

INSPECTION REPORT

MONKSDOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 133331

Headteacher: Mr A. Davies

Lead inspector: Geof Timms

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 December 2003

Inspection number: 256935

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	334
School address:	Monksdown Road Norris Green Liverpool
Postcode:	L11 1HH
Telephone number:	0151 226 1606
Fax number:	0151 256 6281
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon W. Todd
Date of previous inspection:	N/a

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Monksdown Primary School was formed just over a year ago, from amalgamated infant and junior schools. It has 334 full time equivalent pupils, including 44 in the nursery class who attend on a part time basis. The school is situated in an area of severe deprivation and very poor housing, a lot of which is empty and in varying states of decay. Within this very difficult situation, the school provides a safe haven and a bright, interesting learning environment for its pupils. Although there is a range of ability, the attainment of most pupils when they enter the school is well below that expected for their ages. This is especially noticeable in their personal, social and emotional development, and their speaking and listening skills. There are 96 pupils on the register of special educational need, four of whom have statements of special need entitling them to extra support. This is above average when compared with schools nationally. The main needs relate to moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties, and social, emotional and behavioural development. Although the vast majority of the pupils are of white British descent, the school takes a small number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The most common non-British backgrounds are Chinese. Two pupils do not have English as their first language and are at an early stage of acquiring the language. Seven pupils are in the care of the local authority. The proportion of the parents who claim their entitlement to free school meals is well above average.

The school is a Centre of Excellence for Modern Foreign Languages, because of the French teaching pupils receive. It is part of an Education Action Zone and part of the Excellence in Cities project and this provides support for a range of enrichment activities. The school has achieved the awards of Investor in People, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools initiative, an environmental award and the Artsmark. The school has also won two achievement awards and is taking part in a Leadership Development Strategy in Primary Schools and in Sure Start. The school also runs a breakfast club.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21038	Geof Timms	Lead inspector	Science Creative, aesthetic, practical and physical subjects English as an additional language
9504	Sheila Gurney	Lay inspector	
11510	Keith Oglesby	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Special educational needs
31012	Ann Welch	Team inspector	Mathematics Foundation Stage
20962	Chris Ifould	Team inspector	Religious education Humanities
32173	Barbara Brown	Team inspector	French

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school and it provides a very effective quality of education in extremely difficult circumstances. Although standards are below average, the pupils' achievement is very good and they make very good progress given their attainment on entry to the school. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- When compared with schools that take similar pupils, standards are above and sometimes well above average.
- The amalgamation of the two schools has been very smoothly managed overall but the curriculum does not yet reflect the balance required.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher and his two deputy headteachers.
- The role of the subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped.
- The teachers are working hard and the quality of much of the teaching is very good.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

The school was recently formed from the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools, so has not had a previous inspection in its present form. The building work to help complete the amalgamation is underway but the school is working in an extremely difficult catchment area, where much of the housing is empty and awaiting demolition and rebuilding. The level of improvement since the two schools' last inspections, and since a visit by Her Majesty's Inspectors earlier this year, has been very good. Many of the issues have been successfully addressed. Standards in writing have improved throughout the school, as have all standards at the end of Year 2.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Pupils' achievement is very good. When children enter the nursery, the majority have a level of knowledge and understanding, especially in their social and communication skills, that is well below that expected. They make very good progress through the nursery and reception classes, although are still below average when they begin Year 1. In the Year 1 and 2 classes, they make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics, science and art and design. Progress in most other subjects is less good and hampered by pupils' underdeveloped communication skills.

The 2003 national tests were the first to be taken by Year 6 since the new primary school opened. The results represent very good achievement given the pupils' Year 2 tests and their attainment on entry to the school. Attainment in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and history is below that expected for pupils' ages, although good progress is evident. In art and design, pupils' skills are very imaginatively developed and they achieve well, with standards that are broadly in line with those expected. The provision for French is very good and, throughout the school, standards are good. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well given their capacity for learning. Overall, the boys

achieve better results than the girls by the end of Year 6, and this is different from the national picture.

