their use of descriptive language and improve handwriting and presentation of their work. It is the lower standards in writing that is actually depressing the overall standards in English at Year 6. Marking of pupils' work is not consistently identifying what improvement is needed and teachers' comments do not always give pupils sufficient information about what they have done well or need to improve.

50 Teaching is good and this is what enables pupils to achieve well and make good progress in English, from what is usually a low starting point on entry to full time education. Teachers' planning is effective and takes into account mixed age classes and the needs of individual pupils. Those who have special educational needs are supported well by teachers and classroom assistants when they are available. Lessons have clear objectives that can be easily assessed. For example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils reinforce their use of verbs, nouns and adjectives and the teacher checked and revised these effectively at the end of the lesson. Teachers use questions and discussion well but don't always give pupils enough time to explain their ideas thoroughly. There are good relationships in class, pupils respond well and they are keen to answer or offer an opinion. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills and this is having a positive impact on their work. Teachers use available time well, they focus and re-focus pupils' attention and have high expectations for work and behaviour. Most resources are used well. The exception to this is ICT, which is not being used often enough to support work and extend learning in English.

51 The English curriculum is enriched very well particularly through drama as part of the school's focus on learning through the arts. Pupils are given many opportunities to work with performance artists and take part in productions themselves. Pupils have visited the Gateway Theatre in Chester to see a performance of 'Frankenstein' and this stimulated them to write their own lively play-scripts and poems. Older pupils have performed versions of 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Macbeth'. In a Year 6 lesson based on an African legend the teacher effectively demonstrated the impact sound effects can have in radio and television plays so that pupils could then use these in their own work.

52 Leadership and management of the subject are good. The two co-ordinators have carefully audited appropriate priorities to make further improvements. There is clear written evidence to show how well they have monitored teaching and learning by checking planning, analysing pupils' work and observing some lessons. Lesson observations have correctly focused on the development of pupils' writing skills including narrative writing. Teachers have all been given detailed writing target sheets to aid planning and progression to the next levels. There is a willingness to learn from others and share expertise through links with other schools and local authority consultants.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53 There are some good examples of English being linked effectively with other subjects, for instance Year 3 and 4 pupils recounted their visit to Stretton Watermill and Year 5 and 6 pupils combined poetry, dance, music and drama in a collaborative project about 'Anansi and the Sky God'. However, the use of literacy skills overall is satisfactory. Within the school's integrated approach to planning and different ways to learn, opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy skills are not always identified clearly enough. For example, there is some excellent artwork around the school but it is not always labelled and described in detail. In Year 1 and 2 pupils have produced a very effective collage depicting the Fire of London but there is no writing to explain how it was done or the story behind it.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in comparison with schools in similar contexts.
- The school's emphasis on practical and investigative tasks is not applied consistently throughout the school.
- The identification of areas for improvement is well prioritised by subject leaders.
- The use of ICT to further develop mathematical understanding is underdeveloped.
- The reviewing of assessment records is not consistently identifying how some pupils, of all abilities, might make better progress than expected.

Commentary

54 Present standards in Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally. The majority of pupils have made the expected progress using the indications from their national test results in 2000. The school has identified the need to further develop mathematical understanding by the promotion of thinking and problem solving skills. The work of the upper juniors, especially, shows a lack of personal involvement in locating and setting out the key information in problems across the expected range of programmes of study. Inconsistency of challenge to develop these skills is preventing a small number of pupils, of all abilities, who showed potential to make above expected progress at age seven, from attaining the higher National Curriculum levels at age 11.

55 Standards of teaching are good overall. Teachers are knowledgeable about the wide range of learning needs of their pupils. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2 where pupils are making slower progress because of poor skills on entry to the school. Teachers are working hard at

this stage to develop an emphasis on practical and investigative work to improve pupils' understanding. However, teaching is not always successfully matching practical tasks to the differing abilities of pupils, especially in lessons where there is no additional classroom support. The work of the upper juniors lacks the consistency of use of appropriate technical vocabulary and mathematical reasoning in clearly set out presentations in pupils' books. This is a reason why there is not more frequent higher National Curriculum levels achieved in Year 6."

