

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **LITTLE SUTTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111275

Headteacher: Mrs K. Dutton

Lead inspector: Geof Timms

Dates of inspection: 8 – 10 January 2004

Inspection number: 256756

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:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	162
School address:	Berwick Road Little Sutton Ellesmere Port Cheshire
Postcode:	CH66 4PP
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M. Salisbury
Date of previous inspection:	8 March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Little Sutton Church of England Primary School has 162 full time pupils. The school is situated on the edge of Ellesmere Port in a semi-rural position. The school is built in an open plan style and the staff have created a very imaginative, bright and interesting learning environment for the pupils. Although there is a range of ability, the attainment of most pupils when they enter the school is broadly in line with that expected for their ages; girls' attainment is generally above that of the boys and attainment in writing is often below average. There are 21 pupils on the register of special educational need, two of whom have statements of special need entitling them to extra support. This is below average when compared with schools nationally. The main needs relate to moderate learning difficulties, and a small proportion of the pupils have speech and communication difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and specific learning difficulties. The vast majority of the pupils are of white British descent; the most common non-British backgrounds are Japanese. Only one pupil at present does not have English as a first language and is at an early stage of acquiring the language. The proportion of the parents who claim their entitlement to free school meals is below average.

The school has achieved the awards of Investor in People, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools initiative, an ECO environmental award and the Gold Artsmark. The school also won a DFES achievement award in 2002/2003, and is taking part in the National College for School Leadership Network Learning Community Programme.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21038	Geof Timms	Lead inspector	Science Art and design Music Physical education Foundation Stage English as an additional language
9504	Sheila Gurney	Lay inspector	
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school** and most of the pupils achieve the levels expected of them. Standards are currently average in English and science, above average in mathematics and religious education, and well above average in art and design. The school is well led and managed and it provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The standards in the 2003 tests in Year 6 were above average in mathematics; when compared to schools with pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds standards were above average in English and well above average in mathematics.
- Standards were below average in mathematics and well below average in English and science in Year 6 when compared with the same pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 2.
- The teaching is good in the Foundation Stage, and in Years 4 and 5.
- The headteacher and other key staff provide good leadership and the school's self-evaluation is very effective.
- There is very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The improvement since the last inspection has been good. The key issues raised following that inspection have been addressed well, through detailed action planning and very effective self-evaluation. The quality of the curriculum is good and there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. Improvement has been good overall, although the significant changes to the teaching staff mean that there are issues needing to be revisited and developed further.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.** When children enter the reception class, the majority have a level of understanding about average for their ages, although this varies from year to year. They make good progress in the reception class and achieve well, owing to the consistently good and very good teaching they receive. The majority have achieved the expected early learning goals by the time they are five. In the Year 1 and 2 classes, standards are normally well above average when compared with schools nationally. Last year however, standards fell because the cohort contained a higher than normal proportion of pupils with special educational needs, many of whom made good progress.

In the 2003 tests for Year 6, standards were average in English and science, and above average in mathematics when compared with schools nationally. When compared with schools that take pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds results were average in science, above average in English and well above average in mathematics. However, attainment was below average in mathematics and well below in English and science when compared to their attainment when they took the Year 2 tests in 1999. Although an above average proportion of the pupils reached the expected level, too few pupils reached the higher levels. This was partly due to the cohort having a high proportion of pupils who entered the school during Years 3 – 6, and a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The school is aware of the need to raise the achievement of some

girls and of the more able pupils so that more achieve the higher levels. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory. Standards in art and design are well above those expected. In religious education, standards are above those expected and achievement is good. This is due to the quality of the teaching, the opportunities for pupil involvement and the identification of specific skills. Other subjects sampled during the inspection show that pupils are achieving standards at least in line with those expected. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because of the focused support provided. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress where extra support is available.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in reception and Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 to 6. Their **spiritual moral, social and cultural development is very good** throughout the school. Attendance is very good and well above average. Pupils are punctual and show a very keen interest and pride in their work.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall**, but with over half that is good or better. The teaching of the pupils in the Foundation Stage, and in Years 4 and 5, is largely good and often very good. It is characterised by very effective planning based on detailed and accurate assessment of children's previous work. Throughout the rest of the school most of the teaching was satisfactory or better. This has improved since the last inspection. The assessment of pupils' work is very good throughout the school. The teachers work hard and plan well together. The teaching assistants offer a very good level of support for teachers but there are lessons where more support would benefit the teacher and the pupils. The teaching of writing requires improvements as there is too little demonstration by teachers prior to the task. The curriculum is well organised and reviewed regularly to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. This is a major improvement since the previous inspection. The balance between subjects is now good, with appropriate emphasis given to each and teachers make good cross-curricular links between subjects. The school offers a good level of care and welfare and is very good at involving pupils and giving them responsibility. The links with parents and the community are good. There are very good links with other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall, with some very good aspects.** The leadership of the headteacher and the Chair of Governors is good. The overall governance of the school is satisfactory but there are not enough opportunities for governors to monitor the work of the school in a well structured way. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good and the children's start to their education is very well managed. The leadership of some subjects is yet to be fully developed or to be effective in raising standards.

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

Overall, parents and pupils are happy with the school. A number of parents feel that communication between the school and home is not always effective or gives enough notice. The inspection found that links between school and home are very good, especially with regard to homework, and the information provided is good.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards in the content and variety of pupils' writing by improving teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, and providing better demonstration and guidance for pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that work is better matched to pupils' abilities, especially for the more able pupils; the school should also develop better strategies for ensuring greater involvement of pupils in their learning and seeking to provide more teacher assistant time for teachers.

- Governors should follow up their self-evaluation work with more regular and focused visits to the school to monitor the impact.



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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Standards are good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in English, science and information and communication technology. Standards are good in mathematics, religious education, history, and very good in art and design. Pupils' achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory throughout the rest of the school. Some girls achieve less well than boys.

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

- Children make good progress in the reception class and the majority will achieve the expected early learning goals.
- In the 2003 tests the Year 2 standards were well below average in mathematics. Standards in Year 6 mathematics were above average.
- When compared with their attainment in Year 2, the Year 6 pupils were below average in mathematics and well below average in English and science.
- Standards in art and design are very good.
- Too few pupils are working at the higher levels in writing by the age of 7 and 11.

#### **Commentary**

1. When children enter the school, their levels of attainment vary but are largely in line with those expected. This is supported by the results of the school's assessment of them. They make good progress in all areas of learning owing to the good provision and quality of teaching they receive, and the majority are in line to achieve the expected early learning goals by the end of the year.

