

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **GORSE COVERT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111208

Headteacher: Mrs. Lynne Joughin

Lead inspector: Mr Paul Baxter

Dates of inspection: 12-15 July 2004

Inspection number: 256228

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:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	340
School address:	Gorse Covert Road Birchwood Warrington Cheshire
Postcode:	WA3 6TS
Telephone number:	01925 825070
Fax number:	01925 838879
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Hart
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Gorse Covert Primary School has 340 pupils, 181 boys and 159 girls, aged between 4 and 11 years. The school is located on the outskirts of Warrington in Cheshire. It is above average in size and serves an above average socio-economic community – but with a significant and above average number of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the normal times. About six per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and this is below average. In the region of eight per cent of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds; three per cent of the pupils speak English as a language different to their mother tongue and two pupils receive specialist language support. These numbers are above average. Approximately 18 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, a broadly average proportion, and these include specific and moderate learning, social, emotional and behavioural, speech or communication, visual and physical needs. Just over one per cent of the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, and this is a broadly average percentage. Overall, the attainment of children on entry to the school is broadly average. The school achieved the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark' and the 'School Achievement award' in 2003'.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25217	Paul Baxter	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Science Design and Technology Physical Education
1107	Janet Harrison	Lay inspector	
28320	Robert Willey	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Religious Education Special educational needs
22046	Dr. Josephine Jolliffe	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Art and design History Geography

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Gorse Covert Primary is a **very good** school. The school continues to improve as very good leadership and a strongly shared 'team' commitment to developing provision promote pupils' learning to the full. Pupils achieve very well and standards are well above average overall, as a consequence of very effective teaching. Value for money is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- In response to very good teaching, pupils' attainment is well above average and achievement is very good by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils' very good personal qualities are strongly promoted by the staff and make a significant contribution to the quality of their work and their levels of attainment.
- Most areas of provision are at least very good and aspects such as excellent pastoral care in Year R (Reception), the full involvement of parents and pupils in learning and the very good team leadership of the headteacher underpin the strong ethos of learning.
- Teaching and learning are enriched by the very good accommodation and resources and by the degree to which the curriculum is adapted and enhanced to include pupils fully.
- Staffing instability in Year 2 has weakened the continuity of pupils' learning this year.
- Learning support assistants are used well but there are a limited number across the school, restricting the benefit they can bring to pupils' learning.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection, especially in raising pupils' achievement from satisfactory to very good. All key issues for improvement, including, for example, the assessment of pupils' work, have been improved substantially. All other areas of provision have either been improved or sustained at an effective level. The corporate leadership style encouraged by the headteacher and the improvement of teaching from satisfactory to very good are key factors in raising pupils' achievement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Fewer than 80% of the pupils have accurate assessment data from when they were in Year 2, therefore similar schools in this table are those with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

**Achievement is very good overall.** Children's attainment is broadly average on entry, but this can vary from year to year. They achieve very well in Reception (Year R) where their needs are closely met. Achievement over time is good in Years 1 and 2. Most pupils, from a range of backgrounds and learning needs, achieve very well in Years 3 to 6, especially in Years 5 and 6, where they show mature responses to strong teaching. Pupils with special educational needs

generally achieve well. Children at the end of Year R exceed the expected early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical and personal, social and emotional development. Standards of pupils currently in Year 2 are well above average in mathematics and are above average in speaking and listening, writing, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Standards are average in reading. Pupils in Year 6 reach well above average standards in mathematics and science and above average standards in English, ICT and religious education. The school has done well in recent years to sustain rising standards for it has received an increasing number of pupils after Year 3, several of whom have special educational needs. They are inducted very well but the impact on standards was seen last year in the pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good.** Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good and reflect the very effective pastoral care given by adults. Attendance and punctuality are good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall.** Teaching and learning are particularly strong in Years R and 5, where help from assistants adds to the individual support given to pupils, and in Year 6, where mature contributions from the pupils themselves enrich their learning. Teaching is very good in mathematics and science and it is good in English, ICT and religious education. Learning in Year 2 has been constrained to a satisfactory standard, on occasion this year, due to unavoidable changes in staff. Consistently very good teaching, especially the development of the children's personal, social and emotional skills, is a notable feature of the provision in Year R classes. Teachers use assessments of the pupils' work very effectively to inform teaching and learning. The curriculum is very good; all pupils are fully included and are enabled to take responsibility for their learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and is more effective when additional adult support is available. Partnerships with local schools are very good; those with parents and the community and provision for the pupils' care, health and welfare are good. These have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher leads very well and nurtures equally effective partnerships with the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the chair of governors. They are supported strongly by other staff and governors and share a clear vision for the future. Overall governance is very good; governors are diligent in ensuring that their statutory obligations are met and that all pupils are included fully. Management is good and continues to improve. It is supported by very good financial controls.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Overall, parents' views of the school are good. Most are very supportive of the school and play a very effective role as partners in the education of their children. Several parents have concerns about the situation in Year 2, including difficulties in communication. Inspectors agree with these concerns, but find that the school acted appropriately in complex circumstances. Pupils questioned are very happy with the school. They state that their efforts are appreciated and valued and feel fully involved in their learning. Inspectors endorse these views.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Strengthen the provision for pupils in Year 2.
- Seek to increase the level of additional adult support for pupils across the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

By the time they leave the school most pupils have achieved very well. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average overall, and in mathematics and science. Standards are above average in English, ICT and religious education. Standards continue to rise in response to very good and occasionally excellent teaching.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6 and show that most pupils are achieving very well.
- Children make rapid gains in Year R, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, due to the very warm and effective support of teachers and learning assistants.
- Pupils do very well in mathematics and science throughout the school in response to consistently successful teaching that almost always ranges between good and excellent.
- Achievement in Year 2 has been restricted on occasion this year mainly due to ongoing instability in teaching. The formation of new class groupings from September 2004 will rectify this problem.
- Pupils with special educational needs who have the most adult support make the best progress.

