

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **GREAT SANKEY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111181

Headteacher: Mr Jim Courtney

Lead inspector: Margaret Dickinson

Dates of inspection: 28 June – 1 July 2004

Inspection number: 256262

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:	358
School address:	Liverpool Road Great Sankey Warrington Cheshire
Postcode:	WA5 1SB
Telephone number:	01925 723445
Fax number:	01925 729210
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Stephen Pennington
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Great Sankey Primary School is a large community primary school and nursery, which draws most of its pupils from the local area. The social and economic circumstances of the pupils are broadly average though the percentage claiming free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is below average. Almost all pupils are of white British origin and no pupils speak English as an additional language. Children start the nursery with broadly average skills and understanding and, by the time they start Year 1, standards are above average. A below average proportion of pupils has special educational needs. These include moderate, emotional, behavioural and physical difficulties. Six pupils have Statements of Special Education Need, which is below average. The school has very recently received an award for its information and communication technology provision.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12373	Margaret Dickinson	Lead inspector	Science, art and design, music, physical education
11229	Michael Freeman	Lay inspector	
28009	Ruth Allen	Team inspector	English, religious education, design and technology, special educational needs
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22359	Jean Havard	Team inspector	Foundation Stage
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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>9</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>13</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES ONE AND TWO</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>32</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **satisfactory education** and it is improving rapidly. The school went through a very difficult period after the last inspection, due to the prolonged ill health of the previous headteacher. It was identified by the local education authority as a school causing serious concern because the lack of leadership had led to a deterioration in the quality of teaching and in pupils' standards. A substantial support programme was put in place. The current headteacher has played a pivotal role in improving the school since his appointment two and a half years ago and his excellent leadership has had a marked effect. The new structures and improvements are effective but have not yet had a chance to impact fully upon pupils' progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and pupils make steady progress. The school gives satisfactory value for money but is in a very good position to improve upon this.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's leadership is excellent and he has the strong support of the staff, pupils and parents.
- Children make a good start in the nursery and reception classes.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics between Years 1 to 6 and in science from Years 3 to 6.
- Writing standards should be better than they are by Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teaching requires further improvement so that more lessons are good or better.
- Pupils form very good relationships, have good attitudes to school and behave well.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) should be a more integral part of pupils' learning across different subjects.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school was slow to respond to the issues but a great deal has been achieved over recent years. Standards have improved in mathematics, science and religious education. The role of the governing body has developed well. There has been very good improvement in setting up a system for assessing pupils and tracking their progress. The curriculum is much improved and teaching is now monitored well.

### 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	B
mathematics	D	C	B	A
science	B	C	A*	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.*

**Overall achievement at the school is satisfactory.** Standards at the end of Year 6 were well below average when compared with similar schools in 2001 and since then they have improved considerably. In 2003, pupils' performance in the Year 6 national tests was above average overall compared with similar schools and results are likely to be similar this year. A lot of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in the 2003 science tests, and this put the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally for science. This year, the results were very good but not quite as high. Current standards at the end of Year 2 are well above average in reading and mathematics and they are above average in writing and science. At the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Investigative science is not as strong as knowledge and understanding in the subject. Standards in ICT are average and pupils meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Children start nursery with average

skills and achieve well in nursery and reception. By the time they start Year 1, they exceed the goals they are expected to reach in all areas apart from mathematical development, where standards are nearer the expectation. Pupils achieve well in reading in Years 1 and 2. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils do well in speaking and listening and in science. However, writing is a relative weakness and pupils do not make enough progress between Years 3 and 6. Achievement is good in mathematics across the school. The best headway is made in the Year 5 and 6 classes where teachers' expectations are higher.

**Pupils' personal qualities are good.** Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and there are particular strengths in moral and social development. Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy school. They are polite, friendly and take a pride in their school. Attendance is well above average and pupils are very punctual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory** with some good features. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. Provision in the nursery and reception classes is good and children benefit from a very caring and supportive environment. **Teaching and learning are satisfactory** overall though good in nursery and reception and in the Year 5 and 6 classes. Mathematics is taught well across the school. General strengths in teaching include teachers' good subject knowledge and their management of behaviour - this is a notable improvement since the last inspection. Many teachers use questions well to prompt pupils to think and learn. Where teaching is weaker, and very occasionally unsatisfactory, teachers talk for too long, there is a lack of focus on what pupils will learn and work is too easy for some pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good opportunities for enriching learning through clubs and visits. Pupils are fully included in school life and there is good attention to their welfare, care, health and safety. Their views are sought and valued. Links with parents are very strong and links with the community are good. There is a particularly valuable partnership with Penketh High School and the pupils benefit greatly.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good** and governance is satisfactory. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management. He has a very clear vision for the school, with pupils' academic and pastoral welfare at the very heart. The three key areas of standards, teaching and leadership needed considerable improvement when he took up his post but he has inspired and paced developments exceptionally well. Staff did not have leadership roles at that stage: now, the leadership of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators is good. The spirit, commitment and teamwork are very strong. Governors are supportive and are developing their strategic role. Statutory responsibilities are fully met. The budget is well controlled and monitored, with a good focus on how pupils will benefit from any spending.

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

Parents have a good level of regard for the school. They particularly praise the leadership and management. They find teachers expect children to work hard and do their best though this was not the case in all lessons seen during the inspection. A few feel they are not kept well informed about how well their children are doing; inspectors found no evidence to support this. The children are mostly positive about school but have some concerns about behaviour and find that some lessons are not interesting. Inspection findings support their views about lessons but there were no problems with behaviour during the inspection.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Make sure pupils make better progress in writing so standards improve further.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching between Years 1 to 6 to bring about more good or better teaching.
- Build upon the recent significant improvements in ICT by developing ICT across the curriculum.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Overall, standards are above average by Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils achieve well in the nursery and reception classes and satisfactorily between Years 1 and 6.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' performance in the national tests has improved markedly over the last three years and the trend in improvement has been better than the national trend.
- Children make a good start to their schooling in the nursery and continue to make good progress in the reception classes.
- Reading is well above average by Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average by Year 6.
- Pupils do well in mathematics across the school and reach well above average standards by Year 6.
- Standards in science are well above average by Year 6 and pupils achieve well between Years 3 to 6.
- Writing is a weaker area and, although they reach average standards, pupils do not build sufficiently upon the good early writing skills they develop in the reception classes.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.6 (16.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.2 (15.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.7 (17.9)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 41 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	27.6 (28.9)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.3 (27.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	32.0 (28.8)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 37 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

1. Results in the 2003 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2 were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. In the same year's tests, for pupils at the end of Year 6, results were above average in English and mathematics. Pupils' performance in science was very high, because a lot of pupils reached the higher Level 5. In comparison with similar schools – a measure related to the percentage of pupils who take free school meals – the Year 2 results were average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. At Year 6, results were below average in English, average in mathematics and very high in science.
2. In the 2004 tests for Year 2 and Year 6, results look broadly similar to last year. In Year 2, pupils are likely to have done better in reading than last year but not quite so well in writing. Science at

Year 6 is likely to be well above average rather than being in the top five per cent. However, it is too early to make secure comparisons as no national data is available yet.