56 The subject is well led by two co-ordinators. They have developed good procedures to enable them to track pupils' progress throughout the school. This information is enhanced by the evaluation of performances in national tests. They have recently developed an accurate action plan identifying the appropriate needs for improvement in mathematics. Whole-school planning is effectively based on the National Numeracy Scheme and is further made relevant by identifying the key skills to be covered. Principles and procedures for monitoring the work of teachers and pupils are firmly in place. In particular good liaison of planning and teaching occurs in year groups and self-evaluation by all staff at the end of the year is impressive. Monitoring is not yet effective enough to see a rise in standards through more precise target setting. Further monitoring would also usefully note the inconsistency in marking in books and the further need for teachers to give pupils information on the important next stage targets.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57 Pupils make satisfactory use of their numeracy skills in other subject areas. They use their measuring and recording skills well, but inconsistently in scientific experiments. Similarly in design and technology they use numeracy skills to measure and construct objects. There is presently an under-development of the use of ICT in mathematics and opportunities to develop further skills and understanding via graphical interpretation are missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been consistently in line with all schools nationally and high compared with similar schools.
- Effective leadership of the subject has audited future needs and is taking action to improve provision.
- The development of criteria to monitor pupils' acquisition of scientific skills and their application in a range of experiments is well advanced.
- The use of ICT resources to extend the depth of challenge in science work is underdeveloped.
- The use of investigative work to improve understanding is inconsistently applied in the upper juniors.

Commentary

58 Standards in Year 6 have been in line or above the average for all schools nationally in recent years. During this period pupils have achieved well in comparison with similar school contexts. Present standards show a sound understanding of scientific vocabulary and the majority of pupils have very good observational skills and record details, (for example, parts of a human skeleton and plant life), very well. The development plan recognises that these skills need to be applied more consistently and methodically throughout the school. The work of the upper juniors lacks the expected quantity of experimental work across all programmes of study. Standards would be higher if the older pupils were more consistently involved in planning their own experiments and interpreting and recording their findings. The writing-up of their findings is a particular weakness.

59 Pupils enjoy science and are enthusiastic learners. Teachers use the local environment and places of scientific interest, as well as residential visits, extensively to further motivate their

pupils. Older pupils improve their understanding of the concepts of evaporation when they visit the local salt museum. Using appropriate planning formulating hypotheses they complete experiments that change rock salt into white salt. Similar to their visits to the local high school laboratories, this gives them experience of working with controlled experiments, using a range of apparatus and concluding with final results. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 made very good progress when they recorded the differences and similarities of groups of insects and mini beasts. They used their very good art skills to record fine details of body parts and developed additional mathematical skills when completing sets of similar characteristics. The teaching in this lesson and also in a Year 3 lesson was very good. Both teachers pose questions that challenge pupils to test scientific theory. In the Year 3 lesson pupils of all abilities compared plant growth from specimens in differing growing environments. They have a good understanding of fair testing as well as the concept of changing variables and recording differences. However, writing tasks are not yet structured or challenging enough. The management of lessons is very good. Positive outcomes in terms of behaviour and learning are testimony to the very positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Also to the good levels of planning that recognises both mixed age requirements and the individual needs of pupils.