#### **Key Stage 1**

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.5 (17.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.7 (15.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.3 (17.9)	16.3 (16.5)

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

2. In the 2003 tests seen in the table above, the standards in reading and writing were broadly average while those in mathematics were well below average, when compared with all schools nationally. The results when compared with those of similar schools were average for writing, below average for reading and well below average for mathematics. This points to pupils' level of achievement being below what they should have been in reading and mathematics. However, the attainment on entry of that cohort was significantly lower than usual for the school. Standards in science were very high for the proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels but the proportion who reached the higher levels was broadly average. Girls underachieved in science when compared to the boys and when compared to girls nationally. However, the evidence of the inspection shows that this was not due to the teaching or other provision in the school, but to the characteristics of that particular year group.
3. In 2003, too many pupils remained below the expected level in reading and writing. In writing, too few pupils reached the higher levels. The standards fell because the cohort contained a

high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, many of whom made good progress but only achieved lower levels. The standards evident from the inspection show that standards are still too low for pupils reaching the higher levels in writing but have improved for the lower and average attaining pupil. Standards are very good in art and design, good in mathematics, religious education and speaking and listening. Standards in science are broadly in line with those expected. The school is aware of the shortcomings in pupils' achievement in writing and science, and has good plans in place and appropriate pupil tracking to monitor the development of progress. Since the last inspection standards have fallen by the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics, and in mathematics they have fallen below the national average for the first time. The school is aware of this and analysis of the individual pupils' progress shows that a rise in special educational needs and pupils with social and emotional problems contributed to the fall in 2003.

## Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (28.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.2 (29.3)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.6 (28.2)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. In 2003, the standards in English and science were well above average, and average in mathematics when compared with all and with similar schools. A good proportion of pupils reached level 4, with results in mathematics above average in comparison with all schools and well above average when compared with similar schools. Standards in mathematics are good. However, when the results are compared with how well the pupils did when they were in Year 2, not enough of them reached the higher levels. This was partly because the year group had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. There was also a lot of mobility and a number of the pupils had not been in the school throughout the junior years.
5. Performance at the higher levels in English and science was below average when compared with all schools and with similar schools. However, some pupils achieved well above the level expected for them based on their prior performance. The inconsistency in the results reflects the nature of that particular group of pupils, and is also because of the inconsistent quality of the teaching in the past. Evidence from a range of sources collected during the inspection shows that standards at the higher levels are still too low in writing by the age of 11. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory. Over the last five years, standards have improved at a rate similar to that found nationally. Current standards remain on target to achieve the sufficiently challenging targets set by the school. Standards in religious education are above those expected and pupils develop a good understanding of a range of faiths. They make good progress and achieve well.
6. Standards in art and design are well above those expected and in religious education they are above those expected and achievement is good. This is due to the quality of the teaching, the opportunities for pupil involvement and the identification of specific skills. Other subjects sampled during the inspection show that pupils are achieving standards at least in line with those expected. Boys achieve better than girls over time, but evidence from the inspection did not indicate that girls are underachieving. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because of the focused support provided. Pupils who have special educational needs make steady progress against their personal targets. This is because their achievement is monitored closely and they are included very well in lessons. Where extra support is available they sometimes make good progress.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, overall. They are very good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Their relationships with staff and with each other are very good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils have good attitudes towards school and learning.
- The pupils have a number of good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills, and to accept responsibility.
- Pupils' attendance is well above average and they are punctual.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by the positive ethos evident in the school.

## **Commentary**

7. Pupils behave well around the school and in the vast majority of lessons. In the reception class, children are made happy and secure, and they clearly enjoy their work and play. Throughout the school, pupils are interested in the work where it is sufficiently challenging. However, there are a small number of lessons where the behaviour is less good and this is largely due to the teachers' management skills and the lack of sufficient work at different abilities to keep all pupils involved. Pupils are happy at school and willingly take part in the range of activities provided for them. In particular, a good number take part in after-school clubs, which they do enthusiastically and with real enjoyment. They show pride in their work and are happy to share it and talk about it with adults.
8. The school works hard to provide a range of responsibilities for pupils. As well as monitor roles within classrooms, older pupils are able to take part in various initiatives. For example, they can be playground 'buddies' helping younger children and providing a friend for those in need or they can be 'eco buddies' helping to look after the school environment and keep it tidy and pleasant. Others learn to use the CD player and overhead projector in assemblies. This is done well as older pupils are used to teach younger ones how to do it, thus developing their personal skills still further. The school council meets regularly and has an important role in helping prioritise improvements to the school. The reception children are well on course to achieve the expected early learning goal for their personal, social and emotional development.
9. Personal, social and health lessons are used to promote self-esteem through discussion about children's positive qualities. These 'circle time' sessions also enable teachers to reinforce positive messages about behaviour and school routines. The system of rewards and sanctions works well and is effective in its role in the positive ethos evident in the school.
10. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils are happy with the support and care they receive. All pupils, whether boys or girls, or from different ethnic backgrounds, are fully included in all aspects of school life. Pupils who have special educational needs enjoy school and want to do well. This is because relationships are good and adults win the pupils' trust. They are quick to notice when pupils are frustrated and provide appropriate help. Other pupils are supportive and encouraging. They follow the good example of adults, and this helps to raise the pupils' self-esteem.

## **Attendance**

11. Pupils' levels of attendance are very good and well above the national average for primary schools. Children arrive in good time for the start of the school day. The school checks attendance levels, involves the education welfare officer if appropriate and carefully monitors the very rare cases of unsatisfactory attendance or punctuality.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	96	School data	0.4
National data	94.2	National data	0.4

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

**Exclusions**

12. There have been no recent exclusions. This reflects the very good work done by the staff to include those pupils with social and emotional difficulties in the daily life of the school.
13. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The decoration, displays, lighting and use of music all go towards the creation of an imaginative and very positive learning environment in which the pupils can work and learn effectively. It encourages a quietness in the school that is surprising given its open plan nature. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their work, especially in the arts subjects. Pupils learn to respect others, to be excited by and interested in the world around them. They learn from good role models in assemblies and discuss moral issues regularly. Their cultural development is particularly strong given the effective arts education in the school and the wide-ranging displays of artefacts, art works, historical objects and their own work. The school places a high emphasis on pupils learning about other cultures and faiths and this is evident in displays and the work completed in art, music, history and religious education. This work goes towards the good preparation of the pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 4 and 5. The school provides a good, broad, balanced curriculum with good opportunities for enrichment.

**Teaching and learning**

The overall quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory. Over half of the teaching is good or better. The assessment of pupils' work is very good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is good in the reception class and Years 4 and 5.
- The assessment of pupils' work is very good and has improved since the last inspection.
- In some lessons, the work was not planned appropriately for the range of different abilities and some pupils are too passive in their learning.
- The teaching of writing is hindered by teachers using too narrow a range of strategies to improve standards.

**Commentary**

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	4 (12%)	13 (39%)	13 (39%)	3 (9%)	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.