3. Inspection findings broadly reflect the picture suggested by this year's national tests. By Year 2, reading and mathematics are well above average whilst speaking and listening, writing and science are above average. By Year 6, standards are above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Within English, reading is much better than writing, and pupils do not make enough progress in writing between Years 3 and 6. In ICT and religious education, standards are average by Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils achieve satisfactorily.
4. When children start the nursery, a significant number come with limited language and mathematical development. In the nursery and reception classes, they benefit from effective teaching, careful assessment and a good range of well planned activities. This means children make good progress and, by the time they are ready to start Year 1, they have exceeded the goals that are expected for this age in all areas apart from their mathematical development, which is nearer the expectation.
5. The headteacher was appointed in January 2002 and a crucial priority was to raise standards, as the local education authority had highlighted serious concerns about pupils' performance. Since then, pupils have done much better in the tests and there has been substantial improvement year on year. In 2001, for example, the Year 6 test results were much lower than they should have been, being well below average overall when compared with similar schools. In 2002, results were better, though still below average. In 2003, pupils' performance improved significantly and was above average compared with similar schools. The headteacher's very good system for setting and tracking targets for pupils, his determination to raise teachers' expectations and improve the quality of teaching, and his influence on developing the role of teachers' subject leadership roles have been important factors in the improving results.
6. An interest in books is fostered at an early stage, when children start nursery. Parents support their child's reading from the beginning and a love of books continues into the next stage of their schooling, in Years 1 and 2. Here the good progress in reading continues. Reading skills are developed well in literacy lessons and pupils are encouraged to develop their thirst for reading. By Year 6, many pupils have a wide knowledge of books and authors. They talk knowledgeably about the books they read and express considered opinions about them. Many pupils readily tackle substantial books.
7. Speaking and listening skills are above average by Year 2 and well above average by Year 6. Pupils listen well to one another. Many use good vocabulary and express themselves confidently. They are given opportunities to discuss and debate ideas, particularly in the upper classes in the school. Pupils are also encouraged to speak to larger audiences, through participating in assemblies.
8. Mathematics is taught well and there has been a sharp improvement in standards over the last three years. Teachers place very clear emphasis on developing mathematical skills and thinking. Pupils are good at calculating mentally because they practise this on a regular basis. Teachers plan appropriate work according to pupils' capabilities, including harder work for the higher attaining pupils. As a result, a good proportion of pupils reach the expected level in mathematics and many attain the higher Level 5.
9. Pupils do well in science overall between Years 3 and 6. They build well upon the above average standards by the end of Year 2. The best progress occurs in Years 5 and 6. Here, teaching is good and the pupils regularly benefit from additional specialist teaching from a member of staff at Penketh High School. Pupils have access to resources that they would not normally have and this supports their progress well. The older pupils are particularly inquisitive, and interested in science, because the teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on them. By Year 6, most pupils have a particularly good knowledge of scientific processes and terminology.

10. Writing is a relative weakness within English and this is something that the school is in the process of addressing. Performance in the Year 6 writing tests dipped in 2003 because only a few pupils reached the higher Level 5. However, results were much better this year and more pupils attained the higher level. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement with writing across the school because pupils do not make steady progress as they move from class to class. In Years 1 and 2, achievement in writing is satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies in how well writing skills are developed. Achievement is unsatisfactory between Years 3 and 6. Expectations are too low in Years 3 and 4 so pupils' achievement wanes before it picks up again in the Year 5 and 6 classes.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. All these strengths contribute significantly to pupils' good personal development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children's personal and social development is promoted well in the nursery and reception classes.
- Pupils have very good relationships with other pupils and with adults.
- Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to school life.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times.
- The school promotes pupils' moral and social development well.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop an awareness and understanding of other cultures.

### **Commentary**

11. Behaviour throughout the school is good and in the nursery and reception classes it is very good. This reflects good improvement since the last inspection when behaviour overall was satisfactory. Particularly good progress has been made over recent years in tackling some of the problems that had arisen. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy and good strategies for handling any difficulties with behaviour. Parents who attended the meeting were happy with how pupils behaved. The pupils were rather more critical and some felt that pupils do not always behave well. During the inspection, however, behaviour was good. Pupils entered the hall very quietly for assemblies and they showed calm respect. There has been one exclusion within the last two years but this is a very isolated occurrence.
12. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are good and productive. They enjoy coming to school, work hard and most take a pride in their work. They like to show their work to visitors and are eager to talk about their school. Pupils' positive attitudes help them to get the most out of their lessons and this contributes to their satisfactory achievement.
13. The relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and pupils are caring, helpful and polite. They play and work well together and include other pupils in their activities. Older pupils enjoy looking after the younger ones in the playground. The school is a happy and harmonious community. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to develop their personal skills and take on responsibilities. These include the School Council, prefects, class monitors and assembly monitors. Pupils take up these opportunities eagerly, developing good self-esteem and a sense of responsibility, independence and maturity. The good range of extra-curricular activities available, such as the Computer Club and Chess Club, also play an important part in pupils' personal and social development.
14. Children in the nursery and reception soon settle into routines and they quickly become enthusiastic and independent learners. There are very good relationships between staff and children and everyone works together harmoniously. By the time children reach the end of the

reception year, many of them have exceeded the personal and social development goals that are expected for this age.

15. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies are well planned and organised and they make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils are given opportunities to express opinions and say how they feel. They listen carefully and reflect quietly on the theme of the day. For example, they understand why they should wear the golden rules of the school proudly in their hearts just as St George wore his armour and standard proudly into battle. Pupils reflect on what these rules are and how to use them in their everyday lives. Music is used effectively to create a sense of occasion. Pupils are regularly encouraged to be still and reflect as well as to pray during assemblies. Spiritual opportunities occur less frequently in lessons because teachers do not allow time for pupils to make connections that can help to develop spirituality, through, for example, pausing for thought, or exploring and sharing their own thoughts and ideas.
16. Pupils' moral development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and the consequences of their actions. Assemblies contribute strongly to the moral development of pupils. Social development is good with very positive and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are at ease with one another and enjoy being part of the school community.
17. Cultural development is satisfactory and improving steadily. The school makes use of visiting performers, such as African drummers and theatre groups and also takes pupils to local museums and galleries, such as The Silk Museum at Macclesfield. The school has not yet planned fully how it will ensure pupils leave the school with an awareness and tolerance of other cultures and traditions that they may well encounter later in life.
18. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good because the school promotes good attendance rigorously and monitors it well. Parents support this stance strongly and pupils enjoy coming to school.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	3.5
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
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
White – British
Mixed – White and Asian
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll
249
1
4

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	1
0	0
0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded. The numbers in this table do not match the number on roll during the inspection because the data is returned at a different time of the year.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good range of opportunities for enriching the curriculum. Pupils are well cared for by staff. There are very good links with parents and good links with the community. Links with Penketh High School are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory between Years 1 to 6 and good in the nursery and reception classes. Assessment of pupils' work is good overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are taught well in the nursery and reception classes and they make a good start to their schooling as a result.
- Mathematics is taught well throughout the school and pupils do well.
- Between Years 1 and 6, the most effective teaching occurs in the Year 5 and 6 classes.
- In some lessons, teachers do not always expect enough of pupils, teaching lacks variety and the pace of learning slows down.