#### **Commentary**

1. Children enter Year R classes with broadly average skills, but this can vary from year to year. The children adapt quickly to life in school and receive a high quality of personal support. As a consequence, the children achieve very well with most exceeding expected early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical and personal, social and emotional development. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average overall and pupils achieve well. Pupils do best in mathematics and reach well above average standards. Standards are above average in speaking and listening and writing, and in ICT and religious education. The pupils' achievement has been constrained at times this year due to instability in staffing a temporary additional class, which stems from ongoing staff illness. Even though the school has sustained appropriate teaching, the instability has limited pupils' achievement most in reading, where standards are average, representing satisfactory achievement.
2. By the time they leave the school, pupils with special educational needs have achieved well with those receiving consistent additional support from learning support assistants often achieving very well in relation to their capabilities. For example, a recent survey of Year 6 national test results indicates that almost two-thirds of them had made at least good academic progress compared with their attainment at the end of Year 2. This reflects the strong support that they receive from class teachers and classroom assistants in English and mathematics. Pupils who have English as an additional language and higher attainers access learning as effectively as their peers and generally achieve very well. By the end of Year 6, well above average standards in mathematics and science and

in speaking and listening and reading reflect consistently strong teaching. Standards are above average in writing, ICT and religious education.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.3 (17.7)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	17.0 (16.9)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	18.2 (18.0)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 49 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	28.1 (29.2)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	28.2 (29.2)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	31.0 (30.0)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- Standards in the National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 in recent years have been mostly well above average and have reflected consistent strengths in the teaching and learning for pupils in this key stage of learning. The current above average standards at the end of Year 2 represent good achievement by most pupils and show the limiting effect of instability in teaching mentioned earlier. The well above average standards in mathematics indicate ongoing strengths in teaching whereas the average standards in reading show the degree to which frequent and unavoidable changes of teachers have limited pupils' learning. An example of this was stated by several parents who felt that their ability to work as closely and effectively as usual with the class teacher, for example in support of their child's reading, had been reduced this year.
- National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 6 have risen at a trend above that found nationally but have also fluctuated in recent years due to the increasing and varying number of pupils admitted from Year 3 onwards. For example, the lower than usual standards reached in 2003 reflected the higher number of pupils with learning needs in the year group tested. In comparison with the performance of pupils in similar schools, standards were average overall. Comparisons based on the pupils' performances in Year 2 and Year 6 tests are not reliable due to the significant number of pupils entering the school from Year 3 onwards. Examination of the pupils' records and progress since they first entered the school clearly shows, however, that pupils are making very good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding as they mature.
- Inspection shows that standards have increased this year, with a greater proportion of pupils attaining higher than average standards and achieving very well in relation to their capability. The well above average standards found at the end of Year 6 show the beneficial impact of ongoing staff development in raising the quality and consistency of the teaching and learning through the school. In particular, they highlight the cumulative impact of good and very good achievement in different parts of the school that result in pupils achieving very well overall. This shows a significant and very good improvement since the last inspection. Inspection also shows that standards continue to rise as the

school adapts the curriculum to promote creativity and pupils' interest with increasing success.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils have very positive attitudes and behave very well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall. Attendance and punctuality are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' high levels of motivation and behaviour enable them to learn well.
- Children in Year R receive excellent pastoral support.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall.
- The school has successfully increased opportunities for independent learning and this has helped to raise attainment.
- There are too many holidays taken during term time.

### **Commentary**

6. Pupils are very pleased with their school. They say it is friendly, their lessons are interesting and their teachers are helpful. Pupils have very good attitudes towards learning and show respect for their teachers. Throughout the school pupils' high standards of behaviour and attitudes help them make good progress. This is especially the case in the Year R classes and in Year 6. For example, in some of the Year 6 science and mathematics lessons seen, the tasks set were challenging and required pupils to think and work independently on investigative topics. The pupils rose to these challenge maturely, with excellent behaviour and an enthusiasm for learning which enabled them to reach high standards of work. In a few Year 2 lessons seen, some pupils were less attentive or chatted too much and, as a consequence, did not make as much progress. This is partly because one of the Year 2 classes has had a number of different teachers this year and their classroom routines have been disrupted.
7. The children in Year R classes respond enthusiastically to the very warm and strong adult support. They have many and frequent opportunities to develop their independent and social skills and achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development.
8. Good attendance levels have been maintained. However, in the current year 46 per cent of parents have chosen to take their children on holidays during term time. This is a practice the school tries hard to discourage and currently accounts over 1 per cent of missed schooling. This is a higher proportion than usually found and has a disruptive effect on the children's education.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	4.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.5

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

9. A few parents raised concerns about some "short term fallings out of friendships". The school takes any such incidences seriously and resolves them appropriately with good procedures, although record keeping of all such incidences is not as rigorous as it could be. Overall, relationships between pupils and their teachers and peers are very good. This is evidenced by the fact that there were no exclusions for poor behaviour in the year prior to the inspection. The programme of personal, social and health education is well planned and helps to foster sensible and considerate attitudes. Recently pupils participated in a dance workshop with role-playing, which helped to raise their empathy towards the victims of bullying. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils act as "friendship buddies" at lunchtime, setting out play activities and helping to ensure that all play together harmoniously. Beyond lessons and around the school, pupils are polite and helpful and a credit to their school.
10. Pupils' spiritual development is very good. They have moments for quiet reflection during collective worship and in science the excitement of discovery during practical investigations supports their spiritual development very well. Visits are generally very well used and, following a visit to Great Orme, for instance, pupils have written poetry reflecting on their experience. Pupils' moral development is very good. They support a charity helping Cambodian children through their own efforts. In Year 6, pupils debate environmental issues and in personal, social and health education, they have discussed issues such as school rules and bullying. In geography they have studied environmental issues concerning the coral reef and the rainforest.
11. Pupils' social development is very good. Members of the school council discuss issues identified by pupils. This process serves to raise pupils' awareness of matters affecting other pupils. Year 6 pupils have organised a rota for 'Playground Friends', an initiative that emerged from a consultation with parents. Pupils work co-operatively in pairs and small groups and in Year 6 they understand and follow the rules of debate. They are very caring and polite, for example, opening doors for each other as well as visitors. Pupils' cultural development is good. In particular, pupils benefit from the support of visiting artists, musicians and a physical education specialist. They are encouraged to bring back artefacts from their travels and to share and discuss them with other pupils. An extensive range of visits, as well as clubs, enhances their cultural development. The 'International studies' for pupils up to Year 2 are helping to develop their appreciation of other cultures, as is work in art and design and music.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning, the planned curriculum and links with other schools are very good. All other aspects that also contribute to the pupils' achievement are good and these include the provision for the pupils' health and welfare and the school's partnerships with parents and the local community.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning and the teachers' assessment of pupils' work are very good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers, learning support assistants and other adults working with the school promote very good relationships with the pupils that make learning enjoyable and rewarding.

- Teachers plan their lessons very effectively and make very good use of resources to enrich pupils' learning.
- The teachers assess the pupils' work and progress very carefully and have very good knowledge of the pupils' learning needs and the subjects they teach.
- The quality of teaching is consistently strong in Years R, 5 and 6.
- The pastoral support offered to the pupils is very good overall and it is excellent in Year R classes and builds the children's self-esteem and confidence.
- Instability and frequent changes of teachers in Year 2 over the past two terms have constrained teaching and learning to a satisfactory quality on occasion.
- Most pupils with special educational needs learn well but those who receive a good amount of additional adult support learn even more effectively.

