

INSPECTION REPORT

MARUS BRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106406

Headteacher: Mr David Jones

Lead inspector: Parveen Raja

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 256866

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	298
School address:	Kelvin Grove Marus Bridge Wigan
Postcode:	WN3 6SP
Telephone number:	01942 248129
Fax number:	01942 821588
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J B Baldwin
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Marus Bridge Primary School is bigger than other primary schools. Most pupils come from the surrounding areas. Overall the school's socio-economic context is average. Almost all pupils are of white British background with seven pupils from Indian and mixed heritage backgrounds. There are no pupils learning English as an additional language. When children first start in the reception year their attainment is broadly at the level expected of their age. Most pupils come with some pre-school educational experience. The school has 52 pupils with special educational needs including eight with a statement of special educational need. The range of special educational needs include dyslexia, autism, cerebral palsy, and muscular dystrophy. The school received Schools Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
6282	Parveen Raja	Lead inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, religious education, music, English as an additional language
9663	Brian Silvester	Lay inspector	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school makes **satisfactory** provision for the education of its pupils. The school is well led by the headteacher and well governed. The school ethos is very good with high emphasis on pupils' personal development. Consequently, relationships in the school are very good and pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Standards at the end of Year 6 are improving and most pupils are achieving as well as they can. Teaching is good overall. The school makes effective use of its resources and provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Although the quality of teaching is good, it is not as consistent for children in the reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Achievement in reading, speaking and listening is good throughout the school and good in art and design in Years 3 to 6.
- Achievement in writing is not good enough.
- Higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could in science.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They are well assisted in their work by support staff and are fully included in everything that the school does.
- Pupils are well supported to maintain very good attitudes to learning and very good standards of behaviour; their personal development is promoted well throughout the school.
- The role of some of the subject managers is under-developed.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in 1998. Homework is used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning. Improvement has been good in relation to parents' contribution to their children's learning because they now receive the information about the termly topic plans for each class in the newsletters. Reception children are provided with regular opportunities for outdoor play. There are satisfactory procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the school curriculum. The school sets annual targets for each year group in English and mathematics. It is aware of the inconsistency in setting group and individual targets to raise standards and is taking appropriate action.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Achievement is satisfactory overall and standards achieved by pupils in Years 1 to 6 are average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils throughout the school achieve above average standards in reading, speaking and listening, history and art and design. The table above shows that in the 2003 test results for Year 6, pupils achieved average standards in English and mathematics and below average standards in science. The decline in science is due to the higher attaining pupils being insufficiently challenged; as a result the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 is lower than the national average. Standards in writing are not high enough because there is a general over-use of work sheets and pupils have fewer opportunities to write at length in subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the effective additional help given by the support staff. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Most children are on course to reach the early learning goals in the areas of learning, with many of them likely to exceed the goals for personal, social and emotional development and creative development. However, too often opportunities to extend the higher attaining children's learning in writing and mathematics are missed.

Pupils' personal development is very good overall. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils make **good progress** in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and develop confidence and self-esteem well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good overall. It is good in Years 3 to 6 and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and the reception classes. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Best teaching was seen in Years 5 and 6 and in one of the Years 1 and 2 classes. In all the classes teachers work well with the support staff, who contribute effectively to pupils' learning. Staff set high standards of conduct and consequently pupils behave very well. They treat pupils with respect, which fosters very good relationships. In Years 5 and 6 classes, activities are challenging and stimulating, teacher expectations are high and pupils experience learning as fun. There are good systems for checking children's progress in the reception classes. Assessment practice is satisfactory overall and is improving. The curriculum is broad and balanced and relevant to pupils' needs. A very good range of after-school clubs, visitors to the school, educational visits, very good sporting activities and good links with the community very effectively enhance the curriculum. Parents contribute well to their children's learning. The accommodation and resources for learning are good and the school provides very well for the needs of the pupils with physical disabilities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides effective leadership in creating a school climate in which all individuals feel valued, resulting in very good relationships and enhanced confidence and maturity. The governing body provides good governance for the school. Provision for special educational needs is good, particularly for the inclusion of the pupils with physical disabilities. Financial management is good and the school runs efficiently. The school meets all the statutory requirements except for a very minor omission in the information provided to parents in the governors' annual report. The school has already taken steps to address this.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school and most have no significant concerns. Pupils in the infants and juniors, whose views were sought, feel that the school is good and they like coming to school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Ensure that pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes across the curriculum.
- Provide the higher attaining pupils with sufficiently challenging work in science that is closely matched to their needs.
- Develop the role of the subject managers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is **satisfactory** and standards are average overall. Pupils in Year 5 and those with special educational needs make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in reading, speaking and listening, history and art and design throughout the school.
- Achievement in writing is not good enough.
- Higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could in science and in the reception classes.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well.
- Standards in Year 5 are above average in English and mathematics because pupils are well taught.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their individual needs are well catered for.