### Commentary

19. In the nursery and reception classes, teachers plan a wide range of activities, with a good balance between those that are directed by the teacher and those where children have a degree of choice. Nursery nurses are used very effectively to support children. There is very good teamwork and children benefit from seeing the good relationships within the staff team. Speaking and listening skills are developed well through many activities, including role play, and new vocabulary is reinforced skilfully. Staff have high expectations of how children will behave and respond, and they foster a calm and ordered atmosphere for learning. From the time they enter the nursery, children are assessed and targets are set for each. These are used well to support individual children's needs and help all children to achieve well.
20. Mathematics teaching has several strengths. Teachers use questions effectively to check pupils understand and to prompt them to articulate their mathematical thinking. In the best lessons, teachers target specific questions at individual pupils according to their capability. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and reinforce mathematical language well. Lessons have a lively pace and teachers vary the lessons so that pupils are kept alert and interested. In a Year 6 lesson on prime factors, for instance, the teacher used a successful paired activity to motivate the pupils and this lifted the level of concentration. Teachers use resources effectively, both to demonstrate important points and to enable the pupils to practise themselves. Teachers plan work that is suitable for different ability levels within the class and they produce a lot of work. Pupils find that they do work hard in mathematics and they are given harder work if they are capable of this.
21. In other subjects, whilst there are strengths, there are also areas for further development. Where teaching is good or very good, some of the following characteristics are often present:
  - There is a sense of rigour, pace and challenge to the teaching because the teachers have higher expectations of what will be achieved in the lesson. As a result, the pupils are enthusiastic, they try hard and achieve well.
  - Teachers manage pupils well and expectations for behaviour are good – in the best cases the control is unobtrusive.
  - Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic themselves.
  - Teachers are very clear what they want the pupils to learn and there is a clear focus on this throughout the lesson. The final part of lessons is used to draw the threads together and to reinforce the learning, rather than simply remind pupils what they have done.

- Teachers draw on a good range of methods, for example asking pupils to talk with a partner. This was used well in a Year 5 English lesson to develop pupils' ideas and all pupils were immediately spurred on. In a Year 6 science lesson, the teacher referred to an effective visual plan to remind pupils what they had done in the previous lesson so that they quickly 'tuned in' to their experiments and were enthusiastic about starting. In a Years 1 and 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher changed the activity just at the right time to prompt pupils' interest and concentration.
- Teachers have good questioning techniques and constantly challenge pupils to think more deeply. They set high expectations for pupils' responses so that they develop their ideas and explain their thinking. Teachers ask supplementary questions where necessary to bring this about.
- Assessments are used well by teachers to help plan pupils' next steps in learning and to set targets for their further improvement.
- Teachers make sure all pupils have an opportunity to be involved in the lesson. They support the lower attaining pupils with helpful explanations and praise their successes. In one lesson, the teacher allowed a pupil who found it difficult to mix and work with others to sit on the outside of the group, so that he could choose how much he wanted to get involved.

22. Many of the above characteristics were evident in the strongest teaching, which occurred in Years 5 and 6. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, or in the few cases where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, the following characteristics are often evident:
- Teachers talk for too great a proportion of the lesson, meaning that pupils spend long periods listening when they could be taking a more active and independent role in their own learning.
  - Teachers do not capture and maintain all pupils' attention and pupils begin to lose interest or chatter.
  - Lessons move at a slow pace and there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils
  - Classroom assistants are not used as effectively as they could be. They sit and listen for long periods with the pupils, rather than interacting with the pupils they are supporting, ensuring they understand and encouraging them to answer questions.
23. There has been substantial improvement in improving the quality of teaching over the last few years. The headteacher has tackled many of the weaknesses that were identified by local education authority shortly before he took up post and he has established effective procedures for monitoring teaching and supporting further improvement.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3 (10%)	16 (52%)	10 (32%)	2 (6%)	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.*

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. There are good opportunities for enriching the curriculum. The school's accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils to benefit from visits and visitors and the number and range of extra curricular activities is very good.
- The recently opened nursery and reception classrooms provide a good learning environment.
- There are good arrangements for preparing children who are transferring to Year 1 and for Year 6 pupils moving to the high school.
- Opportunities to make links between subjects and to use ICT across the curriculum are at an early stage.

## Commentary

24. At the time of the previous inspection, the planning and content of the curriculum were unsatisfactory. There were very few schemes of work and the lack of time for religious education meant standards were below average. The weaknesses remained until two to three years ago when the headteacher established teachers' curriculum leadership roles and rationalised the amount of time being spent on each subject. He carried out a thorough audit of the curriculum and, as a result, schemes of work were put in place in all subjects. These are now enabling breadth and balance in the curriculum and standards have improved. An overall curriculum plan has been developed and its implementation is rigorously monitored. The school has just completed the first two-year cycle of topics and the headteacher and senior leaders are in the process of evaluating the outcomes of this. The staff now realise that there is scope to develop and enhance the links between subjects, and to plan how ICT will be used to support learning across subjects, in order to make learning more meaningful for pupils. The excellent leadership of the headteacher in establishing and developing good practice has meant good progress has been made in improving the curriculum over recent years. There is now a good whole-school approach to curriculum planning and strong teamwork.
25. The school has an appropriate programme for pupils' personal, social and health education. This contributes appropriately to pupils' moral and social development. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes has improved considerably since the local education authority identified some significant weaknesses two and a half years ago. It is planned and resourced well. All areas of learning are carefully and effectively considered ensuring that the children have good opportunities to learn by making their own choices and through appropriate adult support. There are very good arrangements for ensuring children are confident and secure about transferring to Year 1.
26. Recent visitors to the school have included theatre companies, a brass ensemble, a folk singer, a puppet theatre and a photographer of wildlife and birds. Pupils visit local places which support the work they are doing in the class. Pupils in Year 6 go on a residential visit where they can develop their ICT skills and apply learning they have done in school. The wide range of clubs includes sports activities, such as football, netball, short tennis, cricket, tennis, rugby and hockey, as well as more unusual opportunities such as fencing. Other clubs include chess, guitars, computers, cycling proficiency, French, Spanish and German. All these experiences enrich the curriculum very well. They provide pupils with good opportunities to extend their learning and to develop their cultural awareness and social skills.
27. Provision and support for pupils with special educational needs is good so that all pupils have full and equal access to the curriculum. Suitable work is planned for these pupils, which matches their individual needs and, in many lessons, they are well supported by support staff. Their targets are regularly monitored and reviewed so that the curriculum can be adapted if necessary.
28. The resources available to both teachers and pupils are satisfactory overall, but in the nursery and reception classes they are very good. These classes are housed in a newly-furbished

building. The area is spacious and well organised for the different types of activity for children of this age. Each area is very well resourced.

29. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education, particularly pupils in Year 6. There are strong links with Penketh High School. Pupils are used to visiting the site both within and after the school day to use specific facilities such as the computer suite and an all-weather sports surface. Staff visit regularly to support pupils' learning in ICT and science. Good use is made of units of work for Year 6 pupils, which are begun in primary school and completed after transfer. This provides good continuity for pupils' learning and helps to ease the transition from one stage to the next.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good overall. The provision of support, advice and guidance for pupils is good. Pupils' involvement in the school's work is good and their views are sought and valued.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are well cared for and given good support and guidance.
- The school regularly checks on pupils' views and welcomes these.

### **Commentary**

30. The school provides good care and welfare for its pupils, and parents speak highly of this aspect of the school's work. The governors, headteacher and staff make sure that pupils learn within a healthy and safe environment. There are good measures for ensuring child protection. Arrangements for providing first aid support are good and fire equipment is tested regularly.
31. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils are very happy that there is an adult that they can go to if they are in difficulties or worried. During lunchtimes and playtimes, there is a friendly atmosphere between pupils and staff. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs are well cared for and generally well supported. Teachers and support staff encourage positive relationships and there is a clear emphasis on all pupils being included. Assemblies play an important role in pupils' pastoral care and in promoting a caring ethos within the school.
32. As well as strong pastoral care, pupils' academic welfare is well monitored and tracked. This is particularly the case between Years 3 and 6 where there is a very clear focus on academic progress. The headteacher has established a system whereby each pupil has an ambitious target to reach. These are discussed with teachers and reviewed regularly. This careful monitoring of pupils' progress is helping teachers to focus on individual pupil's needs and potential. This is one reason why results have improved so markedly over recent years. Children are well monitored and supported in nursery and reception classes and careful records are kept of how well each child is doing in relation to each area of learning, and how their progress can be further supported.
33. The School Council provides good opportunities for gauging pupils' views and involving pupils in making decisions about school life. The regular "Happiness Survey" also provides useful information for the school on pupils' opinions. Induction arrangements for new pupils are well organised and the transition into a new school is smooth and effective, with good involvement of parents.

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

The school has very good partnerships with parents and carers, and with other schools. There are also effective links with the local community.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides very good and clear information for parents.
- Parents find the school very easy to approach and find the headteacher and staff accessible and very helpful.
- There are very good and productive links with Penketh High School.
- Parents are very keen to support their children's learning at home.

## **Commentary**

34. The school provides very good and high quality information to parents on their children's progress and other matters. The regular communications range from weekly newsletters (with well written contributions from pupils) to annual reports and the school prospectus. All this information is presented in a clear, helpful and comprehensible style. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting noted how much communication had improved over recent years. They particularly like the detailed information they now receive on the curriculum and the hints the school gives them for helping their children with homework, for example by providing the key words children need to know by a certain age. There is a high degree of satisfaction with the amount and variety of homework that the teachers give pupils in different year groups.
35. The governing body's annual meeting attracts a fair parental turn out and the termly consultation meetings for parents are very well attended. Parents say they find these helpful and informative. The home-school agreement is well supported by parents. Parents who attended the meeting and those who were interviewed during the inspection remarked frequently on the openness and friendliness of the headteacher and his staff. There was strong endorsement that any queries, worries, complaints or issues that arise are dealt with swiftly and respectfully.
36. The energetic parents and friends association (PFA) organises a wide range of activities. The headteacher works very closely with the PFA and the parents on the committee feel very well supported by him. In turn, the PFA events are very well attended by parents and these raise substantial funds for the school, which directly benefit pupils' learning. They support educational trips, for example, or raise funds for specific projects. A recent notable success is the effective new ICT suite, which is in its early days but is already being used regularly by pupils. The PFA also forge good links with local businesses which provide additional resources.
37. Parents are very supportive of the school and there is a regular flow of parents to help in school, with visits, for example, or with reading or design and technology work. The school actively solicits parents' views, for example, through an annual questionnaire, parent governors or informal discussions. The school clearly values its parents and the contribution they make to the life of the school.
38. There is a well established and very productive partnership with the adjacent Penketh High School. The school has access to some of its sports facilities and staff visit the school regularly to support pupils' learning. Special units of work and day visits are planned to bring about a smooth and worry-free transition for Year 6 pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and he manages the school exceptionally well. The leadership of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators is good overall. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding. He is an exemplary role model to all who work and learn in the school.
- Members of the senior management team and most subject co-ordinators are having a clear impact on raising standards.
- There is a very good process in place for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress across the school.
- The school successfully evaluates its own effectiveness and uses the information well to implement improvements in the school.
- Finances are well managed and the school reviews its spending carefully.

## Commentary

39. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management in this school. In the two and a half years he has been in post, he has taken it from a school struggling under very difficult circumstances into a new era of optimism and vision. His infectious warmth and determination have had a remarkable effect on staff, pupils, governors and parents. Everyone associated with the school is committed to its improvement and success in sustaining the very good work that has occurred since his appointment. The school is well on the way to developing a high quality learning environment and improving the achievement of all pupils.
40. The headteacher gives a very strong lead to the work of the school. He has a very clear vision for where he wants the school to be and is pacing developments very well. He has formed an effective senior management team which shares his vision and optimism. As a result all staff in the school work together well and there is very strong teamwork at all levels. The senior staff work effectively alongside the headteacher to ensure a consistency of approach to the monitoring of standards across the school. They are also realistic and know there is still some way to go in making sure pupils achieve well across the school. The role of the subject co-ordinators is now becoming well established. All subject co-ordinators have informative and comprehensive files, indicating that they are active in monitoring, supporting and training in their subject. While some are still developing their role, others, such as those leading the Foundation Stage, English in Years 3 to 6, religious education and special educational needs, are managing their areas well. Leadership in mathematics is very good. The governing body is fully supportive of the headteacher and staff in striving to sustain and build upon the improving standards. Their strategic overview of the school is developing well. They support and challenge the headteacher and senior staff and have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve.
41. The headteacher's own evaluation of the school is very astute. The senior staff support the headteacher in identifying the main priorities for development and ensuring that there is a clear plan of action for improvement. Whole school and curriculum audits are carried out every year and actions form the main part of the detailed school improvement plan. This is used as a working document and all actions are reviewed and evaluated regularly. This sharp and systematic focus means that everyone is very clear about the direction that the school is taking and the part that they are to play within this.
42. The headteacher and senior staff analyse test data well and have set up a very effective target setting process for pupils in Years 3 to 6, based on their Year 2 test results. Challenging, targets are set for all pupils and these are monitored and acted upon regularly. These are not yet having an effective impact on standards in writing but there are signs of improvement.
43. Under the headteacher's guidance and influence, staff are committed to ensuring all areas of the curriculum are delivered appropriately. The pastoral care of pupils is handled well and there is a clear climate of trust which is fostered well by the staff. Staff are clear about their personal targets and have good access to guidance, support and training. The staff work together as a team to support each other and the pupils in their care, ensuring all pupils are fully included in school life.

