

INSPECTION REPORT

LINACRE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bootle, Merseyside

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104853

Headteacher: Mrs B Yates

Lead inspector: Mrs S Walker

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th March 2004

Inspection number: 256739

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:	218
School address:	Thornton Road Bootle Merseyside
Postcode:	L20 5ED
Telephone number:	0151 922 1466
Fax number:	0151 933 0209
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Marie Carney
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Linacre Primary School is situated near the centre of Bootle. The socio-economic circumstances of the area are well below average. The school is about the same size as other schools nationally, with 218 pupils in single age classes. The school roll is falling and this led to staff reductions in 2003. There are more girls than boys in the school. Pupils are predominantly of white British ethnic origin, but there are very small numbers from other ethnic groups. Two pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Most pupils live very close to the school in terraced accommodation, which is predominantly rented. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average, but there are no pupils with statements of special educational needs. Nearly half the pupils in Year 6 did not start their education in the school. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below average.

Linacre Primary School is part of an Excellence in Cities initiative and is also part of an Education Action Zone, which promotes improvement in attainment, attitude, and attendance. This provides finance, a home-school liaison officer, transition mentor and information and communication technology (ICT) and curriculum support. It is part of the leadership development strategy in cities, which provides extra finance and improves pupils' literacy skills. The school has gained a Sure Start Excellence Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People status and also gained a School's Achievement Award in 2001. The school provides a breakfast club, is a 'partnership plus' schools with Edge Hill College and provides weekly computer courses for adults and a family learning programme in basic skills.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21678	Susan Walker	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology Geography History
9884	Maureen Roscoe	Lay inspector	
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30745	Patricia Thorpe	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Linacre Primary School is a **very good** school, where pupils achieve well and make good and sometimes very good progress by the time that they leave the school. Leadership and management are **very good** and the headteacher and her staff provide a very good quality of education for the pupils. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is very good teaching and provision for children in the nursery and reception classes.
- There is very good leadership and management, and good governance.
- Assessment procedures and the use of information to improve pupils' learning are very good.
- Pupils receive very good support, guidance, and everyday care.
- Links with the community are excellent and links with other schools, colleges, and parents are very good.
- Teaching and learning are well planned, resourced and managed.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships, and the provision for the development of their personal qualities are all good.
- Standards are average in Years 1 to 5, but are below average in Year 6, except in mathematics, art and design and design and technology where standards are average.

The school has made very good improvement since its last inspection in March 1998, not only in addressing those areas that it was asked to put right, but also in making a marked improvement in raising standards of achievement, teaching, assessment and the quality of leadership and management.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **good**.

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average E - the lowest 5 per cent nationally*

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

In the 2003 national tests for eleven year olds, standards were well below average in English and science and average in mathematics. When compared to what pupils could do when they took the national tests as seven year olds, they had done well. Inspection findings show that the current Year 6 pupils are below average in many subjects, because nearly half of them did not start their education in the school and a third are on the register of special educational needs. They attain average standards in mathematics.

In the national tests for pupils aged seven, standards were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with pupils in similar socio-economic circumstances, standards were above average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics. The current Year 2 pupils look set to attain the national average in all subjects, due to good teaching.

By the time that they leave the reception class most children do not attain the national goals identified for their age; only a few higher attainers do so. Standards are highest in creative development where most children reach the expected level. Throughout the school pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve well; in some areas children in the reception class achieve very well. The small numbers of pupils who come from other ethnic groups and the tiny numbers who do not speak English as their first language also achieve well.

Pupils' personal development is **good**, including their spiritual, moral, and cultural development. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are good, and attitudes are very good in the nursery and reception classes. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching is **good** and very good for children in the nursery and reception classes. This is because the school has thought long and hard about how to improve pupils' learning. Assessment is very good. The curriculum is very good. Provision for pupils' care, health and safety is satisfactory, but support and guidance is very good. The school does not undertake and record a fuller range of risk assessments relating to the curriculum and how the school is used by pupils at all times of the day. Links with the community are excellent and links with other schools, colleges, and parents are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** and the school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing. This is effective in helping it focus on future improvement. The school provides very effective care and education for pupils, before, after and during school hours ('wrap round' care). It is a school where all pupils are welcomed and supported in their learning, whatever their ability and background. It has a very good ethos. Governance is good and the governors meet most statutory requirements, except the requirement to record risk assessments and the action taken.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the education and 'wrap round' care that the school provides for their children. Pupils enjoy what the school has to offer. They take full opportunities to participate in the wealth of activities, which the school provides in order to widen their experience and help them to learn.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To continue their efforts to raise and maintain standards in English, mathematics and science.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- To keep a fuller written record of risk assessments and the action taken.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are average in Years 1 to 5, but are **below average** in Year 6, except in mathematics, art and design and design and technology where standards are average. Pupils' achievement is **good**, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well overall, except in physical education and religious education, where achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 5 achieve very well in science.
- Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve well overall and particularly well in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, and communication, language and learning.
- Standards in swimming are good.
- National test data shows that pupils make good improvement between Year 2 and Year 6.
- There are a huge range of local and national initiatives in place to support pupils' achievement. They are based on excellent links with the community.

Commentary

1. When children enter the nursery their attainment is well below average when compared with other children of their age. Due to very good teaching, by the time that they leave the reception class children achieve well. In the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and learning they achieve very well. Many children do not attain most of the goals expected for their age, but a few higher attaining children achieve the expected standard. Standards are highest in creative development where most children reach the expected goals for their age
2. Inspection findings show that the current Year 2 class are in line to reach the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science and there is an average number in line to reach the higher level 3. The headteacher took an effective management decision to move teachers around so that the deputy headteacher, an experienced and able teacher, is teaching this year group. Teaching in Year 2 is consistently good and is moving pupils' learning forward effectively in all subjects. The role-play in writing initiative is particularly effective in improving standards in writing.
3. Inspection findings show that standards in the current Year 6 class are below average in English and science. This is because it is a small class and in a small class the attainment of each pupil has a substantial impact on the overall performance of the class. Nearly half of these pupils did not start their education at the school and a third have special educational needs. Their language skills are relatively weak and some lack sufficient organisational strategies. Standards in mathematics are average and this reflects the school's better performance in 2003 and its use of a computer program to boost pupils' skills.
4. In most other subjects standards at Year 6 are also below average. Pupils do not meet the standards required by the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils' skills in ICT are broadly average, but there are some weaknesses in multimedia presentation. Standards in art and design and design and technology are average. However, standards in swimming are good because pupils learn to swim, regularly, from Year 2 onwards.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.7 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.9 (14.7)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	13.8 (16.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. In the 2003 national tests for pupils aged seven, standards were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. When teachers assessed what pupils could do in science standards were also below average. When compared with pupils in similar socio-economic circumstances, standards were above average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics. The trend for improvement is above the national average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.1 (24.1)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.5 (22.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	26.3 (23.5)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 25 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. In the national tests for eleven year olds standards were well below average in English and science and average in mathematics. When compared to what pupils could do when they took the national tests as seven year olds they had done well. Standards were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. The school sets challenging targets for pupils and believes in their ability to succeed. It did not achieve its targets in English in 2003, but exceeded them in mathematics and just missed the target for the number of pupils to attain the higher levels.
7. The school recognises that the trend has been uneven over the last three years and most years standards are below the national average. The school's priority is to improve standards in literacy and to build on progress in mathematics. It has put in place a huge number of additional initiatives to improve pupils' performance, for instance good opportunities for pupils to improve their basic skills at the beginning of the school day, links with local business volunteers, learning mentors and a homework club. All initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on the achievement of pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and the tiny number who are learning English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers.
8. The most able pupils have been identified and they too receive additional support. For instance, they read with volunteers from the business community and take part in science workshops at Edge Hill College.
9. The data shows that girls perform worse than boys do in the national tests. (The local culture is that boys are dominant.) Inspection findings show that there is little difference in the response of boys and girls to teaching in lessons.
10. Improvement since the last inspection is generally good. In Years 1 and 2, where standards were below average and pupils made unsatisfactory progress in some subjects, improvement is good. Achievement has improved Years 3 to 6, but because of the ability of the current Year 6 class, standards have not improved, except in mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are **good**. They are very good in the nursery and reception classes and when pupils are engrossed in practical lessons. Pupils' personal development is **good**, including their spiritual, moral, and cultural development. Provision for pupils' social development is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils demonstrate a very good interest in school and in learning.
- Relationships are very good and pupils are safe from all forms of harassment.
- The school does all it can to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils are very aware of the responsibilities of living in a community.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, and cultural development is good, and social development is very good.