Commentary

1. Children enter the reception classes with average levels of attainment. Children have had a variety of pre-school experiences; over half have attended the nursery and others attend playgroups. A few children start school without any pre-school experience. Children learn a great deal through finding out for themselves as they undertake imaginative and interesting activities. Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and in creative development. Most children are on course to exceed the learning goals in these areas. Progress is satisfactory in all the other areas of learning and most children are well on course to achieve the early learning goals. However, opportunities for the higher attaining children to develop skill in writing and recording their work in mathematics are sometimes missed which slows their pace in learning and they do not achieve as well as they could in these areas. Overall the reception year gives children a sound basis for the future progress.
2. The table below shows that in the 2003 national test results, standards in Year 2 are improving in reading but continue to decline in writing and have slipped to well below average when compared to all schools and similar schools. Standards in mathematics also slipped from average to below average. In writing and in mathematics a high percentage of pupils achieve at Level 2B but the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 is below the national average. This is because pupils have fewer opportunities to review their learning and record work more systematically. The school's trend in the national tests for this age was below the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.0 (15.7)	15.7(15.8)
Writing	13.2 (13.6)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	15.7 (16.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The current Years 1 and 2 are provided with many opportunities to express their ideas and to present their work to different audiences, and experience a rich range of literature in the form of stories and factual texts. This results in most pupils making good progress in reading and in speaking and listening. Whilst the provision and the quality of teaching in writing have improved well, pupils do not have enough opportunities to record their work in writing in other subjects and much of the written work is done on work sheets. In mathematics, pupils are provided with challenging and interesting activities but have few opportunities to consolidate new learning. Standards are above average in reading and speaking and listening and not good enough in writing. Standards are average in mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. Pupils enjoy their work in art and history, make good progress and achieve above average standards because they are taught well, and art in particular is linked well to other subjects.
4. The table below shows that in 2003 tests, standards in Year 6 were average in English and mathematics and below average in science when compared to all schools. Standards were average in English, above average in mathematics and well below average in science when compared to similar schools. Standards have been maintained in English and mathematics but declined in science. This is mainly because the percentage of pupils achieving at the higher than expected level was lower in science and mathematics than the national average. The school has identified through analysing test results that the higher attaining pupils have fewer opportunities to investigate and experiment independently in science and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in practical situations. The school missed its targets by ten per cent in English and two per cent in mathematics. It has set realistic targets for the current year and is well on course to reach the targets in both English and mathematics. The trend in the rate of progress over time has been broadly in line with the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.3 (27.6)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	27.4 (28.1)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	28.4 (28.5)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Inspection findings show that in Years 3 to 6 and particularly in the Year 5/6 classes, the rate of progress accelerates and achievement is generally good. This is because Years 5 and 6 are taught in smaller sets for English and mathematics, and there is a very good contribution from additional teaching by the deputy headteacher. Expectations are high, the pace in lessons is brisk and teachers make good use of extra support. This results in the overall quality of teaching being good. Lower attaining pupils are also given extra teaching support. Pupils are provided with stimulating and exciting work, which is well supported by quality resources, making lessons come alive. In Years 3/4 classes, pupils are suitably challenged. Standards are above average in reading, speaking and listening, art and design and history; they are average in mathematics, science and ICT, and in religious education standards are in line with the expectations for this age in the agreed syllabus.
6. Overall standards are improving because the school has taken rigorous action to address the weaknesses identified from the analysis of test results and assessment outcomes. Teachers now provide regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and understanding in word problems and practical work but this is fairly recent and as yet not extended to other subjects systematically. Similarly, pupils regularly investigate and experiment in science but the higher attaining pupils do not have enough opportunities to set their own experiments and follow their own lines of investigations. The quality of provision for English has improved well. These developments have not been in place for long enough to impact on test results.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school because they are given work which matches their needs and have specific targets on their individual education plans. They are identified early in their school life and monitored closely to ensure sufficient progress is being made. Good support by teaching assistants enables most groups of pupils to access all aspects of the curriculum.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes to learning; their behaviour is very good and the school makes very good provision for their personal development. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and have a very good attitude to their work.
- Pupils are very well behaved, welcoming and friendly.
- Relationships throughout the school are underpinned by the caring ethos and are very good.
- The very good moral and social development contributes well to the very good provision for personal development.
- A minority of pupils arrive late and miss an important part of learning.

Commentary

8. Pupils’ very good attitudes to work make a positive contribution to their learning. They are enthusiastic, keen learners, keep on task and are responsive to their teacher. They co-operate with their peers and work collaboratively. Staff use praise appropriately and effectively to encourage the pupils to do good work. This was apparent in an art lesson when pupils in Year 6 planned panels collaboratively as groups. As a result of their attitudes and behaviour the lesson moved at a very good pace and they achieved very well. Parents are very happy with the standards of behaviour achieved. Incidents of bullying are rare but, when they do occur, they are dealt with promptly and thoroughly. Pupils are self-disciplined and well behaved and learn in a calm, purposeful learning environment.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	289	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

9. The school provides very good support for the personal development of the pupils. There is very good provision for pupils’ moral and social development and this has a positive impact on the pupils’ behaviour. Pupils show consideration for one another and respect the property of others. Pupils are supported well by the staff and are encouraged to mature and learn about right and wrong. The after-school activities, trips and residential visits help the pupils develop self-esteem and confidence. Pupils are made aware of their own cultural heritage as well as other cultures. The school promotes cultural awareness and understanding of Britain’s diverse communities in assemblies, displays, religious education and personal, social and health education. There are

links with schools in Denmark, Dublin and France. Pupils value each other regardless of gender, race, ability or disability. The spiritual education of the pupils is enhanced through daily acts of collective worship, some of which are taken by visiting clergy. The religious education of the pupils aids their spiritual development. Pupils have respect for the beliefs of others.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.7	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

10. The level of attendance is broadly in line with the national average. There were no unauthorised absences in 2002/03. The main reason for absence, other than illness, is holidays in term time, which the school tries to discourage. Most pupils are punctual but a small number of pupils, up to five per cent each day, arrive late and consequently miss an important part of the work in the class. The school is aware of the situation and effectively deals with cases of persistent lateness.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, and pupils generally learn well in Years 3 to 6. Teaching is a significant strength in Years 5 and 6 and in one of the Years 1 and 2 classes. Good teaching occurs in all the classes, with all the very good teaching taking place in Years 3 to 6. Assessment of pupils' learning is satisfactory overall but on occasions is not used rigorously enough to inform planning for the higher attaining pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6.
- Most teachers provide stimulating activities and pupils work with enjoyment.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is very good and consequently pupils develop very good attitudes to learning.
- Expectations for some Year 1 pupils and the more able children in the reception classes are not high enough.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught well.
- There is an overuse of worksheets and as result pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in subjects other than in English.
- Marking celebrates good effort but does not consistently inform pupils of what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

11. Good teaching was seen in almost every class resulting in 75 per cent of teaching judged as good or better. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, the percentage of good teaching has increased with no unsatisfactory teaching seen. Pupils learn well when teaching is good. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is particularly good because teachers plan interesting lessons, which are well timed to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Good quality questioning characterises most lessons and is targeted to encourage pupils of different abilities to give a response and so take part in the lesson. Teachers always explain to pupils what the

object of the lesson is and time is set aside to talk about what they have learnt. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and so pupils are not afraid to ask questions and to offer observations; this helps them to learn effectively. Where the quality of teaching is very good, the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, such as in the Year 6 art lesson where challenging questions made pupils think. Teachers' good subject knowledge and focus on specific vocabulary contribute well to pupils developing speaking and listening skills.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1(2%)	7 (17%)	23 (56%)	10 (24%)	0	0	0

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

12. In the reception classes and Years 1 and 2, most of the lessons seen were good, but taking the scrutiny of work into account teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers provide well thought out motivating activities that provide opportunities to learn through first hand experiences. These are well supported by quality resources, which capture pupils' imagination and as a result most pupils concentrate well. However, most of the written instructions are given through work sheets supported by oral explanations with effective assistance from the support staff. This limits the opportunities to consolidate new learning and for pupils to record work systematically in books. Some younger pupils do not demonstrate clearly what they know, and consequently they do not always build firmly on what they have learnt, which leads to pupils not being sufficiently challenged. This is reflected in the lower percentage of pupils achieving at the higher than expected Level 3 in the national tests at Year 2. Analysis of work by Year 1 pupils of average and lower ability shows that in mathematics in particular expectations are not high enough and pupils' recorded work lacks the level of maturity expected for this age. Some pupils barely write in a straight line and work in science, mathematics and sometimes in English is untidy.

13. Throughout the school, teachers have very high expectations of pupils' conduct and use very effective management strategies, which means that pupils concentrate well on learning. Teachers have a very caring attitude towards pupils and always treat them with respect, which fosters very good relationships. Good support from the learning support assistants helps pupils of all abilities to gain in knowledge and understanding and this raises their confidence. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers are careful to ensure that these pupils experience success. Class teaching is good when teachers draw in the less able pupils by including them in questioning. Teachers provide pupils with challenging but appropriate tasks that are well matched to the targets in their individual plans. The impact of the range of support by the special educational needs co-ordinator and support staff is good.