44. The budget is controlled and monitored well and the finance administrator manages the finances of the school efficiently, in conjunction with the headteacher. They are well supported by a finance officer from the local education authority. The headteacher has a very clear view that spending decisions should focus clearly on raising standards and improving the quality of education for all pupils. The governing body are aware that injections of funding need to be evaluated in terms of value for money and they are developing more formal procedures to bring this about.

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

Income and Expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	623,602	Balance from previous year	21,255
Total expenditure	620,787	Balance carried forward to next year	24,070
Expenditure per pupil	1,784		

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

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

45. The provision for children in nursery and reception is good and is a strength of the school. At the previous inspection, provision was good. The local education authority's report, in November 2001, indicates that the quality of provision had declined. However, it has improved greatly since that time. When the majority of children begin in the nursery, their attainment is about average but a significant proportion of children are below the general expectation in language and mathematical development. Through the consistently good teaching in the nursery and in both reception classes, children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. By the end of the reception year, almost all attain the goals children are expected to reach, and many exceed them. This applies to all areas of learning, except mathematical development, where standards are overall in line with expectations.
46. There is a good balance of teacher and child-initiated activities, through which the children become independent and enthusiastic learners. In addition, there are good induction procedures into school, to ensure a smooth transition between home and school and eventually into Year 1. Assessment procedures are thorough and used well to help teachers with their planning. The curriculum is good, with imaginatively planned activities which the children enjoy, so they achieve well.
47. Leadership and management are good. The Foundation Stage leader has successfully overseen the organisation and resourcing of classrooms to develop the areas of learning in the newly-refurbished building. She has greatly improved the quality of planning since the previous inspection. All staff plan co-operatively, exchange ideas and ensure that children have similar experiences in each reception class. Very good relationships exist between children and staff and the school's commitment to inclusion helps to create an effective first stage of learning, and a strong foundation for the children's future education.

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

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

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

- Children achieve well because of the overall good teaching and high expectations of the staff.
- Children settle quickly into the routines of the class because of the efficient organisation of learning.
- The staff's good team work provides a very good role model for the children.
- Children are safe, happy and confident learners, and they enjoy coming to school.

#### **Commentary**

48. Children enter the nursery at the level expected for their age in personal, social and emotional development. By the time they reach Year 1 almost all of the children have attained the goals for this area of development and most attain beyond this. They respond well to the high expectations of the staff in the nursery and reception classes, and behaviour is very good. They know the routines of their class and settle quickly to tasks. The very good relationship between the teachers and the nursery nurses provides a very good role model of working harmoniously together. Children play well together, initiate conversations with each other, show interest in what they are doing and concentrate well. There is a calm, orderly atmosphere and children are eager to learn even when not working directly with adults. They take a pride in their work and are eager to discuss it.

49. Children are encouraged to share and take turns amicably and know to put up their hands when the teacher asks a question. In a music lesson, for example, they all waited patiently for their turn to play the instruments and they listened carefully. Children are confident to ask questions or suggest answers, knowing that each contribution will be valued. Adults working in the class are skilful in encouraging children to consider the needs and feelings of others. Children are open and friendly to each other and to visitors in the classroom.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- As a result of overall good teaching, children are above the level expected for their age in this area of learning.
- Every opportunity is used to develop the children's language skills.
- Systematic teaching of phonics and other early reading skills is very good.

### **Commentary**

50. Many children enter the nursery at the level expected for their age in this area of development with a significant minority of children below average. By the time they reach Year 1 almost all of the children have attained the expected goals for communication, language and literacy and the majority are attaining beyond this.
51. Teaching is good and at times very good. Staff have high expectations and relationships are very good. As a result, children achieve well. There is a good stock of fiction and non-fiction books. Nursery children can choose a book and handle it with care, many appreciating that text is read from left to right. Children quickly learn to read because of the strong home-school partnership, for example through taking reading books home; they therefore have regular reading practice. Reading strategies are taught systematically and children know many sounds and letter names. For example, reception children enjoy sharing a class book, listen carefully to the story, and can suggest words that end in 'll' as in 'pill'.
52. At every appropriate opportunity, speaking and listening skills are developed well, with staff acting as very good role models. They say words clearly and encourage children to explain their experiences carefully. Correct vocabulary is taught in context. This occurred, for example, in a reception mathematics lesson, when the teacher asked the children to 'predict' the distance between two points.
53. Throughout all the children's experiences in nursery and reception they are encouraged to develop their communication skills. There is very good provision for role play in a variety of imaginative situations. The activity 'Walking Through the Jungle', for example, provided children with very good opportunities to speak and listen and to develop their mark making and writing skills in 'diaries'.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children's attitudes to mathematical development are good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Nursery nurses are deployed well.

## Commentary

54. Standards of attainment in mathematical development are slightly below average when they start the nursery. They achieve well in nursery and reception. When they reach Year 1, a good proportion of children have attained the required goals, but problem-solving is a weaker area. Children's good attitudes to this area of learning contribute greatly to their good achievement. They enjoy learning about number and use correct vocabulary. Children have many opportunities within classroom activities to practise relevant skills such as, counting, sorting and measuring.
55. Teaching and learning are good and resources are used effectively use to promote learning. This results in all pupils achieving well. For example, in a reception class, when children were introduced to 'measuring' the distance between two points, they joined plastic cubes together, counted them and recorded the number of cubes used. The activity really helped to develop the children's ability to measure distance as well as consolidate their counting skills.
56. The nursery nurses offer good support to the children and this allows effective group work to take place. All adults have very good relationships with the children and continually check their level of understanding. As a result, children are confident about answering questions and trying activities for themselves.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well.
- Children's learning is developed within well-chosen contexts.

## Commentary

57. Standards of attainment are average when children first start the nursery. Achievement is good for all children. By the time they reach Year 1 almost all of the children have attained the required goals and most are attaining beyond this, because they receive good quality teaching. For example, the good reading of the story of Noah, by the nursery teacher, included the children wearing masks and moving into the ark as 'animals'. This led on to providing the children with early scientific experiences, through exploring floating and sinking activities. Role play themes are also used well to develop children's knowledge of the world, through, for example, 'Jack's Garden Centre' and 'Walking Through the Jungle'.
58. The children learn to compare old and new toys and group them accordingly. In all classes, teachers and staff create a lively environment to stimulate children's curiosity. Children are introduced to new concepts and vocabulary through well-chosen activities that reflect real-world contexts. Following a farm visit, for example, children in reception learnt how to create a map showing the journey from the school to the farm so that 'PB the Bear' could follow it. They develop early ICT skills by using computers to write their own name, choosing their own particular style of font and select a colour to colour it in.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well through the imaginatively planned activities on offer.

