

INSPECTION REPORT

MENDELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bromborough

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105017

Headteacher: Mrs E S Cotton

Lead inspector: Ms B Matusiak-Varley

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th March 2004

Inspection number: 256892

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	207
School address:	Allport Lane Bromborough Wirral Merseyside
Postcode:	CH62 7HN
Telephone number:	0151 334 1432
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Bradburn JP
Date of previous inspection:	15 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mendell Primary School is an average sized school situated in Bromborough, Wirral. It caters for pupils aged three to eleven and has 207 pupils on roll who are of predominantly white British origin. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is very low (1 per cent); these pupils have full access to the curriculum as they are fluent in English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (16.7 per cent) is broadly in line with national averages, and the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (0.5 per cent) is below the national average. The range and nature of pupils' special educational needs are largely associated with social, emotional, behaviour problems and learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average (34.2 per cent) and this reflects the unfavourable socio-economic circumstances of the area the school serves. Attainment on entry to the school is below average; many children enter the nursery with limited linguistic, mathematical and personal, social and emotional capabilities. In 2001 the school received an ActiveMark award. The school is involved with University College Chester in the Initial Teacher Training Partnership and has close links with South Wirral High School and Bebbington High School Sports College in developing projects to facilitate pupils' transition and the co-ordination of school sports.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19938	B Matusiak-Varley	Lead inspector	Science History Religious education English as an additional language
9614	C Webb	Lay inspector	
30651	M Entwistle	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage
11642	C Parkinson	Team inspector	English Art and design Geography Music Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school where every child's individual needs are acknowledged and met. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and reach average standards in most subjects from a below average level of attainment on entry to Year 1. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with examples of very good teaching seen. The curriculum is very good and pupils have very good attitudes to learning. The school is very well led and managed by a very hardworking and dedicated headteacher. Governance of the school is good and the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are rising and pupils' achievements are good overall; they are very good in physical education, art and design and religious education.
- Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall but the quality of teaching in the nursery is better than in the reception class.
- Children who are above average attainers are not always sufficiently challenged in the reception class in aspects of the science strand of knowledge and understanding of the world, and history throughout the school, and too few opportunities are provided for independent learning.
- The curriculum is very good and is very well enriched with visits and visitors.
- Not all subject co-ordinators monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The headteacher knows her pupils and their families very well and pupils are very well cared for.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy in other subjects is not as well developed as the use of literacy.
- Standards in spelling are not high enough.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards in ICT are now average; teaching is good with more examples of very good teaching seen. Standards in English are not as high as judged previously but this year in Year 2 and Year 6 there are many pupils who have special educational needs and are below average attainers, and this depresses the overall class attainment. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved and is now good. There is still room for improvement in developing the role of subject leaders. The many strengths identified in the previous report have been maintained.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Inspection findings show that, due to very good systems for school self-evaluation, standards are improving and in English are now broadly in line with national averages. In mathematics and science pupils attain average standards. In ICT pupils meet the expectations of seven and eleven year olds and they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' achievements are very good in religious education, physical education and art and design where standards are above those expected of seven and eleven year olds. In experimental and investigative science, pupils achieve very well and are making rapid gains in learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils who are above average attainers achieve well but at times they are not challenged enough in science. In 2003 in the national tests, in comparison with all schools by the end of Year 2, pupils attained average standards in reading, mathematics and science and above average standards in writing. By the end of Year 6 standards in English were below average and were in line in mathematics and science. Inspection findings show that standards are improving, especially in English. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is below that expected of similarly-aged children nationally. Overall, children's achievements are good but they are better in the nursery than in the reception class. Children attain, but do not exceed, the expected standards in all areas except in communication, language, literacy, and mathematical development because insufficient emphasis is placed on children formally recording their work and many above average attaining children are

capable of achieving more. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good** as are their attitudes to work and their behaviour. Attendance is good and is above the national average.

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

*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.*

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. The curriculum is very good, as are opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Teaching and learning are good, with examples of very good practice. Examples of consistently very good practice were seen in the nursery and in Year 6 although in most classes examples of very good practice were seen. Very hardworking teachers teach basic skills well. The teaching of English, mathematics, science and ICT is good and in religious education, physical education and art and design it is very good. The use of literacy across the curriculum is good and the use of numeracy and ICT is satisfactory. Pupils are very well cared for and every effort is made to accommodate their needs. Partnership with parents is good and the school has good links with other schools and very good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**, although subject leaders are improving quickly, their roles are not yet sufficiently well developed. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The headteacher is passionate about her school and ensures that every child is given the best opportunity to succeed. The school has very good systems of self-evaluation. Governance is good and administrative systems are very effective. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are rightly proud of their school. Partnership with parents is good and parents are seen as true partners in their children's learning. Parents and pupils are consulted on all aspects of school life and value the 'open door policy' that the school operates. Pupils know that they are cared for and appreciate the time that teachers devote to them, helping them with their learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Challenge above average attaining pupils further in the reception class, science and history throughout the school, and provide opportunities for independent learning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their skills of numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.
- Ensure that subject co-ordinators receive training to monitor standards in teaching and learning.

- Raise standards in spelling.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils achieve well overall in English, mathematics, science and ICT and very well in religious education, art and design and physical education. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and attain average standards from a below average standard on entry in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- In religious education pupils' achievements are very good and standards exceed those identified in the agreed syllabus.
- In art and design and physical education, pupils attain above average standards and achieve very well.
- Pupils make very good progress in experimental and investigative science and standards are above those expected nationally.
- In the Foundation Stage children make faster progress in the nursery than they do in the reception class.
- The spelling of subject specific words is a weakness that is presently being addressed by the school.
- Above average attaining pupils could be challenged even more in science and history, and given even more opportunities to develop their independent research skills.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.8 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.3 (13.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.6 (16.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.4 (26.9)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.8 (26.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.5 (28.5)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 1 The 2003 national test results show that by the end of Year 2 in comparison with all schools nationally, pupils attained average standards in reading and mathematics and above average standards in writing. By the end of Year 6, pupils attained below average standards in English and attained average standards in science and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, standards in reading and writing and mathematics are well above average in Year 2 and in Year 6 in relation to pupils' prior attainment, standards in English were below average

and were average in mathematics and science. In the infants over three years, the performance of pupils fell below the national average with no significant difference in performance by gender. In the juniors, too few pupils attained the higher levels in English and science and over three years the performance of pupils fell below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Boys did better than girls in English and science but this was not noticeable during the inspection. Overall, the trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with the national trend. The school met its targets in mathematics but not in English.