Commentary

11. Pupils' attitudes, to all that the school has to offer, are good. They are very interested in the varied activities that take place in and out of school time. For example, the many different clubs are usually well attended and serve to qualify pupils for graduation from the Children's University. This is a highly prized award celebrated at one of the universities. The homework club is the most popular, reflecting the pupils' interest in learning. The school has many initiatives in place to help pupils make the most of their learning. These include opportunities to develop organisational skills and self-help strategies. For example, the Year 6 'Going for Gold' project encourages pupils to organise their resources and time and to become more responsible for themselves. This is also a widely recognised award, which prepares pupils for secondary education.
12. Relationships are generally very good. The school is a happy place and has a positive ethos. Pupils, parents, staff, governors and visitors enjoy a friendly atmosphere in which pupils are encouraged to feel good about themselves. There is a culture of 'I can do', which has a positive effect on pupils' efforts and on their approach to others. Some pupils do not initially have great confidence or self-esteem, but the school makes good efforts to develop these by ensuring that there are equal opportunities and by dealing very effectively with any problems. The pupils do not suffer any forms of bullying, racism, or harassment because any incidents that may occur are dealt with very rapidly and involve parents and pupils as appropriate. There have been no exclusions in the last six years.
13. Occasionally, pupils can become excitable and do not listen to their teachers very well. At these times, teachers work hard to ensure good control and discipline. Pupils' behaviour can be excellent when they are actively involved in lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

14. The school works very hard to improve attendance and punctuality. It is vigilant and has been successful in encouraging pupils to come to school. This is mainly achieved because the atmosphere is welcoming. Most pupils feel safe, interested and keen to learn. There is a breakfast and activity club, which encourages pupils to attend early. Various awards for class and individual good attendance motivate pupils to make extra efforts. Good attendance is

regularly mentioned in newsletters, and rates of attendance and punctuality are checked each day.

15. The school provides excellent links with community groups, and very good links with other schools and businesses. This results in excellent support for pupils' learning and their social and moral development. For example, a very good art and design inclusion project and ongoing link with a local special school have had a very positive impact on the pupils who had little experience of meeting young people with physical or learning disabilities. They showed kindness and respect and have learnt that the children are just like them. The highly successful 'Construction Day' project has enabled pupils to work with adults from business and to develop many personal, academic and physical skills.
16. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because opportunities are provided for different experiences and to practise skills. For example, residential visits and events such as the dance festival enable pupils to work with those from other schools and, in some cases, from other cultures. Pupils in Year 2 talked about their spiritual awareness by relating their wonder at sculptures, fireworks, stories and a walk by the canal to see the ferry. They expressed their pleasure and amazement at how lifelike the sculptures are and even expressed awe at the workings of the interactive whiteboards in school. A moral code is present in all that happens in school and is reinforced by the pupils through the school council, comprising representatives from each class, through the buddy system that pairs older pupils with younger and through class rules for behaviour. Pupils demonstrate self-control and good behaviour during assemblies. Year 6 buddies responsibly watch and care for younger pupils, showing them how to behave and encouraging them to listen well. There are opportunities for cultural development through art and literature and the celebration of festivals. An Indian dancer and West Indian poet visited school to help pupils to understand more about other life-styles. Pupils show interest in other cultures and appreciate their diversity.
17. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its pupils' positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships and improved provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	147	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	46	0	0

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are good, and assessment is very good. The curriculum is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** and very good in Year 1 and the nursery and reception classes. Assessment is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement since the last inspection is very good.
- Lessons are well planned, managed and taught, due to teachers' good subject knowledge. .
- Teaching for the reception and nursery children is very good and is moving their learning forward very well.
- Teaching in science in Years 1, 2 and 5 is very good.
- Teachers have a very good idea of what pupils know and understand.
- Pupils are clear about what they have learnt.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are well supported.
- Pupils' self-esteem is continually built up in lessons.
- Homework is used to improve pupils' learning.
- The oldest pupils do not have enough opportunity to show initiative and independence in their learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	7 (18%)	21 (54%)	10 (25%)	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.

18. At the last inspection teaching was satisfactory and about a quarter of lessons were good. Assessment was in its early stages. In contrast, teaching is now good overall, with much that is very good in the nursery and reception classes and in Year 1. Assessment is very well established and the information gained is used very well to improve pupils' learning. These very good improvements are showing in pupils' learning.
19. Children in the nursery and reception classes are very well taught. Their teachers know exactly what appeals to young children and this promotes their very good learning.
20. Lessons in Years 1 to 6 are well planned and taught and are based on a very good curriculum. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this leads to them teaching the correct subject vocabulary in lessons and insisting that pupils use it in their responses. Pupils understand the school rules and the consequences and rewards of conforming and this leads to smooth-running lessons and no disruption to others' learning.
21. Teaching in science in Years 1, 2 and 5 is very good. It is based on good teacher subject knowledge and provides lively practical activities that allow pupils to have fun while they are learning.

22. Pupils' learning is supported by a very thorough study policy. Teachers set a clear purpose for each lessons and share this with pupils using the 'learning line'.¹ Good opportunities are provided at the end of the lesson for pupils to reflect on the skills and knowledge that they have gained. In subjects such as English and mathematics, pupils write the purpose of the lesson as a question at the top of their work, for instance "Can I write a playscript?" The teacher's answer then gives pupils very precise feedback on whether they have succeeded or not. The climate of success engendered by such an approach builds up pupils' self-esteem and encourages them to try even harder.
23. Marking of pupils' work is good, overall. In English it is thorough and offers both advice to pupils and reflection on what they have achieved. In mathematics, it is encouraging and evaluative, but does not always show pupils how to set about getting better. In Year 5, a strength is the way the teacher writes notes that show how much support a pupil needed to complete the work. An occasional weakness in some classes is that teachers do not pick up on the need for better presentation or correct pupils' spelling.
24. Assessment procedures are very good (as the school correctly recognised) and are a very effective school management tool. There are clear procedures for teachers to assess pupils' learning in all subjects, to follow their progress and to monitor achievement. For instance, pupils have mathematics and writing assessment books, which they take with them as they move through the school and these give an 'at a glance' judgement on how their skills are developing. Tests, whether optional or national, are thoroughly analysed and the results used to improve teaching and learning. All pupils are set targets to improve aspects of their work. In some classes pupils have these written on a 'bookmark', which they can take with them to all lessons and so remember what they need to do to improve their writing, for instance in history or science.
25. The good teaching, the very good use of assessment and the carefully planned deployment of teaching assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs learn well. The same is true for the very small numbers of pupils who are learning English as an additional language.
26. Homework is used effectively to help pupils to consolidate their learning. Teachers check that homework goes home and is returned. The school has provided a homework club to help pupils to develop good homework habits and this is well attended. Parents are well satisfied with the school's arrangements for homework.
27. The oldest pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to select their own topics or to choose their own resources. This good practice is well established for the youngest pupils.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. It is enriched **very well** by extra-curricular activities. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement since the last inspection is very good.
- The breadth of curriculum opportunities is very good, including the curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes.
- There is very good curriculum enrichment, and provision and support for learning outside the school day.
- Teachers prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

¹ The learning line consists of a line of large cards, which are strung across the classroom. Each card is for a different subject. The purpose of each lesson is written clearly for each subject taught throughout the week.