- Space is limited for outdoor activities but teachers ensure that maximum learning takes place.

### **Commentary**

59. Standards of attainment are average when children first start school and, by the time they enter Year 1, almost all children attain the goals for this area and many exceed them.
60. Children achieve well in their physical activities through the good teaching they receive. Staff provide them with many imaginatively-planned activities to engage the children. In the reception classes, the children use scissors efficiently and use glue and sticky tape to join paper and card to make farm buildings and animals. Children show good fine motor skills, such as moving the cursor on the computer screen and using pencils to draw farm animals. In the limited outdoor space, the nursery children learn to control wheeled toys and to balance on planks successfully. Through careful teaching the children in reception learn that they need to warm up before exercising, and learn that their hearts beat faster after exercise.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average in children's creative work.
- Teaching and learning are good and result in good achievement.

### **Commentary**

61. Standards of attainment in this area are average when children start school. By the end of the reception year almost all children have attained and many exceed the goals for children of this age. For example, the good quality three dimensional farm animals in reception reflect the fine motor control, care and imagination exercised by the children.
62. Teaching and learning are good and this enables all children to achieve well. Children explore pattern and learn to manipulate modelling and construction materials and apply paint skilfully with a variety of tools. Very good teamwork amongst staff enables children to receive good quality guidance in their choice and creative use of tools and materials. The children are given good opportunities to act, sing and make music. For example, in a reception lesson, a parent comes in regularly to sing with the children and accompany them on a guitar. They sang a number of songs enthusiastically. During 'When The Rain Came Down', all joined in with the actions and a group of children played hand bells, managing to keep to the beat very successfully.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Reading is taught well and pupils' reading skills are therefore well developed.
- Pupils speak confidently and by the end of Year 6 they are using a good range of vocabulary.
- Standards in writing could be better by the end of Year 6 and other subjects could make a stronger contribution to raising standards in writing.
- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is good, and is better than in other years.
- The quality of assessment and target setting varies. Some teachers do not provide enough guidance on how pupils can improve their standards further.

## Commentary

63. Standards in English are above average by Years 2 and 6 and achievement is satisfactory. After the last inspection, standards dipped significantly and, until 2001, the pupils' performance was below average in comparison with similar schools. Since then, standards have improved and this year's results are likely to show continued improvement. Inspection evidence shows standards at Year 2 are well above average in reading and above average in writing. By Year 6 standards in reading remain well above average but standards in writing are average. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils achieve satisfactorily in reading but achievement in writing is unsatisfactory because pupils make uneven progress in these years and do not sustain their above average standards.
64. Reading skills are taught very effectively in the nursery and reception classes and a love of books is fostered at this early age. With very good support from parents, pupils maintain this interest throughout their time in the school. Parents read with their children regularly and encourage them to use the local library. Discussions with pupils show many of them are keen readers who regularly use the library and read each evening. Reading skills are developed well in literacy lessons and guided reading sessions are very effective. By Year 2 most pupils read with good levels of fluency and can use non-fiction books to find things out. By Year 6 pupils' reading standards are well above average. The majority of pupils read widely and tackle substantial texts. In lessons they use a highly analytical approach to their reading and express opinions about key features of books and how authors use text to convey feelings and moods.
65. All pupils listen well to each other in class lessons and in other social situations, such as assemblies and small-group activities. Speaking and listening are encouraged from the very beginning when children enter the nursery. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able to talk about what they do with confidence and offer opinions and suggestions in discussion. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a very good grasp of quite complex vocabulary. These skills are encouraged well, particularly in Year 6, where pupils are given many opportunities to debate and discuss. In one lesson, for example, pupils discussed characterisation in books and how authors portray this through the use of effective language.
66. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their writing in Years 1 and 2. This is mainly due to the good start pupils make in the nursery and reception classes; they retain and consolidate this knowledge throughout Years 1 and 2. However, it is clear, from looking at pupils' work, that there is an over emphasis on filling in work sheets. Opportunities are missed to develop pupils' use of creative language and develop handwriting and spelling. By Year 6, pupils use a range of forms appropriately, including stories, poems, letters and reports, but in Years 3 and 4 expectations of how work should be presented are too low and the higher attaining pupils are not being given harder or more complex work to extend their learning. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use interesting and imaginative words and phrases. They understand the need to draft a piece of work in order to then improve it over time. By Year 6, many pupils use powerful language and draw on a rich vocabulary.
67. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers promote reading skills well and in many lessons, pupils' speaking skills are developed effectively. Teachers plan lessons carefully and are well prepared. Pupils have opportunities to write for longer periods and they write for a variety of purposes. There are some weaknesses, however, in how writing is taught. In Years 1 and 2, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting, spelling and presentation. In Years 3 and 4 teachers' expectations vary and higher attaining pupils are not given enough more demanding work to extend their learning. There is insufficient written work in some classes. This means pupils are not building up their writing stamina in a steady way. In the Year 5 and 6 classes, teachers' expectations are higher and more consistent. Teaching is more rigorous and challenging and, as a result, pupils try hard to succeed and make much better progress.



68. Assessment and target setting procedures have been introduced well with all classes. Individual writing targets are placed in the front of pupils' writing books and are reviewed each half term. There is evidence in some year groups that these are not reviewed often enough. Pupils higher up the school can decide on their own targets and, where support is provided by the teacher, this is effective. However, some pupils say they just pick a target they want. This indicates that the process is inconsistent across the school and is not challenging all pupils sufficiently. A very good system is now in place whereby national levels are set for all pupils and teachers can consistently monitor whether these are being achieved. This is very effective in Years 3 to 6 but now needs to be used in Years 1 and 2 to help pupils make better progress. Leadership and management of the subject is shared and is satisfactory overall but stronger in Years 3 and 6.

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

69. Speaking and listening are well developed across subjects and on other occasions, such as assemblies. In the most successful lessons, teachers encourage pupils to use good vocabulary. In science, for example, pupils have acquired a good grasp of scientific terms. Pupils use their reading skills well across the curriculum. In ICT lessons, pupils search for information using the Internet. Writing is not as well developed across the curriculum and there are missed opportunities to develop pupils' capacity to write in subjects, such as science and religious education.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics between Years 1 to 6 because of good teaching.
- The leadership of the joint co-ordinators is very good.
- There is very good emphasis on developing skills in mental mathematics and problem solving and this equips pupils well with the skills they need to be good mathematicians.
- Assessment and analysis of performance data is used effectively to monitor progress, particularly for Years 3 to 6.