- 2 Inspection findings show that standards in English, mathematics, science, history and ICT meet the national expectations of seven and eleven year olds and pupils' achievements are good. In experimental and investigative science standards exceed the national expectations for seven and eleven year olds and pupils' achievements are very good. In religious education, pupils exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and make very good progress. In art and design and physical education, in both Year 2 and Year 6, pupils exceed national expectations and make very good progress due to very good provision and very good examples of teaching which, in turn, have a very good effect on learning. No judgements can be made on standards in design and technology, geography and music as insufficient teaching was seen during the inspection but, from the scrutiny of teachers' plans and interviews with pupils, it appears that pupils are attaining at least average standards. In English, pupils attain average standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing and achieve well. In the juniors during the week of the inspection, very good opportunities were seen for pupils to use drama, especially in religious education where pupils were exploring the events leading to Christ's crucifixion. Pupils are making good progress in developing their skills of creative writing, especially when writing poetry and describing their responses to the works of famous artists seen at the gallery. However, there is a weakness in spelling throughout the school and many pupils do not write subject specific words correctly, a weakness that has been recognised by the very good systems of school self-evaluation.
- 3 In mathematics throughout the school, standards are rising because of the good quality of teaching, especially in the teaching of mental and written calculation strategies and problem solving, but, at present, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills of mathematics across the curriculum.
- 4 In all aspects of science pupils in both the infants and juniors achieve well but they achieve very well in experimental and investigative science because they evaluate their findings with their initial hypothesis. They know how to set up experiments and record their findings accurately but even so there are times when higher attainers could be achieving more, especially in relation to using ICT and developing their research skills. At present, the use of numeracy and ICT is not sufficiently identified in teachers' planning and whilst a good start has been made at using ICT as a tool for learning there is still a lot of work to be done in this area to ensure that it is to support all subjects. In science and history, above average attaining pupils could be pushed even further to develop their skills of independent research.
- 5 Attainment on entry to the nursery is below average. In the Foundation Stage children make good progress overall but in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development their progress is satisfactory. They do not attain the expected standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development because many above average children in the reception class are not sufficiently challenged. They are ready for a more structured approach to learning, especially in developing their recording skills. In personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development children achieve well and attain the expected standards. Overall, progress in the Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection and standards are rising. The headteacher is aware of the need to develop more rigorous learning opportunities for higher attaining children in the reception class. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

- 6 Since the last inspection the school has maintained its high standards in religious education, physical education and art and design. In science, standards in investigative and experimental science have improved and are now above average. Good improvement has been made in ICT where pupils are now attaining average standards. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because of the very good quality of support they receive both in class and also from specialist individual help out of the classroom.
- 7 The good improvement has been brought about by:
- very good leadership of the headteacher;
 - good subject leadership;
 - very good provision for special educational needs;
 - very good systems of school self-evaluation;
 - very effective monitoring of teaching and learning and effective systems of performance management;
 - good involvement of the governing body in all aspects of school life;
 - the dedication and good teamwork of staff in raising standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their education and their behaviour are **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very effective procedures to manage behaviour.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and have very good attitudes towards their education.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now very good.
- Pupils' good attendance has a positive effect on learning.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school.

Commentary

- 8 Pupils like their school and wear their uniform with pride. As a result of a high emphasis on family values and very high expectations, the school is a welcoming, caring community and relationships are very good. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, supported by their peers and included in activities. Pupils quickly develop a strong sense of justice, and understand what is expected of them and what will happen if they do not follow school rules. Some individuals ask for a behaviour sheet, recognising that they need this structure to help them. Behaviour is very good throughout the school and, though play outside can be boisterous and exuberant as pupils 'let off steam', because of the vigilance and very good management by all staff any incident is quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils value their rewards – sashes in the lower part of the school and merits for older pupils. The announcement of the weekly class 100 per cent attendance cup and, every term, of the house points is eagerly anticipated. Sanctions are regarded as fair, and there have been no exclusions.
- 9 Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons and have very good attitudes to learning. They are keen to give their opinions. They enjoy working together and develop very good social skills. Lunchtime is a very sociable occasion. Pupils demonstrate their commitment to their education by doing unasked-for extra homework and are very pleased that this is recognised.
- 10 Pupils' personal development is very good. Aware of those less fortunate than themselves they raise money for a local children's home, and sponsor a Kenyan girl, exchanging letters and information. Through their personal, social and health education lessons they learn what it means to live in a community, and are alerted to the difficulties and dangers existing outside school and how best to deal with these. Year 6 pupils, trained as play leaders, and other

monitors carry out their tasks well. Representatives of the school council are eager to organise change where they and their peers feel it is necessary. Pupils are consulted and feel their views matter. These are taken into account when decisions are made. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, a good improvement since the last inspection.

- 11 Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is very good and enhanced by visits made and visitors to the school. Interested in other religions and cultures, pupils enjoy the stories, art and design and music and develop a very good understanding of how others lead their lives and what is important to them. Through art and design and poetry as well as assemblies, pupils become aware of spiritual elements, and 'feel' the lyrics as they sing 'Let's make this day a sharing day'.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.5
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0.0
National data:	0.4

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

- 12 Pupils' attendance is good and is above the national average. Pupils arrive promptly in the mornings and their attendance, with no unauthorised absence, is carefully monitored.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The learning opportunities are very good and teaching is good, with examples of very good teaching seen. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, benefit from the good quality of education the school provides. There are good links with other schools.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall and moves pupils' learning along at a good rate. Examples of very good teaching were seen in nursery, the infants and the juniors. Teachers are very hardworking individuals and are keen to improve their practice. Support staff make a valid contribution to pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good; basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic and ICT are taught well.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall but it is better in the nursery than reception.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Examples of good marking were seen but this is not consistent throughout the school and too often incorrect spellings are left unmarked.
- Teachers plan well, use time effectively and generally have high expectations of their pupils; as a result pupils work productively.
- Assessment procedures are good overall but, in science and in the reception class, better use could be made of these to challenge higher attaining pupils even more.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good and their individual education plans are used well to help them overcome their learning difficulties.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	16 (36%)	21 (47%)	8 (18%)	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.

- 13 The quality of teaching is good, with several examples of very good practice seen throughout the school. Weaknesses in the 18 per cent of satisfactory teaching seen relate to higher attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged and at times consolidating learning rather than being challenged to produce more, especially in science and in the reception class. Too often these pupils undertake the same work as the average attaining pupils and, as a result, their rates of progress decrease. Teachers generally have very good subject knowledge and give clear, concise explanations. In a very good Year 4/5 science lesson the teachers made good use of ICT programs to support learning but could have challenged several of the higher attaining pupils to achieve even more in developing their ICT research skills.
- 14 At all times teachers encourage their pupils to ask questions and to talk with their friends about what they have learnt. In a very good religious education lesson in Year 6, the deputy headteacher used drama very well to deepen pupils' understanding of Christ's passion; she used very good quality paintings by great masters such as El Greco and asked her pupils to represent the emotion in the pictures using 'freeze frame'. This method enabled pupils to increase their understanding of fear, betrayal and acceptance of fate.
- 15 The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good, with examples of very good practice. In a very good literacy lesson in Year 2, the teacher read Clive Sanson's poem *The Train* and asked her pupils to pay particular attention to the rhythm and rhyme of the poem, modelling very effectively how the poem should be read. Pupils copied her and in a very short space of time produced a high quality poem due to her very good explanations and modelling techniques. Pupils with special educational needs made very progress because of the very good support of the teaching assistant and well-prepared writing frames.
- 16 In a very good mathematics lesson in Year 6, the class teacher used time very effectively and gave very good explanations of how to tackle problem solving by using whiteboards to show working out and encouraging pupils to evaluate the quality of their work. He asked the above average attaining pupils harder questions and this moved them on in linking what they were learning with previously acquired knowledge and, as a result, very good progress was made.
- 17 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, with examples of very good practice. Teachers are well informed and plan carefully and effectively. Teaching is interesting and well planned so pupils are motivated to do their best. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' learning difficulties and are quick to support and inspire as necessary by using suitable resources and good explanations. This helps pupils achieve well, increases their confidence and improves their rate of progress. Support staff are very well informed of pupils' barriers to learning and keep accurate records of their progress.
- 18 Throughout the school, teachers plan well; they are particularly good at ensuring that new knowledge is introduced in such a way that it builds upon pupils' prior learning. For example, in many lessons seen, teachers would say "Do you remember when we learnt about", "Cast your minds back to the time when we studied..", this helps pupils feel confident in learning and, as a result, they assimilate new concepts quickly.