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good in Years 1 to 6 and very good for children in the nursery and reception classes.
- Staffing, accommodation and resources are good and very good for the children in the nursery and reception classes.

Commentary

28. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The curriculum meets all the legal requirements, which is an improvement since the last inspection when it did not meet statutory requirements to teach ICT and did not follow the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. There are schemes of work for all subjects. Extra-curricular activities have improved very markedly. There has been a good improvement in the quality and quantity of resources and the accommodation.
29. The curriculum for all areas of learning for children in the nursery and reception classes is very well led and managed. Children of all abilities are supported very well and challenged to improve their learning within a friendly, caring environment. The curriculum is exciting, varied and motivating. Staff make very good use of resources and accommodation, and of ICT. As a result children achieve well across all areas of learning.
30. The school has a rich, vibrant curriculum, which is based on creative thinking. Improving pupils' learning is at the heart of the curriculum. In addition to those lessons that all schools provide, the curriculum is very well enriched by all kinds of opportunities and the school makes good use of expertise both in and outside the school. For instance, pupils work very effectively with pupils from a special school on art and design projects, they take part in Young Enterprise schemes and they build bridges during a Construction Day with the Education Business development. Pupils have very good opportunities for involvement in supportive initiatives to improve their learning in basic skills.
31. There has been very good improvement in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. This is because of the very good leadership and management by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the schools' determination to use every suitable available programme to support the learning of these pupils. This has had a positive effect on the achievement of pupils with special educational needs, which is now good. These pupils join in lessons at an appropriate level, with skilful help from the trained and well-organised team of support staff. The quality of individual education plans is good and targets are identified for each pupil. On the whole these are achievable by individual pupils. A few targets are too broad and are not broken down into manageable steps and this slows pupils' progress against them. There is regular monitoring by the special educational needs co-ordinator to ensure that the needs of all pupils are being met effectively.
32. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language and the tiny number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is as good as that provided for their peers. Teachers are aware of such pupils and ensure that they are supported very well.
33. The school prepares its pupils very well for the next stage in their education. Three learning mentors help Year 6 pupils to prepare for secondary school. The 'Going for Gold' project allows Year 6 pupils to acquire the skills that they will need in order to be successful. There are three days at the end of the summer term when all the pupils, including the youngest children, move up a class to meet their teacher and settle into their new classroom. This gives both teachers and pupils a peaceful and prompt start to the autumn term as everything is familiar.
34. Extra-curricular activities to support pupils' learning are very good. The school has appointed a co-ordinator to manage this important aspect of school life. There is a breakfast club to ensure that pupils get a good start to their day. The school provides clubs in German, gardening, fitness, mathematics, science, a range of sports and music, art, computers and homework. Some of these are part of the Year 6 pupils Children's University project.

35. Staffing is good. The accommodation is good. The school is housed in a vibrant building where pupils' work is carefully displayed and their achievement is celebrated. The downstairs area of the school, where children from nursery to Year 2 are taught, is fully accessible. The school appreciates that the very steep stairs to the Year 3 to 6 classrooms may present problems to any future pupils with physical disabilities. It has plans in hand to improve matters. The outside play space is as cheerful as the school can make it. The good accommodation adds much to the ethos of the school. The curriculum is well resourced, because teachers take careful note of what they will need to teach topics imaginatively.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **satisfactory** overall, but very good for children in the nursery and reception classes. Levels of support and guidance are **very good** and the involvement of pupils in the school's development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good arrangements for care contribute to the welfare of all pupils and play a very strong part in lifting their confidence to form very good and trusting relationships with all adults in the school.
- These are very good systems for monitoring the academic and personal development of all pupils.
- Induction arrangements are very good and, combined with friendly staff, provide an atmosphere of warmth and security that successfully promotes pupils' well-being and emotional health.
- Pupils' involvement in decision making is good.
- Staff are vigilant at looking at hazards present within the premises and on educational visits; however, the headteacher and governors do not keep a more detailed written record of risk assessments and the action taken.

Commentary

36. All adults in the school respond to pupils' personal needs whatever they may be in this friendly, child-centred environment. Very good arrangements for personal security, first aid, child protection and fire precautions protect pupils' interests effectively. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to safeguard pupils' use of the Internet.
37. The school has, despite its size, generated a very strong 'family atmosphere' where it is usual for pupils to go to adults immediately for help, or more usually, to share some good news. This support is also readily available in the before and after-school clubs.
38. Staff are very aware of the rate of progress that individuals and groups of pupils are making. They use this information very effectively to promote higher achievement. Learning mentors along with other support staff also play a part in monitoring pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils with special educational needs are comfortable within the school family and staff are also well aware of pupils' special circumstances or difficulties. This information provides staff with the knowledge they need to support all pupils equally so pupils are confident and happy in school, and learn well.
39. Funding from the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative provides a home-school liaison worker who helps to monitor individuals' attendance levels. She also provides a weekly 'Play and Stay' club for those needing more structure to their lunchtime activity. This is effective in promoting attendance and learning.
40. There are very good practices for getting to know children before they start school, and for settling them into every class each year. These sensitive arrangements, which help pupils and their parents, are mirrored in Year 6 when pupils smoothly move on to secondary schools.

41. Pupils know that their views matter because caring adults hear their concerns and respond to their wishes. Pupils are supported by an effective school council that promotes an active participation in decision making and a respect for their authority. Pupils, through their representatives on the school council, air their views on a variety of matters of interest to them. In conversation pupils proudly indicated the improvements connected with the tuck shop, playground and toilets that their decisions had brought about.
42. The governors and headteacher have carefully put together a range of measures designed to promote pupils' health and safety. Buildings and grounds are well managed and there are routines to support security and access to the school. The school does not undertake and record a more detailed range of risk assessments relating to the curriculum and how the school is used by pupils at all times of the day, but is well poised to do so. The school has maintained its strengths since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has forged **good** links with parents and **very good** links with other schools. Links with the community are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Community links make a consistent and exceptional contribution to pupils' achievement, to their personal development and to school improvement.
- There are very good mutually beneficial links between the school and its partners in a local cluster group of schools.
- Most parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and are very pleased with the sincere care that their children receive.
- Parents receive a good range of essential information and the views of all parents are occasionally formally sought.

Commentary

43. The excellent relationships maintained with outside organisations, retail chains, local businesses and schools enrich the school's provision, enhance the quality of support and extend pupils' horizons in a dynamic way. Most of this provision is funded by way of the Educational Action Zone and has enabled a host of establishments to be supportive of the school's own initiatives to improve achievement, pupils' motivation and their attendance.
44. The school is closely linked to the St George of England Cluster, which facilitates shared projects that benefit pupils and result in shared personal development between Linacre teachers and those at other schools. An art and design project with a local special school was particularly successful in broadening pupils' experiences and imagination.
45. Parents are highly satisfied with the opportunities they have to come into school on a daily basis to the infant department to hear their children read or just to help settle them into class. They appreciate the way the school explains 'the next steps' in their children's learning and the approachability and friendliness of staff.
46. Parents hold the school in high regard because of the welcome it provides for their children. This for some can be an early, hearty breakfast on a cold morning. Some parents take advantage of the courses relating to ICT and literacy held for their benefit. These are greatly enjoyed and valued for the advantage they give to their children.
47. The good links with parents are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Information is attractively presented and usually user-friendly. Newsletters, regular letters from

staff and good reports on progress all serve to keep parents informed. However, there is not enough information about what pupils are learning in lessons and how they can support their children with their learning.

48. Parents have been widely consulted in the recent past about their preferences for a residential visit, but this process of consultation is not a regular feature of the school's development. Parents have numerous opportunities to make their views known in an informal way.
49. The school has maintained its strengths in its links with parents and markedly improved its links with partnership schools and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. The governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has an extremely clear vision for the school and high aspirations for the pupils.
- Governors are well informed and play a leading part in shaping the development of the school.
- Extra funding is used well and the school's finances are managed very efficiently.
- The school's determination to retain and develop a rich and broad curriculum has aided pupils' achievement very effectively.
- A wide range of external awards confirms the school's improvement.