14. The teaching of the pupils in the Foundation Stage in the reception class is largely good and often very good. It is characterised by very effective planning based on detailed and accurate assessment of children's previous work. The teacher deploys the support staff well, making good use of their expertise. The lessons are very well resourced and carried out at an appropriate pace. The teacher has developed very good relationships with the children, beginning with the very effective induction to the school. The work is well planned for the different abilities and is sufficiently challenging for the higher attaining pupils. Because of this, the majority of pupils will achieve the expected early learning goals and a good proportion will exceed them. The teaching ensures that the children have a very good start to their time in school and are very well prepared for the National Curriculum.
15. Throughout the rest of the school the majority of the teaching was satisfactory or better. This has improved since the last inspection. The proportion of good and better teaching has improved and the proportion of very good teaching has remained broadly the same. Little of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory. Where this occurred it was often due to a lack of interaction between teachers and pupils that leads to effective and creative learning. The management of pupils resulted in them not paying sufficient attention and this caused some less than satisfactory behaviour. At times, the satisfactory teaching also had weaknesses in the amount of challenge offered to groups of pupils and this resulted in insufficient being asked of them, and tasks that were too easy. This partly explains the underachievement evident in some subjects. In some lessons, the teaching was over-directed and pupils were too passive and not involved in their learning. However, in other lessons, such as a science lesson in Year 2, pupils were very active and given challenging tasks that extended their thinking skills and understanding of the subject. Teachers are using ICT well in planning and accessing resources from the Internet.
16. The teaching of writing requires improvements. The school has identified the development of writing as a priority and drawn up an appropriate action plan. There is too little demonstration by teachers prior to the task. The teaching does not address sentence level work sufficiently. The teaching of spelling does not focus sufficiently on conventions rather than just isolated key words. Reading is being better taught. A particular strength is the use of the home/school journals for communicating well with parents and sharing learning objectives and targets with them. The teaching in mathematics is broadly satisfactory but the standards of presentation of pupils' work are much improved since the last inspection. Teaching in the other subjects is largely satisfactory or better. The teachers work hard and plan well together. The teaching assistants offer a very good level of support for teachers but there are lessons where more support would benefit the teacher and the pupils.
17. Where the teaching is effective, the pupils' learning is strong. In these lessons, they make good progress and achieve levels appropriate for their abilities. Overall, pupils' learning is satisfactory, but it is good and often very good in the reception class, and good in Years 4 and 5. The girls' test results indicate that they achieve less well than the boys but there is no evidence to suggest that the teaching causes this. Teachers are aware of the needs of all of their pupils, owing to the good analysis of assessments and test results carried out by the senior staff. However, where the lesson planning is unsatisfactory it does not pay sufficient regard to pupils' prior attainment.

18. The assessment of pupils' work is very good throughout the school, although its use in planning is inconsistent. The co-ordinator keeps a tracking system up to date, and is in the process of using updated software to do this. The marking of pupils' work is often good and targets are shared with parents at parent evenings. The assessments are used to highlight underachievement, although this is a recent development, and this is helping teachers to focus their support more closely to individual pupils. The assessments made in English and mathematics are also used to create focus groups of pupils requiring extra support or a short term boost to their learning. Good records are kept that build into a useful monitoring system of how well individuals are progressing throughout the school.
19. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs matches the quality offered to the other pupils. In the many good lessons they are involved, busy and make good progress. In a small number of lessons, the teaching lacks rigour and so these pupils make less progress. Throughout the school, teachers know a lot about the difficulties faced by the pupils in their care. They try hard to ensure that pupils who have barriers to learning are given the means to overcome these. Individual programmes of learning are carefully written for all these pupils. There is a capable team of teaching assistants and these make a good contribution to pupils' achievement. Pupils' difficulties are diagnosed early, and those who need help with reading, writing and number are given support in small groups or individually. Provision of this support is sufficient in the infant classes but rather stretched in the junior classes.
20. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. However, they do receive good support in learning the language, both within the school and from the local authority. This results in such pupils developing good learning habits and making good progress. When their language skills have reached such a level that they no longer require specialist support, the class teachers remain aware of their needs and target their questioning appropriately.

## **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is good. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very good and the use of structured play is supporting very good progress.
- There is very good provision for personal, social and health education.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, visits and visitors.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school promotes learning through regular homework.
- In the area shared by Year 4 and 5, noise sometimes affects learning.

## **Commentary**

21. The curriculum is well organised and reviewed regularly to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The school has made major improvements since the previous inspection. The balance between subjects is now good, with appropriate emphasis given to each. Teachers use some logical cross-curricular links between subjects to make the best use of time. Subject leaders are a strong team and work hard to keep the curriculum relevant and up-to-date. Long-term planning was also an issue last time: this is now good in all classes.
22. The curriculum in the reception class has seen great changes since the last inspection, and is now very good. It is well matched to the learning needs of young children, with the very effective use of structured play activities. This approach is also being successfully extended to some of the work in Years 1 and 2. The programme is broad, balanced and active, with a rich

diet of activities which promote pupils' social, emotional, mental and physical development. There is a good mix of adult-directed and self-chosen activities. Pupils are well prepared for later stages of education.

23. The school is an inclusive one and works hard to see that all pupils have equal access to what it offers. As a result of the school's commitment to inclusion, those pupils with special educational needs and the very small number who speak English as a second language achieve well against the targets set for them. The school has a very good record with pupils who have found it difficult to succeed in other schools. In just a few lessons, teachers do not match the activities to the wide range of abilities present in most classrooms.
24. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils benefit from the calm and orderly atmosphere and the well-managed routines. Teachers and teaching assistants provide support and guidance which is usually well matched to pupils' needs. There are a few lessons, in Year 3 for example, where more special needs support is needed. The school has introduced assessment procedures, for example the electronic tests in mathematics, to record and celebrate the progress of those achieve small steps in learning.
25. The school is keen to try fresh approaches. For example, the use of European languages has now been introduced into daily routines such as registration. Teachers have been involved in some innovative research on pupils' learning styles, this is being tested to see where achievement can be improved. There are productive, and appreciated, links with the local authority advisory service.
26. The school makes very good provision for personal, social and health education. There is a programme, currently being updated, where pupils learn to co-operate with others and respect their feelings, to make the right choices for a healthy lifestyle. Older pupils are taught the dangers of drugs and smoking, sex education and first aid. The school has also introduced a programme on citizenship which includes links with local government, and an effective school council. Alongside all this, promoting pupils' personal qualities is always uppermost in the minds of teachers. Their success is evident in the ethos of the school and the mature behaviour of its pupils.
27. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of after-school clubs. These are popular and well attended. There is also a good programme of visits and visitors, which supports learning and extends pupils' experience. There is a residential visit to North Wales for the older pupils. Homework is given regularly. A feature of this is the advice offered to parents about how they can best help if they wish to. Nearly all pupils do their best with this and learning is enhanced.
28. Accommodation is good overall. The building is welcoming and kept very clean. There is generous outside space and part of this is planned for development specifically for the Foundation Stage. A weakness is the shared space that class 4 and 5 use. Despite the very good co-operation between the two teachers, there are times when noise affects learning or the planning has to take account of the noise levels, as happened in a music lesson. The staffing levels are good although the provision of classroom assistants is only satisfactory and more support would benefit a number of the classes. The school is well resourced.

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

The school has a caring ethos, is fully inclusive and shows concern for every individual. The pupils are guided and supported well.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are given very good opportunities to air their views and feel ownership of the school.
- Children are very well prepared for starting school.
- There are good procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety.
- Staff have good and supportive relationships with the pupils.