- 19 The quality of teaching the Foundation Stage is good overall but it is very good in the nursery where children are given very good opportunities to learn through discovery by using all of their senses. In the reception class, teaching is satisfactory but children are not always pushed to their full potential, especially those who are higher attainers. This is especially the case when it comes to getting children to record their work because, at present, too few opportunities are provided for these children to formally record their learning.
- 20 Teachers generally mark well, and marking is regular but there are inconsistencies in practice. Too often incorrectly spelt subject-specific words are not marked and so pupils keep repeating the same spelling mistakes. This restricts their learning. The headteacher has recognised this as an area for improvement. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT is good with examples of very good teaching seen, due to the very good opportunities provided for staff to attend training courses and improve their practice.
- 21 Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching throughout the school because of the very good monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the high emphasis placed upon the effective implementation of performance management, and the overall good leadership and management of subject co-ordinators in monitoring standards and provision in their subjects.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. It is enriched with a very good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is fully inclusive and prepares pupils well for their next steps in education. Accommodation and resources are good and support pupils' learning well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has dealt well with the issues from the last inspection, resulting in a much improved curriculum.
- Good curricular planning ensures that all subjects are rigorously taught, so that the curriculum provides a rounded, in-depth education for pupils.
- The school prepares its pupils well for the next stages of their education, and for life-long learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils are very well looked after.
- The school makes the most of its good links with its parents and the community to improve the relevance of learning and enjoyment for the pupils.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum and increases enthusiasm for learning, and provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is very good.
- The school does not yet fully exploit the potential of the links between the subjects in order to lift standards in numeracy and ICT further.
- Whilst learning opportunities provided in the Foundation Stage of learning are good overall, too few opportunities are planned in the reception class for children to record their work.

Commentary

- 22 The curriculum is very good and shows no trace of the weaknesses from the last inspection. Provision for the Foundation Stage of learning is good with some very good features in the nursery. There is good continuity of learning between the nursery and reception class, and all children in the Foundation Stage receive good opportunities to learn using their senses; however, above average attaining children in the reception class are ready to start more formal work, especially recording of number and more structured writing.

- 23 Team planning and sharing of expertise mean that all staff are aware of what parallel year groups are doing. As a result, pupils can develop all their capabilities and they achieve well in all subjects. A very good programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship is newly in place and being taught effectively. Very good systems for monitoring and reviewing mean that there is a fail-safe process between planning and delivery.
- 24 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' specific needs are carefully assessed. Each pupil has a clear individual education plan which sets out precisely the targets he or she needs to achieve. There is very good communication with parents which ensures that they are able to contribute to their children's action plans and to support them in their learning.
- 25 The school uses expertise from outside the school very well. There is a very good programme of visits out and visitors into school that enhances the quality of what is taught and captures the children's interest and enthusiasm. For example, the nursery and reception class have recently visited the local post office. Year 1 visit the library weekly, and older pupils visit local museums, the immediate locality of the village and Wirral County Park. Sports coaches, poets and authors, grandparents and local authority officers come to school for events such as a Victorian Day or to support work in the environment. As primary link teacher for the School Sport Co-ordinator Programme, the physical education co-ordinator accesses some imaginative additional support for both pupils and their hardworking teachers. Participation in the project is giving many pupils extended opportunities for sporting activity outside the school day and school environment. This is having a positive impact on attitudes to sport and to schooling in general, as well as alerting them to what the community can offer them as they grow up. A very good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities before and after school adds to this very full picture, and helps towards the pupils' overall enjoyment of school and aids their social development very well. Pupils say how much they like all these aspects of school life.
- 26 The school is fully inclusive in all of its practices and has an effective process for identifying children with particular gifts and talents. The school works very hard at preparing its pupils for the next stages of schooling and their future lives. Assessment procedures are good and secure across the school, so that there is continuity and pupils feel confident about moving to a new class. The step from reception to Year 1 remains a large one, but this transition is currently under review and will need great care to preserve the good aspects in both age groups. Transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is dealt with especially well. Bridging units introduce the pupils to working within the 11-14 framework and help pupil confidence in moving on to secondary school. Teachers are keen to open up as many avenues as they can for pupils and their families. For example, as a health promoting school, they help pupils to see the link between food, health, fitness and life opportunities.
- 27 The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are now well embedded and making a difference to attainment, and links between writing and other subjects are well developed. They are not as strong between mathematics and ICT and the rest of the curriculum, and the very good systems for school self-evaluation have rightly identified that the next step is to take a more imaginative and creative approach to planning for the links between subjects. The school is well placed to do this and move its curriculum from strength to strength.
- 28 Accommodation and resources are good overall and meet the needs of the curriculum. The library and ICT suite support learning well, and the school has a good number of well-trained staff and support staff to deliver the curriculum. The school has made good improvement in developing its curriculum for ICT and pupils love learning in the ICT suite with the interactive whiteboard.
- 29 Improvement since the last inspection has been good due to the very good leadership of the headteacher and overall good subject management by the co-ordinators.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares very well for its pupils. The school's procedures for health, safety and welfare of the whole school community are **good**. Arrangements for child protection are **very good**. Advice and guidance for pupils are **good** and, although monitoring of their personal development is informal, it is nevertheless **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of pupils and their lives are very good.
- The school's consultation with pupils is good and relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Pastoral care is very good.
- Induction procedures are good, as are transfer arrangements for pupils to go to secondary school.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

- 30 The health, safety and welfare of the whole school community are high priorities for the school and arrangements to ensure these are very thorough. Frequent risk assessments take place, security is under regular review and trained personnel administer first aid, although some certificates are just out of date and not all minor incidents are recorded. Staff have recently attended training on child protection and are well aware of the issues. Pastoral care of pupils is very good because the headteacher knows all of her pupils and their families very well.
- 31 Pastoral care is very good and, as a result of very good relationships throughout the school, all pupils have someone in whom they can confide if they are worried, confident that their concerns will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Teachers know their pupils very well. Group targets are known to pupils of differing abilities but as yet no individual targets are set, other than for those with special education or other needs, who are usefully involved in their reviews. Individual targets would enable all pupils to understand how to improve their work, and to reach their potential. Transition to secondary school is well considered so pupils suffer a minimum of anxiety and can continue to make good progress as they move to their new school. High standards of care and support have been maintained since the previous inspection.
- 32 Pupils' personal development is well promoted through the school's very high expectations that all pupils will behave responsibly. Teachers have a very good knowledge of pupils, their circumstances and developing maturity. The school actively seeks pupils' views on all aspects of school life, and the school council and classroom monitors seek out pupils' views effectively. The school has maintained its high levels of care identified in the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has maintained a **good** relationship with parents. Links with the local community are **very good**, and those with other local schools are **good** and **well used**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good efforts to involve parents in their children's education and parents are consulted regularly on all aspects of school life.
- The school has very good links with other schools.
- Good information is provided for parents about events and their children's progress.