Commentary

50. The weaknesses in governance identified in the last report have been addressed. Governors are knowledgeable and well organised. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and firmly demonstrate the ability and willingness to resolve issues. The governors have developed considerable expertise and have addressed the urgent and serious problems presented by falling rolls. They make a good contribution towards shaping the vision and direction of the school. The governing body is very supportive of the school, its headteacher and other key staff and is prepared to challenge and question decisions and policies if necessary. Governors carry out their legal requirements. Appropriate policies are in place to promote special educational needs, race equality, sex education and provision for disability.
51. The headteacher's leadership is very good and her self-evaluation of the school is 'spot on'. Her determined vision and very high aspirations, supported strongly by the senior management team, other staff and parents, are reflected in all aspects of the school's work. This includes developing a rich and broad curriculum and improving standards in all subjects, whilst promoting the personal development and care of all pupils as a priority. Using a range of initiatives, including the Education Action Zone and the Healthy School's programme, she has developed the curriculum and pre/post school care to meet the particular needs of all pupils. The headteacher has established a very good ethos in the school where everyone is valued and in which everyone is working to a common purpose to move the school forward. All staff have a very good, clear commitment to inclusion and to do the best possible for the pupils.
52. The overall management of the school is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is evaluated regularly by senior staff and the results of tests and the assessment of pupils' progress is analysed comprehensively. This information helps the school to make decisions regarding future targets for both the whole school and individual pupils. Pupils with special educational needs receive the extra help and support they need. There are very good performance management systems in place, and staff targets and the continuing professional development of staff are clearly linked to the school's improvement plan. All staff, for example,

have benefited from training in ICT and this shows in their increasing confidence with technology. There are good arrangements to make sure teachers new to the school settle quickly and receive the support they need. The school's involvement in training new teachers is beneficial to the school, and procedures for meeting the needs of student teachers are good. As a result of these procedures Edge Hill College has designated the school a Partnership Plus School for initial teacher training. The school has been awarded Investors in People status.

53. The school's financial planning is very good and the range of specific grants is used very well. The administrative staff work efficiently and provide good support for the headteacher and other teachers. The school makes very good use of the extra money available through being part of an Educational Action Zone. For example, the school has recently purchased homework packs in mathematics for parents to borrow so that they can support their child's learning at home. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
54. The apparent large carry forward has arisen because the school prudently reduced its staff in the last financial year to keep its finances under control. The surplus will reduce in 2004 to a £24,000 as the present level of staffing is safeguarded. Money has also been used to fund computer equipment.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	771,651	Balance from previous year	101,745
Total expenditure	643,089	Balance carried forward to the next	81,035
Expenditure per pupil	3,444.87		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

55. Overall, provision in the morning and afternoon nursery classes and the reception class is very good. The curriculum and teaching for all areas of learning are very well led and managed. Children of all abilities, those with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language are supported very well and challenged to improve their learning within a friendly, caring environment. The curriculum is exciting, varied and motivating. Staff make very good use of resources and accommodation, particularly ICT. As a result children achieve well across all areas of learning. Sometimes, children's language development is not reinforced at home and achievement is not as rapid as might be expected from the very good provision. However, very good relationships, built up through initial visits, have developed a trusting and friendly partnership between staff and parents. This is impacting favourably on standards. The children's development, in all areas of learning, is very carefully checked through a range of linked and structured assessment systems. Children's achievements are regularly recorded and the school has received the Sure Start Excellence Award.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good.
- Children's attitudes are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Relationships between children, staff, parents and community are very good.
- Standards of attainment are below expectations by the time children transfer to Year 1.

Commentary

56. Standards of attainment on entry to nursery are well below average. However, the children quickly settle into school and, across their time in the Foundation Stage, learn to be more independent, to ask questions and to gain confidence. By the time they reach the end of the reception year, children generally achieve standards that are still below expectations, but a few more able children have reached the early learning goal as expected. When they start in the nursery, children often have a short concentration span, but this gradually improves until most are listening for increasingly longer periods and can concentrate on tasks. As facilities are often shared, the reception children act as good examples for the younger children. Overall, this indicates very good achievement.

57. Children have very good attitudes towards their work and play and towards all others. This is reinforced by the very good relationships developed between all staff and parents at the beginning of the day. Children are able to model the relaxed and respectful approach adults show towards each other and successfully learn the meaning of kindness and good behaviour through example. The school's very good relationship with the school-based community toddler group further supports the ethos of very good care and continuous development of this area of learning. The 'can do' culture in school begins in the Foundation Stage. Consequently, individual children write about their range of achievements from school and home such as using sign language, swimming, dancing or counting in Arabic.

58. Very good teaching through 'circle time' or discussion develops children's understanding and builds their self-esteem and confidence. For example, children in the reception class thought of ways to help a 'new puppet pupil' who was joining their class. They offered to help her in many

different ways and listened carefully to each other. Personal, social and emotional development is well planned within other areas of learning. As a result of this planning, children learn to put on their own painting aprons and to select materials for collages or to mix their own paints. They are given opportunities to make their own decisions in role-play and in choosing what to write, read or play with. By the time they are in the reception class, children are using computers independently, because they have been taught the skills and given the opportunities to practise and learn. Children understand routines and behave well, obeying their 'Golden Rules' and gaining 'leaves of achievement' for the class trees. They behave well and are sociable in their groups, because they are expected to do so. Children are happy and excited by their learning because teaching is flexible in catering for their interests and needs.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Language-based initiatives are very successful in improving standards.
- Achievement is very good.
- Standards of attainment are below expectations for children at the end of the reception year.

Commentary

59. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well because language development is very well planned within all other areas. All staff place a high priority on language. Clear assessment enables them to plan accurately and to tailor activities to individual needs. Children who are learning English as an additional language also achieve well because they are placed in appropriate ability groups that challenge them and strengthen their development of English.
60. Children begin the nursery at standards of attainment that are well below expectations. Many find it difficult to express themselves except in very simple ways. However, after a short time in the nursery, children answer the register in different languages and higher ability children make very good attempts to explain the wind blowing outside the classroom. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage and transfer to Year 1 they have progressed well. Overall, attainment at this age remains below average, but a small number of more able children have reached the expected goal for this area of learning. For example, they are able to correctly spell words using very good letter formation and read them back correctly.
61. Children have developed a range of appropriate language to use in different situations and skills such as reading, writing, and vocabulary that will prepare them for later stages of school. For example, they learn mathematical and scientific language and begin to use it naturally. All children try very hard to read with the teacher and ICT is used well to support reading. Children excitedly used the interactive whiteboard to talk about and read books from the main reading scheme. Higher attaining children are given many opportunities to extend their reading skills.
62. A Beacon School-funded initiative has successfully developed different kinds of writing through role-play. This has had a very positive impact on the children in Foundation Stage. It has been successful because staff are committed to the process and because they all model language very well. Staff and children become engrossed in the play and children quickly copy structures and vocabulary, which they use for their writing. For example, in a 'seed factory' in reception, the children took orders from the telephone and made notes, counted out what was required and made lists. Children also learnt to ask and answer questions. They 'read' the seed catalogues to choose what to buy and linked other areas by designing seed packets. The

'Living Language' project has also been successful, particularly where children need extra support and would benefit from very small group and one-to-one support.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Achievement is good.
- Curriculum opportunities are planned within other areas and include a multi-cultural element.
- Standards are below expectations by the end of the reception year.