14. Teachers and senior staff undertake a range of assessment activities to monitor pupils' achievement. They also effectively use commercial schemes related assessment materials at regular intervals to check pupils' learning. However, on occasions, assessments are not used rigorously enough to ensure the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged, particularly in science. Foundation Stage assessments are good and staff have a clear understanding of where children are in each of the areas of learning but, as in the other classes, sometimes the higher attaining children are capable of more advanced work. Pupils in the rest of the school are tested frequently in English, mathematics and science. The statutory results are very thoroughly analysed so that all staff have a clear picture of pupils' attainment. Generally staff give good verbal feedback on their work but the marking of work is not helpful because often it does not give pupils a clear understanding of whether they have learnt what was intended.

The curriculum

A satisfactory, broad and balanced curriculum appropriately meets the needs of the pupils. It is enriched, by a very good range of extra-curricular clubs, visits and visitors. The accommodation and resources are now good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular activities contribute very well to the quality of the curriculum for the pupils.
- The inclusion of pupils with physical disabilities is very good and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The accommodation has been improved well to create an effective learning environment. The access and facilities to meet the needs of the physically challenged pupils are very good.

Commentary

15. In the reception year, children are provided with a stimulating learning environment, which enables children to learn well. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are provided with a good range of interesting and challenging activities in English, history, art and design and sport. These activities are well supported by good quality resources and as a result pupils achieve well. In Years 1 and 2 the quality of activities varies between different sets for English and mathematics and between classes, and ranges from very good to satisfactory.
16. Parents rightly regard the curriculum as giving pupils a rich and challenging range of educational experiences. A regular programme of visits and visitors to the school enriches and supports the curriculum. As a result pupils of all ages gain valuable historical, geographical, scientific, musical and cultural stimuli and experiences. Annual residential visits provide Year 6 pupils with good opportunities for personal and social development. Personal development is further promoted through science topics and the personal, social and health education programme. Both of these are effective in raising awareness and understanding of issues such as racial discrimination, diet, drugs and alcohol abuse, and the dangers of smoking. There is a very good range of clubs for all age groups and attendance is good. Pupils participate in these clubs with enthusiasm and enjoy the activities. For example, in the mathematics club Year 2 pupils enjoyed playing mathematical games and were well supported by parent helpers, staff and Year 6 pupils. The standard of work produced by the Year 6 pupils in the art club is very good.
17. The school has fully implemented the new requirements for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are well supported and consequently have access to all aspects of the curriculum. All adults and pupils go to great lengths to ensure that these pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life. For example, when one of the pupils with physical disabilities could not play football because of the difficulty in moving his wheelchair on a very soft pitch, the game was transferred to the hard surface play area so that he could referee the match. The provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is at an early stage of development.
18. The school's open plan accommodation has improved considerably since the last inspection. Most of the teaching areas are more spacious. The sliding doors have been replaced by partitions, which enables pupils to concentrate without any distractions. The facilities for the pupils with physical disabilities are very good. The school has provided ramps and lifts for access to all the areas of the school building and grounds, ensuring pupils can join in all activities and subjects.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare and health and safety provision is **very good**, as are the support, advice and guidance given to pupils. The involvement of pupils, through seeking, valuing and acting on their views, is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a happy, secure and stimulating environment.
- There are very good relationships between pupils and adults and pupils feel valued because they are listened to.

- There are good induction procedures in place.
- Pupils and staff have a very caring, supportive approach to the physically disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Commentary

19. The school is successful in its aim to create a happy, secure and stimulating working environment. There are good procedures in place for the welfare and health and safety of pupils. Regular health and safety checks of the building and grounds and risk assessments are carried out. Child protection procedures are in place and the medical needs of the pupils are met well. First aid and recording procedures are good. As a result of this good provision, pupils and parents are confident that their children work and play in a safe, secure learning environment.
20. The school has good induction procedures for settling pupils into school and there is also very good provision for preparing pupils for the transfer to high school. The school participates in the 'Share and Inspire' programme, which aims to develop links between families and schools from an early stage. Through this link, designed to help parents who want to help their child at home but are not sure how to go about it, the school effectively initiates a productive partnership with the parents. Pupils know their views matter. The school has a regular, formal system for taking pupils' views into account through the school council. This meets regularly to discuss issues raised by the pupils. However, currently, the younger reception children, Years 1 and 2 pupils do not serve on the school council. Most pupils have responsibilities in their classes and older pupils have responsibilities around the school. Older pupils have a range of responsibilities to assist in the smooth running of the school. For example, Year 6 pupils act as play leaders at lunchtime and help the reception children at playtimes. Years 5 and 6 pupils act as library and litter monitors.
21. The teachers effectively monitor the personal development of the pupils and provide good support through the personal, social and health education programme. Visits out of school and visitors into school enhance personal development well. Pupils have a very good range of varied, interesting and exciting opportunities to interact with adults and pupils from other schools, which significantly enhance their personal development.
22. There are clear procedures for systematically tracking pupils' progress, so that pupils with special educational needs are identified early and supported effectively from an early age. The parents of pupils who have special educational needs value the commitment of the staff to care for their children. Parents are invited to all review meetings and there is close liaison with them about their children's progress, such as making sure the transition to secondary education is seamless and appropriate. The school has links with specialist support agencies and a very close relationship with the nearby special school which shares staff and pupils to ensure needs are effectively met.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is **good**. The links with the local community are **good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- The information supplied to parents is good; however, some parents would like to have more information on the progress of their child.
- Good links with the community and schools enhance pupils' learning.