Commentary

- 33 Links and liaison with parents are good and the school strives to involve families in their children's education in a variety of ways. Parents are asked for their views, and are sometimes asked into assemblies. Parents support the school's aims and ambitions for their children and a number help teachers in classes. Most who can help their children with work at home, although the home/school reading book is not consistently well used as a dialogue between teachers and parents. Attendance at consultation evenings is good but few attend the governors' annual meeting. When school productions take place the hall 'overflows' with relatives and members of the local community eager to see what children can do. Successful fund-raising events are run by the parent staff association and enjoyed by parents and local residents alike. Money raised is spent for the benefit of children and, as a result, resources have improved.
- 34 All questionnaires returned expressed parents' satisfaction with the school and what it provides for their children. Communication with parents is good. Parents are well informed about events through the prospectus, governors' annual report, newsletters and communication with teachers. Children's annual reports give information on what they have achieved but not all contain useful targets to help them to improve. Parents of children with special education or other needs are very well supported by the school and involved in the targets set for their children and the reviews every term. Parents value "Buddies" (before and after school club), and the before and after-school clubs, facilitated by the school.
- 35 A very good range of visitors enhances pupils' knowledge and widen their experience of the world outside Mendell Primary School, as does the wide range of very good visits all pupils make. Several members of the local community come into school, some sharing their knowledge of local history. Grandparents' afternoons are well attended. The curate and ministers from local churches take assemblies and talk to children, and the choir sings for older local residents. The school is the focal point of the community.
- 36 The very good links with other primary schools and the local high school are well established, and joint training is increasing. Pupils share discos, participate in competitive sport and join together for a church service with those at other local schools. They know the high school through attending golf and dance sessions. As they approach transfer, bridging units increase and all are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. The school ensures that the environment is safe, pupils are very well cared for and high levels of cleanliness exist in all classrooms, promoting an attractive learning environment. The high quality of relationships has been maintained since the previous inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are **very good**. Governance is good with very good financial management and support for strategic planning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governance is good.
- Financial management is very good.
- Performance management is very good.
- The headteacher has very high aspirations for the school and these are translated into a very clear and persistent focus on pupils' achievement.
- Strategic planning is very good and a clear education direction has been established.
- The leadership and planning of the curriculum are very good.
- Leaders provide very good role models for other staff and pupils.
- Co-ordinators are not yet monitoring teaching and learning but are fully aware of standards in their subjects.

Commentary

- 37 The headteacher is a very good leader. She has created effective teams and is ably supported by her senior management team. Subject co-ordinators fulfil their duties well but are not yet fully trained in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. At present the headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor teaching and learning very well and performance management is effectively implemented to raise standards, and the staff's continuous professional development is well linked to targets identified on the school development plan.
- 38 Governance is good and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is a close and effective working relationship between governors and the headteacher although the headteacher is very much the leader. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met and, through their good knowledge of the school's self-evaluation and the quality of their involvement with all aspects of school life, they are able to have a significant influence in the school's development. They have a very good grasp of the school's financial situation, its needs and priorities, and are able to play a highly influential role in this area. They are very supportive of the headteacher.
- 39 The headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is very good. Teachers' targets for improvement, as identified in the school's performance management systems, reflect the needs of the school very effectively so that the whole staff is working towards the overall goals of raising standards, and better progress is made as a result. Strategic planning is very good, based on the school's very good self-evaluation and the headteacher's own clear vision and value she puts on the need for high quality education for pupils. This is reflected in the stimulating and very well planned curriculum, to which all pupils have very good access. This high quality of leadership planning, management and delivery is also reflected in the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs which enables them to achieve more. The headteacher's obvious interest, drive and belief in the value of education, combined with her very good managerial skills, provide a very good role model for all staff and pupils.
- 40 The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. There is still some room for improvement in ensuring that more opportunities are provided for higher attaining children to record their work, especially in the reception class.
- 41 The high quality of leadership and management of the headteacher and governing body as identified in the previous inspection has been maintained and is instrumental in raising standards.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	580,717	Balance from previous year	35,688
Total expenditure	492,403	Balance carried forward to the next	35,782
Expenditure per pupil	2,286		

- 42 The school's financial planning is very good. It is based on careful analysis of spending, high quality self-evaluation and well-founded projections. The headteacher leads financial management but works closely with the school's governors who are knowledgeable and supportive and well aware of the school's financial situation. At present, the school has falling rolls and the headteacher and governors have taken suitable steps to manage the possibility of a deficit budget should numbers of pupils on roll not increase quickly. All documentation is clear, up to date and accessible and the school's administrator provides an efficient and effective service to ensure that day-to-day office management runs smoothly.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement since the last inspection, because of the determined and innovative lead given by the co-ordinator and headteacher.
- The two classes operate well as a single unit so that all of the children benefit from the high quality of curriculum planning and rich resource provision.
- Children in the reception class do not achieve as quickly or as well as they could in learning to read, write and record numbers
- Teaching is good but it is better in the nursery than in the reception class.
- Good quality accommodation and highly stimulating resources entice the children into learning through direct experience, play and exploration.
- There is very good teaching by the nursery team.

Commentary

43 The co-ordinator has successfully led the development of a true Foundation Stage unit since the time of the last inspection and improvement has been good. Accommodation, resources and the curriculum have all been significantly improved. The open-plan arrangement means that both classes can now access the newly laid out and well-equipped secure outdoor area. The teaching teams plan together so that there is consistency between the classes. A very good range of learning experiences is carefully structured so that the areas of learning develop alongside each other, through highly independent play, investigation and creative effort. The teaching staff assess the children's achievement almost at every step, so that they know exactly how each child is progressing towards the early learning goals. This approach is highly effective in the nursery setting, because the teaching is crisp, lively, and very well directed towards the next learning steps and the children achieve very well. However, the rate of learning slows down in the reception class, particularly for the most capable children, because the teaching of reading, writing and number is not challenging enough. This means that children are not as well prepared for the work in Years 1 and 2 as they could be. By the age of five, children have achieved well in personal and social, physical, and creative development and in knowledge of the world and are on track to reach the expected standards in these areas. Whilst a good proportion of children will achieve the goals set for mathematical development and communication, language and literacy, a substantial number will remain below this level, and the highest attaining children could do even better to gain a stronger start to their work in Years 1 and 2. Overall standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are below those expected nationally of children of this age, and children's achievements are satisfactory but could be better.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well in the nursery and reach the expected goals by the end of the reception year.
- The nursery teachers' gentle insistence on good, considerate behaviour mean that the children quickly learn what is expected of them.

- Teachers look for every means of promoting self-esteem and self-confidence within a secure, happy learning environment.
- Sometimes in the reception class the pace of learning slows because children are consolidating learning rather than being challenged into acquiring even more knowledge.

Commentary

44 The children achieve well in this area because provision for this area is threaded through the planning for all areas of learning. Teaching is consistently good, with examples of very good practice in the nursery. Because the nursery staff are excellent role models, children's behaviour is very good, and remains good in the reception class. Due to the very good demonstration of language by the teaching assistant, nursery children sustained a group conversation about the previous weekend's thunder and hailstones, sharing their experiences in the informal snack-time setting. All children repay the teachers' concerns for high quality materials and equipment by treating them well; for instance, laying out waterproof gloves and warm gloves as separate sets after using them to explore giant ice-cubes. The children generally concentrate and listen well. They all respond very well to the ever-changing range of experiences on offer, so that their interest and motivation to learn are high. On occasion, older children become restless and less attentive when the pace of lessons is too slow. This is because they are not always effectively challenged and spend too long consolidating learning rather than being consistently challenged.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide a rich series of experiences to promote speaking and listening, and teach the very earliest stages of reading and writing well through engagement with other tasks.
- Standards of reading and writing of the reception class children are not as high as they should be because the teaching is not always sufficiently focused or challenging, and not enough is expected of higher attaining children.