Commentary

63. Children start the nursery at standards of attainment that are well below expectations overall, but intake groups vary and often include a wide range of abilities. For example, some children struggle to count and use numbers to three, whilst others count confidently to 20. However, the children achieve well across their time in the Foundation Stage and although standards remain below expectations overall, a few higher attaining children achieve the early learning goal.
64. Teaching and learning are very good, because staff provide many and varied opportunities for children to develop their understanding of a range of mathematical concepts. Children make ladybirds and count the spots and develop vocabulary such as 'full' and 'empty' in the water or sand play. They learn what 'next' means through describing instructions and sequences and learn to predict the number of scoops of grit needed to fill different sized pots. Mathematical areas in the classrooms are clearly labelled and resources are accessible. Children practise skills or explore patterns independently. For example, children use the interactive whiteboard to create their own patterns of food and in nursery the 'shoe shop' provides many opportunities to use the vocabulary of number and size. They are encouraged to use mathematical cards and explore ideas during the early morning sessions with parents. One child had worked with her mother to make a repeating peg pattern. This was later shown and applauded by the children. Parents' contribution to learning is always valued. In the nursery, staff assess children's abilities during class sessions and adapt questioning to challenge and develop their understanding. Number and counting rhymes are sung regularly and children quickly learn to join in. A very good lesson in the reception class was exciting, active and challenging for all abilities. The children improved in their understanding of pattern because they were very interested in the African theme. The range of activities, such as printing, collage, exploration and ICT, was very well planned, resourced and supported. As a result children of all abilities achieved very well. For example, children could paint their own patterns and could name the shapes they had painted. Displays show that a multi-cultural theme in mathematics has also been used to link number to a favourite story from India.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The curriculum is varied.
- Achievement is good.
- Standards of attainment are below expectations for children at the end of the reception year.
- Occasionally, children need more support to develop appropriate language.

Commentary

65. When children start in the nursery, their standards of attainment are well below expectations, because their experiences are limited and they do not have the language to describe what they experience. The school provides very well integrated learning to support knowledge and understanding of the world. As a result, children achieve well and, although overall standards are below average at the end of the reception year, a few higher attaining children reach the early learning goals.
66. Teaching and learning are very good, overall. This area of learning is well planned and children are challenged. As a result they achieve well and develop understanding. Opportunities to develop appropriate language and vocabulary are always taken. For example, the writing through role-play initiative also included opportunities to 'experience' a 'jungle swamp' and to make maps for their journey. However, very occasionally the children require more support to find the correct structures and vocabulary to describe their experience. Although children are given appropriate thinking time, this can sometimes become too long and can delay parts of a lesson.
67. Children are given many opportunities to explore and use all their senses. They use the outside environment, and visits or visitors provide further extension to their developing understanding. The children visit the local church and enjoy puppet shows and theatre productions. They sometimes picnic in the garden and watch the effects of wind on kite tails tied to the trees. Reception children planted their own bulbs, seeds and beans and begin to understand about growth, roots and shoots. They are beginning to understand what plants need to survive. They begin to make predictions and are asked to observe changes. Children are involved in watering plants and write diaries of plant growth. The use of natural materials such as pebbles, grit, wood and seeds enables children to experience textures and to explore their properties. For example, one child in the reception class very sensibly asked about how small African wooden animals had been cut out, as they could not use scissors for the task. The children also begin to understand the wider world through the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year. Nursery children experienced eating noodles with chopsticks. A picture of a mosque was used as a stimulus for printing in reception. This resulted in very good pictures. Reception children also achieved well in drawing plans and had imagined themselves as a bird flying over. ICT is well planned and supports all areas of learning. Consequently, children are confident in its use. The wide range of experiences results in very good learning and good achievement

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Many opportunities are provided to develop children's motor skills and dexterity.
- Standards of attainment are generally a little below expectation by the end of the reception year, but a significant minority achieve the early learning goal.
- There is no covered area outside and this limits children's opportunities for outdoor play.

Commentary

68. Teaching and learning are good, because very good relationships ensure that children are secure and become confident. This results in good learning, because children are happy to 'have a go'. Lessons and opportunities are planned well using a good range of varied resources and equipment. For example, the nursery children learnt to listen carefully and reacted sensibly to instruction when using the parachute in the hall. Other resources are used well to develop skills such as balance, climbing and riding. Children learn to take turns, to control balls and to

throw and catch. Their needs are assessed and they are supported and challenged as required. Children with special educational needs are well supported and given equal opportunities to join in and develop their skills. The Foundation Stage outside environment is safe and bright. The school has worked hard to make it a pleasant area in a large and bleak space. It has also developed other areas of the playground to enable the children to sit and work outside to enjoy a picnic. However, there is no sheltered area which would allow children to work and play outside when it is cooler. The reception class has physical education lessons in the hall three times a week, reflecting that the school recognises the importance of this area of development.

69. Manipulative skills are developed within other areas of learning such as threading cotton reels for patterning in mathematics, using the computer keyboard and writing. Children are shown how to use equipment and given time to practise. They make collage patterns using pasta and seeds and achieve well in hand/eye co-ordination.
70. Some children come to nursery with standards of attainment that are well below expectations and find difficulty in using utensils for snacks. However, they are given a variety to practise with and soon learn to handle them well. Nursery children dig in their very large sandpit, paint pictures and use chalk outside. At first the children find it difficult to form a circle for ring games or to work in pairs. However, staff join in and model activities. Consequently, children learn quickly. Some nursery children use the climbing frame very well and have good control of their bodies. By the time they reach reception class, children use equipment confidently. Overall, children achieve well and, although standards of attainment at the end of Foundation Stage are a little below expectation, a significant minority of children achieve the early learning goal.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Children achieve well.
- Standards of attainment are generally in line with expectations by the end of the reception year.

Commentary

71. Teaching and learning are good because children are given a variety of opportunities to develop their imagination and creativity. Musical instruments are accessible and children respond to music in different ways, for example through dance or in echoing patterns played on different instruments. In the reception class, children improved their playing of patterns because relationships were good and children were targeted well to extend their learning. In the nursery, children experimented with sounds and music-making on a row of pots and pans hung from the railings. Role-play activities develop children's imagination because staff model language well. For example, the nursery teacher placed 'treasure' in the sandpit and children climbed in to begin their search, talking about how much they could find.
72. Children use a good variety of media such as collage, chalk and paints and are encouraged to mix their own paints. They express themselves by using ideas from nature or stories. Nursery children weave large strips of material around the railings and express themselves by dressing up. Opportunities are continuously provided for children to select their own media and to experiment, but skills are taught carefully so that they are successful. This resulted in lower attaining children very successfully using glue and sticks and carefully manipulating materials. Children are beginning to talk about their creations and enjoy all their activities.

73. Overall, standards are in line with expectations, although a few children still find difficulty in expressing themselves creatively. As many children began school at standards which were below expectations, they have achieved well.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good for all pupils, whatever their ability or ethnicity.
- Standards are below average by Year 6.
- Teaching is good and pupils have good opportunities to practise their basic skills.
- The 'writing through role-play' project is definitely making a difference.
- Pupils understand what they are learning and how well they are doing.
- Leadership and management are both very good.

Commentary

74. In the 2003 national tests for pupils aged seven, standards were well below average in reading and writing. When compared with pupils in similar socio-economic circumstances, standards were above average in reading and average in writing. In the national tests for eleven year olds standards were well below average in English. When compared to what pupils could do when they took the national tests as seven year olds, they had done well, and standards were above average in English.
75. Inspection findings show that the current Year 2 pupils are in line to reach the national average in reading and writing, with an average number at the higher level. Teaching in Year 2 is consistently good and is moving pupils' learning forward effectively. The current Year 6 class is below average in English, particularly in writing and speaking skills. Their reading skills are nearer the average. This is because it is a small class, where the attainment of each child has a substantial impact on the overall performance of the class. Nearly half of these pupils did not start their education at the school and a third have special educational needs.
76. Writing through role-play is effective, because it allows pupils to participate in events before they start to write. This was very well demonstrated in Year 2 where a 'dark, dark cave' had been set up for pupils to explore with torches. The resultant writing was exciting and allowed pupils to show what they knew about creating impact through repetition of words. This initiative is why higher attaining pupils are exceeding the expected level. The initiative is usefully being extended into Years 3 to 6.
77. Teaching is good because teachers' subject knowledge is good and lessons are well managed so that no time is lost. The use of teaching assistants and other adults is carefully planned, so that pupils get the maximum benefit and are carefully supported in their learning. Questioning is used well to assess what pupils already know and they are challenged to clarify exactly what they mean. The interactive whiteboards are used effectively to allow pupils to see and participate in stories, poems and routine spelling patterns. The most able pupils have been identified and additional support is provided for them to attain their goals.
78. Pupils know what they are learning as teachers share the purpose of the lesson with them using the 'learning line'. Important vocabulary is introduced, such as 'setting' or 'characters', and the pupils are encouraged to use this when they talk about their writing or the book they are reading. Pupils understand the skills that they have learnt because these are assessed both at the end of the lesson and on each piece of work. The school has an effective practice of pupils

starting their written work with a question such as “Can I write a story with both description and action?” Marking is thorough and offers both advice to pupils and reflection on what they have achieved.