### **Commentary**

29. The school makes good provision for children's health and safety. There is very secure first aid provision by three qualified staff. Safety within the school is good and regular risk assessment takes place. However, the headteacher and governors are concerned by growing safety risks to children as they arrive and leave. The shortage of parking means that parents often double park and this can be dangerous as pupils wind their way between vehicles. The problem is likely to intensify because of the housing being built opposite the school. There are good arrangements to ensure child protection and all staff are aware of the agreed procedures.
30. The arrangements for children starting in the reception class are sensitive and effective. They make several visits to the school before joining. Entry is often staggered to allow each child to be well supported on an individual basis. Pupils attend part time for their first two weeks, and this can be extended if parents feel it appropriate. Older children joining the school feel welcome and are helped to settle in quickly and easily.
31. Pupils are happy and feel secure. Parents agree that their children are well cared for and treated as individuals. Children with special educational needs thrive and the school is fully inclusive. They have confidence in their class teachers whom they trust for help and guidance. Teachers offer good role models and have good and supportive relationships with their pupils. Assessment is used well to track progress and provide appropriate support for the majority of the pupils, both academically and personally. Teachers know the pupils well and are able to offer a good level of personal support for them. However, although they are recognised as more able, support for the higher attaining pupils does not always ensure they are sufficiently challenged in lessons.

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

The partnership with parents is good. Most parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the partnership involved. Links with the community are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents support their children's learning very well at home.
- The school works hard to ascertain parents' views and reinforce the partnership.
- The 'Friends of Little Sutton School' make very generous contributions to school funds.
- There are very constructive links with two local schools which have resulted in a joint production and work in the arts.

### **Commentary**

32. Most parents are very satisfied with what the school provides. Letters, regular newsletters, and notices keep parents well informed about what is going on though a few would like rather more notice of events and question the reliability of "pupil post". This is something that the school needs to bear in mind. Parents are very supportive of homework and make very good use of home/school journals to communicate with teachers. Termly consultation evenings are held and the open door policy allows parents to see teachers about suggestions or concerns. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress. When the school has pupils from other ethnic backgrounds, links with the parents are seen as



important for the children's achievement. All parents are given useful information about aspects of the curriculum to be studied. Pupils' annual reports are helpful and detailed, though some could give clearer indications of actual progress made and some targets could be more specific.

33. The school regularly seeks parents' views through meetings and questionnaires. Useful curricular workshops are offered to help parents help their children. Response to these is very varied. Very few parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and there was a poor response to the questionnaire but consultation evenings are well supported and events involving the children are very well attended. Almost all parents have signed the home/school agreement. Parent helpers are warmly welcomed. The Friends of Little Sutton work hard and are extremely successful at organising fund-raising events. Parents and members of the local community support the school very generously. Charities are also generously funded and parents are especially involved with helping their children to fill shoe boxes for disadvantaged children through Operation Christian Child.
34. Links with the local community are good and the school has plans to develop them further. Visiting speakers, lecturers and theatre groups all contribute to pupils' learning and enjoyment. Members of the community support school events and use school premises for meetings. Wider links are enhanced with educational day trips, residential visits and the school choir's performances in different venues.
35. There are good links with other schools, from nurseries to the local technical college. Transfer arrangements to a range of different secondary schools are effective. The most productive links are with a local primary special school and the nearby secondary school. Year 3 pupils joined students from the other schools in making masks and performing dance sequences. The project was funded through the European Year of the Disabled. Though the project is now complete it has helped to enhance the already good links between the three schools.
36. The school's links with parents, other schools and the community have a beneficial effect on the pupils' learning and their personal development. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are always invited to be fully involved. The school has worked hard to improve communication and parents are now nearly always positive about the help being offered.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management are good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is good. The governance of the school is satisfactory and the school is well managed.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has created a very positive and supportive ethos throughout the school
- The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good.
- The school is very effective in monitoring pupils' progress, including the recognition of different groups of pupils.
- The Chair of Governors leads the governing body well and has high expectations.

### **Commentary**

37. The headteacher provides good, inspirational leadership and the school is well managed. She has high expectations and is continually seeking improvement. This is reflected in a project involving leadership skills with a national college and a group of local schools, from which she hopes to be able to develop her skills, and those of key staff, even further. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and this contributes to the effective leadership. The school's aims are clearly put into practice in the very pleasant, calm and interesting learning environment created by the headteacher and her staff. Since the last inspection, she has

developed very good systems for tracking information about pupils' progress. This enables her to trace any differences in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs, the gifted and talented, those with English as an additional language or even how well they do compared to where they live. This information is used well to prepare teachers for their new classes and to show where underachievement exists so that it can be addressed. Although new, this work is beginning to have a positive impact on standards, although it still needs to be refined and streamlined in its presentation so that the most important and practical information is easily accessible.

38. A number of the subject co-ordinators have recently been appointed and have yet to fully take on their role, especially with regard to monitoring the teaching and learning. However, their early action plans and the whole school development planning shows that this is intended to take place as soon as practicable. Where subjects have been led for longer, co-ordinators, along with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have monitored and evaluated the teaching and learning and this work has had an impact on teachers' practice. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very effective and this has a clear positive impact on pupils' achievement. The management, curricular planning, resourcing and teaching are all closely and effectively interlinked, resulting in coherent provision. New staff are well inducted into school procedures and teachers attend a wide range of professional development training, based largely around the development plan priorities.
39. The school takes part in a system of regular self-evaluation, involving staff, the governing body and an outside consultant. This is carried out in some depth and is very effective in helping recognise and prioritise improvements needed. The development planning is based on a detailed audit, involving almost all in the school. Individual action plans are produced by and agreed with co-ordinators and the priorities are costed appropriately, including the provision of time and money for the staff involved, where appropriate. The performance management structure is good and effective, and closely linked to the development planning, which enables there to be some coherence in the setting of objectives. These have had a satisfactory impact on teaching and pupils' achievement. Observations and discussions have resulted in improvements to the teaching, especially in the case of more inexperienced teachers.
40. The governing body is well organised and has an appropriate structure of committees to enable it to carry out its work efficiently. They meet all of their statutory responsibilities. The governors provide a satisfactory level of challenge and support for the school. The Chair is very active and keen to ensure that the governors are as effective as possible. He has recently produced a draft handbook for the governors containing a wealth of useful information. The structure of the governing body is appropriate and it carries out its business efficiently. Some governors have links with subjects and a number spend a lot of time in school. However, the system for regular monitoring and reporting to the governing body on aspects of the school's work is not fully developed and they rely too heavily on the headteacher's reports regarding the school's work. This has been recognised in the school's development planning, and is reflected in the governors' good understanding of the school's strengths but lack of security in recognising its weaknesses.
41. The headteacher acts as coordinator for special educational needs. Since her appointment, she has made significant improvements to special needs provision. For example, teachers are now much more involved; they prepare pupils' targets and make sure that lesson plans include suitable activities. Improved provision is linked to the inclusion and care which is evident throughout the school. There are clear procedures and records are kept up-to-date. The support team have had experience and training in helping pupils with special needs, these make a good contribution to learning. The school has made good progress in its aim to make the school accessible to all. There is a well-informed governor for special needs, who makes a good contribution to the school's work.