#### **Commentary**

70. Standards in mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy to good effect to provide a structured approach to learning. This has resulted in a steady rise in standards since the last inspection, particularly over the last three years.
71. Pupils with special educational need are supported well during lessons, enabling them to take a full and active part. As a result these pupils achieve as well as their classmates. This is helped both by the range of resources used and by good interventions by the teaching assistants, who work unobtrusively and sensitively. In two lessons, for example, pupils were supported by teaching assistants on an individual basis in order to meet the needs identified on their educational plans. In both cases the support enabled them to play a full part in the lesson and this represented very good inclusion for these pupils.
72. The higher attaining pupils are given work which challenges them so that they too achieve well. In discussions, pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 were aware of how their teachers make the work harder for some, for instance by giving them bigger numbers or more complex tasks. The Year 6 pupils feel that they learn a lot in mathematics. They say that teachers explain well and that lessons are fun, involving more than just going from page to page in a book. They say that teachers give them work which makes them do their best and they know when they have done

well, both by what is written in their books and by what is said to them in lessons. Homework is set regularly.

73. Teaching and learning are good overall. Inspectors' analysis of pupils' work indicates good teaching, though the quality of teaching during the inspection varied from good to unsatisfactory. The most successful teaching and learning occurred in the lessons for the oldest pupils in the school. In the good lessons seen, teachers had good subject knowledge and used questions effectively to clarify understanding for the pupils, who were required to explain their learning and their mathematical thinking. There was a lively pace and good use was made of resources, both to demonstrate the teaching and learning points and to enable the pupils to practise themselves. Pupils' work from all ages in the school shows that teachers have high expectations and plan work that is suitable for all pupils, taking into account their capabilities. Pupils across the attainment range work hard and produce a high volume of work that reflects all aspects of the subject.
74. Throughout the school great importance is placed on the acquisition of quick and effective ways of mental calculation. This is achieved by emphasis on regular practice in lessons and activities which the pupils find enjoyable. Pupils in Year 2 spoke very enthusiastically about the games which they play at the beginning of every lesson. They were very secure in their understanding of tens and units during one of these games. In another lesson, pupils in Year 6 were challenged to recite the 0.08 times table then apply this to related activities. Later on, they were able to use these facts to work out division problems set by the teacher.
75. The subject leaders provide very good leadership. They have been very successful in raising the profile of mathematics and have played a key role in raising standards from below average, three years ago, to well above average. They have a clear understanding of how the roles and responsibilities are shared and they have kept detailed and well ordered records of the work they have done. They have carried out a very effective analysis of strengths and aspects they wanted to improve further and this has resulted in appropriate actions being taken to improve provision. Their focus on ensuring that pupils have very good mental mathematical skills and can then apply these to solve problems has helped to raise standards.
76. The school has a good system for keeping records of pupils' attainment. Teachers use this to ensure that the work they give to pupils helps them to make progress. This is more secure in Years 3 to 6, but there are plans to continue to develop and refine the process in earlier years. The teachers set challenging yearly targets for pupils and many either meet or exceed these. These good aspects of provision help to bring about pupils' good achievement.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

77. There is appropriate use of mathematics across the curriculum which enables the pupils to apply their skills in a variety of meaningful ways. The Year 6 pupils have used their understanding of averages and graphs to help them record rainfall, temperatures and heights of mountains in geography and have used charts and various types of graph to record results of investigations in science.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good** overall.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by Year 6 and pupils do well, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about science and its related terminology.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils especially enjoy lessons with a practical element.
- The subject is well led and managed and there has been considerable progress since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement in scientific investigations is not quite as strong as the other aspects of science and teachers could have higher expectations when it comes to the related writing tasks.

## Commentary

78. Achievement is good overall. Pupils enter Year 1 with good knowledge and understanding and this continues through to the end of Year 2, where standards are above average. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Between Years 3 and 6, achievement is good overall, and very good in the Year 5 and 6 classes. Standards are well above average by Year 6.
79. Standards in science, at Years 2 and 6, are higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Standards at Year 6 fell to below average after the last inspection but they have improved considerably since then, with a sharp rise over the last two to three years. In the 2003 tests for Year 6 pupils, the pupils' performance was exceptionally good and the school was in the top five per cent compared with schools nationally as well as similar schools. One of the reasons for this was the very high proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5. In this year's tests, standards are more likely to be well above average, not quite as good as last year, but this nevertheless represents good achievement for these pupils.
80. By Year 2, many pupils have a good scientific knowledge about science. They know words like 'push' and 'pull' refer to different types of force. Many make observations about factors that might make different toy cars move well across a shiny or carpeted surface, considering size, materials and shape. They list basic differences between familiar living and non-living things and they compare and record features, such as feet and hand size. Pupils know why it is important to make a test fair and ways they can do this. They predict what might happen, observe carefully and draw simple conclusions once they have carried out their investigations. Whilst pupils in Year 1 and 2 do record their findings, all pupils do this in the same way, irrespective of their capability. The expectations are therefore sometimes too low and more capable writers could be expected to write more fully. When pupils are given the chance to write independently, they generally include more scientific detail and their writing is of a better standard.
81. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils continue to develop a very good grasp of the knowledge-based aspects of the science. They also have plenty of opportunities to carry out investigations. In Year 5, for example, they test the solubility of materials in different liquids and the factors that affect evaporation. In Year 6, pupils explore to what extent temperature affects the amount of gas escaping from a fizzy drink. Through this type of activity, pupils are encouraged to observe closely, ask questions and think scientifically. Teachers promote these skills well, through modelling and guiding, but sometimes over direct the investigations and dictate how they will be recorded. Pupils do not have much chance to design their own investigations and consider how they would explore scientific questions. Books show that all pupils mostly produce the same work. Quite often this is identical, whether it is done by a pupil with special educational needs or a higher attaining pupil. The knowledge of science is being taught thoroughly, which is one reason why pupils do very well in tests, but there is now scope for pupils to work more independently, especially within the investigations aspect of science. Analysis of pupils' books also shows writing skills, which is a current priority area for the school, could be developed more effectively through science.

82. Teaching and learning are good overall and are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge and all teachers make sure scientific skills are covered as well as the aspects of scientific knowledge. There is much greater pace and challenge to the teaching at towards the top of the school. Here, the pupils also benefit from additional specialist teaching, from a member of staff from the high school. During the inspection, pupils had the opportunity to use good resources, provided by the high school, to help them carry out more involved experiments than would normally be the case. Having two teachers to one class also meant that pupils had plenty of opportunity to ask questions and receive support. They made good headway with their experiments.
83. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has a good grasp of the main strengths and weaknesses, derived through looking systematically at pupils' books. Even though science is a strong area of the school's work, she has identified several valid points for further development. The science curriculum is well planned and structured and pupils cover all the required elements in a systematic and thorough way. These good factors, together with the pupils' own genuine enthusiasm and curiosity, are the main reasons why pupils make effectively headway in science.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new computer suite provides a quality learning environment for the pupils and they enjoy their lessons there.
- Links with the local secondary school provide good additional resources for the pupils.
- The organisation of lessons means that most pupils only have access to a computer every two weeks which limits the progress they make.
- There is limited evidence of the use of ICT in other subject areas.