79. Achievement for all pupils, including those with English as an additional language, is good because teaching is effective and the curriculum is interesting. However, the school seizes every opportunity to ensure that all pupils consolidate and improve their basic skills. This particularly benefits pupils with special educational needs, those who are lower attaining and the tiny number who are at an early stage of learning English. For instance: the start of the school day gives pupils opportunities to practise spelling rules; government-funded initiatives, such as additional literacy support, support reading and phonic development well; and there is reading support for both lower and higher attaining pupils through other initiatives. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants in lessons.
80. Leadership and management are very good. Assessment is very good, and is purposefully used to support pupils’ achievement through target setting and participation in various initiatives. The co-ordinator scrutinises planning and pupils’ books and analyses test data to ascertain standards and progress. The school benefits from being part of an Education Action Zone and the school makes full use of any extra funds available to it. Resources are audited and of good quality and easily accessible to teachers and pupils alike. The texts used by teachers add a good deal to pupils’ understanding of other cultures. A specific and detailed programme has been purchased to improve pupils’ skills in spoken language.
81. Improvement has been good since the last inspection, in standards of teaching, management, pupils’ attitudes and the quality of the resources.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

82. There is good provision overall for this aspect. Teachers have identified the need to improve speaking skills and in some classes there are good opportunities being developed in a range of subjects, through the use of ‘talking partners’ and drama. In most subjects and classes pupils are given the opportunity to write in their own words. The school has carefully chosen texts that can be used in subjects such as history or science as well as literacy lessons, so that pupils get a thorough understanding of non-fiction texts.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good achievement in mathematics throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Mathematics is used well to aid pupils’ learning in other subjects.
- Pupils’ ability to use and apply their mathematics is not as well developed as other aspects of their work.
- There is good support for less able pupils and those with special educational needs.
- There is very good leadership and management of the subject.

Commentary

83. In the 2003 national assessment, standards were well below average at Year 2 and average at Year 6. Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection. Inspection findings show that pupils make good progress and achieve the national standards expected by Year 2 and Year 6. This improvement in standards is due to increased provision, good teaching and strong leadership of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs work at a level suitable

to their ability and with good support achieve well. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language achieve well because they are known to their teachers. Mathematics enjoys a high profile in school and the many attractive mathematical displays around the school support pupils' learning effectively.

84. The quality of teaching is good and pupils enjoy their lessons. Teachers explain ideas clearly using the correct mathematical language and pupils quickly become familiar with new words and use them appropriately. For instance, pupils in Years 6 confidently use 'digits' and 'decimal points' and pupils in Year 5 discover what a 'vertex' on a shape is. Teachers are very positive about pupils' abilities and this raises their self-esteem and encourages them to try harder. Teachers ensure that less able pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from further explanations from teaching assistants working in small groups. These efforts to make sure that pupils understand the main ideas of the lesson contribute significantly to the good progress they make in overcoming their difficulties with mathematics. The school also has several good initiatives in place such as Maths Recovery and Springboard Maths to further help pupils finding mathematics difficult.
85. Lessons are well structured and usually begin with a lively mental session, which engages the pupils in using number skills and recalling the knowledge they have already acquired. During whole-class and group activities pupils are given the opportunity to put into practice what they have been taught and then at the beginning of the next lesson teachers use the introduction to check how much they can remember. This helps to ensure that the teaching is building progressively and securely on what pupils already know and can do. Teachers use the information from their records of how well pupils are doing to identify what pupils need to learn next. Pupils have their own personal targets and strive to achieve them. Although all strands of the mathematics curriculum are covered, particular emphasis is put on developing number skills. This sometimes means that pupils are less confident using and applying their mathematical skills to solve problems.
86. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be developed further. Pupils benefit from being in an Educational Action Zone and other local organisations, and the school makes full use of any extra funding available to it. For example, homework packs in mathematics have just been bought for parents to borrow so that they can support their child's learning at home. Overall, resources are used very well to support pupils' learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

87. Mathematics is used well to aid pupils' learning in other subjects. In science and geography, for instance, pupils record the information they are collecting in the form of charts and graphs. Measuring skills are used during design and technology lessons and symmetry enhances pupils' work in art and design. ICT is used well to reinforce or extend mathematical concepts.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1, 2 and 5 is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning across Years 3, 4 and 6 is generally good.
- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 are below average.
- Achievement is generally good, but it is very good in Years 1 and 2.
- There is very good leadership and management of the subject.
- Some pupils have insufficient support for language development and organisation.

Commentary

88. In the 2003 national tests, standards in Year 6 were well below the national average, but they were a significant improvement from the year before. The school exceeded its target for the number of pupils attaining the expected level; however, too few pupils reached the higher level to improve overall standards. Pupils had made above average progress since they took the national tests as seven year olds. Inspection findings show that the current Year 6 pupils are likely to be below average, because there are a number of pupils who require support for their language work and their organisation. Some pupils have a weak scientific vocabulary and find it difficult to use different ways of recording what they know. Nearly half of these pupils did not start their education at the school and a third have special educational needs.
89. When teachers assessed what Year 2 pupils could do in 2003, standards were well below average. Standards of attainment for the current Year 2 pupils are broadly in line with those found nationally for pupils of this age. The teaching is very good in Years 1 and 2 and this contributes to the improved standards. Lessons are very well planned to cater for all abilities. Challenging and practical activities are varied. For example, in a very good Year 2 lesson about electricity and safety, the teacher used excellent practical ideas to demonstrate circuits and pupils were given opportunities to make their own. They selected and discussed the use of batteries and prepared a *PowerPoint* presentation about safety rules. Although the pupils are lively in this class, the teacher had very good control and the lesson moved at a brisk pace. She used scientific vocabulary naturally and had very clear diction. Consequently, the pupils used vocabulary correctly. The teacher extended and challenged higher ability pupils because her subject knowledge is very good and she knew what the next step would be when pupils showed a deeper understanding. Similarly, teaching and learning in Year 1 are also very good, because in these very brisk, practical and lively lessons, all pupils are engrossed and very good use is made of teaching assistants. These pupils achieve very well.
90. The quality of teaching and learning across Year 3 to 6 is generally good. Pupils achieve well, because lessons are well planned and are often practical. In one very good lesson in Year 5, pupils worked very hard and showed great enthusiasm for the lesson because no time was wasted. They demonstrated very good knowledge about predictions and used this to further their understanding about forces through discussion. The teacher identified any difficulties and ensured full understanding. She challenged their predictions by asking appropriate questions. Sometimes, pupils' work across Years 3 to 6 is not presented as well as could be expected, and there are limited opportunities for pupils to find and construct their own ways of recording. Although all groups are supported well in classes and teaching assistants are well briefed, there is sometimes insufficient planned language and organisational support for lower attaining pupils.
91. Pupils who have English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers, because they are well known to their teachers who are quick to offer support as required to improve their learning.
92. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum is very well planned and organised and there is an appropriate emphasis on scientific enquiry. Assessment is very good across the school. Targets are set for individual pupils and the subject leader has analysed trends in the national tests and teacher assessments. In light of the better performance of boys in science, she set up the science club and developed a culture of emphasising girls' achievements in this subject by using assemblies to share and highlight their success.
93. Resources are organised well, including ICT, and the science club enriches the curriculum. The positive impact of this club was seen within class lessons and discussions with pupils. Those attending the club have a very good attitude and are keen to ask questions and to try for

themselves. There are also very good links with a local secondary school staff who allow the club members to use their facilities and share in the teaching and activities. Good outside opportunities include science activities on a residential visit, visits to Martin Mere Wildlife Centre, and to the local park to investigate minibeasts, and theatre presentations. The subject leader has given demonstration lessons and checks planning. She is very knowledgeable and attends a working party for developing a pupil visitor centre. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection.
- The staff training has improved their confidence in teaching the subject.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- ICT is used well to support subjects across the curriculum.
- Partnership with parents, and business links improve pupils' learning.
- Some teachers use too many worksheets to record pupils' skill development.