## **Financial information**

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	397 624
Total expenditure	394 066
Expenditure per pupil	2 318

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	30 754
Balance carried forward to the next	34 312

42. The finance committee and headteacher carry out the budgeting process efficiently and with the principles of best value in mind. They monitor the budget regularly with information provided by the administrative staff. The governing body keeps the planned carry forward amounts high to cover staffing costs as numbers have fallen recently. All grants received are spent appropriately and have a positive impact on provision. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

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

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

The reception class teacher is supported by good quality teaching assistants. The work is well planned and appropriate for the ages of the children, based on the Foundation Stage curriculum. The teaching is of good quality overall and supports the evident good progress and achievement. The reception class is well resourced, and the school has plans to develop the outdoor area more fully since a move of room made access difficult. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and has a clear idea of the priorities for improvement needed. The preparation for children starting school is very good and involves parents and children, and the pre-school settings, in a number of visits and events. The children's progress is assessed well and is used to inform the planning of activities. At the end of the year, the teacher does a detailed analysis of the Foundation Stage profile, showing individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and passes this on to the Year 1 teacher.

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

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

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

- Good use is made of outdoor play, although access is difficult.
- Children have good opportunities to take part in self-chosen activities as well as learning to work and play as part of a larger group.
- Relationships between children, and between staff and children, are good.

#### **Commentary**

43. The teaching is good and the majority of the children are on course to exceed the expected early learning goals by the end of the year. The teacher and non-teaching staff have a strong relationship with the children and this encourages their learning, making them confident and supporting their self-esteem. The teacher has introduced clearly understood and effective classroom routines, including a mixture of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Children's behaviour is good and they show a good awareness of the needs of others and get on well together. The children have many opportunities to play together indoors and out. The class is well resourced with toys and sand and water trays, giving opportunities for children to select activities and to share and co-operate in their play. Their personal development is enhanced through taking part in a Nativity play. When changing for physical education, most children are able to dress and undress themselves well. Class discussions are used to focus children's understanding on reasons why they get angry or excited. Very good role-play activities, such as the 'bus' which acted as a focus for this work as part of the transport topic, give children a chance to work together and develop their understanding of others' needs.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

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

- The teacher makes very good use of individual targets for children.
- Children's writing skills are being well developed.
- Many of the planned activities are targeted at developing children's speaking and listening skills.
- The self-chosen reading books are not always appropriate for the children's level of ability.

## Commentary

44. The teaching is good and the majority of the children will achieve the expected early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The teacher uses individual targets to set appropriately challenging objectives for children, based on what they already know and can do. So, for example, one child may have recognising a particular letter sound as a target, while a more able child is expected to be able to write the letters. These targets are first set using the assessment of children's ability on entry to the school. Good progress is evident in writing as children who cannot write their names when they start school are able to do so after two months. They can recognise initial sounds of words. Children with average ability are able to write recognisable letters and can tell what it is they are trying to say. Higher attaining children are beginning to use capital 'I' and full stops in sentences. They write with a good, even hand. Homework is used well to develop reading skills. Many children have good selections of key words to learn, but also access to books. However, the system of choosing books in certain sections has resulted in children having books that are unsuitable for their reading skills and will not help them to develop their phonic ability.
45. There is good use of computers to support children's learning. For example, in one activity children clicked on and dragged letters to create three-letter words, helping improve their phonic skills. Many of the role-play and other play activities are intended to develop children's speaking and listening skills, and observations of them planning and taking bus journeys shows clearly how they are developing a good level of articulacy.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching makes good links between different areas of the curriculum.
- Very good links are made between mathematics and other subjects.

## Commentary

46. The teaching is very good in this area of learning and this enables the children to achieve well. By the start of Year 1, almost all of the children will achieve the expected early learning goals. In one very good lesson, the teacher made extremely effective links between mathematics and children's physical development by using a hall session to consolidate their learning of ordinal numbers, positional language and the vocabulary of shape, such as wide, long and tall. They count movements and show they have a good understanding of zero. Children can arrange themselves using ordinal numbers. Middle ability children can count to 5 accurately and are almost counting to 10 after a month in the school. When given a number they can draw the correct number of objects up to eight. Higher attaining children are able to write numbers accurately and to match two-dimensional shapes of different sizes. Children used computers well to create pictures from two-dimensional shapes and the teacher ensured they had to explain their work using the correct mathematical vocabulary.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children learn about different religions and customs.
- The teacher plans work well, to complement the themes being covered in Years 1 and 2.

## **Commentary**

47. Children study the festivals of Diwali and Christmas, with both being opportunities to create good artwork as well as finding out about and comparing different religions. A visit from a bird of prey sanctuary provided children with an opportunity to see such birds up close and to create a real feeling of wonder, especially at the larger birds.
48. Children use computers regularly for a variety of tasks in other areas of learning. They use art software to create pictures and patterns and they use the mouse and appropriate icons well. In a mathematics lesson, they built houses using two-dimensional, wide and narrow shapes by clicking and dragging. Children are able to learn about the world around them through activities such as the drawing of places passed on their route to school. By the end of the reception year, the majority of the children will reach the expected early learning goals.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The work in this area of learning is very well linked to other areas.

## **Commentary**

49. The teaching is good and most of the children will achieve the expected early learning goals by the end of the reception year, with a significant proportion exceeding them. When working in the hall the teacher ensures that children are safe and has good routines for avoiding the many obstruction created by the way the hall is used. In physical education lessons children warm up and cool down appropriately and they respond to the teachers' signals well. The teacher makes good use of the cool down to explain the effects of exercise on their bodies. Children have opportunities to practise football skills with a professional from a local club.
50. A number of classroom activities are used to promote children's skills in using different materials and tools. They have many opportunities for cutting and sticking, and they confidently use malleable materials to model with. Outside the use of large wheeled toys is planned and focused on specific learning outcomes. One session, for example, was linked to the journeys' theme and well-led by the teaching assistant.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

51. It is not possible to make an overall judgement of provision and standards as too few lessons were observed. Children have the chance to experience a range of media and methods of creating pictures and patterns. They print using paint and make various collages, some linked to stories and books used in literacy lessons. Children create very good observational drawings outdoors of, for example, sunflowers. These are very well used back in the classroom to create ink and wash drawings. In a link with their knowledge and understanding of the world, they make clay lamps for Diwali. Photographs show children taking part in a range of dance and musical activities. Displays show good work based on that of Matisse, creating paper backgrounds and then cutting out shapes to make snails or snakes. The good teaching links music and art through the composition of sounds to illustrate paintings of places passed on children's journey to school. This gives them the opportunity to work in groups with tuned and untuned percussion to compose and perform their sounds.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**. Standards are average throughout the school. Standards in speaking and listening skills are above average in Years 1 and 2.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The monitoring of standards and the analysis of data are good.
- Pupils' listening skills are good throughout the school, and speaking skills are good in Years 1 and 2.
- The use of home /school reading journals is good.
- The development of handwriting and presentational skills has been good.
- Pupils' attitudes towards reading are good but guided reading sessions are not always sufficiently productive for the majority of the pupils.
- Standards of writing, particularly of the higher attaining pupils, need developing and the teaching of spelling needs to be given greater priority.