Commentary

23. Parents are supportive of the school. Parents and the school have a relationship of trust, openness and honesty. They consider that their children like school and that the school helps them to work hard and achieve their best. Regular information letters are sent out and there is a school website. Parents are kept informed about the topics their child will be studying each term. The reading/homework diaries provide an effective line of communication between home and school. The provision of homework is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. The school offers one formal meeting in the spring term and two informal parents' meetings in the autumn and summer terms annually but a minority of parents would like more information on their child's progress and more formal parents' evenings. The school is aware of this and measures are being taken to improve the situation. The reports to parents on their child/children's progress are good. They tell parents what their child knows, understands and can do and set targets for improvement. The school is also aware that the governors' annual report to parents has a minor omission, which is being addressed.
24. The school has close links with the local community. The 'Friends of the School' organise a range of events, like Christmas parties, discos and bingo, to raise funds. These funds are used well to improve the resources for learning. Parents are encouraged to help in the school and up to 12 do so every week. Some parents attend classes in the school, run by a local college, which inform parents how they can assist in their child's education. Parents are invited to special events, like sports days, performances and open evenings. The school has good links with the local clergy who comes in regularly to take assemblies. Effective local business links include links with supermarkets, a restaurant and a medical clinic and these are used well to extend pupils' experiences and learning. Pupils participate enthusiastically in athletics meetings with other Wigan schools as well as swimming galas. There are also beneficial links with the Highfield Cricket Club. A wide range of visits to places of interest in the local community enhances pupils' educational experiences well. Many visitors come into the school to talk to the pupils and there have been several artists in residence. Grandparents and other community members share their experiences with the pupils and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
25. The school has forged very productive links with other schools through becoming a member of the Associated Network Learning Community, which aims to develop collaborative learning between schools. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils participate in a technology project at the high school to which most Year 6 pupils transfer. Transfer procedures are very effective in helping pupils to maintain good attitudes to their work. There are very good links with the nearby Hope Special School. Years 1 and 2 pupils do a class link and some Hope School pupils participate fully in lessons at Marus Bridge.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides **good** leadership. The governance of the school is **good**. Management is **satisfactory**, as is subject leadership.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is a dedicated and committed leader of a strong and experienced team of teachers and has developed a very good climate for learning and a very good caring family ethos.
- Management, particularly that of some subject co-ordinators through the school improvement plan and subject action plans, is not sharply focused on what needs to be done to raise standards.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school and use their expertise effectively.
- Finances are well managed and spending is evaluated carefully.
- The school is very committed to inclusion and concern for the needs of the individuals.

Commentary

26. The headteacher provides good, caring leadership. His thoughtfulness and sensitivity, combined with his absolute commitment to pupils and staff, have, since the last inspection, provided the school with a very positive climate for learning. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher and staff. Consequently, the school is a happy one, characterised by a genuine desire to improve. For example, the school identified writing as a weakness and the headteacher has taken positive steps to correct this.
27. The governors contribute well to the development of the school, sharing and utilising their expertise successfully. Several governors visit the school regularly and all are linked to a specific class in the school in order to help and improve their understanding of school life. They know that standards in writing are not as strong as they should be and are familiar with the action that has been taken by the headteacher and subject leader to address this. They take their duties seriously, with many having undertaken training through the local education authority. They are clear about their statutory responsibilities and ensure that these are met with a minor omission from the annual report to parents.
28. Management of the school's longer-term planning is of variable quality, reflecting a lack of specific direction to raise standards in some subjects. The school's monitoring systems are not consistently applied across all subjects. In addition, some subject action plans are also of variable quality. Where they are stronger, as in English, specific concise steps to raise attainment in writing, for example, are clearly identified and over the last year, standards have been rising. This approach is not always replicated in other subjects. The school's self-assessment procedures lose effectiveness because they are not always closely tied to identification of the school's key educational priorities.
29. This is a school in which all children matter. The school's aspiration for pupils' personal development is consistently promoted for all pupils. The intention is to accord all pupils similar opportunities to achieve to their potential, irrespective of ability. This is met effectively for pupils with special educational needs and pupils with physical disabilities through the allocation of additional funds, effective leadership and good management. This aim is not always realised well enough in the provision for higher attaining pupils such as in science and in the reception classes.
30. The funds available to the school are used very well. Governors and the headteacher are particularly effective in their planning and management of the school's finances and ensure that these are linked to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Financial arrangements in the school are very clear and are kept in very good order. The school secretary provides good support in her management and monitoring of the budget. Money is spent wisely and carefully on the school priorities identified in the improvement plan. Staff are deployed appropriately and supported well, which contributes well to pupils' learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	632926
Total expenditure	612843
Expenditure per pupil	2042.81

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	29960.00
Balance carried forward to the next	20038.24

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children in the reception classes are given a good start to their education. Most children have some pre-school educational experience and have average attainments when they start at Marus Bridge. Provision for this stage has been maintained with good improvement in personal, social and emotional and creative development. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The curriculum is well planned. Learning activities are well prepared and organised and children now have regular opportunities for outdoor play. Children therefore enjoy all areas of learning that lead into the National Curriculum. Good assessment arrangements build up a clear picture of each child's development, enabling staff to generally match activities closely to most children's individual needs, although the needs of the more able children are not met effectively in language and mathematical development. The leadership and management are satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of good teaching and high expectations set by all staff.
- Caring and warm relationships help children settle quickly into school and become familiar with the daily routines.

Commentary

31. Children are well on course to exceed expectations by the end of the reception year; children's achievements are good. Teaching is good in this area and children receive patient, caring and appropriate support. Progress is good because much of the teaching in personal, social and emotional development underpins the work in the other areas of learning. This ensures that expectations are reinforced through the range of different activities on offer and that learning in this area is set within meaningful contexts. Once in school, children settle quickly and get to know daily routines. They understand the need to change activities and learn how to make independent choices. They take part willingly at tidy up time, because they have learnt that working together makes the task easier. Relationships are positive throughout reception classes and children have the opportunity to develop effective working relationships with one another and the adults who work with them. Adults set good examples for the children to copy, and interactions are positive; this plays an important part in the children's learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff take every opportunity to develop the children's speaking and listening skills and to promote early reading skills.
- Higher attaining children do not achieve well enough in writing skills.

Commentary

32. By the end of the reception year, standards are in line with those expected at the beginning of Year 1. Although teaching is good, children's achievement is satisfactory overall because there is

scope for improvement in writing development. Throughout the reception classes, children develop their confidence in speaking and listening because staff engage in almost continual conversation with them. They chat, question and encourage the children to extend their vocabulary and their confidence in the spoken word. The children learn to initiate their own conversations. This is because they are shown how and they become interested in the well-planned activities as they play, for example, in the Giant's House or in the developing shop area. However, too frequently they listen to stories in a large group setting because both reception classes are combined at story time, resulting in many children losing concentration and not being able to listen with interest and enjoyment.

33. Children develop an enjoyment of books and some make good attempts to tell stories using the pictures as prompts. Many children already recognise letters of the alphabet and use these in recognisable form in their emergent writing. Teachers provide a range of activities to encourage children to explore writing. Basic writing skills are taught and children see the purpose of writing because activities are often linked to work in other areas of learning such as knowledge and understanding of the world. Children create their own books, write letters to the giant from 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and write regularly on large question sheets. However, higher attaining children have too few opportunities to write independently in expressive form or to structure complete sentences using plausible spellings. Teachers model language well when reading and talking to the children, but do not give children enough time to copy and practise expressive spoken language and reading aloud. Sometimes, by using only 'closed questions', adults supervising children miss good opportunities to draw out their ideas.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a stimulating range of activities to develop children's mathematical understanding.
- Resources are used well to promote children's mathematical language.
- Expectations for the more able children are not high enough.