## Commentary

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (11%)	17 (36%)	17 (36%)	8 (17%)	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

12. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and it is now very good overall. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and in almost half the lessons seen teaching was very good or better. In support of the observed teaching, the scrutiny of the pupils' work showed that it is well marked and closely matched to the pupils' prior attainment thereby offering a beneficial challenge to the pupils and enhancing their learning. When interviewed the pupils spoke eagerly of their interesting lessons and with appreciation about the teachers' efforts to make learning interesting. Observations, for example, of the 'International Studies' in art and design and design and technology in Years R, 1 and 2, indicated the success of the school's development of the creative curriculum in support of pupils' learning. An examination of the teachers' planning also showed a high degree of consistent very good practice through the school, with teachers identifying clear learning objectives and making good links with previous work to sustain the pupils' achievement and progress. For example, in science and several other subjects, teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make notes on their lesson plans indicating how they can strengthen learning in future lessons. These strategies are implemented very effectively in most classes and contribute significantly to the pupils' very good achievement over time. This high level of consistent provision also reflects the beneficial impact of leadership and management in promoting the ongoing professional development of staff, thereby improving their effectiveness.
13. Teaching in over a third of the lessons seen was very good and five excellent lessons were also observed. Teaching and learning in these lessons were enriched by the teachers' perceptive response to the pupils' contributions and the way they valued and developed the pupils' ideas in support of their new learning.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**In an excellent Year 5 English lesson, the teacher's warm and encouraging approach and interesting presentation excited the pupils and promoted rapid achievement.**

The teacher's careful selection of vocabulary to describe 'persuasive writing' and her intelligent use of the 'interactive whiteboard' to illustrate the concept were highly successful. Pupils were excited at the challenge presented to them and were uplifted by the teacher's warm praise and encouragement. Her choice of illustration using 'alliteration' such as, 'The magical museum might mesmerise your mind,' proved to be a catalyst in motivating the pupils and stimulating their ideas. They were enthralled in their work and made excellent progress.

14. Excellent teaching was also seen in both classes in Year 6, in science and mathematics. The teachers' strong subject knowledge, rigorous use of questioning and warm relationships were key elements that supported the pupils' successful learning in these lessons. These factors were consistent features in most of the very good and good lessons observed and the small number of satisfactory lessons seen reflected times when these elements were less effective. Consistent good practice underpinned the bulk of the lessons seen and the quality only slipped at times in Year 2 where instability in teaching stemming from frequent changes to supply cover undermined the teachers' ability to challenge pupils' learning to the full on every occasion. This also led to some pupils losing concentration during parts of lessons.
15. The teachers used learning support assistants very effectively where they were deployed. In these situations assistants and other adult helpers, including governors and parents, made beneficial contributions to the pupils' learning. Help with reading, with computers and during practical work had a positive impact on the pupils' learning. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils has been improved since the last inspection. The development of the pupils' independence in learning has also been improved and this has a particularly strong impact on learning in Year R and 6 classes. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well and have their needs met effectively. The teachers know their pupils and include them successfully in whole class discussions. When pupils have additional and closer support from learning support assistants they achieve the most. Support assistants work very closely with class teachers and the co-ordinator for special educational needs. They are well briefed about their roles within lessons and report on outcomes and pupils' achievement daily, usually in discussion with class teachers. Pupils with English as an additional language, gifted and talented pupils and those from different backgrounds are also fully included and often enrich the learning of others by talking about their faith, for example, in religious education lessons.
16. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching in Year R was consistently very good and was especially successful in developing the children's social skills and self-confidence. The learning support assistants made very helpful contributions, including the use of assessment of the children's work to sustain their understanding. As a result learning was both enjoyable and successful. Teaching was very good in mathematics and science, where the teachers' strong focus on learning through practical problem solving was very effective. Teaching was good in English, ICT and religious education. In addition the teachers were very skilful in making links between subjects to reinforce pupils' learning. This was seen to very good effect in the quality and use of on-going assessment are very good and particularly strong in mathematics
18. and science. Teachers mark pupils' work accurately and most give very clear guidance for future improvement. Teachers are using assessments of the pupils' work with increasing effect to identify targets for improvement and in some subjects, for example, science, these are entered in the pupils' books to encourage the pupils' awareness and ownership, thereby strengthening their relevance and use. The development of a more creative curriculum is changing the approach to assessment and there are therefore very good systems in place to track pupils' progress across the curriculum, including speaking and listening skills. The school has devised its own baseline assessment for the end of the Foundation Stage to ensure consistency in measuring pupils' progress. Very good marking helps pupils to clearly understand how they can improve. Pupils know their own targets for improvement and those in Years 5 and 6 in particular say with confidence that they are making progress in relation to their

targets. Teachers often involve pupils in evaluating their work and occasionally in judging the extent to which they have met the learning objectives for the lesson.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a very good, broad and balanced curriculum. There is a very good range of additional activities beyond normal lessons. The accommodation and resources are also very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A very good, well-planned and monitored curriculum is provided for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and for children in Year R, and it meets their needs very well.
- A very good range of clubs, visits and visitors in addition to links between subjects enrich the curriculum.
- Inclusion is a very good feature across the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall despite the limited number of teaching assistants available to provide support.
- Very good accommodation and subject resources enhance pupils' learning.
- The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education is planned well.

### **Commentary**

19. Curricular issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and pupils' needs are now met very well. All the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are met. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been very successfully implemented. All subjects have co-ordinators and the latest national guidance has been taken into account to provide good policies and guidance for teachers. The curriculum for children in Year R (Foundation Stage) covers all the required areas of learning and the teachers adapt the activities very skilfully to ensure that children learn from their own ideas and from the carefully planned adult direction.
20. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure a good balance between subjects and organised into two-year cycles, where appropriate, to ensure curriculum continuity and avoid duplication for pupils in mixed age classes. Setting (grouping pupils on the basis of their prior attainment) is used currently only for mathematics in Year 6 but setting arrangements are reviewed annually in order to respond to the perceived needs of pupils from year to year across the school. There are structures in place to monitor the curriculum through curriculum and subject leaders as well as through lesson observations by the headteacher. These enable the management team to hold a clear overview of curricular strengths and weaknesses and provide a secure basis for further development and innovation.
21. Clubs, visits and visitors coming to school provide a wide range of experiences and stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Such clubs as art and design, chess and yoga extend the range beyond the good number reflecting seasonal sports. Numerous and varied visits are made by all classes throughout the year. These include Year 2 to Risley Moss for environmental geography, Years 3 and 4 to Bramhall Hall for history and Year 5 to Llandudno for geography in addition to an overnight residential visit for Year 1 pupils to Beeston and a two-night visit for Year 6 to the Lake District. Visitors contribute well to many areas of the curriculum including an author for literacy, a local vicar for religious

education, a workshop on land yachts in design and technology, an African group for music and local businesses in relation to healthy eating and electricity. These are further supplemented with lessons taken by teachers from a local high school including conversational French for Year 5 pupils. Teachers make very good links between subjects throughout the school. This greatly increases curriculum relevance for pupils and was well evidenced in an international afternoon for pupils from Reception through to Year 2. They made models of different homes, sampled foods from, and designed posters for, different countries in the computer suite and listened to music from different parts of the world. Older pupils worked in the computer suite to generate haiku poems about rivers as a result of their recent residential visit. Teachers give much careful thought to such inventive and challenging subject links and this adds excitement to pupils' learning.