#### Commentary

52. The results of the National Curriculum assessments for 2003 point to Year 2 pupils' level of achievement being below what they should have been in reading. However, those pupils had a level of attainment significantly lower than usual for the school when they started in reception. Even so, too many pupils remained below the expected level in reading and writing. In writing, too few pupils reached the higher levels. The standards evident from the inspection show that standards for pupils reaching the higher levels in writing still need improvement, although they have improved for the middle and lower attaining pupils.
53. In 2003, the results from the national tests show that the number of pupils attaining the expected level at the age of 11 was well above average, when compared with schools taking pupils with similar socio-economic backgrounds. Performance at the higher levels was below the average. Evidence from a range of sources collected during the inspection show that standards at the higher levels need to improve further in writing. Assessment data show boys' performance to be higher than girls; however, inspection evidence showed this was due to that particular group of pupils rather than any aspect of the school's provision. Current standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally, but above that in Years 4 and 5 because of good and very good teaching.
54. The majority of pupils listen very carefully to adults and to each other. In good lessons, teachers plan for the development of speaking and listening skills in a range of curriculum subjects, they value pupils' contributions, and use questions effectively to develop learning. This was well illustrated in a Year 1 history lesson where the teacher engaged the pupils in a discussion about a recent visit to Ellesmere Boat Museum. Challenging questioning, effective modelling, and rephrasing of pupils' answers led to good pupil development. Teachers make good use of talk partners to prompt thinking and to enable pupils to extend and explore ideas. In the best lessons this is used very effectively as a precursor to writing.
55. Reading is given a high priority and pupils throughout the school demonstrate a positive attitude towards books. The home/school journal is a very successful feature of the reading programme in Years 1, 2 and 3. Enquiry and library skills are developed through the use of the school library and pupils are able to locate books using the simplified Dewey system. However, the range of books read by the most able is not as wide as expected, pupils in Year 6 need greater guidance in the choice of books read, particularly the range of fiction. The teaching of guided reading sessions, where the focus is on the teaching of reading skills and

strategies, is variable. In the weakest sessions, the work is undemanding and pupils reading independently in the rest of the room lack direction and challenge from the teacher. This represents over two hours' teaching-time a week.

56. Standards in writing need to be improved. The school has identified the development of writing as a priority and drawn up an appropriate action plan. Greater opportunities are being provided for pupils to write extended pieces of writing but there is too little demonstration by teachers prior to the task. The teaching does not address sentence level work sufficiently. The teaching of spelling does not focus sufficiently on conventions rather than just isolated key words.
57. The most effective teaching is characterised by a fast pace, engaging material that captures pupils' interest, clear planning and explicit teaching of the key features of a genre. This was observed in a very good Year 5 lesson working on the text, 'The Night Stalker.' The teacher used a range of strategies to involve pupils, continually challenging the pupils and making effective use of teacher modelling. Teaching was explicit, engaging and broken down into small achievable steps. As a result, all pupils made very good progress and achieved well. The development of handwriting and presentational skills has been good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils generally present their work with great care and take pride in their work. The use of a pupil self-evaluation is very good practice and appropriately involves pupils in evaluating their own development.
58. The subject leader is enthusiastic and keen to raise standards further. She has only been in post for a term but has the potential to manage this subject very effectively. An action plan has been developed, focusing on raising achievement in writing and using assessment data to inform teaching and monitor individual progress. The school monitors performance very well by tracking pupils' achievement and setting targets. The school has correctly identified, from analysis, the need to raise standards further in spelling and knowledge of non-fiction text types in Years 3 to 6. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning through lesson observations and scrutiny of planning and work. The school needs to address teachers' subject knowledge, as this is key to raising standards further particularly for higher attaining pupils. All pupils have a writing portfolio containing one piece of work that is given a National Curriculum level on a termly basis. This enables the school to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils more easily.

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

59. There is good evidence of literacy skills being taught through a number of subjects, such as religious education and history. Pupils have plentiful opportunities for discussion in lessons as a way of developing speaking and listening skills and developing understanding. Many teachers have identified good opportunities for the development of cross-curricular writing. Evidence was seen in Year 4 where pupils were studying Britain since 1930 were asked to write an account of an evacuee. Work across the curriculum includes the appropriate use of information and communication technology to support learning.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good systems for tracking pupils' progress.
- Teachers emphasise good presentation; standards in this are much better than the last inspection.
- Homework is used well to raise standards.
- Teachers do not always use mental and oral work well enough.
- Pupils of different abilities are sometimes given work at the same level.



## Commentary

60. In Year 2, standards are in line with those expected for seven-year-olds. Pupils have made a steady start in the infant classes, particularly in number work. There was a dip in the results of the national tests in 2003, when almost half of the pupils did not reach average standards. This was due to an unusually high number of pupils who entered the school with weak mathematical skills. The present Year 2 is set to improve on these results. Standards have remained consistently high since the last inspection.
61. Standards in Year 6 are above average. This matches the results achieved in the 2003 national tests. Achievement is satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Most pupils make at least steady progress in the junior classes, but this could still be better. For example, in the 2003 tests, a third of the pupils who had reached above average levels in Year 2 did not manage to do so by the time they reached Year 6. The main reason for this is that the teaching at the time lacked rigour. A survey of the pupils' books shows that work is often the same for pupils of very different abilities, so parts of some lessons are not demanding enough for the more able pupils. Teachers are better at making sure that slower pupils, or those with special educational needs, succeed. These achieve as well as the others, and sometimes better when extra support is available
62. Boys consistently do better than girls. The school is keeping a careful eye on this, through its extremely thorough systems for tracking pupils' progress. From these, the subject leader makes a detailed analysis of the differences in boys' or girls' performance, and provides suggestions for adjustments in teaching styles or the curriculum. During the inspection there was no evidence that any part of the school's provision is causing this gap.
63. Teaching was good in just over half the lessons seen, but this is not consistent throughout the school. As a result, teaching and achievement remain satisfactory overall. All teachers prepare lessons well, with clear learning objectives. They use equipment effectively to support pupils' understanding of mathematical ideas. In the best lessons, for example in the work on decimals in Year 5, teachers set a challenging pace and guide all pupils towards new ideas by demonstrating, explaining clearly and asking probing questions. They use a range of strategies to make sure that pupils understand and have chances to shine. In these lessons, pupils know when they have done well and are keen to do more. In contrast, in just a few lessons, the pace is slower and there is not enough exciting teaching to keep the lesson bubbling and bring it to a satisfying conclusion. As a result, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' understanding. Despite this, pupils nearly always listen well, work hard and want to learn. They take great care with their written work, this is a big improvement since the last inspection.
64. Most lessons begin with stimulating oral work. This is helping to improve the pupils' ability to calculate mentally and recall important number facts. However, in a few lessons this part is too brief and not demanding enough to extend pupils' knowledge or strategies. In these cases, this also means that the classes do not move on to the next activity sufficiently alert and engaged. Teachers have increased the number of opportunities for problem solving and investigative work. Pupils enjoy these and their skills have improved since the last inspection. Nevertheless, this work could often be taken further. Investigations rarely move on to look for a general rule or a formula. For example, after pupils in Year 6 completed a good experiment on squared numbers, they did not take this further by looking for patterns, or testing their theories using technology and larger numbers. Pupils' skills in predicting, estimating, and checking answers for reasonableness are not developed sufficiently. However there are good routines for setting interesting homework.
65. Leadership in the subject has been effective in putting in place effective systems to record what pupils know and can do, and whether they are learning fast enough. There has been a significant improvement in this since the last inspection. This information is used very well to provide support where needed and to make improvements to teaching. The systems are so