Commentary

34. Achievement in mathematical development is good because teaching is good. Children are on course to achieve standards that are in line with those expected by the end of the reception year. Teachers make purposeful links between children's mathematical development and related activities, for example physical development. A good range of attractive resources stimulates and focuses learning nicely. For example, in a very good 'Big Maths' lesson, children threw large dice and then ran around arranging themselves into groups of the thrown number. They used appropriate language such as 'plus', 'double' and 'add' to describe what type of sum they were doing. Opportunities for children to practise counting, sing number rhymes and play mathematical games ensure they gain a secure understanding of the work they are covering. Children with special educational needs receive good support with the steps in learning being smaller. This builds in success and children show great pleasure in their achievements. However, expectations for the more able children are not high enough because opportunities, for example to record mathematically and move into the early stages of the numeracy strategy, are limited.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children benefit from experiencing a range of activities that extends their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Commentary

35. Achievement in this area of learning is satisfactory and standards are in line with those expected by the end of the reception year. Staff plan a range of activities which help children learn about the world around them and help them develop an appropriate vocabulary. For example, children plant bean seeds and observe them grow, as in the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. They take part in circle time, which helps them understand being special and they discuss times which are special to them, such as "I like getting hugs and kisses" or "I am happy when I play with my toys". Such activities provide chances for children to draw on their own experiences and this helps them develop an awareness of themselves and others. All children have appropriate access to computers. They have developing competence in the use of computers with some children able to use click and drag, write their names across the screen and enlarge and reduce font size, whilst others find the necessary hand/eye co-ordination difficult. They are taught how to use the return key but some still find double clicking problematic. All are given support and guidance at an appropriate level.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have ample opportunities to develop hand-eye co-ordination.
- Children use a wide range of resources in a variety of activities.

Commentary

36. Standards in physical development are in line with those expected by the end of the reception year and achievements are sound. They develop skills satisfactorily in using tools such as scissors, glue sticks and a variety of papers and are able to print using a variety of fruits and vegetables; they create counting hats and measure using teddy bears, feet and hands. They manipulate the computer mouse, and roll and mould play dough. Teachers ensure that children learn quickly because they provide structured and purposeful activities both indoors and outdoors. The school has addressed the issue of a lack of outdoor space by allocating specific times for the reception children to engage in energetic and imaginative play outside using large toys and wheeled vehicles. In the physical education lessons in the hall, children use large and small apparatus with growing skill and confidence. They are able to run, jump, skip and make good attempts to throw and catch a ball, showing developing control of their bodies. They move carefully around the hall during 'Big Maths' activities, and during outside activity they show they are able to avoid obstacles when playing chasing games, which greatly contributes to their physical development.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching supports learning well and children have good opportunities to use their imaginations to develop their ideas further.
- Lively and exciting activities capture children's interest and they make good progress in imaginative work and play.

Commentary

37. Children learn a good range of early printing, drawing and painting techniques. For example, they print in different patterns with fruit and vegetables. Children's skill development is good because they have access to daily activities such as paints, collage opportunities, and a variety of fabrics, papers and artists' materials. Good use is made of ICT as a medium to draw pictures on the computer and paint their own portraits. Their imaginative play develops well through a good range of sensitively supported activities. Children's creative skills are developed further by the provision of a wide range of activities in the role-play areas. The Giant's House arose from the children's ideas and this has led to children creating the shopping area. Such activities capture the children's interest, which helps them to concentrate and work for extended periods. Conversations with adults in these activities are strengths of the teaching, expanding ideas, inventiveness and vocabulary. Children enjoy the opportunity to sing action songs and rhymes and they respond enthusiastically. Planning enables children to experience activities that inspire and challenge them. By the end of reception year, standards are above those expected.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching, overall, is good.
- Pupils are achieving well in reading and in speaking and listening.
- Standards are below average in writing at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but improving rapidly because of the school's focus on pupils' writing and good management.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their writing skills in science, religious education and in some classes in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

38. Standards have improved in reading and in speaking and listening in Years 1 and 2 and maintained in Years 3 to 6 but have declined in writing because until recently the school has made an overuse of worksheets. Last year's national test results indicate that pupils reached average standards in reading and well below average standards in writing at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6, standards overall in English were average. The school analysed all these results and recognised that pupils were not doing as well as they could in writing. Improved provision in the teaching of English is now in place and, although in writing standards are still below average and still not as good as they were in the last inspection, this represents a good improvement in Year 2. In Year 6, 25 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs and this depresses the overall standard. In reading, and in speaking and listening, standards are now above average throughout the school. This is because teachers expect pupils to use appropriate specialist vocabulary and this enables pupils to express themselves accurately. All pupils have

opportunities to take part in drama and role-play in a range of activities. The school continues to place emphasis on individual reading as well as opportunities presented in the literacy hour, and fosters enjoyment of reading well. Standards in all aspects of English are above average in Year 5, as this class has a higher proportion of higher attaining pupils.

39. The main reason for the improving standards is the good teaching and the effort teachers have made to raise the profile of writing in the school. For example, in most English lessons, pupils now write for a wide range of purposes, such as poetry, stories, letters and lists. They describe characters they have read about and express their views on different topics. They learn to improve their writing by good use of verbs, adverbs and adjectives to make their arguments and thoughts more persuasive and effective. For example, pupils in Year 5 were helped by the teacher's very good knowledge of English teaching and very good planning to extend their simple sentences to longer ones with clauses, phrases and the appropriate linking words. Teachers insist that the presentation of the work in books is neat. It is generally of good quality. Handwriting is practised regularly. Teachers' marking is good in English and teachers' comments are constructive and help pupils to improve. Over the last two years, good assessment procedures have been introduced and these are used well to set appropriate work for the different abilities of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Assessment information is also used well to set individual and group targets for pupils so that pupils are very well informed about what they have to do to improve. All these improvements have not been in place long enough for pupils to reach higher standards by the time they leave the school.
40. The subject is well led and the co-ordinators have produced an effective action plan, which clearly indicates to teachers what needs to be done to raise attainment. The well-stocked library and the wide range of books in each classroom develop good regular reading habits. Pupils use books well for individual research, as well as for personal pleasure. Most pupils enjoy reading and all are encouraged to take books home regularly. Parents support their children well and often listen to them read at home.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. This is an area that needs extending further so pupils get more opportunity to practise the skills learned in literacy lessons. Some effective writing was seen in pupils' history and geography books. For example, in Year 4, pupils produced some effective expressive writing about peoples' feelings on the sinking *Titanic*. In geography, some powerful writing was seen, explaining the differences living in a Pakistani village compared to life in Wigan. However, opportunities are missed to develop writing in some classes in Years 1 and 2, where there is an overuse of worksheets. This does not give pupils opportunities to start using sentences early enough. In religious education, an overuse of worksheets also limits the opportunities for writing at length. In science, most writing is limited to lists of facts with little opportunity for expressive writing.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 2 lesson was planned in such an exciting way that the pupils became totally engrossed in developing a poem.