Commentary

45 Teaching is satisfactory overall but it is stronger in the nursery. Some children begin school with below average language skill, but make good progress in expressing their ideas in a group, and in conversation. The high quality role-play areas and fresh, ever-changing resources give the children much to talk about, such as how to spring clean the home corner properly. There are, however, some opportunities missed by adults to develop the vocabulary of older children further, by sharper intervention in the play.

46 Children in the nursery enjoy stories and rhymes, and respond well to tempting ways of re-telling known stories such as the *Gingerbread Man* through the puppet theatre or drawing on the whiteboard. In the reception class, older children are taught the link between letters and sounds at a steady pace, but they are not pushed on to the next step of recording quickly enough. The direct teaching sessions do not always hold the children's interest as much as they should because not enough new learning is taking place. Strategies are not sufficiently varied and the children are not always expected to use what they know when they meet unfamiliar words in reading, or to help them when writing. This is slowing down their achievement, especially in writing. The most able children are capable of writing a simple, very short sentence, with adult support, but the rest of the class are not yet at this stage. Many of the higher attaining children could be further advanced at this stage.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in counting skills and number recognition because of the very good teaching in the nursery.
- Teachers provide a very good range of practical, first-hand experiences that gives a solid foundation for the understanding of number, shape, space and measures.
- There are missed opportunities for children to record their mathematics in simple ways, and to begin to develop simple calculations in the reception class.

Commentary

47 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but better than this in the nursery. There is very good planning for mathematical development through the teacher-directed activities, and through the continuous provision areas, so that the children learn with enjoyment and understanding of how problems can be solved. Whilst awaiting their snack time, children count up to five and six, name a square, circle and rectangle and count the jumps between the carpet shapes on the floor. Numbered cars in the garage, counting letters and stamps in the 'Post Office' all make good contributions to learning with enjoyment. However, a scrutiny of the children's recorded mathematics indicates that few reception children are yet attaining the expected standards, and those children who are at this level are not moved on to link with the more challenging work that they must meet in Year 1. The teaching misses opportunities to show children how they might record their practical mathematics, so that their progress begins to stall.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are given a very secure grounding in the skills of scientific enquiry and investigation because of high quality provision for sensory experience and exploration.
- Teaching and learning of ICT are very good for all of the children.
- The teachers' planning is meticulous in ensuring that every element of this area is firmly addressed through the range and thoroughness of the provision.

Commentary

48 The world of the nursery and reception class invites curiosity and interest, with so much that is new to discover. Children achieve well because of the good enquiry-based learning opportunities on offer, and most children in the reception class have reached the expected goals. For instance, they were able to observe how huge blocks of ice in the water tray behaved differently and changed as they melted, and they matched some of the toy creatures in the tray against an array of photographs cleverly positioned close to the water tray. In the reception class, many children are confident with a simple program on the computer and use the keyboard to write their name with adult support. The activity with programmable toys showed the teaching in the nursery at its very best. Skilful intervention and increasingly focused teaching moved the children from exploration to understanding of how the toys can be controlled, to beginning to program the toys for more complex moves and actions. The teachers use their personal links with community members well. Visits to the local Post Office prompted valuable learning and this was followed up in the role-play Post Office. By the end of

the reception class children understand 'old' and 'new', can give simple directions and know that different religions celebrate a range of different customs.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvements to the indoor accommodation and play areas and joint planning mean that both classes now benefit from the enlarged indoor and outdoor areas.
- Children achieve well because of the careful planning, high quality of resources and good teaching.

Commentary

49 The co-ordinator is vigilant in maintaining the highest standard of resource provision, so that all children are keen to learn. A hall session for nursery children showed that they were able to experiment with different ways of moving, and were developing good body control and co-ordination. Teaching and learning are good. Support staff play a valuable role in supporting learning and help these young children cut and glue accurately. They recognised that, by raising their heartbeat, they were "getting big and strong". They know what constitutes a healthy snack and they eagerly ride their bicycles and use the apparatus with increased precision and confidence. Because of the wide range of provision, they achieve well in learning how to handle tools and materials safely and with control, in readiness for the more sophisticated technology curriculum of the next stage of learning.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are committed to developing personal and language development through a creative approach to the curriculum.
- There is not always enough skilled adult intervention to ensure that imaginative play achieves its full potential.
- Resources and materials are of the highest quality.

Commentary

50 Teaching is good and often very good, because of the careful blend of direction and opportunity for individual creative effort. Children show understanding of how different media such as cellophane, tissue, sand and card may be combined, and explore different ways of fitting together, and combining two and three-dimensional shapes. Good quality resources are always set out temptingly, so that children can practise what they have learned with the teacher, and work creatively for themselves. The puppet theatre helps children to introduce a story line into their play, and to recall the narrative sequence of known stories and rhymes. At times, the play is less beneficial, because a skilled adult is not always able to join in and move the learning forward, and so the impact of the very good planning is reduced. By the end of the reception class children mix paint, stick and glue accurately, sing in tune and love making music with the good quality instruments.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good.
- Good assessment procedures are in place and teachers use information to plan pupils' next steps of learning.
- At times, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough, especially in Year 6.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Teaching is good and pupils acquire skills at a fast rate.
- Pupils' creative writing is of good quality.
- Good opportunities are provided for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

- 51 Standards are in line with national average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievements are good overall.
- 52 Pupils enter the school with below average standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Their vocabulary is under-developed and their spoken language structures are more limited than is normal. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of English in response to good teaching which is firmly based on analysis of strengths and weaknesses of their achievement. Standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are in line with national averages despite lower standards in Year 6 last year. However, there are significant numbers of pupils with special educational needs in both Year 2 and Year 6; this depresses results in national tests. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils are identified early and given high quality support to meet their specific difficulties so that teachers and support assistants are well informed and make good provision in class. This helps pupils make good progress towards their targets. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning; they are learning how to correct errors in their writing but need more opportunities to practise correct spelling of subject-specific words.
- 53 Teaching is good with examples of very good practice, especially in the teaching of basic skills. It is lively but thorough and basic skills in reading and writing are well modelled and practised so that pupils build on previous skills and knowledge and make good progress. However, pupils struggle with spelling subject-specific vocabulary, particularly in science but the school is aware of this and, as a result, is focusing on this in its school development plan. Teachers extend new vocabulary well at every opportunity and inspire a love of reading in pupils. As a result, pupils are keen to write and do so quickly and fluently. Their creative writing, in connection with history and art and design for example, is particularly good. Throughout the school, teachers provide good opportunities in lessons to develop speaking and listening skills; for example, drama is used well and pupils make good progress because they enjoy learning. Assessment procedures are good and teachers use information from assessments appropriately to ensure that pupils receive work that is matched to their needs.
- 54 Resources are good and every opportunity is taken to present pupils' writing in high quality displays around the school. Literacy is used well in other subjects but the use of ICT, whilst satisfactory, is less well developed. The leadership and management of the subject are good and clear evaluation of strengths and weaknesses has led to steady improvement. Standards are monitored rigorously and teachers receive good information from the headteacher and deputy headteacher on how to improve their work. Improvement since the last inspection is

good as the quality of teaching has improved significantly, with more emphasis being placed upon drama as an effective tool for raising standards in speaking and listening. The school has rectified the previously identified weakness in monitoring teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55 Literacy is used well in other subjects. Pupils have good opportunities to read and explore different fonts when searching for information on the Internet. Pupils write well to record their artistic and historical experiences after visits, and their vocabulary and style of writing improve rapidly as they go up the school. The majority write confidently and expressively in different subjects although the quality of subject-specific spelling is variable.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics are rising, because teachers across the school have acted firmly to put right past weaknesses, due to the very good systems of school self-evaluation.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and work hard in lessons and with their homework because of good quality teaching.
- Pupils develop a very secure understanding of the number system and use a good range of calculation strategies, both mental and written.
- Teachers miss opportunities in helping pupils apply and develop their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' skills as learners are developing, but pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve remains variable across the classes.
- The use of ICT, whilst satisfactory overall, could be developed further to move pupils on in their learning.