Commentary

94. The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection when ICT was a key issue, because standards were low and the curriculum was not fully taught. All aspects are now taught and good assessment is in place to measure what pupils know and understand. The school's resources have improved markedly; there is now a computer suite and all classrooms have interactive whiteboards. Consequently, pupils enjoy the subject and achieve well whatever their ability or ethnicity.
95. The school carefully selected how staff were trained in technology skills as part of the government initiative to raise standards, so that they obtained best value for money. This training has given staff the knowledge and understanding to use ICT to improve pupils' learning.
96. Standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with what would be expected nationally and continue to be as expected as pupils pass through the school. By Year 6 standards are overall average, but they are below average in some aspects, such as multi-media presentations, and there is too little opportunity for pupils to use their initiative. This is partially the make-up of the class and partially the fact that the pupils have not had this quality of provision as they moved up through the school.
97. Teaching in most classes is good, but it is satisfactory in Year 6. The purpose of the lessons is shared with pupils and any important vocabulary is carefully explained, so that pupils understand what they are to do. The ending to the lesson is used well to consolidate this learning. In a lesson seen in Year 5, pupils' learning in mathematics was reinforced well as they labelled the sides of the graph (the axes) and gave the graph a title, when learning about anomalies in data. Year 1 pupils used their growing literacy skills effectively to describe and label mathematical shapes. Teaching assistants have clear roles in lessons and help all pupils to learn, especially those of lower ability. Pupils work in 'buddy pairs' and this is effective in helping them to learn, but is especially supportive for those who have English as an additional language.
98. Evidence from pupils' previous work suggests that in a minority of classes worksheets are used too often to record and plan work in ICT, rather than pupils receiving 'hands on' experience on the computer.

99. The subject is very well led and managed. Lessons have been observed and training has been organised and delivered to staff. Other schools have visited to see the co-ordinator working with her class. Planning is monitored and pupils' work is displayed and celebrated. There is a very good partnership and curriculum support from 'Mersey Grid'. A computer club for children enriches the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 and a club for younger pupils will be started next term. Parents and their children have been provided with training in working with computers. The school is at the early stages of working towards a national award for its work in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

100. The school has made very good efforts to improve the use of ICT across the curriculum. All co-ordinators have sorted out a list of useful websites and CD-ROMs for their subjects and shared them with colleagues. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, benefit from programs to consolidate their learning in English and mathematics.

HUMANITIES

101. No lessons were seen in **geography**, so no overall judgement can be made about provision. This is because the school is concentrating on teaching history this term. Judgements were made from looking at pupils' previous work and discussion with pupils. Standards at Year 2 are in line with what would be expected nationally, teaching is good and pupils achieve well. Pupils are acquiring satisfactory knowledge and understanding through their work on the fictitious Isle of Struay. They are developing a sound geographical vocabulary and higher attaining pupils are beginning to explain the reasons for their thinking. Year 1 pupils make good use of the locality to draw routes from home to school. Too little geographical work for pupils in Years 3 to 6 was available on which to make secure judgements about standards, achievement, and teaching. Year 6 pupils understand the water cycle correctly and recall 'pond dipping'. However, they have sketchy remembrance of the names of continents, rivers, or mountains. Their relatively weak speaking skills made it difficult for them to talk about what they knew. Leadership and management are good and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Planning, work and lessons are monitored and assessment is good. Staff training has taken place and there is now a secure scheme of work. A good range of visits supports the subject and resources have improved considerably.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning overall is good across Years 1 to 6.
- The curriculum is good and fully complies with the locally agreed syllabus.
- Standards of attainment have risen in Years 1 and 2 and are now in line with expectations.
- Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 are generally below expectations.
- Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Sometimes opportunities are missed to develop speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

102. Teaching and learning are good overall, because teachers make the lessons meaningful and interesting. They use role-play, such as in a Year 4 lesson about Palm Sunday. This prepared pupils for their next lesson when they recounted the story well and tried to include emotion in their versions of the story. A good lesson in Year 6 developed learning from an earlier visit to the local church and made good use of ICT. The teacher has good subject knowledge, which is reflected in high expectations and use of vocabulary and questioning. The pupils demonstrated

their learning from the visit and some could identify and explain similarities and differences between the pictures of churches. Although attitudes are generally good and pupils are used to working together, they do not always know how to make the best use of these opportunities. Sometimes, teachers do not use the end of the lessons effectively to further develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, such as through structured evaluations of their own and others' work.

103. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. Discussion with pupils showed that they have very good recall of many facts. They talked animatedly about special people and could retell the story of Joseph and his brothers in great detail, relating why he was special. They linked their work in religious education to fables they had read about being greedy and could explain about Judaism, the Seder plate and food. They all knew about Easter and its importance to Christians and had remembered stories from assembly and the meanings of symbols. It was a pleasure to listen to the wealth of knowledge and the obvious interest gained from the good teaching. The attitudes of these pupils are very good and pupils of all abilities and ethnicities achieve well.
104. Standards of attainment vary across Years 3 to 6 and often depend upon pupils' abilities to express themselves and to build on prior learning. Standards in the current Years 4 and 5 are in line with expectations whilst Years 3 and 6 are below expectations. However, teaching is generally good and the curriculum is enriched through the use of visits, visitors and a good range of artefacts. This indicates that standards may rise further in time. Discussion with pupils from Year 6 revealed that higher attaining pupils reach average standards and talk with interest about different religions and important people. Most of the pupils were very interested in the artefacts from different religions and spoke in some detail about their use. Achievement of all pupils whatever their ability or ethnicity is satisfactory because, although standards of knowledge and understanding are below expectations, the pupils have learnt respect and they value other beliefs. Those who are at an early stage of learning English are well supported by teaching assistants so that they achieve as well as their classmates.
105. The curriculum covers a good range of religions and pupils relate these to their own lives, for example, by considering kindness and friendships or the wider issues of racism. There are good links made to literacy through diaries and play-scripts, and to pupils' learning through dance. Pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to respond in different ways. The subject leader is effective and monitors teachers' planning and checks pupils' work and learning through samples, looking at displays and some lesson observations. She annotates the work so that pupils are sure what they can and cannot do so that progress is monitored and teachers plan appropriately. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and questioning is used effectively.
- The curriculum provides good links to other subjects.
- The locality is used well.
- There are effective opportunities for pupils to use their skills gained in ICT and literacy lessons.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

Commentary

106. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are taught well in history; they enjoy their lessons and achieve well. Standards are as expected for pupils in Year 2. They use their good literacy skills to write at length about the Great Fire of London and their artistic skills to produce effective black and

white portraits of Florence Nightingale. In a very good lesson in Year 1, pupils learnt much vocabulary and practical information about a row of terraced houses, as they sketched those near the school.