Not a minute was wasted in this lesson, to teach and develop important skills in a very challenging way. The teacher introduced the lesson by having a poem displayed, called *The slippery snake*. She used questions very effectively to remind pupils how poems were often more effective than ordinary text. Pupils responded to this challenge very well by saying things like, "Poems have interesting words not boring ones" and "Poems do not have to rhyme but they often do". A highlight of the lesson was the group work where pupils wrote poetry about their own family but likened each member to an animal. One pupil wrote, "My Dad is like a big strong lion and mother like a cuddly bear". The lesson gave excellent opportunities for expressive reading, speaking and writing. The classroom walls displayed good lists of verbs, adverbs and adjectives for pupils to use. At the end, pupils wanted to read their poems to the rest of the class and the teacher got the pupils to explain the thoughts and ideas that resulted in their poem. In this inspirational lesson, pupils enjoyed their work greatly, persevered very well to the end of the lesson and achieved very well.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6 and as a result pupils achieve well in relation to prior attainment.
- The lower attaining pupils in Year 6 are very well supported through additional teaching support and in the booster group.
- Although teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, expectations are not high enough in the Year 1 set.
- Overuse of worksheets limits opportunities to use writing to consolidate new knowledge and review previous learning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning by the co-ordinator is limited to Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

42. Standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6, with those in Year 6 being skewed by higher numbers of pupils with special educational needs. However, in Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve well and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve standards in line with their capabilities. There are more higher attaining pupils in Year 5 and they achieve above average standards. Lower attaining pupils in Year 6 are provided with additional teaching support in small groups, which is well matched to their abilities. Pupils work at a very good pace with motivation, and learning is made fun. This work is further reinforced in the booster group and enables some of the pupils to achieve near average standards at the end of Year 6. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are provided with appropriate work, which enables them to achieve average standards. However, in the set with Year 1 pupils of lower and average ability, pupils are not sufficiently challenged, with fewer opportunities to record work independently. As a result, some pupils do not as yet write numerals accurately and some reverse 3, 2 and 5. The limited amount of work in books is generally untidy. In the test results for the Year 2 pupils, more than half of the pupils achieved at Level 2B and 2C.
43. Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6; it is very good in Year 5 and there are significant strengths in the Years 5 and 6 classes. Pupils learn well. A particular strength is the way teachers start lessons with a variety of mental arithmetic and mathematical exercises. Strategies include team games, use of small whiteboards to quickly display an answer, and timed tests. The pace in the lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge and focused questioning hold pupils' attention, promoting clear thinking and enabling them to learn in a logical and systematic way. In lessons where teaching is very good, pupils learn at a very good rate as in Year 5 in a lesson on data handling. The very good opportunities for speaking and listening keep pupils attentive and fully involved. In the Years 1 and 2 sets, although teaching is overall satisfactory, an example of good teaching ensured pupils were challenged well and had good opportunities for experimenting and learning through first hand experience with effective support from adult helpers.
44. Work covers a broad range of topics and provides a good balance in the National Curriculum areas of study. However, less work is recorded in books and much of the work is done on worksheets. Too often these are not dated and so it is difficult to follow a sequence in work over time. Since pupils do not record new learning in detail, they miss valuable opportunities to consolidate learning and review previous work. For example, in Year 2 in a lesson on simple fractions, higher attaining pupils could not recall easily that things are shared and divided equally into parts. Homework is used regularly to reinforce what pupils learn in school.
45. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. This is because, as part of changes in subject management responsibilities, the co-ordinator has only recently taken on the responsibility and this is not fully extended to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2. The action plan is based on sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses but lacks a sharp focus and detail in what needs to be done in order to meet the needs.

Mathematics across the curriculum

46. Pupils use mathematics as part of their work in some of the other subjects such as in geography, science and ICT and consequently develop an appreciation of the practical uses of these skills. However, the development of mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding through other subjects is not given enough emphasis. Opportunities tend to occur coincidentally rather than as part of systematic planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average in Years 1 to 6 and improving, but work is not well matched to pupils of higher ability who are not sufficiently challenged.
- In most classes insufficient emphasis is given to develop a formal reporting style for writing up investigations.
- Some pupils' work is untidy in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

47. Standards of attainment are average by the end of Years 2 and 6 and achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. These findings are broadly in line with the results of the 2003 national tests for Year 6 pupils and the teacher assessed work in Year 2. National test results for Year 6 in 2003 showed that standards were below average when compared to all schools and well below average compared to similar schools. This was so because the percentage of pupils achieving the higher than expected Level 5 was lower than the national average. Pupils who have special educational needs make greater progress in relation to their abilities than their classmates, because the school provides well for them. There are no differences in the attainment of boys and girls.
48. Standards are improving although they are not as good as at the time of the last inspection. This is because science has not been a focus for development at school level since the last inspection and the school had mainly targeted improvements in English and mathematics. The school has analysed test results and taken appropriate action to address the areas of weaknesses. Science is now a key priority, new resources have been added, and staff and the co-ordinators have been provided with training in teaching of investigations and experimental science. This is a fairly recent development and there has not been sufficient time as yet to impact on standards but in most classes work is still not well matched to the abilities of the higher attaining pupils. Too frequently they do the same work as pupils of average and lower ability. As a result higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. However, the school has recognised this need and has introduced an additional session for the higher attaining pupils.
49. In most lessons teachers give emphasis to learning through investigation. As a result, pupils are developing sound understanding of the need to carry out a 'fair test' in order to ensure meaningful results, and of making a prediction as a 'sensible guess' about outcomes, but skill in drawing conclusions is not developed as systematically. All pupils recognise the importance of recording the results of investigations, but there is inconsistency in the way pupils do this in different classes and in the importance teachers attach to it. Moreover, consistent use of worksheets limits the opportunities for pupils to record their work in individual ways. There are also limited opportunities for the higher attaining pupils to choose the method to record their findings or to write up their experiments using their own ideas and skills acquired in literacy. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 class, the pace of teaching was such that pupils spent the whole lesson planning

an investigation and no practical work was set up, whilst older pupils focused on revision of Earth and Space topic.

50. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, lessons effectively capture the pupils' interest. Lessons are prepared carefully and the practical nature of some of the work supports pupils' learning and helps to develop pupils' understanding of scientific concepts. In a good Year 2 lesson, pupils were given a lively introduction, scientific terms were consistently used and the teacher stated clearly what the pupils were going to learn which prepared pupils well for the task. The mixture of class, group and individual teaching allows the different groups to work at a pace suitable for their needs and most teachers are developing an awareness of how to teach practical investigative science. However, in Years 1 and 2 some teachers do not always pay enough attention to the standards of presentation and some of the pupils' work is untidy with careless mistakes which lead to inaccuracies. Work in science supports the development of pupils' personal skills well because they learn to work effectively as groups or with a partner and cover health and safety topics well.
51. Leadership and management of science are satisfactory. The role of the subject co-ordinators is developing well. They are aware of strengths and areas for development needed throughout the school, especially the change of focus within the subject from a content-driven curriculum to a more practical, investigative approach to the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond to using computers with enthusiasm and remain well focused on the activities they undertake.
- Although pupils' achievement is satisfactory, they often make good progress in lessons because of good teaching and effective timetabling arrangements.
- Computers are not sufficiently used to support learning in other subjects, although opportunities are increasing.
- Assessment opportunities to track pupils' progress are underdeveloped.