Commentary

56 Standards have improved steadily in the past three years and are now in line with national averages. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Pupils' achievements are good overall. Pupils performed as well as most seven and eleven year olds in the 2003 tests, and did better than those in similar schools, significantly so at Year 2. Pupils in the current Year 6 are well on track to reach the school's target, and most Year 2 pupils are already working securely at the expected levels. Inspection findings show that standards are in line with national averages with strengths in mental mathematics and problem-solving strategies.

57 Good improvement since the last inspection has been brought about by a range of measures carefully designed to raise standards:

- rigorous interpretation of the test results, shared outcomes with all teachers, and appropriately planned intervention strategies for groups and individuals;
- very good systems of self-evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning;
- setting of challenging curriculum targets for pupils and tracking of progress year on year;
- more practical activities introduced in Year 1 and 2 lessons so that pupils can apply what they have learnt to new situations;
- setting arrangements for mixed age classes so that work can be given at the right level of challenge for different capability groups;
- lesson planning that makes good use of the National Numeracy Strategy planning models;
- good use of assessment data to plan the next steps of learning.

These strategies are successful because of the teachers' shared commitment to developing numerate pupils who enjoy mathematics.

- 58 A strong feature of the pupils' good achievement is their ability to explain to each other how they reached a particular solution or set out a calculation as they did. This is because the teachers value oral explanation as a way of deepening the pupils' thinking, and build good opportunities for speaking and listening into most lessons. Year 2 pupils were quick to spot recurring patterns in sets of multiples, and listened carefully as they explained to each other why these occurred. By Years 4 and 5, pupils gave clear explanations of how they used a formula to calculate the area of two adjoining rectangles. Pupils are also ready to tackle 'real-life' problems. Year 6 pupils used what they knew about decimals to tackle problems of measurement related to weight and capacity. Teachers have also dealt with a previous weakness in written calculations across the school. Examination of Year 2 pupils' mathematics books shows that they now can set out calculations neatly, and adopt a range of layouts, all properly set out. This is echoed in the ability of Year 6 pupils to interpret problems, select a suitable method and set out their working clearly in a variety of ways. 'Mathematics notebooks', where pupils record their working out, are a useful tool in this process.
- 59 Pupils respond warmly to the consistently good teaching and have very good attitudes to learning. In the very best numeracy lessons, the pace is lively, with crisp questioning that keeps everyone attentive and keen to do their best. Resources such as individual whiteboards are used well to promote trial and error, paired discussion and flexibility of thought. The fitting of interactive whiteboards in each classroom would sharpen the focus of lesson presentation even further. Teachers arrange classroom grouping according to assessment data and target groups. Although tasks set are broadly similar, there is enough fine-tuning for the higher and lower attaining pupils to make the tasks challenging yet achievable. A weaker element is that pupils are only just beginning to have self-knowledge about their learning and to take some responsibility for their own progress. Apart from in a Year 6 and Year 4/5 class, marking does not help enough with this, by showing the pupils what to do to improve work and reach their targets.
- 60 The leadership of the subject is good and the quality of teaching has been well monitored. Assessments are good and are used well to move pupils on in their learning. The use of ICT in mathematics is satisfactory but could be better, especially in developing different ways of presenting data.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 61 The application of mathematical skills across the curriculum is satisfactory, but could be better. There is better use of numeracy in some classes than others. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 use graphs to record results, graphs, charts and measures in science and in geography. However, the headteacher has identified that there needs to be a more clearly whole-school approach to this, so that teachers are helped in identifying the points where mathematics can be taught and revisited.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in experimental and investigative science and standards are above those expected of seven and eleven year olds.
- The quality of teaching is good and pupils acquire new learning quickly and effectively.
- The subject is well led and managed and any weaknesses are clearly identified by the very good systems of school self-evaluation.

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and learn well in groups.
- Not enough is made of ICT to support learning, especially in challenging above average attaining pupils.
- The spelling of subject-specific words is not always corrected by teachers.

Commentary

- 62 Standards in science meet the expectations of seven and eleven year olds and pupils' achievements are good. In experimental and investigative science, pupils in both the infants and juniors achieve very well because the school has introduced a clear scientific framework for raising standards of attainment, and standards are above national averages. The school's performance in the 2003 national tests in Year 2 show that pupils attained average standards in comparison with all schools but the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels overall was below that expected nationally. In Year 6, pupils attained average standards but too few pupils attained the higher levels. On completing a thorough analysis of the national test results, the headteacher, senior management team and science co-ordinator immediately attacked the shortcomings energetically and implemented a rigorous system for improving the teaching of experimental and investigative science. As a result of the very good systems for school self-evaluation, standards are now rising and are above those expected nationally.
- 63 Pupils achieve well overall in both the infants and the juniors; the greatest strength of their work is their ability to record, observe and evaluate their findings. Teaching is good with examples of very good practice. Pupils work well in groups and have very good skills of co-operation. In the best lessons seen, teachers gave pupils good opportunities to discuss ways of setting up experiments and gently guided them into recording their findings in a variety of ways. Furthermore, in lessons teachers ensured that pupils picked up a good range of scientific vocabulary by having a good focus on developing key words, but not all teachers identify incorrect spellings in their marking of pupils' work. The use of ICT is inconsistent, and whilst good examples of ICT were seen being used to support learning during the inspection, this was not always evident in teachers' planning and in the scrutiny of pupils' work. In some lessons valuable opportunities to challenge the above average attaining pupils in developing their research skills were missed and at times this slowed down the pupils' rates of progress.
- 64 The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and well-informed co-ordinator. Assessment procedures are good and are satisfactorily used to plan the next steps of pupils' learning; as a result, pupils make good gains in learning. The school has maintained its good quality of provision in this subject and average standards. Standards in experimental and investigative science have improved and are now above average. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average, and are much better than at the time of the last inspection.
- The co-ordinator gives good, clear educational direction and liaises very effectively with key staff, the local education authority and support agencies to bring about improvement.
- Teachers have made great gains in confidence and skill, so that teaching is now good.
- The school sees the potential of ICT to raise standards in other subjects, but the moderation of standards still needs further refinement.
- Pupils are highly interested during lessons and concentrate very well.
- The school does not yet make full use of the potential of teaching assistants to support ICT lessons.