60 Both subject leaders have a good understanding of the developing needs of the subject acquired through auditing and action planning. New plans are shared well with colleagues. The identification of key scientific skills, the development of other subject skills through science and the learning outcomes acquired in conducting an experiment, are providing valuable planning resources for teachers. This is providing a more systematic approach to the teaching of science. However, this age-related information has still to be extended to show how pupils will become more independently responsible for conducting their experiments as they move through the school. Good assessment procedures mean that teachers thoroughly record the progress their pupils make. They are aware of the next stages in learning but the marking in pupils books does not consistently inform them of their achievements and next stage targets. Although an interactive white board is used well to show microscopic features in a lesson, there is limited evidence to show how teachers use ICT to further motivate and challenge scientific learning and understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing and using their skills in ICT
- In Year 2 and 6 attainment is in line with national expectations and achievement is good.
- Improvement in the provision for ICT since the last inspection is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Resources for teaching and learning in other curriculum areas are barely satisfactory.

Commentary

61 Pupils in Year 2 attain standards that match national expectations and their achievement is good. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The improvement is due to the increasing opportunities to use ICT within the curriculum, (although a lack of resources restricts this in certain subjects), and staff training which has led to increasing levels of competence and confidence. Pupils in Year 2 have secure basic skills and know how to write text, enter data and can use a range of software to support different subjects. In a Year 1 class pupils understanding of classifying mini-beasts was seen to improve by using a programme which required pupils to put mini-beasts into sets.

62 By Year 6, pupils gain a sound level of skill and understanding of ICT. They use text for a variety of purposes and confidently manipulate it to achieve differing effects. They develop skills in information retrieval, using CD-ROMS and the Internet. They have good opportunities to use interactive technology to present their work through multi-media resources and to explore control mechanisms. Planning for teaching ICT is based on the units of work from national guidelines to

ensure progression of skills and there are wide opportunities for pupils to use these skills in other subjects. Assessment procedures are sound and pupils' individual progress is tracked.

63 ICT is led and managed by co-ordinators in each key stage. They work effectively as a team and provide good leadership of the subject. They have addressed all of the issues raised at the last inspection and have a clear action plan for the present and further development of the subject. They have supported colleagues well, ensuring that relevant resources have been purchased and training of staff is undertaken. Standards have been monitored by the co-ordinators and this would be further improved by their having time to observe lessons throughout the school.

64 Pupils talk enthusiastically about their use of computer programmes and have a sound knowledge and understanding of the use of ICT. They have researched work in a range of topics. Pupils in Year 6 found information about the slave trade to support a history topic and in a Year 4 class they gathered information about plants to support their work in science.

65 The school has improved its resource provision since the last inspection but there is still room for further development. The ratio of computers is 1 to 8 pupils and there is only one interactive white-board in school. Further resources are required to continue to improve the provision for the teaching and learning of ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66 Skills in ICT were developed as pupils learnt how to use the Internet to find out about the festival of Diwali. Pupils make satisfactory use of their skills to support work in other areas of the curriculum. Suitable software, digital cameras and computer microscopes have been purchased. In Year 6 pupils have manipulated images taken with the digital camera and produced interesting and exciting artistic portraits. They have also combined text and images to produce a school leaflet. In a Year 1 class pupils effectively used a programme to support their work in art and design and made interesting symmetrical patterns. Pupils in a Year 3 class constructed graphs to measure shadows as part of their science topic.

HUMANITIES

67 Not enough teaching was seen in history and geography for a firm judgement to be given in these subjects. However, teachers' planning was scrutinised and pupils' work sampled.

68 Leadership and management of **history** gives the subject satisfactory guidance on what to teach and an action plan identifies clear priorities. Pupils in Year 2 have studied their own family history as a good way of developing an understanding of how things were beyond living memory. They showed particular interest in things that were used around the home for washing and cleaning. The same group of pupils made a detailed study of the Great Fire of London and could re-tell the story in words and pictures. Year 6 pupils learnt about some of the people and events in Tudor times, their written work is more structured and uses dates and terms correctly. Older pupils made their own hard backed books to record their work, which was very neatly presented. Visits are used effectively to support work in history, for example, pupils have visited Speke Hall and Tatton Park.