well established that the school now has scope for streamlining the procedures. This would give teachers more time to ensure that work in lessons is matched to ability. A good feature is the use of self-evaluations by pupils. They write these evaluations thoughtfully, and this helps them to think about how they have improved and what they need to do next. The co-ordinator has been able to observe some lessons and so keep an eye on the quality of teaching and learning. There are good plans to continue this, and so make sure that all teaching reaches the standard of the best. Teachers work well as a team and are keen to share expertise. The school is well placed to raise standards and achievement further.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

66. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their numeracy skills in other subjects, particularly science. They collect and present data well, using neat charts and diagrams. They measure accurately, for example in the work on temperature and when they design and make moving toys in technology. Time lines are used effectively in history and ICT is used regularly to consolidate or extend mathematical ideas.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In the infant classes, all pupils achieve satisfactory standards but too few of the pupils go on to achieve the higher levels.
- Girls in the present Year 6 are achieving well.
- The curriculum is well planned and most of the teaching is good and improving.
- The work is not always matched to the needs of the different ability groups in the classrooms.
- The teaching makes good use of investigative and practical activities.

### **Commentary**

67. Although in 2003 all pupils achieved the expected level, only a broadly average proportion reached the higher levels. In studying life and living processes, a below average proportion reached the higher levels. This pattern was followed in the Year 6 tests where although a higher proportion of the pupils reached the expected level, too few pupils achieved the higher levels. In particular, girls underachieved and left the school behind girls nationally, as well as the boys. The evidence of the inspection points to this result being largely due to the pupils in that year group, as in the present Year 6, where boys outnumber the girls greatly, the girls are well-represented in the higher ability groups and are achieving well. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and from below average are now much closer to the national average.
68. One of the strengths of the good teaching is the good use of investigations. In Year 2, for example, pupils were asked to devise their own experiments to test forces with toy cars. Talking to pupils shows how well they remember and how much they enjoyed an earlier investigation. The teacher had grouped pupils well to ensure a mix of ability so that the more able could support and help develop the understanding of the less able. About half of the class understood the effect of gravity and how they could use this to devise a test. A strength of the teaching is the use of correct technical vocabulary so that pupils are becoming familiar with words such as 'hypothesis' and 'predict'. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils experimented with dissolving matter in water and their use of the correct technical vocabulary is praised. They are able to devise ways to ensure their tests are fair. They show an understanding of how hot water might have a different impact on the experiment. The scrutiny of their books shows that older pupils are given too many photocopied worksheets and not enough opportunities to devise their own ways of recording their work.

69. The curriculum is well planned through appropriate topics and the coverage of the National Curriculum is good. In Year 1 pupils experimented with a range of toys to illustrate how they used different forces to make them work. The teacher had clearly made the work fun and interesting. The science co-ordinator has only recently joined the school and is in the process of auditing needs. She has not had opportunities to monitor or evaluate the work of other teachers yet. Even so, she has some sound priorities for the future development of the subject already in an action plan. She runs an after-school club to enable those in Years 5 and 6 to extend their skills and develop their interests in the subject further. She is well supported by the governor linked to the subject who has specific scientific expertise and experience. Although little use of ICT was observed during the inspection, the teachers' plans show that it is used for recording results and presenting data.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and control technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teachers make effective use of the available equipment.
- There is a good range of applications of computer work in other subjects.
- The subject is managed well and there is a useful and manageable assessment system.
- Teachers have good knowledge and explain clearly but the curriculum, and some of the equipment, is fairly new, so there are still a few gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge.
- The lack of a large screen for demonstrations slows learning.

### **Commentary**

70. Pupils reach the expected standard by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Since the last inspection the school has kept pace with the big improvement seen nationally. Pupils are confident with an increasing range of programmes. Many can start and complete a task without much help from adults. Pupils are beginning to use ICT as an effective tool. In a design and technology lesson in Year 6, for example, a few pupils decided to use a drawing programme to improve the quality of their packaging. The main strengths are linked to word processing, graphics and data handling. The curriculum is well organised and all requirements are met, including e-mail, control and modelling. Achievement for all abilities, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. However, there are good plans to improve resources so pupils have more opportunities to make even better progress.
71. Teaching is good overall. A strength is the way that teachers show pupils how to apply their new skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 used cutting and pasting to rearrange dates and events in a history lesson. Teachers demonstrate as well as they can with the small screens. Explanations are well prepared and easy to follow. The pupils play their part by listening carefully; they have good attitudes and want to improve. Teachers organise lessons well and use ingenious ways to give pupils as much practice as possible. However, the proposed purchase of screens and projectors will make teaching more effective.
72. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils are confident in finding files, presenting text and importing images and sound to illustrate it. They use the Internet rapidly and search sensibly. A good feature is that pupils refine their work with an awareness of the needs of the reader. They have moved beyond the stage of aimlessly changing layouts and colours. One reason for this is that teachers systematically build up skills and experiences throughout the school. The youngest pupils, for example, can use a writing programme to build sentences, in Year 3 they learn more about combining text and pictures and pupils in Year 4 can write very convincing newspaper articles and interviews.

73. The subject leader has been effective in improving the curriculum, ensuring that all staff have up-to-date training, and encouraging appropriate use of computers and software. The school has concentrated successfully on the contribution of ICT to other subjects. Assessment procedures are good, these are helping teachers to cater for the different levels of ability in computer skills. Plans for development are good.