Commentary

- 65 At the time of last inspection, standards were unsatisfactory. They are now markedly better and are average overall with pupils achieving well in relation to their prior attainment and attaining average standards. The improved provision is taking its time to make an impact on the oldest pupils' knowledge and understanding, so that in 2003 the school judged that only some 60 per cent of the pupils reached the expected Level 4.
- 66 This convincing improvement has happened because of the hard work and clarity of thinking of the co-ordinator and headteacher. The co-ordinator has worked effectively with the headteacher, key staff and the local education authority advisory team to develop well-focused action plans and to carry these forward with the staff as a whole. Teachers continue to have good access to training so that they are competent and confident to teach the school's scheme of work and use newly purchased items. As a result, the taught curriculum for ICT bears no traces of the 'poorly implemented curriculum map' of the last inspection.
- 67 No teaching of ICT was observed in Years 1 and 2, but it is clear from the skill levels of Year 3 pupils that they left Year 2 at a sound level of competence. Pupils in both the infants and the juniors can open up the desk top and pull down menus to select programs competently, using well-rehearsed procedures. Year 6 pupils are beginning to develop satisfactory research skills when using the Internet and other sources, although they need to be more selective in choosing information to import across to their own files. They can make a multi-media presentation of a newspaper page on *Microsoft Publisher*, cutting and pasting text and pictures from one application to another, changing font, adding bullet points and moving headings about the page satisfactorily.
- 68 In the lessons seen teaching is consistently good, with several examples of very good teaching. Introductions to lessons are lively and interesting, with clear demonstrations. The use of the interactive whiteboard motivates and clarifies techniques during explanations, so that pupils are confident when they begin the task for themselves. Teachers pack a lot of learning into each lesson, so that achievement is consistently good – pupils learn a lot in a short time. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well. Good examples of ICT being used to support science were seen in the juniors on a topic on teeth. Pupils were mesmerised by the effect bacteria have on enamel and were very keen to learn more but too few opportunities are provided for pupils to devise their own ways of gathering data. The co-ordinator has experimented to find a system of assessment that all teachers can and will use, and a revised format is presently being piloted. Teachers are becoming better at judging National Curriculum levels, and the newly set-up whole-school moderation sessions could help assessment in ICT in this respect. The headteacher has identified this as an area to develop. Teachers have identified groups of pupils who take longer to learn about new programs, and those who learn quickly, and adapt the tasks successfully, but at present there is no tracking of each pupil's progress over time or consistently applied target setting or pupil self-evaluation across the school. When teaching assistants are timetabled during ICT lessons, they give good support, particularly to pupils whose skill level is lower than the rest. However, they are not present in every lesson, and in larger classes, the teacher's intervention during independent tasks is spread thinly.
- 69 Leadership and management of the subject are good. Assessment is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in improving resources. The computer suite of 13 terminals and interactive whiteboard gives good access, so that pupils can build up knowledge step-by-step and practise skills often enough. As a result, they are confident when using the computers, and are keen to develop their skills.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 70 The application of ICT skills and knowledge to other subjects is satisfactory but is not yet sufficiently well developed to move standards on at a fast rate. The school knows this and is working at it. A good start has been made by the purchase of subject-specific resources and by the requirement for planning teams to identify where and when ICT can improve the learning. Each class indicates an 'integrated task' as part of their planning, and assess these according to a school pro forma. This is a good start, but there is still room for improvement before ICT is integral to teaching and learning as a matter of course.

HUMANITIES

No judgement on provision in geography can be made as it was not taught during the inspection. History and geography are taught during alternate terms. Standards in geography meet the national expectations of seven and eleven year olds. The policy and curriculum are very well written and work in pupils' books and in wall displays indicates that pupils learn subject-specific skills and knowledge at a steady rate but, too often, pupils make too many spelling errors in their work and these are not always marked correctly. Geography is very well led and managed so that teachers have the support they need to teach effectively. The school has maintained average standards as identified in the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school and pupils in Year 6 can use different types of evidence to find out about life in the past.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- A good range of writing has been undertaken by pupils.
- The quality of teaching is good with examples of very good teaching seen in Year 2.

Commentary

- 71 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils attain average standards and achieve well throughout the school but above average attaining pupils are not challenged enough to develop their skills of independent learning.
- 72 Pupils enjoy history in Year 2; they are very keen to find out about old and new toys, sequence events in the correct order leading up to the fire of London and can retell the story of Guy Fawkes. They have good skills of empathy and know that poppies are used to remind us of the many lives lost during the two World Wars. Pupils can write accounts of how teddy bears have changed over the years, how lucky we are today to have computers to access information and how Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole fought for better sanitation in hospitals. This work contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they are aware of how people give of their best to help others. Pupils in Year 6 can interrogate different types of evidence well to find out about how people lived. Looking at Greek vases they can identify games played at the Olympics and the roles undertaken by workers in that society. Pupils are making good gains in understanding chronology and are developing their research and deduction skills well, but at times insufficient opportunities are provided for above average attaining pupils to develop their skills of independent learning and to make good instead of satisfactory progress.
- 73 Pupils are developing their skills of deduction well by interpreting evidence from pictures on plates and vases and they eagerly describe fashions from the times of the Tudors and Victorians.

- 74 The quality of teaching is good and this has a positive effect on learning. Teachers have secure subject knowledge; they give good quality explanations and consistently check that pupils understand. This has a positive effect on learning as pupils' misconceptions are readily identified. In a very good lesson seen in Year 2, the teacher inspired her pupils to create a classroom museum of old and new toys. In this lesson, very good opportunities were provided for pupils to develop their writing skills to describe various toys and pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the good use of writing frames to help them develop their writing skills. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visitors, and visits to Chester, Little Moreton Hall and the Boat Museum.
- 75 The leadership and management of the subject are good. Assessments are satisfactory.
- 76 Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the quality of teaching is now good as opposed to satisfactory as it was judged in the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are very good throughout the school, and by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different world faiths.
- The quality of teaching is very good with a range of different methods used to engage pupils' interest, such as the use of drama.
- The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and as a result pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong.
- The use of ICT is not sufficiently developed to support the subject.

Commentary

- 77 Standards exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and achievements are very good. The school has maintained its high standards identified at the previous inspection. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils have a good grasp of the different world faiths. They know and identify religious practices and ceremonies and festivals associated with Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism. Pupils in both the infants and juniors have a very good understanding of Jesus' relationships with his family and friends and the stories that he told to illustrate the importance of living Christian values.
- 78 Due to the very good quality of teaching which is characterised by very good use of questioning, relating facts to pupils' everyday experiences, the very good use of drama to deepen understanding of human relationships and good opportunities provided for writing, pupils are making very good gains in learning. For example, in Year 2, pupils quickly accepted and understood the concept of resurrection as a miracle and in acting the part of the story of finding an empty tomb they demonstrated true feelings of consternation.
- 79 Pupils work well in groups; they have very good attitudes to learning and they genuinely want to know about the trials, heartbreak and feelings of abandonment that Jesus must have experienced when he was let down by his friends.
- 80 In a very good lesson seen in Year 3, the headteacher came in unexpectedly and started washing the hands of several pupils; a wonderful spiritual moment captured the sheer consternation of the pupils that this should happen. The class teacher very skilfully explained that this is precisely what Jesus did and how it showed his humility as a human being when offering service to others. By the end of the lesson, pupils had gained a very deep insight into

the equality among human beings. In a very good lesson in Year 6, the deputy headteacher explained the passion of Christ by using a very good range of painting of the great masters to demonstrate Jesus' agony during holy week. She skilfully used drama conventions such as freeze frame to capture the moment of Judas' betrayal. Pupils make very good gains in learning when they explored Oscar Wilde's comment, "Yet each man kills the thing he loves, the coward does it with a kiss, the brave man with a sword."