69 Leadership and management of **geography** gives sound direction for the planning of topics to be taught following a two-year programme that meets the school's needs well. Year 2 pupils compared two contrasting localities using first hand information from their African visitors very well. They were helped to make the global link between the British Isles and South Africa and with the teacher's support they were able to locate the two countries accurately on a world map. They are beginning to use subject vocabulary correctly, for example, when pupils in Years 5 and 6 linked history and geography work well in their studies of Sir Francis Drake's voyages using maps and globes to plot his route and tried to answer the question, 'Why did people want to explore?' Visits are used very well to support work in humanities and these exploit cross-curricular links effectively, for instance, when elements of history, geography and science formed parts of a visit to the Salt Museum in Northwich.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make effective links with other subjects and this improves pupils' understanding of their own and other faiths.
- Pupils achieve well in their knowledge and understanding of major world religions.
- Visits and visitors are used well to provide pupils with first-hand learning experiences.
- The marking of some work is poor and does little to help pupils improve their work.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning to give an informed view on the progress pupils' make is underdeveloped.

Commentary

70 Standards of attainment seen during the inspection remain in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. What teachers do well is to teach key elements of major world faiths through effective links with other subjects. For example, in Years 1 and 2, a topic on Hinduism developed pupils' geographical skills as they looked at maps of the world to find India, which led to pupils' appreciating that India is a vast country and is subject to many extremes of weather. Literacy skills were extended as pupils learnt Hindi words for "hello" and "peace" and they wrote comparisons of the common features of Christianity and Hinduism related to forms of worship. In creative work, pupils explored and designed mehndi hand paintings and to extend their cultural awareness, pupils' dressed up in beautiful silk saris and wrote about how this made them feel. Skills in ICT were developed as pupils learnt how to use the Internet to find out about the festival of Diwali. As a result of this approach, pupils achieve well in their understanding of major world religions.

71 Older pupils learn about Christianity and Judaism through the school's extensive use of visits and visitors. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy visits from a specialist teacher, who tells them exciting stories from the Old and New Testaments. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have the unique opportunity to have visits from a Jewish headmaster and two of his pupils, who show pupils how Jews celebrate Shabbat. Pupils listen respectfully to songs and chants in Hebrew and they share the Shabbat bread with the Jewish pupils. Such first-hand learning experiences have a positive effect on pupils' understanding and appreciation of the differences, and similarities, between major world religions.

72 The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent, and as a result pupils are not given enough guidance about what the next steps to learning are and what they need to do to improve their work.

73 The leadership and management of the subject is good overall and there have been good improvements made since the previous inspection. These improvements have happened as a result of an audit of strength and weaknesses and appropriate action plans to carry out changes. However the co-ordinator has no opportunity to check the quality of teaching throughout the school and so does not have the opportunity to identify areas for improvement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

74 Not enough teaching was seen in music, design and technology and physical education for a firm judgement to be given in these subjects. However, teachers' planning was scrutinised and pupils' work sampled.

75 In **design and technology** the evidence available suggests that what teachers do well is to make effective links with other subjects to teach design and technology. There are good links made with work in the creative arts and in some history topics, for example, pupils in Year 3 considered a design for an Anderson air raid shelter during their work on World War 11. Scrutiny of work

indicates that pupils' design and evaluation skills are much weaker than their ability to make and construct objects. Initial designs lack sufficient detail and some evaluations are too brief to be useful to the pupil. However, the products that pupils make are usually finished well.

76 In **music** the school is able to offer pupils lots of opportunities to overcome their inhibitions and learn to sing and play with confidence. They respond to this challenge very well, for example, in Year 2 pupils are able to remember and copy rhythmic patterns correctly by clapping together, which they thoroughly enjoyed. The curriculum is very well enriched by visiting specialists and performance artists, and this further enhances work in music and dance. In one particular activity this was very obvious when pupils from several local schools took part in a workshop focusing on African styles of music. The instructor's enthusiasm was infectious and pupils and adults were inspired to dance by the sound and rhythm of the drums. Their loudness and vibration had a quite startling effect on pupils who were taken by surprise. Assemblies also make a good contribution to pupils' musical development and the quality of their singing is a strength, for example, pupils had rehearsed a welcome song for their African visitors and their singing was excellent. Recorded music is often played at the beginning and end of assemblies and teachers make the most of this by drawing pupils' attention to it and making sure that they know the name of the piece and who composed it. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the choir that performs in school and the community.