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

74. Teachers use a good range of opportunities to enable pupils to apply their skills in other subjects. There is good use of computers to make learning more effective in English and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 6 use a geometry programme when they study angles, and in Year 4 they produce an accurate fraction chart. In art lessons, pupils in Year 4 explore symmetry and tessellation to enrich their designs whilst in Year 5 they use graphics well to create designs in the style of Matisse. Computers are regularly used in science, for example in turning experimental data into graphs or making a branching diagram in Year 3.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography and history**

75. During the inspection, the humanities, consisting of history and geography, were not a focus so it is not possible to make a secure judgement about provision. The school has an appropriate long term plan with a range of topics identified over the year to ensure adequate opportunities to develop relevant knowledge, skills and understanding.
76. In **history**, the available evidence points to standards that are often above those expected, the majority of pupils achieve well and have a good knowledge of events in the past. They are developing a sense of chronology and the majority have a growing vocabulary to enable them to order events. In Years 1 and 2, very good use was made of a visit to Ellesmere Port Boat Museum to develop pupils' historical skills and understanding of Victorian life. A role-play area designed as a Victorian kitchen had been set up in the classroom, this included a range, kettle, washing equipment, clothes and a tub. Many of the items had been borrowed from the museum and provided a very good opportunity for pupils to deepen their understanding. Good use is made of digital photographs to motivate pupils and develop their understanding, frequently these are also used as part of a display. Many teachers have identified good opportunities for the development of cross-curricular writing this is particularly the case in Year 6 where pupils were asked to write for a range of purposes, such as a servant's diary from 1840 and a letter to their parents as an evacuee in World War II.
77. During the inspection, it was not possible to observe **geography** lessons being taught, but evidence from pupils' books, planning, together with discussions with staff, show that standards are at least in line with those expected. Teachers frequently use secondary sources of information as a starting point for teaching, drawing upon evidence from the locality. Good use is made of displays to deepen pupils' understanding and geographical knowledge and skills. The subject leader has only been in post for a term, but is enthusiastic about her role and has a clear view of the strengths and areas for development.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils throughout the school achieve well and develop their understanding of a range of religious festivals and faiths.
- The subject is well led.

## Commentary

78. Pupils' attainment is above that expected by the requirements of the Cheshire Agreed syllabus. Standards of work and the levels identified in the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils make good progress and learn about the world's major religions including Christianity. They gain a sound knowledge and understanding of a range of festivals including, Christmas, Diwali, Easter and Passover. The teaching contributes significantly to the development of literacy, citizenship, key skills and thinking skills.
79. Pupils enter Year 1 with an appropriate awareness that all groups have expectations about how members will behave towards each other and that groups celebrate special events together. The scheme of work builds on this. Discussions with pupils, examination of pupils' work and teachers' planning indicates that sound progress is made both in gaining knowledge of the Christian and Jewish faiths and relating what they know to their own experience. By the end of Year 2, children have a good knowledge of the rituals and practices of the Jewish faith as well as those for Christianity. Teachers make very effective use of discussions and 'talk partners' to involve pupils and deepen their understanding. Pupils' opinions show respect, interest and thoughtfulness.
80. Good teaching, as observed in Year 4, is well planned, fast paced and involves a range of strategies to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, during a lesson exploring the temptations of Christ, the teacher used a range of strategies to develop learning. She used questioning effectively and good opportunities were provided for the pupils to reflect on the real meaning of temptation. The teacher's good subject knowledge was a feature of the lesson. Work in pupils' books is presented with thought and care. Books are marked and pupils respond to teachers' comments and questions.
81. The newly appointed co-ordinator manages the subject well. All teachers complete an evaluation at the end of units of work. Planning is monitored termly for appropriate coverage and pupils' work is moderated using the Cheshire syllabus. No opportunity has yet been provided for the subject leader to complete lesson observations. There is a good range of books and sufficient religious artefacts to support pupils' learning. The school makes effective use of displays to celebrate pupils' work, stimulate and inform. Teachers make effective use of assemblies to reinforce work taught in lessons and pupils show very good levels of co-operation and respect in their daily life in the school.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

82. Not enough teaching was seen in **design and technology** to make an overall judgement on provision. However teachers' planning, talking to pupils, and the displays of work around the school indicate that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills. Pupils show that they understand the process of designing and making. Designs are done with care and attention to detail, for example in the very good plans for moving toys in Years 5 and 6. Skills in making are satisfactory. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have used a reasonable range of tools and materials and strive for a good standard of finish. Teachers introduce the idea of considering people's needs and tastes before making products. In Year 5, for example, pupils make a very thorough survey of types of bread, and which were the most popular, before manufacturing their own.
83. Only one lesson was observed in **music**, but books and displays were scrutinised, and singing in assemblies observed. Although it is not possible to make a judgement about overall provision, music has a high profile throughout the school and is used effectively to help create the quiet ethos and interesting learning environment. In the one good lesson observed, Year 4 pupils composed a line of music to accompany a line of a poem from their literacy work. Although a good, well-planned and challenging lesson, the pupils struggled to compose their music due to the open plan nature of the classrooms, which meant they could not have the hands-on experience they needed to try out their work. The music books show the

development of types of notation pupils use and that they do listen to music and respond to it in a variety of ways. The choir sing at a range of community events and the school brings a range of musicians into school from different cultures. Recently, African drummers and string and brass groups have performed and this results in pupils gaining a wider understanding of music from different parts of the world. Instrumental tuition is available for older pupils in guitars, keyboards and brass. In assemblies, pupils sing tunefully accompanying recorded hymns.

84. Very little evidence was able to be collected about provision in **physical education**. One unsatisfactory lesson resulted from a combination of poor weather, undeveloped skills in pupil management and unchallenging tasks. However, the planning shows a good coverage of the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to swim and dance has a high profile. After-school clubs in a range of sports, including dance, are provided for pupils.

## **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- This subject has a high profile in the school and displays are very good.
- Cross-curricular links are emphasised very effectively, especially with other arts subjects.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to use a range of media and materials.

### **Commentary**

85. The school was awarded the Gold Artsmark award three years ago. This recognised the efforts put into teaching and learning in this subject, as well as the pupils' achievement. The displays of children's work, and of artistic and historic artefacts, together with the lighting and use of music, help create an unusual but imaginative learning environment.
86. Cross-curricular links are made through projects such as that on masks and dance held with a local special school and a local secondary school. This resulted in some very impressive work, as well as supporting the pupils' good personal and social development. Multi-cultural links are strongly developed through this subject. For example, a workshop helped pupils develop kites for the Chinese New Year celebrations. Other work supported their learning about Diwali.
87. Examples of very good work displayed include a very wide range of media, from paint and ink to fabrics and different printing methods, such as wax resist. Clay is used to make models and sculptures, and in history, pupils have made very good models of Tudor houses. The use of sketch books is underdeveloped although they are used on occasion for experimenting with pencil markings, drawings and observational work.
88. Only one art lesson was observed. The teaching was good and the Year 3 pupils showed a good understanding of the work of Matisse as they prepared paper to cut out and use to create pictures showing movement, building on sketches done of each other. Pupils worked well and with enthusiasm, showing pride in their work and discussing their work with each other. They had previously created some very imaginative, effective and frightening images of faces and gas masks to accompany work in history. These pictures made excellent use of colour, collage and drawing, as well as painted areas.

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

89. Only one lesson was observed so no judgements can be made about overall provision. In Year 2, pupils had a good opportunity to develop each other self-esteem through the creating of positive comments about each other as they sit on the 'Star' chair. The planning shows a good

coverage of topics such as smoking, drug abuse and healthy eating. There are close links between religious education and personal, health and social education where the emphasis is placed on behaviour and personal development. In assemblies, they learn about well known figures from history such as Martin Luther King and Mary Seacole, and about the work of charities such as Christian Aid.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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