22. The school is strongly committed to inclusion and this was a particular feature of a number of lessons and activities. No pupils are excluded from out-of-school activities because of gender, ability or physical disability. A number of pupils have joined the school as a result of closure of their former one and have been made to feel very welcome and valued. This reflects the school's deep commitment to creating the best inclusive provision for all its pupils.
23. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and has been improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are well supported in and out of their classrooms. The targets structured for them are very specific and set within very good individual educational programmes. The school makes good use of national and local initiatives to support pupils through activities such as "Early Learning Support" for literacy development and "Springboard" for mathematics. A small number of experienced and informed learning support assistants are well deployed to maximise their effectiveness in supporting learning. Where this happens pupils often make very good progress in meeting their individual targets. However, this level of support cannot be consistently applied to all areas of the curriculum as current funding restricts the number of hours that can be afforded. The school already supports funding in this area, contributing over half the level of expenditure from the delegated budget. This demonstrates the school's strong commitment to supporting pupils with special educational needs. A number of parents afford good support for some classes in areas such as spelling and reading. A register of gifted and talented pupils has recently been established and the co-ordinator is working closely with the local authority advisor and colleagues from a local high school to fashion suitable programmes to foster thinking skills and provide appropriate challenge.
24. Accommodation is very good. There are good-sized classrooms and shared areas, a large computer suite and a well-stocked library although there is a shortage of storage space for subject resource banks. High quality displays throughout the school ensure a stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment for learning. The 'mobile' classroom, however, isolates the class using it from the rest of school.
25. The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education is planned well. The experienced and caring co-ordinator has produced a policy document, guidance for teaching and introduced dedicated lessons for the subject. All pupils have personal, social and health education books in which they record the work that they do. The programme is well linked to aspects of the science curriculum such as healthy lifestyles. Drugs awareness issues such as smoking and alcohol are well addressed but work relating to other harmful substances was less evident. The programme for sex education is satisfactory.

## Care, guidance and support

Pupils are well cared for at the school. Pupils are given very good support and guidance. The school has good procedures to take pupils' views into account.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are given very good personal and academic guidance, which enables them to learn with confidence.
- Child protection and health and safety procedures are good, so that children feel safe.
- Pupils know their views matter and this makes them feel valued.

## Commentary

26. The good quality of care provided for the pupils has been sustained well since the last inspection. Nearly all parents say that their children are happy, well cared for and treated fairly and equally. Pupils say that their teachers are helpful if they have problems with their work and that they are well looked after. This reassurance has a positive impact on their learning. There are very good induction procedures. Those pupils who arrive part way through the school year have a personal interview to check they have settled in. The school encourages healthy living effectively, with fruit for younger children and the encouragement of healthy snacks.
27. The school behaviour policy is very effective, so that pupils get along together harmoniously at work and at play. Pupils with special educational or behavioural needs are well integrated into the school. Children in Year R are particularly well looked after and supported when in need of emotional or medical support. A member of staff is a trained counsellor and there are sufficient staff trained in first aid. The school has established good procedures and practice for the identification and support of pupils with special educational need as well as the deployment of a very small team of support assistants. The quality of pupils' individual education plans is good and available to all staff working with them.
28. Pupils have trust in their teachers and the teaching assistants and this helps them learn with confidence. In 'circle time' discussions in class and personal, social and health education lessons, pupils have opportunities to discuss their feelings, explore emotions and discuss ways to overcome setbacks. Pupils are very well informed about the standards of their work and aware of how to improve it. This is because the school's assessment procedures are very thorough; pupils have good information about National Curriculum requirements and are set relevant targets to improve their work. The school also makes very good use of national initiatives to support pupils' learning.
29. There are effective health and safety procedures. The school is extremely well maintained by an efficient caretaker and cleaning staff. Risk assessments are in place and are currently being updated. There are segregated playground areas for the different age groups of children; this works well to keep playtimes happy and safe. Supervision levels at breaks and lunch times are good. The inspectors, however, consider that it would be advisable to have some additional adult support in school assemblies to cater for the rare occasions when there might be some misbehaviour or medical needs. Child protection procedures are effective and all staff are well informed about policy and procedures.

30. Pupils play an active part in the day-to-day running of the school and in school decision-making. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils help as “playground friends” giving out ropes and balls and making sure that no one is left out of the play activities. The school council behaves maturely. They discuss, for example, ways to raise funds for their sponsored child in Cambodia and ways to improve the school environment. The active and willing involvement of pupils in the running of their school makes a strong contribution to their personal development.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has very good links with other schools and good links with parents and the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents give very good support to the school and their children’s learning.
- Communications are generally of good quality.
- Pupils benefit from close links with the pre-school provision and the local high school.
- The school provides a good focal point for the community.

### **Commentary**

31. Parents are pleased with the school, which is a popular choice in the local area. They say that their children are expected to work hard, make good progress and that the school promotes good values. Some parents have more mixed views about the information they get on their child’s progress. The good partnership with parents has been sustained well since the last inspection. Parents take a very keen interest in their children’s education. Nearly all parents attend the two meetings a year with teachers to discuss their child’s progress. An impressive number of parents and community members help on a regular basis with classes or with support projects for the pupils. This valuable support is welcomed by the teachers and helps to raise the pupils’ attainment. The parents and teachers association gives good support to the school, recently helping to fund new computers.
32. Communications between school and home are generally good. The prospectus is well written and informative. There are regular newsletters to keep parents informed and the school holds occasional curriculum evenings. Each term parents are sent an outline of the work their children are going to cover and details of ways they can help at home; this is good practice. In the last year there has been some minor disruption to communication for parents of Year 2 pupils, partly because there has not been a regular teacher in one of the classes. However, in general parents are pleased with the progress reporting arrangements. The annual written reports on children’s progress are good and meet statutory requirements. The inspectors consider that the written reports could be further improved with more precise targets, similar to those agreed regularly with the pupils in school, so that parents can help their children at home. The school consults parents effectively, sending out a questionnaire each year. In response to parental suggestions the school has increased the range of activities at lunch times and is introducing homework diaries. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved and informed, helping them to contribute supportively to their children’s learning.