77 In **physical education** the school follows national guidelines to ensure a good breadth and balance of physical activities are undertaken. It is well enriched with extra-curricular activities in areas such as games and dance, where external expertise is used to compliment the strengths of the teachers. All pupils involved in the ongoing school production explain enthusiastically how much they enjoy planning, rehearsing and performing African dances. There are very good procedures in place to teach swimming and detailed records show that high standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are presently above those expected.

Art and Design

Provision in art and design is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and there are examples of excellent teaching. This results in the pupils achieving very well in their use of skills and techniques.
- Very effective use is made of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum, so pupils benefit from an exciting and innovative curriculum.
- The subject leaders do not have the opportunity to check the quality of teaching throughout the school and so are unable to have a clear view of teaching standards.

Commentary

78 Pupils' art and design work is very well displayed throughout the school, making corridors and shared areas look vibrant. Pupils reach standards that are well above those typically found in both the infants and the juniors. They have very good knowledge of the work of famous artists and in discussions, they can knowledgeably compare the styles of Turner and Van Gogh. In one excellent lesson in Year 3, the teaching was excellent and resulted in pupils' very high achievement in their ability to blend and mix colours in the style of Turner. The very effective teaching of how to mix and blend colour and the opportunities given for pupils to experiment using a wide range of media, led to pupils working with great flair and confidence. For example, they used very large brushes to sweep colour across large pieces of paper, then mixed and blended colours using smaller brushes or rollers. Some pupils used their hands to blend oils, whilst those pupils using watercolours used the finest brushes to mix shades and tones of blues and greens. This lesson encapsulated what excellent subject knowledge, a teachers' inspiration and enthusiasm and the effective use of a good range of resources, can achieve. Pupils were brimming with enthusiasm and worked intensively, remaining totally focused during the whole lesson.

79 Whilst teaching is very good overall, what all teachers excel at is how well they encourage, stimulate and challenge their pupils to appreciate the work of famous artists. They give very good opportunities for pupils to experiment and explore using a range of techniques and media as they work in the style of the artists. This results in pupils who are confident to try new ideas and consequently, they show a refreshing boldness when working. Multicultural aspects of art are a strength and pupils' appreciation of both European and African genres are impressive. The curriculum is exciting and innovative and pupils benefit from the many visiting artists into school and from their visits to art galleries in the locality. Those pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other children do. They achieve well because of good adult support and because of their ability to work collaboratively in mixed ability groups in mainstream classes.

80 The subject is well led and managed by two enthusiastic co-ordinators, who are amassing an impressive collection of pupils' past and present work to act as a guide to learning new techniques. However, currently, the subject leaders do not have the opportunity to check the quality of teaching through direct observation and this means that they do not have a clear view of teaching throughout the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81 Not enough teaching was seen in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) for a firm judgement to be given in this subject. However, teachers' planning was scrutinised and pupils' work sampled.

82 The school has a very strong commitment to develop a PSHCE programme via residential visits. From Year 1 onwards personal and social education is developed extensively by the school's commitment to providing opportunities for all pupils and staff to take part in these visits. The school provides its own health and sex education programme. Drugs and alcohol programmes are taught with assistance from local community police and local theatre groups, so pupils learn to consider the impact of their choices. The curriculum effectively supports the learning of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems who are based in the unit. This support enables these pupils to integrate well into the mainstream of the school for many lessons. When these arrangements happen the pupils display a high level of interest and motivation. Although there are many positive outcomes from such programmes there is an absence of a policy to effectively monitor the delivery to gauge its impact on learning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).