107. Pupils in Years 3 to 5 are taught effectively and they achieve well. Their learning and self-esteem is boosted by praise for how well they are doing. Teaching is satisfactory in Year 6, but does not give the pupils opportunities to make sufficient choices about their learning, for instance in selecting the decade they most want to research. Year 6 pupils know and understand what they have been taught recently, such as Britain since 1948, but their understanding of other periods of history is sketchy. Questioning is used well to establish what pupils recall. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are below what would be expected nationally.
108. Pupils' learning is helped by the effective use of ICT. They watch videos of historical topics and use search engines to research a variety of projects, such as the Tudors. Year 4 pupils were able to use their reference skills more effectively than Year 6 pupils in order to make notes and this reflects the make-up of the two classes.
109. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school now has a co-ordinator and leadership and management are both satisfactory. Plans are monitored and assessment is in place. The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors, such as the lady who talked to Year 3 pupils about her experiences of living in Bootle during the war years. Pupils' achievement has improved and good quality resources and artefacts have been purchased and are well organised so that they are easily accessible.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

110. Insufficient evidence was seen to form an overall judgement about provision and standards in **music**. Teachers' plans indicate that the curriculum follows national guidelines and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils sing regularly, use percussion instruments and listen to music but have limited knowledge of famous composers. A few pupils choose to learn to play a tuned instrument with a visiting teacher and the school has a choir and a recorder group.

ART AND DESIGN

The provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Observational and drawing skills are developed well.
- Good links are made with other schools through art and design.
- The quality of the displays of pupils' work around the school is high.
- Pupils make good use of the natural world for inspiration.

Commentary

111. Although only one lesson was seen during the inspection, work displayed around the school and discussions with pupils indicate that standards are similar to those found at the last inspection. All pupils whatever their ethnic origins reach the standards expected at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and achieve well due to good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by staff and this allows them to play a full part in lessons.
112. The pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences in art and design and are using a good variety of media. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop good observational skills and show appropriate levels of skill in drawing, painting and picture composition. They often use the natural world as a basis

for their work. For instance, pupils in Year 2 use cones, leaves and shells to good effect in their collage work. Pupils often use their drawing skills in other subjects. A good example of this was when pupils in Year 1 sketched houses in the local area as part of their work in history.

113. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught a wide range of techniques that they apply well. Good teaching in the Year 6 lesson observed included direct teaching of skills and techniques. For instance, pupils were taught how to blend colours and shade to represent sunlight and shadow. A visit to the interior of the local church by pupils in Year 6 revealed a wealth of pattern and design which pupils were able to record in some detail. There is a good balance between two-dimensional work and three-dimensional work. After a visit to an art gallery to look at the environmental work of Andy Goldsworthy, pupils searched the woods of a local nature reserve for twigs, cones and other natural things and created their own sculptures to hang in the trees.
114. Pupils know how some significant artists worked in the past and use such artists' techniques to bring interest to their own designs. For example, Year 2 pupils were inspired by Henry Matisse's painting *The Beasts of the Sea* to create their own sea pictures. Similarly, pupils in Year 5, along with pupils from a local special school, looked at the work of a variety of artists before beginning joint work on their own large collages.
115. It is clear that teachers value pupils' work. Classrooms and displays across the school are organised very well and support and celebrate well the range of work covered by the pupils.
116. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Planning for art and design is thorough and based on national guidelines. There is an art club for older pupils after school. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Basic skills are taught well.
- The use of the local community to widen pupils' experiences is good.
- Pupils do not always evaluate their work sufficiently.

Commentary

117. Standards of attainment are similar to those found at the last inspection and are in line with national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 6; this represents good achievement for these pupils. It is clear from the one lesson seen, the work completed last year and ongoing work this year, that pupils of all ages are provided with a good range of interesting activities through which they learn a range of skills and techniques. Teachers of the pupils in Years 1 and 2 make sure that pupils are taught specific skills to enable them to make progress in their work. These skills often help pupils with their work in other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 2 set out to discover the best way of joining two pieces of fabric together and to record their results in table form. This reinforces the investigative skills needed in pupils' science work and develops their thinking skills well. Pupils of all abilities were supported well in the lesson because all groups had the support of an adult to keep them on track.
118. By Year 6, pupils have a solid understanding of most of the elements of the design and make progress, although they are a little unsure of the importance of evaluation as a guide to how improvements can be made in the future. Pupils' achievements in Year 6 are built on the solid foundation that is laid further down the school.

119. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator ensures that the curriculum is covered well and that design and technology is promoted effectively. Recently, design and technology was a particular focus for the school, involving local business people who gave their services to the school as part of a project. The outcomes from the day were many. Not only did pupils make good progress with 'designing and making' and had a finished product to show for it, but they also had an insight into how a business was run. Pupils' enthusiasm and pride in their achievements are pronounced and the day did much to raise their self-esteem. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weakness

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Standards of attainment in swimming are good.
- There has been a good improvement in provision and standards in dance.
- There is a broad and varied curriculum.
- Standards of games skills are below expectations by the end of Year 6.

Commentary

120. Teaching and learning are good overall, because teachers plan lessons well and have improved their own knowledge. They competently use direct teaching and pupil demonstration. For example, in a good Year 5 games lesson, the teacher continuously assessed progress and used pupil demonstration to improve skills. Consequently, the pupils made noticeable improvements. Most teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and so most pupils organise themselves quickly. A Year 2 dance lesson was successful because the lesson built on what had been learned in previous lessons, fully involved all the pupils and included self-evaluation of progress. This resulted in a well-ordered lesson in which pupils developed a variety of movements using their own ideas and those of others. The pupils used well-controlled and imaginative movement to interpret the making of Joseph's technicoloured coat from their religious education lessons. Pupils were told how future lessons will develop their dance and they were asked to think about 'sewing' movements. This will develop into a response to music in later lessons. All lessons include appropriate 'warm up' and 'cool down' sessions and pupils understand the effect of exercise on their bodies. This also contributes to the Healthy Schools awards.

121. Standards of attainment in swimming are good, because the school provides opportunities for all pupils from Years 2 to 6 to go swimming throughout each year. Only a very few pupils do not reach expected standards in swimming. Standards of attainment in dance have improved because the school has placed a high priority on this area and all staff have been well trained. Year 5 pupils attend a dance festival and the school has welcomed an Indian dancer to school. Pupils and staff are enthusiastic about dance. Pupils in Year 2 have reached expected standards for this area. There was not enough evidence to make a judgement about dance in Years 3 to 6. Standards of attainment in games are below expectation at the end of Year 6. However, in a Year 6 games lesson the teacher quickly assessed pupils' needs and consolidated learning at a simpler level. As a result they were more successful. Pupils who attend football or netball clubs demonstrate better skills. It was not possible to judge standards in games at Years 1 and 2 or gymnastics across the school.

122. Leadership and management are good. The needs of the subject have been checked and the scheme of work has been updated. Extra-curricular activities are provided to develop skills and broaden pupils' experiences. The football and netball clubs are popular with both boys and girls and it was possible to see girls sometimes acquiring better football control skills than boys.

There is a fitness club and the football academy coach works with pupils from the reception class to Year 6. Although the playground is large, timetables result in the older pupils holding games lessons at playtimes. The noise of other pupils playing makes it difficult for such pupils to hear their teacher. There is a field for games, which is five minutes away, and this can be used in the better weather.

123. Achievement is generally satisfactory, but it is good in dance and very good in swimming. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Circle time is used well.
- Pupils' personal, social, health education is supported and developed very well.

Commentary

124. Circle time and personal, social and health education provides good opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and to talk about any issues. They learn to understand how others may be feeling. For example, pupils in Year 4 appreciated others' need for peace and quiet for reflection because relationships in the lesson were very good.

125. Through its participation in the Healthy Schools' project, pupils have learnt about emotional well-being, sex education, drug abuse, and relationships. Through the Young Enterprise project, pupils have gained a very good experience of citizenship. Voting and electing members of the school council has extended this experience.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
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	3
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
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	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
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	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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