33. The school's community wing is well used for events and clubs including Brownies, Cubs, dance classes and a luncheon club for the elderly. There is also a 'Before and After School Care Club' and a playgroup and these facilities are greatly appreciated by parents in the local area. The close links with the village playgroup enable children to make a smooth transition into the main school. There are frequent visitors to the school who bring a range of expertise to benefit the pupils. School trips and visits to local parks and conservation areas add reality and meaning to the pupils' learning.
34. Very effective links have been established with the local high school and these represent very good ongoing improvement since the last inspection. Pupils identified as "gifted and talented" visit the high school for specialist events. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6 enjoy physical education lessons taught by the visiting high school teacher and this has helped to raise their enthusiasm and interest and subsequent skills in dance and sport. During the inspection week the older pupils also enjoyed learning French with a visiting high school teacher. The shared teaching, together with opportunities to visit the high school for "taster sessions", helps to build pupils' confidence and make a smooth transition to their next stage of education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is very good. Governance is very good and management is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and this underpins the school's very strong team-orientated commitment to improvement.
- Other key staff, including the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, also give very effective leadership and share the headteacher's clear vision for the future development of the school.
- Under the capable stewardship of the chair of governors, the governing body fulfils its responsibilities very effectively.
- The good, and often very good, work of other staff with responsibilities is strengthening management and the school's considerable ability to sustain on-going improvement.

### **Commentary**

35. The headteacher provides very good leadership and receives strong support from governors and colleagues. Her example in promoting a team approach to leadership and management of the school is also informed by a carefully considered and implemented development plan. These have built successfully on the work of her predecessor and have resulted in a significant improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher's monitoring of the school's provision is increasingly supported by the work of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher and by other senior co-ordinators. Together they are developing effective teams across the school and these are helping to ensure that pupils achieve high standards. For example, aspects such as assessment of the pupils' work, provision for pupils with special educational needs, and outdoor provision for children in Year R classes, identified as weaknesses at the time of the last inspection, are now strengths that continue to receive on-going development due to the very effective work of staff co-ordinators. In addition, the difficult situation regarding staffing in Year 2 was fully identified and supported as effectively as possible in the circumstances.

36. The school's commitment to including all pupils equally is very effective. Governors give full support to this ethos and also play a full and equally successful role in supporting staff to ensure the very good effectiveness of the school. Governance is very good overall and all statutory requirements are met.
37. A very good, experienced and pro-active co-ordinator for special educational needs, supported by the headteacher, has worked very hard to improve provision for pupils. Support assistants are well qualified, have regular training opportunities in order to update their knowledge and expertise, meet regularly with the co-ordinator and provide good support. They are fully involved in setting and reviewing targets for pupils. As there are significantly fewer than in many schools, they are carefully and strategically deployed to maximise their impact. The school heavily supplements funding for pupils with special educational needs, with more than half the expenditure coming from the school's general budget in keeping with the school's commitment to inclusion for all. The school enlists the help of visiting coaches and staff from the high school. In addition it encourages a substantial number of parents to give good support in classes. These have a beneficial impact on pupils' learning. Inspectors agree that the school should seek to increase the individual help available to pupils in support of its shared intention to establish equally successful achievement in all parts of the school.
38. The school is organised very efficiently and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and fulfil them diligently. Administrative and premises staff also make strong contributions and the extremely well maintained accommodation reflects this. The high quality of the pastoral work of the staff is a significant strength. Senior managers are very supportive in meeting the individual training needs of staff and are effective in ensuring that the personal needs of staff are fully considered alongside the corporate needs of the school; as a result momentum toward improvement is successful in, for example, the increasing expertise of co-ordinators in bringing improved practice. Best value principles are considered very carefully; very good control of finances contributes significantly to the effective management and use of funds, especially at this time when the number of pupils seeking entry to the school is fluctuating and influencing the total finances available. As a result of the pupils' well above average standards and their very good achievement, and in consideration of the average costs, the school provides very good value for money.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	942,265
Total expenditure	928,133
Expenditure per pupil	2,622

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	11,356
Balance carried forward to the next	25,488

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

39. On entry to school overall attainment is broadly average, but this can vary from year to year. Most children benefit from pre-school experiences in the playgroup that is located within the school. Children make a smooth transition into the Reception classes (Year R). All the lessons observed in Year R were very good and this consistently high quality of teaching and learning enables all children to achieve very well. The children make the most gains in their development of the skills necessary to learn and socialise within a class grouping and in their acquisition of excellent attitudes to working in school. By the end of Year R standards are above expectation, with a significant number of children exceeding the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional and mathematical development and in their communication, language and literacy skills. Achievement is very good in all these areas of learning. The provision for children in Year R is very good and has been improved since the last inspection. As well as very good management and teaching, learning is enriched by the very effective contributions of learning support staff and by the teachers' skilful use of the excellent accommodation and range of resources available. As a consequence, children enjoy their work and develop independence and self-confidence most successfully.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children enjoy school, share ideas warmly and their excellent attitudes, behaviour and relationships enrich learning.
- The children achieve very well because of excellent personal support from all the adults who work in classes in Year R.
- Children reach above average standards for their age by the end of Year R.

#### **Commentary**

40. All children are included in an exemplary manner. Teaching and learning are very good and the children achieve very well with many exceeding the expected early learning goals by the time they leave Year R. Within this inclusive ethos of learning, the children feel valued and welcome. The teachers agree weekly targets, including good manners, with the children and praise them encouragingly when these are accomplished. The children are encouraged to make choices about which activities to undertake, to explain their choices and to take personal responsibility for their learning. There is an equally effective and consistent emphasis on co-operative working and children are expected to share ideas and resources such as large wheeled toys and computers, and to work together when helping to clear away at the end of the day. The warm relationships between adults and children and between the children themselves, including, for example, when playing and experimenting with sand or water, have a very supportive impact on their learning.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well and many exceed expected learning outcomes by the time they enter Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is very good and all adults working with children in Year R use questioning very warmly and effectively to promote learning.
- 'Large books' of favourite stories are used very supportively to develop language skills and to promote ideas that encourage future learning through role-play.
- Teachers are very skilful in developing cross-curricular links and to make close connections with children's previous learning and these help achievement.

## Commentary

41. Teaching and learning are very good and the children achieve very well with many exceeding the expected early learning goals by the time they leave Year R. The teachers and learning support assistants place a strong and consistent emphasis on developing the children's speaking and listening skills. They use 'Big Book' stories such as 'The Train Ride' to stimulate ideas and discussion. They use questioning in a rigorous but supportive manner to extend the children's thinking skills. The exploration of 'why' is a regular question challenging the children to explain their ideas with increasing depth and understanding. Teachers make productive links with previous work and activities in other areas of learning, for example, identifying words such as floating, and concepts associated with their topic on 'bubbles'. The range of activities offered to the children is broad and rich and reinforces learning as well as enabling the children to initiate learning by following their own lines of enquiry. For example, they use finger puppets to retell favourite stories, such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', sometimes introducing alternate endings. By the time they leave Year R, most children can recognise initial sounds and an above average number of words; many can read simple sentences and most enjoy telling stories in their own words. Writing skills are developing well and most children can write their name legibly and accurately and attempt recognisable sentences with confidence.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective teaching and learning lead to very good achievement for all children.
- Regular and very carefully planned opportunities enable children to extend their skills in a systematic way.
- Teachers and assistants are talented in using the children's own ideas and observations to build on their knowledge, skill and understanding.
- Practical learning opportunities extend children's understanding and enable them to learn together and from each other.