Commentary

52. By the end of Years 2 and 6, most pupils have reached average standards in computing skills and their achievement is satisfactory. These standards are similar to those at the last inspection for pupils in Year 2 but not as high for pupils in Year 6. This year's Year 6 has quite a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs who find some computing skills they learn difficult to remember. However, in some lessons, pupils make good progress because of good teaching. For example, pupils in Year 5 responded with enthusiasm to the use of spreadsheets to carry out addition and multiplication. Good knowledge enabled the teacher to explain the procedure in such a way that pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, understood and made progress with growing confidence. Good progress was also seen in a lesson for pupils in Year 3. Here pupils were learning to give the correct instructions to the computer using a super-logo program. They discovered how to create a square and triangle by typing in a special formula. Pupils did this well, remaining on task throughout, and some could explain well what the letters and numbers of the formula meant. Learning was effective because of careful guidance from the teacher and classroom assistant. By the end of Year 6, most pupils add to, amend and combine different forms of information from a variety of different sources, including CD-ROMS and digital cameras, to produce documents and simple books. All pupils are able to use the Internet for research and explain their own use of ICT and some of its many valuable uses in the world beyond school.

53. The subject is soundly led and the co-ordinator has ensured good training for teachers and classroom assistants, who now have a good knowledge of how to teach the subject. The timetable is so arranged that pupils get at least one period of ICT per week and this helps them to gain relevant skills consistently. However, on occasions, there is not enough time for lower attaining pupils or those who do not have computers at home to practise the new skills they have learnt. Resources are good, with a well-equipped suite. The three interactive whiteboards in the school are now used effectively by teachers. There are computers in classes but these are not always used as well as they could be to support learning. The subject leader is well aware that there is little assessment of pupils' knowledge skills and understanding and it is therefore difficult to track how well individual pupils are progressing. There is an intention to introduce assessment shortly and this is identified on the ICT action plan.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. Computers are used to support pupils' learning satisfactorily in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 use the program *My World* to investigate and demonstrate simple parts of a plant or of a body of an animal. In history, the Internet has been used to do research for the topic of Ancient Egyptians. A digital camera was seen in action during a playground walk for children in the reception class, improving their knowledge and understanding of world. Computers are also used to support learning in English and mathematics, such as for developing number tables and graphs and for handling data. Overall, however, such use is limited. The subject leader has produced a good list for the use of ICT in different subjects and is aware that this work needs extending, not only to complement the teaching of many subjects but also to give greater opportunity for pupils to practise their ICT skills.

HUMANITIES

Geography

During the inspection, only one geography lesson was observed and work in books and on display was scrutinised. There was insufficient evidence to form an overall judgement about provision and standards in the infants. However, in Years 3 to 6, standards are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Years 3 and 4 study weather patterns whilst older pupils learn about lifestyles in a Pakistani village, comparing homes, school and daily life. They know that the source of a river is a spring and that the river profile will change over its course to the sea.

Geography alternates with history and the curriculum plan shows full coverage of all elements of the geography National Curriculum. Wherever possible, pupils use visits to enhance their understanding such as Years 3 and 4 pupils undertaking field work in Formby and older pupils working at a local brook. This makes the learning more meaningful for all pupils. ICT is used for some research but there is scope for further development in this aspect. Geography makes a positive contribution to social, cultural and moral development by raising pupils' awareness of other cultures and societies.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of visits and visitors helps to enrich the curriculum.
- There is a practical approach to the subject, which gives pupils a good understanding of historical concepts and events.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to write at length in their work.
- Younger pupils need to improve their standard of presentation.

Commentary

55. In Year 2, standards are in line with national expectations, and by the end of Year 6 standards are above the expected levels. This improvement in standards is due to good teaching, the challenge given to all pupils and the very positive attitude of the pupils towards their work. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and good in Years 3 to 6.
56. The pupils gain good knowledge about different eras of history as they move through the school. Teachers use places of interest and the locality as well as visitors to support, consolidate and extend pupils' learning. There is good development of historical skills by various methods and resources are good. This helps to make the pupils' learning meaningful.
57. Younger pupils study the past and present. They compare lifestyles, and what it must have been like without electricity and modern bathroom facilities. They compare toys which belonged to their parents and grandparents with modern toys. The visit to a Toy Museum reinforces their concept of old and new and of how things change with time. Years 3 and 4 build on the development of early history skills as they study Celts and Romans. Pupils empathise with past and present lifestyles. They note that Celtic children had "no time for play as they had lots of jobs to do" and a Roman soldier "felt unhappy about going to Britain because he had to fight and leave his family behind". These studies give pupils good opportunities to use their literacy skills such as writing about 'characters in history'. A good example of extended writing was seen when pupils wrote about Elizabeth I. However, in Years 1 and 2, pupils frequently use worksheets and pay little attention to standards of presentation in their written work.
58. Older pupils make use of primary and secondary source material to further extend the development of their history skills. Pupils investigate life in Tudor times, making good use of ICT to research characters, finding out that Elizabeth I had "sunken eyes and a wrinkled neck". Such details fascinate pupils and they enjoy the subject. Whilst studying the Ancient Egyptians, they thrive on the details of mummification and they make good use of research skills and artefacts to enrich their learning. For example, enacting Lady Anne Barton makes history come alive. Visits to historical places of interest and museums, as well as contributions from visitors about past experiences enhance the history curriculum well.
59. Leadership of the subject is good. The subject co-ordinator's enthusiasm and good subject knowledge has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. As yet, assessment procedures are not in place and there is limited opportunity for the subject co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons help pupils to learn about both themselves and others because teachers link work closely to their experiences.
- Limited recording of new work results in fewer opportunities for pupils to consolidate and review religious knowledge.
- The school does not monitor the quality of teaching and learning in lessons enough.
- Resources for the subject are inadequate.

Commentary

60. Standards achieved at the end of Years 2 and 6 are as expected for pupils' ages and are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Achievement and the overall quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory.