### **Commentary**

84. By Year 6, pupils attain average standards. Year 6 pupils understand both the benefits and limitations of computers. They use a search engine to find websites which help them with their research. They refine their language to narrow the range of sites which are suggested. They are confident in using the computer to write articles, inserting pictures to make their work more attractive and adjusting the layout to suit the needs of the audience. They have used the facilities at the nearby secondary school to make a multi-media presentation using Powerpoint. They are aware of the use of digital cameras and other devices but have not had experience of using these in school. The pupils are very enthusiastic about using computers and in discussion the majority said that this was their favourite subject.
85. Some higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 spoke confidently and knowledgeably about effective use of ICT. They could describe the use of a database to record details of monsters they had created and could sort the information to find different categories of creatures, for example those with more than and less than two heads. They had used a publishing program to write an article for a newspaper which required them to adjust the size and colour of the font as well as to insert pictures, adjusting the size to make them fit. They were familiar with the tools available to them on the computer, such as spell check and word banks and they could use the Internet to find out information on a topic.
86. Standards are average at the end of Year 2. Pupils are able to log on to the computer independently. They use appropriate tools to draw and colour shapes and they can change the size of a shape. Discussions with pupils show that they know how to save their work and they can discuss programs they have used. They have very positive attitudes to the subject and are very clear about the rules for using the suite.

87. The school has made significant investment in providing a high quality computer suite. The technical support means problems with equipment or software can be dealt with promptly. The suite has only been open for a few weeks and it has not yet had a chance to enhance standards. A visiting teacher with considerable expertise in ICT is helping to build teachers' skills and confidence in using the suite, as well as working with pupils to help them learn.
88. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are still in the early stages of working out the most effective way of using the suite. The current arrangements for allowing half the class to use the computers and the remaining half to work on other related tasks, often involving worksheets, limits the progress pupils make. This was evident in several lessons. Teachers sometimes had difficulty in managing the two groups so that both were engaged in worthwhile activities. In one lesson, for example, the teacher was working with the writing group but had to leave them in order to provide support when there were technical problems with the computers or when the pupils at the workstations needed advice.
89. Subject leadership is good and there has been good improvement over recent years. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the subject and has carried out a thorough evaluation of provision. The school has been working hard to reach the standard required for the NAACE quality mark and has recently been successful in doing this. This award acknowledges that a structure is in place to develop the subject, including a policy, a scheme of work and an action plan, based on sound financial planning. Challenging targets are in place for pupils' attainment, the teachers are aware of their individual roles in raising standards and the co-ordinator is purchasing resources which will help this to happen. Currently, pupils achieve satisfactorily, but the school is in a good position now to improve upon this further.
90. There is a very well attended computer club in the school every lunchtime, which provides opportunities for pupils to practise their skills and develop their understanding of websites and programs. There is also opportunity to attend an after-school club at the nearby secondary school once a week which further broadens pupils' experiences.

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

91. Pupils are learning the skills they need, through sessions in the computer suite, but teachers are at a relatively early stage in identifying how ICT can be incorporated within the curriculum plans for each subject. There was some evidence of the practical application of ICT on display around the school, though this was somewhat limited. Pupils in Year 2 could not recall any occasions when they had used the computer in other subject areas, though Year 6 pupils reported that they had used computers in history and geography.

## **HUMANITIES**

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. History and geography were not inspected.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good promotion of self esteem and care for others, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- The subject is well led and managed and there has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- Some pupils do not appreciate the importance of learning about other religions.

## Commentary

92. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were below average and pupils were not making enough progress. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are now in line with the requirements of the Cheshire Agreed Syllabus and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection but it is evident from looking at pupils' work, displays and talking to pupils that there is a high emphasis placed on care and respect for others. This is particularly evident in the younger classes. In Years 1 and 2 pupils write about a special person they know, for example, and they are encouraged to express their feelings through stories such as 'Dogger' and the story of the lost sheep. This ethos of care and respect is reflected well in pupils' attitudes across the school both inside and outside the classroom.
93. The work in books indicates that teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils have a sound understanding of traditions and customs associated with Christianity and of the Jewish and Muslim faiths. They learn, for instance, some of the traditions associated with worship in a Mosque and learn about sacred texts. Pupils also learn about particularly special days and festivals associated with Judaism and Islam. However, discussions with pupils show that some do not see why they need to learn about different religions.
94. In the one lesson observed, the room was very hot and the pupils looked tired at the end of the day. Despite this, the teacher worked hard to keep their attention and learning was satisfactory. Pupils learned about a Christening and how this related to being welcomed as part of God's family. The teacher asked some appropriate questions to check that the pupils understood key words, such as 'font' and explained the symbolic use of water.
95. The leadership and management of the subject are good. This is a role that is still developing but the co-ordinator has a clear vision of what needs improving and how it is to be done. She is already monitoring pupils' work and as a result, raising attainment in pupils' recorded work as well as introducing appropriate assessment and recording procedures. Her main strength has been to raise the profile of religious education teaching and learning across the school. The weaknesses that related to the way the curriculum was planned and the lack of time allocated to religious education have been addressed effectively.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology and art and design were sampled. Music and physical education were not inspected.

96. No lessons in **design technology** were observed but work books and displays were studied and pupils were interviewed. The subject was discussed with the co-ordinator and schemes of work were examined. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 1 make simple plans and drawings of a vehicle for Barnaby Bear to travel in. They design a coat for 'Joseph' and make decisions on the best way of joining the different sections together. Year 2 pupils understand the principles of weaving and using the warp and weft.
97. Year 3 pupils make picture frames and they add flaps and doors to a book. They write appropriate accounts of how they approach their tasks and what could be done to improve. In Year 4 pupils consider and plan how they will make a stable stand using card, and evaluate its success. By the end of Year 6 pupils are designing slippers appropriate to different age groups. They consider the purposes of slippers, the different types that they could make and the features that are most important. They use a range of materials to make wheeled vehicles. All pupils are given the opportunity to develop the full range of skills: they plan, design, make and then evaluate their work to see how it can be improved. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and there is satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

98. In the one **art and design** lesson observed, pupils had good opportunities to use a variety of art techniques, including graphics and painting, to devise their own rainforest. They worked hard and many were used creative ideas. They took pride in their work and persevered well. The teacher gave good help and encouragement and paced the lesson well, so that pupils remained interested.

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

This curriculum area was sampled through looking at planning, talking to the co-ordinator and talking to pupils.

99. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is delivered satisfactorily throughout the school and is a developing area. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over PSHE but has already carried out a useful audit of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A clear action plan is in place. PSHE is planned through circle time, when pupils have a chance to express their feelings and develop their personal ideas as well as their social awareness. Appropriate links are made with religious education lessons, when, for example, pupils consider things that are very special to them. The school provides good opportunities to learn citizenship skills, particularly through the School Council. This gives pupils a valuable opportunity to take responsibility for their school and contribute to the school community. The members realise they must respect and consider other children's views and concerns and represent their class as well as they can. This aspect is making a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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