## Commentary

42. Teaching and learning are very good and the children achieve very well with many exceeding the expected early learning goals by the time they leave Year R. The teachers

set high expectations and promote these very effectively, for example, by using hand movements to represent different surfaces when examining three-dimensional shapes (a flat hand showing shows a flat surface). Whole class mental numeracy sessions proceed at a very productive fast pace and the children are encouraged to respond as soon as they can, developing their counting skills both upwards and downwards from 20. Several children have well above average knowledge and can count and recognise numbers up to 100. These regular opportunities to count as part of a group and to learn about shapes, colours (with links with science work on bubbles), numbers, space and measurement are successful in developing the children's skills. The children's learning is also enriched by the teachers' careful and consistent use of mathematical language such as, odd, even, counting, less than and more than.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT and PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

*It was not possible to make an overall judgement of the provision or standards in these areas of learning.*

43. In **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**, children explore a very interesting range of resources and enjoy finding out about the world they live in. Work often extends outdoors and includes activities such as a 'Bear Hunt in the garden to extend their experience even more. The teachers are very knowledgeable and often add to the children's learning most successfully by making connections with their previous learning. This was seen to excellent effect during a mathematics lesson when a child noticed that he could see through a plastic cylinder. Immediately the teacher made helpful links with the children's scientific studies about transparency. The children are given frequent opportunities to learn by using computers and they are developing good skills in ICT, for example when using remote controlled toys.
44. In **Creative Development**, children experience a broad range of worthwhile activities. These are planned very well and encourage the children to explore, experiment and practise skills. For example, they use their ideas and imagination to good effect in the role-play 'Airport' area. They draw and paint pictures of steam trains seen during a recent museum visit as they develop their awareness and use of colour. The children enjoy singing simple rhymes and these help to support their skills in other areas of learning.
45. In **Physical Development**, children have many and frequent opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills. They use small resources and tools such as scissors regularly to cut card and paper. The addition of a good range of outdoor resources, including a climbing frame and large wheeled toys, has extended their opportunities to learn through robust outdoor play and this has helped to develop their social and physical skills very well.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

The overall provision in English is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment is well above average in reading and speaking and listening by the end of Year 6. Attainment is above average overall because of the carefully planned opportunities created by teachers.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' knowledge and use of strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills are very good.
- Assessment, including target setting, is used very well to improve standards.
- Parents support their children very effectively in developing their reading skills.
- Instability in staffing in Year 2 has constrained pupils' learning in reading.

## Commentary

46. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. In the 2003 national tests, standards were above average in Year 6 and well above average in Year 2. Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils' attainment is currently above average in both Years 2 and 6. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall by the end of Year 2, although higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are not always challenged enough in reading. Parents have been concerned about changes in staffing due to staff absence this year and its limiting influence on pupils' achievement. The current temporary class structure ceases at the end of the summer term and the school has clear plans to ensure consistent provision for these pupils in the future. By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is good. This is due to very good teaching in Years 5 and 6, the pupils' positive attitudes to their work and ongoing strong support for reading from parents.
47. Following the closure of two local schools in the area, almost one third of pupils in some classes are relatively new to the school. The school's careful analysis of data reveals that this large intake of new pupils has restricted overall standards, but that pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
48. Teachers are very skilled at providing planned opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through questioning and in pairs, so that by the time they are in Year 2, pupils' skills are above average. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils are confident, articulate speakers with well above average skill. Their range of vocabulary is very good and they express opinions very clearly and coherently. Because teachers manage pupils' behaviour and learning very effectively in Year 6, they are enabled play an active part in debate and are beginning to express an argument clearly and logically. This has a very beneficial impact on their achievement.
49. By the end of Year 2, most pupils write well. They have made a fact file about dinosaurs and have written short character descriptions, using simple punctuation. Some pupils write independently to a very high standard, using punctuation effectively, for example, to express delight: "Lovely! Lovely!" The handwriting of this minority is joined, well formed and of a very high standard. Although some pupils are just beginning to develop as writers, there is a sense of purpose in their writing. Reading is average overall although there is not enough challenge to extend the skills of the best readers.
50. As a result of very good teaching in Year 6, most pupils are writing well for a wide range of purposes such as glossaries, diaries, descriptions and letters of complaint. Because they are encouraged by teachers and are keen to do their best, the pupils take great pride in

their work and present it beautifully. Attainment in writing is above average by the end of Year 6. The pupils read with well above average skill and demonstrate their enjoyment through clear expression and lively discussion of the text.

51. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, although learning has been affected in Year 2 due to changes in staffing resulting from long term staff absence. This has occasionally led to pupils repeating work, particularly in reading. Teachers are knowledgeable and use literacy strategies very effectively. Learning support assistants who are also expert in the use of literacy strategies are well deployed to support the achievement of pupils with individual education plans. There are examples in Years 1, 5 and 6 of very good or excellent teaching, where enjoyable, challenging work extends pupils' learning and skills very well. In one excellent lesson the pupils were excited by the challenge given through the teacher's probing questioning. In the same lesson pupils became fully involved in evaluating the extent to which they had met the learning objectives and chose a piece of work of which they felt very proud.
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53. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator is committed to further improvement and has introduced many changes for the better. Assessment is now used to very good effect, particularly in Years 3 to 6 where pupils know their individual targets and marking explains precisely what needs to be done for them to improve. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

54. Pupils use their language and literacy skills well across the curriculum because of the planned opportunities in pairs or small groups. Teachers use questioning very effectively and encourage discussion to promote speaking and listening skills. In subjects such as history, religious education, geography and science, pupils use their literacy skills effectively for description, labelling, listing, letter writing and expressing their views.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment is well above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and achievement is very good.

- All aspects of the subject are covered well and teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to set appropriate challenges for their pupils.
- Learning support assistants, where and when available, enable pupils with special learning needs to achieve well.
- The subject leader is a leading teaching for the local education authority and this enables her to support her colleagues well.