61. Teachers' planning is well linked to the agreed syllabus, which enables pupils to learn *from*, as well as *about*, different religions, such as learning about Islamic beliefs and how Muslims practise their religion and reflecting on their own ideas of 'the land of my dreams'. Teachers link work to familiar, everyday events well through providing opportunities for pupils to reflect on the most important events in their lives such as birthdays and weddings. At the time of the inspection, all classes were learning about Easter with the focus on learning the story of Palm Sunday. Year 2 pupils explored some of the basic feelings associated with the joy and sorrow of the Easter Story. Years 3 and 4 pupils focused on the idea of respect, showing empathy and understanding of what it feels like to be respected by others. Assemblies and the personal, social and health education lessons make good contributions to developing pupils' understanding of moral and religious issues.
62. Pupils explore religions through discussions and have fewer opportunities for recording their work. Since they do not therefore record new learning in detail, they often forget key knowledge of the great world faiths and sometimes confuse them. Overuse of worksheets also limits opportunities to express personal responses and the use of writing to consolidate new knowledge. However, an exception to this practice is clearly evident in one of the Years 3 and 4 mixed age classes, where pupils are provided with good opportunities to make individual responses. For example, when pupils learnt about Mohammed visiting heaven, they wrote about 'My idea of heaven'.
63. In line with the changes in the responsibilities for subject management, the co-ordinator has taken over this role quite recently. The new co-ordinator has evaluated the strengths and weaknesses in provision and drawn up an action plan but has had insufficient time to take action or to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in classes. The co-ordinator is aware that there are not enough artefacts for the religions being covered. There is only a limited number of reference books in the library. Opportunities for pupils to talk to visitors from different faiths and visits to places of worship are limited.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

In art and design, design and technology and music, one lesson was seen in each of these subjects and a few lessons in physical education but not all aspects of physical education were observed. A very wide range of most recent pupils' artwork was scrutinised. Discussions were held with pupils, teachers and the co-ordinator and teachers' planning was also seen. However, it is not possible to make an overall judgement on standards or provision in design and technology, music or physical education.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The quality of teaching is good in Years 1 to 6, and as a result pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- A rich and stimulating range of experiences, which is well supported by high quality resources and opportunities to work with artists and art specialists, enriches the curriculum very well.
- The subject is well led and managed by a co-ordinator who has considerable expertise.

Commentary

64. Art and design is a strength of the school because of: the considerable staff expertise; a very strong commitment to the subject at senior management level; and pupils' very positive attitudes to art. As a result standards are high at the end of Years 2 and 6, maintaining those reported at

the last inspection. Pupils who have special educational needs and those from different backgrounds are supported very well in lessons and make progress at a similar rate to their classmates.

65. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations, subject knowledge is good and enthusiasm for art is high. The samples of work seen at Year 2 show that pupils are taught a range of skills and techniques and provided with a range of stimuli. In the Year 6 lesson pupils planned their designs for a panel in the style of Andy Goldsworthy in order to work collaboratively with a group. When exploring ideas together they made good use of art vocabulary and showed good knowledge and awareness of different styles, techniques and materials. The teacher provided a very good model of art vocabulary and ideas which inspired pupils to create very imaginative and artistic designs reflecting their awareness of line, shape and form. With support they achieved a good balance in colour, textures and form. In all the classes, pupils demonstrate awareness of the different styles of modern and traditional recognised artists, for example in Years 3 and 4, by creating self-portraits in the style of Andy Warhol.
66. Art is used well to support other subjects throughout the school. For example, in science Years 1 and 2 pupils observed the parts of a plant and combined their observational skills and art techniques to produce good drawings of plants with fine detail in the different parts of the plants. Links with the Drumcroom and Turnpike Art Centres and with the art department of the local high school provide very valuable experiences of appreciating sculptors, paintings and three-dimensional artwork. Work with a teacher from the local high school and an artist from the Drumcroom Art Centre provided good learning opportunities. As a result, for example, Years 3 and 4 produced very good quality decorations on 'Chairs' as part of the design and technology project and Year 6 pupils extended their knowledge and skills through work on the transitional project.
67. The subject is well led and managed. The art co-ordinator's knowledge and enthusiasm for art, with very good support from the deputy headteacher, have a positive influence on the subject. Their resourcefulness at making and collecting tools, implements and all kinds of materials has built a good bank of high quality resources, which is well organised and easily accessible. Pupils' work is displayed skilfully, with care and aesthetic appeal in all the classes and around the school. It contributes effectively to raising pupils' confidence and esteem and enhances the visual environment.

Design and technology

Teachers' planning, pupils' work on display and photographic evidence show that pupils are provided with ample opportunities to create their own designs and transfer these ideas to the stage of making products. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils designed puppets and practised sewing skills. Finished products such as the model Tudor homes made by Year 5 and 'vehicles' by Year 6 showed expectations in Years 3 to 6 classes to be higher than those for Years 1 and 2. Links with the technology department of a local high school and joint work on a project has had a positive effect on the standard of work produced by the older pupils. The co-ordinator has very recently taken over the role from an experienced subject manager and is at an early stage of developing her skill and expertise in subject management at school level.

Music

Pupils have limited music teaching because there is no specialist among the staff. However, a very talented peripatetic teacher comes to school weekly and pupils are given high quality music lessons. In the one lesson seen, older pupils were playing a variety of samba music instruments. They were taught rhythms to help keep their beat and were expected to remember a sequence of different patterns. Most pupils were able to do this and many found it challenging. Subject appropriate vocabulary is stressed and pupils use structure and samba-reggae with understanding. Teaching in this lesson was very good with all pupils, including several pupils with special educational needs, being fully included in the performance. The local cluster of primary schools contributes well to the

teaching of music in the cluster schools and to the development of musical skills, performance and appreciation. In collective worship, pupils sing with enthusiasm and their singing is tuneful, with clear diction.

Physical education

Standards in swimming are above average, as almost all pupils swim the nationally expected 25 metres before they leave school and many swim much further. Teachers plan physical education lessons well. They start with some good ideas for warming up and skills are developed throughout the lessons, building well on early skills. A real strength of teaching results from the high expectations teachers have of pupils' behaviour and effort. This was demonstrated clearly in a good lesson for pupils in Year 4. Pupils responded with enthusiasm to their teacher's request to practise then refine their dance skills as they demonstrated the imaginative movement of different animals. This developed confidence well and pupils gained from comments of other pupils, who thoughtfully and sensitively pointed out ways to improve, showing that evaluation of own and others' performance is a well-established process.

The co-ordinator has ensured that the subject is enhanced in many ways. For example, the school competes with other schools regularly in rugby, netball and football. In tag rugby, they beat all the teams in their competition group and went on to the final. Last year they represented Wigan at the Greater Manchester Mini Games. Twenty-five pupils from the Cheerleader after school club, performed at the opening and closing ceremony of the World Cheerleading Championships at the Manchester Evening News Arena. The school's participation in sport is very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

There was not enough evidence to make judgements about the quality of provision. Discussions with the co-ordinator and pupils were held and one lesson was seen. The school sees pupils' personal development as a very important part of its work. Personal, social and health education lessons are provided regularly in all classes. The school is promoting awareness and understanding of citizenship, and to this end pupils are provided with opportunities to visit Leigh town hall and liaise with the police. In the lesson seen, teaching was good and pupils in Years 1 and 2 were developing an awareness of what they are good at and the importance of listening to each other. There is an appropriate programme of activities including work on diet, health, sex education, drugs and alcohol abuse, personal safety and issues related to racial discrimination. Through this programme pupils are supported to develop a healthy lifestyle. They empathise with others and understand issues of equality, gain in confidence and practise their social skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