- 81 Religious education contributes very positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils gain very good insights into world faiths, the meaning of right and wrong and the concept of forgiveness. This in turn contributes very well to helping them develop very positive attitudes to learning and enables them to become well-rounded individuals who take full responsibility for their actions.
- 82 The leadership and management of the subject are good and there are good quality resources used to support learning. Assessments are satisfactory but are in the process of being developed further. The use of ICT is satisfactory but has not yet been fully exploited to develop learning in this subject, and in lessons seen valuable opportunities were missed to deepen pupils' understanding even further. The school has maintained the high standards identified during the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

In **design and technology**, lessons were observed only in Years 2 and 3. However, it is evident from the teachers' planning and from products on display that the work is varied and properly planned. The scheme of work ensures that pupils develop their skills and understanding as they move up the school. All of the examples on display show a good standard of finish, with materials chosen with flair and a concern for their sensory qualities as well as functionality. Lessons and work in folders show that pupils build up the important skill of designing, making use of the design and then evaluating the product according to set criteria. This is a good feature. In both of the lessons seen, the teachers had a good subject knowledge and experience of teaching design and technology that helped them to plan realistically. The Year 3 class were repeatedly told that their first concern was to make a pneumatic moving model that 'worked', so that they concentrated well on that aspect, and succeeded. The materials provided in both lessons were of very good quality, and this made a significance difference to the quality of the products. Teachers make good use of what pupils learn in literacy about instructional and reported writing, and of measurement in mathematics. The use of ICT for the designing, modelling or control is at an early stage. Assessment in the subject is not well developed and, whilst it is satisfactory overall in relation to identifying work pupils have covered, it does not go into sufficient depth to identify specific acquisition of subject-specific skills. No judgement on the quality of provision in **music** has been made because too little teaching was available during the inspection; however, from scrutiny of teachers' planning the curriculum is very good and contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Subject leadership and management for music are very good and this is made clear by the high quality of the policy, curriculum planning and displays around the school. The well-written policy identifies how links between music and other subjects are made. An appropriate emphasis is placed upon identifying how music contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as their personal, social and health education development. Curriculum planning is very good, based on national schemes, with satisfactory opportunities for assessment. Pupils are given good opportunities to perform through school productions twice a year, and access to a visiting teacher to learn guitar, violin, saxophone and flute. There is a small music group which performs at assemblies. All plans are monitored and up to date and the subject manager monitors teaching and gives an annual report to the headteacher on strengths and weaknesses in music. The use of ICT is especially well defined and each year group has particular programmes of work devised. This very good management supports teachers well. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Pupils are now given plenty of opportunities to compose and evaluate music.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils' achievements are very good.
- Pupils acquire new skills and knowledge at a fast rate.
- The curriculum is very good and visits to art galleries and places of interest are very well used to extend pupils' artistic experiences.
- Links with literacy and other subjects are very good.
- Teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils learn quickly.
- The subject is very well led and managed by a highly enthusiastic co-ordinator.
- Art and design contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

83 Standards in art and design are above expectations of seven and eleven year olds and pupils' achievements are very good because the curriculum is very well planned and extended by well-managed visits, for example to the Millennium Gallery. Experiences such as these prompt pupils' creative writing and they remember and consider the practices they have seen. The curriculum is delivered very effectively so that pupils learn to develop their observation skills, sense of colour, pattern and texture and their appreciation of works of art so that they can apply this knowledge in other lessons. Teaching is very good and it is clear from examples of work around the school that pupils make good progress in all aspects of the subject. Teachers ensure that very good explanations are given and that pupils of all abilities have plenty of opportunities to practise their skills of paint mixing, observational drawing and shading. Teachers plan their lessons very well so that pupils can practise their skills and have time to explore new ideas. Pupils produced some very good creative writing after a visit to the art gallery and were keen to talk about their work. The subject is very well led and managed so that teachers have the guidance and resources they need and this leads to pupils' very good achievement. The standard of art and design display is high so that pupils see their work is valued and the contribution of the subject to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school has maintained its high standards identified in the previous inspection.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in physical education are above average across the school because of good teaching, and pupils' achievements are very good.
- The co-ordination of physical education is very good, and well supported by the school's participation in the Sports Co-ordinator scheme.
- The school has achieved the ActiveMark award and is working towards ActiveMark Gold.
- The school links healthy eating to the sporting aspects of fitness and health very successfully.
- Pupils' work is well assessed, contributing to the very good gains pupils make in learning.
- Commentary

84 Pupils achieve very well and standards are above average at Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils are particularly good at evaluating and improving their performance because teachers promote this strand strongly from the nursery onwards. A further strong feature is the pupils' ability to co-

ordinate body movements and show increasing control as they apply skills and techniques. One reason for this is that teachers make sure that pupils take their work in physical education as seriously as in all other subjects. As a result, pupils work very hard and strive to improve; they have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well.

- 85 Teaching in the subject is very good, largely as a result of the co-ordinator's enthusiasm, good assessment procedures and teachers' secure subject knowledge. Teachers know how to plan for skills development and teach these skills very well, clearly demonstrating throwing and catching techniques and encouraging the importance of evaluating their performance, and are beginning to assess the pupils' progress and build upon this. A new departure is self-assessment by the pupils, who set their own personal targets for a term, publicise these and evaluate their own progress. Assessment procedures are good and are used well to plan the next steps of learning. Teachers are keen to help pupils recognise the interdependence of diet and fitness, and are having some success.
- 86 The curriculum is very well planned to meet the ActiveMark requirement of two hours of physical activity each week. Involvement in the Sports Co-ordinator programme has led to effective use of a wide range of community contacts as well as improvement to the curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities to join in the very good range of extra-curricular clubs, learn new skills from visitors to the school, and take part in sporting competitions. This broadens the curriculum and helps pupils to recognise how they might continue their participation in sport outside the school day, now and as they get older. The youngest as well as oldest pupils have opportunities to extend their range of interests. For example, there is a games club especially for pupils in Year 1 and 2. Year 3 receive fitness training by Year 11 pupils and football coaching from Tranmere Rovers Football Club. These activities contribute to the high standards pupils attain.
- 87 Leadership and management of the subject are very good and a contributory factor to the high standards pupils attain. The co-ordinator's position as primary link teacher is giving a useful boost to his expertise as subject leader. His passion for the subject is infectious and he provides a very good role model for his pupils, who clearly adore him. Assessment procedures are good and are used well to raise standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in developing assessment procedures.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers enable pupils to identify their emotions and create secure learning environments within which pupils can express their concerns.
- The quality of teaching is good and pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils understand the importance of being good citizens and of looking after the environment.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills of literacy.
- A high emphasis is placed upon developing pupils' self-esteem through good quality teaching.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school and pupils can freely say what is on their mind.

Commentary

- 88 The school rightly places a high emphasis on developing pupils' self-esteem and this is best seen by the very good relationships that pupils have among themselves and with their teachers. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to identify their emotions, challenge stereotypes and learn how to look after themselves. Teachers enable pupils to explore their emotions in a safe learning environment and pupils show utmost respect towards one another

by listening attentively, taking turns and not being afraid to offer opinions. Pupils understand the need for rules, both within school and the wider community; they care about their environment and are conscious of the need to look after scarce resources. They discuss the harmful effects of pollution and how important it is to ensure that people understand the concept of personal responsibility. Good opportunities are provided for older pupils to discuss the harmful effects of drugs and any forms of substance abuse. The quality of teaching is good and teachers ensure that good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills of literacy through the use of talking partners. Pupils are given plenty of opportunity to write about their experiences and this contributes well to the development of their skills of literacy.

- 89 The school works very hard and successfully to enable pupils to be very responsive to the needs of others in the school and the wider community; this adds greatly to the very caring ethos of the school. The school is successful in helping pupils understand the importance of being good citizens.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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