## Commentary

55. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils consistently attain above average results in national tests. In 2003, the number of pupils attaining the higher levels was well above average when compared with the number nationally. They achieve well in each stage of the school so overall, from joining the school to leaving, pupils' achievement is very good. This reflects very good improvement since the last inspection.
56. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 and very good teaching in Years 3 to 6 underpin the improvement in standards made since the last inspection. All aspects of the subject are covered well and teachers plan challenging lessons that develop pupils' mathematical thinking. A high volume of work is expected from all pupils. This is marked regularly and comments that affirm and encourage pupils are regularly made. In Year 6, comments that show pupils how they could improve their work are also added. These are often linked to the targets set for individual pupils. Pupils in Year 6 are set according to ability for teaching and this has also helped to raise standards.
57. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and ICT is effectively used to support learning. Part of a lesson about tally charts with pupils in Year 1 was conducted in the computer suite. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to explain their strategies, as in a Year 2 lesson when they were explaining how they had discovered which two-dimensional shapes could be divided into quarters. Pupils are prompted to use correct mathematical vocabulary when explaining their thinking. Teachers ensure the inclusion of all pupils in lessons by focussed questioning and the use of whiteboards during mental and oral sessions.

### Example of outstanding practice

**In an excellent Year 6 mathematics lesson the teacher's skilful questioning promoted the pupils' very successful learning.**

"From the data collected, is it possible to predict anything about the course of a river?" was the challenging question asked at the end of a Year 6 lesson. Mature, thoughtful responses identified that some data did not fit a sequential pattern, nor was there enough data to draw conclusions about other sections of the river. The challenges began from the start of the lesson when pupils used whiteboards to 'brain storm' all they could remember about graphs. The brisk pace coupled with high expectations of pupils' use and understanding of subject vocabulary and the excellent use of praise kept the group focussed and eager to do well. Pupils were at ease tabulating data and generating spreadsheets and bar graphs on computers. As a result of excellent teaching pupils' achievement during the lesson was of a very high order.

58. Learning assistants give pupils with special educational needs excellent support in lessons but financial constraints mean that this is selective and does not cover all pupils who would benefit from support. Class teachers often work with the lower attaining pupils in a class but this restricts their availability to other pupils.

59. The subject leader is a leading teacher in mathematics for the local education authority. Her knowledge and understanding of the subject are excellent and she supports other teachers very well. Resources for the subject are very good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

60. Mathematics is used well to support learning in other subjects. Graphs are used in both geography and science, materials are measured in design and technology, and the passage of time and concepts of chronology underpin teaching in history.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 6, reflecting the pupils' very good achievement.
- Teaching, learning and the planned curriculum are very good.
- The pupils' very positive attitudes and willingness to share ideas underpin their attentive response to the teaching.
- The development of the pupils' investigative skills is strengthened by the consistent emphasis that teachers place on promoting their independence and by the opportunities for pupils to reflect about their work.

### **Commentary**

61. The pupils' well above average standards by the end of Year 6 reflect very good achievement and represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. Observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of pupils' work showed that pupils in Year 2 achieve well and have a good understanding of how to observe and investigate, and several have a clear understanding of the notion of a fair test, with higher attainers aware of the need to keep variables to a minimum, for example, when investigating forces. The pupils annotate their diagrams clearly and accurately and make perceptive observations when comparing hand and foot sizes. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have continued to build very effectively on previous learning. Many show good use of their literacy skills to describe, for example, how plants and flowers are pollinated and fertilised. Pupils make good use of ICT to research their findings and to present their diagrams, for example, about human teeth. Several pupils reach high standards and reflect thoughtfully about their findings and how to improve the effectiveness of their investigations.
62. Teaching and learning are very good. Learning is firmly and successfully rooted in practical investigation, with pupils reflecting about their own discoveries. Teaching is most successful when pupils are enabled to explore their own ideas, to plan their own investigations and to share ideas. Although elements of this approach are found in all lessons, it has greatest impact in Year 6. This is because a greater emphasis is placed on developing learning from the pupils' ideas and also because older pupils have a deeper range of knowledge and understanding to draw upon. This was clearly illustrated in two excellent lessons seen in Years 6.

### Example of outstanding practice

**In an excellent Year 6 science lesson, the teacher's enlightened use of a pupils' observation that, 'Moss always grows on the north side of a tree', as focus for investigation captured the pupils' interest and imagination.**

The teacher used this remark, first made by a pupil on a recent residential visit to give ownership of an investigation to the pupils. Because it stemmed from one of their peers the pupils approached their work with eagerness. Firstly by challenging the notion, then by offering alternative ideas and finally by considering how to investigate the problem in a scientifically sound manner, the teacher nurtured a questioning ethos. The teacher built up the challenge even more by asking the pupils to revisit their previous knowledge and to share their ideas about how to proceed. This led to excellent and enjoyable collaborative learning.

63. Very occasionally, learning is less effective when introductions are too long or when it is not matched closely enough to pupils' prior attainment. In the main, however, these were strengths in most lessons, for example in Years 3 and 4 when considering the function of teeth. All lessons seen were prepared well and teachers made particularly effective use of resources to stimulate the pupils' ideas, as for example in Year 1 when the pupils considered which materials would make the most effective umbrella.
64. Teachers use assessments of the pupils' work very effectively to evaluate the success of learning and to inform future teaching and planning. Half-termly assessment tasks are also used beneficially to plot the pupils' progress. The teachers mark the pupils' work very well and help to promote their positive attitudes and this was clearly evident in the neatness of their annotated diagrams and in the clear ways forward and targets listed in their books.
65. The co-ordinator leads the subject effectively and receives good support from colleagues. Even though the subject has not received close focus as a whole school initiative in recent years, colleagues have collaborated supportively over time to systematically improve what was already a strong area of the curriculum at the time of the last inspection. This reflects the increasingly beneficial impact of close teamwork by the staff of the school.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment has improved since the last inspection and is now above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The acquisition of a computer suite and a range of hardware have improved pupils' skills but the current unreliability of the system is a barrier to pupils' learning.
- Good teaching has helped to raise standards.
- The subject leaders are very effective and drive the subject forward.
- Classroom computers are not always used to best effect.

## **Commentary**

66. Standards have been improving year on year so attainment throughout the school is now above average and all pupils, including those with special learning needs, achieve well. This is the result of very good teaching in Years 1, 5 and 6 and good teaching in the rest of the school. All aspects of the subject are addressed including control technology. Overall these show very good improvement since the last inspection.
67. Since that inspection, the school has acquired a computer suite and this has helped to raise standards because of the greater contact time enjoyed by pupils. Currently the hardware is unreliable, however, and this affects pupils' learning. No lesson seen during the inspection ran smoothly and it was due to the good relationships between pupils and teachers and contingency plans prepared by teachers that lessons maintained good order and learning objectives were still achieved. In a Year 6 lesson, the server went down and not all machines could be used. Some pupils had to use three different computers to complete their work and for the past month access to the Internet had also been restricted. A new server is to be installed during the holiday and these problems should then be solved.
68. All aspects of the subject are taught including a variety of uses of control technology. The school has fifteen digital cameras and another twenty mini-digital cameras that are well used by pupils to record their work, especially that done away from the school site. Digital photographs are extensively used in displays around the school. Pupils in Year 1 enjoy operating a programmable toy and older pupils benefit from being able to use a digital microscope in science lessons. In Year 6, pupils visit a local high school to extend their learning in this aspect of the subject. Software to support the teaching of control technology has been bought and also to help the production of flow charts.
69. Teaching is good throughout the school as all teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Their confidence is reflected in pupils' attitudes to the subject. Pupils use subject specific vocabulary accurately and support each other well. The subject's key skills are addressed well and linked to other subjects in the curriculum to reinforce pupils' learning. This is a particularly good feature of work in the computer suite. Greater use could be made of classroom computers to achieve this end also.
70. Two teachers share leadership for the subject. Both are knowledgeable and committed to improving delivery of the subject. Although there is a system for assessing pupils' learning in place, they want to improve it next year when pupils in Year 6 will be involved in a pilot assessment scheme being introduced by the local education authority.

## **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

71. ICT is used well in the teaching of most subjects. 'Dazzle' is used in art, digital microscopes in science, imaginative word processing in literacy and graphs in mathematics, geography and science. In Year 4 there was evidence of computer generated work relating to signs and symbols in religious education.

## **HUMANITIES**

*Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. Geography and history were sampled.*

72. In **geography** there are good cross-curricular links with ICT, history and literacy. For instance, when studying rainforests, Years 3 and 4 pupils created microcosms of a rainforest for a homework project. They have also written about Colonel Percy Fawcett, lost exploring the rainforest in 1925, using their historical and geographical knowledge. In one lesson, pupils demonstrated above average skills and knowledge in mapping rivers. Visits are well used to support learning, for example, pupils will be visiting Birchwood Forest Park and have predicted what they will see.
73. In **history** the co-ordinator has a clear vision and priorities for the subject with a focus on enjoyment and developing pupils' interest for life. Pupils benefit from a range of visits to provide them with an enjoyable experience of history. Year 1 pupils have experienced a Wash Day and Year 5 pupils re-enacted the battle of Marathon. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 have visited Bramhall Hall, dressed in Tudor costume, eating and dancing in Tudor style. In the Year 2 lesson seen, pupils were developing a sense of the past and used simple categories to compare the features of holidays in the past and present.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment has improved well since the last inspection and is now above average.
- Good teaching enables the pupils to achieve well.
- Good resources are used well to support teaching but there is limited contact with adherents to other faiths.
- Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- The subject leader's clear view of how the subject can be improved is driving the subject forward.

### Commentary

74. The school complies with the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils throughout the school generally produce a good volume of work and attainment is above average. All pupils, including those with special learning needs, achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
75. As pupils move through the school, they learn about the world's major faiths and reflect on how their teachings provide role models for people today. In a Year 2 lesson the story of a sick man being brought to Jesus to be healed led to a general discussion on friendship. Pupils are encouraged to listen sensitively to each other's ideas and opinions and respect other people's points of view. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and this enables them to question effectively, ensuring the inclusion of all. Open-ended questions are used well to encourage pupils to think clearly. In a Year 3 lesson about the wisdom of Solomon, pupils responded perceptively and thoughtfully when they were asked why the real mother would have agreed to give up her baby. Role-play and drama are used well to bring the subject alive. Pupils are sometimes asked to record what they have learned as a script for a play and these and the sustained writing they produce provide a useful support for their work in literacy.

76. There are boxes of artefacts to support teaching about each religion and ICT is also used well to support the subject as access to information about world religions is available on computers. Few links have been established with people from faith communities, however, and visits to places of worship are confined to the local church and virtual reality sites on the Internet.
77. Music, such as Gregorian Chant, is used well to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the development of pupils' spiritual awareness. The pupils' cultural education is developed well by the use of famous works of art that illustrate faith stories and personal qualities such as courage are highlighted when looking at the actions of people such as Grace Darling.
78. The subject leader gives very good direction and has improved resources and driven the rise in standards since the last inspection. She is in the process of compiling a portfolio of graded work to enable the school to focus on improving assessment in the subject next term and is arranging training in developing thinking skills through the subject.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*Art and design, design and technology and physical education were sampled. Music was not inspected.*

79. Pupils experience a wide range of media in **art and design**, particularly through the school's use of visiting artists who help to develop their skills well. In preparing pupils for work in art and design associated with the rainforest, good links are made with literacy. The school celebrates the pupils' work through well-planned displays in classrooms and shared areas. In Years 3 and 4, good links have been made with music and pupils have produced imaginative charcoal drawings of 'Peter and the Wolf.' Year 6 pupils have depicted movement in their brightly coloured 'Children dancing wildly.' Good links are made with other subjects, including ICT, geography and history.
80. A very good range of work on display throughout the school shows that **design and technology** is given good emphasis and reflects a continuation of the strengths seen during the last inspection. These displays, for example of bread making, also show that pupils' understanding of the design process of planning, designing and making receives consistent focus as they move through the school. Models of fairground rides indicate that ICT is used to good effect in moving and controlling models. The curriculum is planned thoroughly and is enriched by the school's promotion of creativity. This was seen to beneficial effect in Years R, 1 and 2 when pupils from these age groups co-operated warmly in the making of houses from different countries during 'International Studies.' The subject is led well and the co-ordinator has been particularly effective by organising resources so that they are fully accessible to staff and pupils and aid teaching and learning.
81. In **physical education** observations of a few lessons, some taken by visiting coaches and teachers, show that the subject is given careful attention across the school. Pupils in Year 5 were seen enjoying and benefiting from guidance from a 'Warrington Wolves' rugby league coach. There was an effective emphasis on skills and competition was a successful element in motivating girls and boys equally. A teacher from the nearby high

school also emphasised skills very well in games and gymnastics and showed that rigour and high expectations are enriching pupils' learning. The curriculum is planned well and is strengthened by the increasing involvement of outside specialists and by a very good range of out-of-school activities. Most of these opportunities, including swimming, are available to pupils in Years 3 to 6, and as part of its intention to expand the curriculum the school is seeking ways of extending clubs to include younger pupils.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

*This area of the curriculum was sampled.*

82. This area of the curriculum is planned well. Assembly themes such as 'other people's feelings' and 'circle time' discussions in classrooms ensure a consistent and ongoing review of moral and social issues. The teachers and learning support assistants promote the children's personal, social and emotional skills in an exemplary fashion and these qualities receive very good emphasis across the school. The pupils' work in this area of the curriculum is recorded in separate books and this helps to give status to their studies. The school's widening of the curriculum and promotion of creativity is enriching this area of learning and strengthening the consideration of health issues.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).*