Pupils' personal qualities – including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development - are very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall, and very good in the nursery and reception classes, and in Year 6. However, attendance is below average and too many pupils do not always arrive at school on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of the teaching is good overall, but with a significant amount that is very good. The best lessons contain very good relationships, pacey, well-informed input from the teachers and sufficiently challenging work to keep pupils' interest and to fire their imaginations. The best teaching was observed in French and science. When the teaching is less strong, the relationships are less well developed and behaviour management is poorer. The marking does not always develop pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve. The learning mentors offer very good support for the pupils who are disaffected or have emotional or behavioural needs. The teaching assistants provide good support where they are fully involved with lessons. However, their deployment is not always appropriate and in some classes more support for the teachers is needed. The curriculum provided for pupils is satisfactory overall, but there is an excellent level of enrichment through after school activities, trips, visits and visitors. The school offers a good level of care and welfare, with some very good support offered to individual pupils. The links with parents are good, while the links with the local community, other schools and the Education Action Zone are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher and the two deputy headteachers is very good and has been a major reason for the successful amalgamation of the two schools. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good, and the management and governance of the school as a whole is good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and for the challenges that lie ahead with falling rolls due to the housing situation. The governing body is also aware of these difficulties, and it provides the school with a good level of support and challenge. The strong leadership demonstrated by the junior deputy headteacher has been instrumental in maintaining the very good provision, and she provides an excellent role model for other staff when teaching. The leadership of subjects has yet to be fully developed since the amalgamation of the two schools and the subject co-ordinators need to extend their expertise and influence in those parts of the school with which they are less familiar.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents' views of the school are largely positive. Almost all who replied to a questionnaire felt their children enjoyed coming to school and that they were making good progress. Those who attended a meeting with the inspectors supported this view. They think the teaching is good, that staff have high expectations and the arrangements for starting school are good. A few parents feel that behaviour is not very good and that there is some bullying although those at the meeting felt any issues were well dealt with by the school. During the inspection, behaviour problems were largely dealt with effectively. The pupils also completed a questionnaire and expressed their very positive feelings about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop the role of subject co-ordinators to extend their knowledge, skills and influence across the whole school.
- Raise the quality of all of the teaching to that of the best by making the marking of pupils' work more consistent, reviewing the management and deployment of the teaching assistants, and ensuring that all teachers have consistently effective behaviour management strategies.

- Ensure that enough time is given to teaching subjects other than English, mathematics, science and French.
- Improve the procedures for monitoring and promoting the punctuality of a minority of children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are below average when compared with schools nationally. When compared with those of similar schools standards are above average and pupils' achievement is very good overall. Boys' achievement is better than that of the girls, and achievement is better in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. However, the school is aware of this and is addressing the matter. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress overall, throughout the school.
- In the 2003 national tests for Year 6 pupils, standards were below average when compared to schools nationally but above average when compared with those of similar schools.
- The standards at the end of Year 2 are improving rapidly.

Commentary

1. When children enter the nursery class, many have levels of attainment that are very low compared to those expected given their ages. Their speaking, listening, communication, personal and social skills are very underdeveloped, although they are physically quite confident. The very good provision supports their very good progress although by the time they enter the reception class they are still well below average. Further good progress is made, especially in their communication skills, and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. By the end of the reception year, the majority of the children have below average standards but have made very good progress and have developed some sound learning skills.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.2 (n/a)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.8 (n/a)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.2 (n/a)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 50 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The standards in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were well below the national average in the 2003 national tests, while in writing the standards were below average. However, when they were compared with standards in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, they were above average in reading and mathematics, and well above average in writing. This represents a steep increase over the performance in previous years when the infants were in a separate school, as shown by figures provided by the school. Although the school gets fewer pupils to the higher levels than is the case nationally, the results represent very good progress from the very low levels of attainment on entry to the school, and good achievement. Writing standards have been a particular focus and these have shown a very good improvement. In 2003, the boys achieved better than the girls in writing and especially mathematics, as they were closer to the national average, but in reading, the girls

outperformed the boys. In science, the teacher assessment of the 2003 Year 2 pupils put their attainment as broadly in line with that of pupils from similar schools, while the proportion reaching the higher levels was below average.

3. The current standards are similar to those of last year, although the achievement of pupils, especially in Year 2, is improving rapidly. Pupils' standards are below average in reading, writing, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. However, their achievement is good and they are making good progress with their learning. The preparation for the next stage of their education is good.

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.9 (n/a)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.5 (n/a)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.4 (n/a)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. The standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 were in line with the national average in the 2003 tests. This represents very good levels of achievement given the same pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Their standards in English were below average and in science were well below average in the same tests. The science tests changed in 2003 and the pupils' scientific progress was hindered by their poor communication and literacy skills. However, when compared with schools in which pupils had attained at a similar level when they were in Year 2, their results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and average in science. This represents a very good level of achievement over time, and this is the result of the very good provision, quality of teaching and the level of care given to the individual pupils in the school.
5. When the results are compared with schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds, the results are even more positive, being well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. The value added to the pupils' skills from when they enter the school until they take the Year 6 tests puts them in the top 40 per cent of schools nationally, and this is despite being in one of the top 12 most deprived areas of the country. The pupils make better progress than they do across the local authority as a whole. Even so, the proportion who attain the higher levels is well below that found nationally, and improving this is a focus of the school's work, for example by supporting the initiatives for gifted and talented pupils available through its involvement in the Excellence in Cities project. The evidence of the inspection supports the view that the teachers need to ensure that the provision for the more able pupils is sufficiently challenging to enable them to achieve their potential. Overall, the boys achieve better results than the girls by the end of Year 6, and this is different from the national picture. The evidence of the inspection points to the extra assertiveness of the boys, and the low expectations of girls in the local area, as being partly responsible for this.
6. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are below average, but still represent a very good level of achievement given the pupils' attainment in Year 2. Attainment in ICT, religious education and history is also below that expected for their ages, although good progress is evident. In art and design, pupils' skills are very imaginatively developed and they achieve well, with standards that are broadly in line with those expected.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. In lessons they make steady gains against their personal targets, including those for personal and social development. Some

reach, or come very close to, the nationally expected levels by the end of Year 6. Their success is due to careful planning, attention to detail, and the quality of the help given by teachers and teaching assistants. There are no pupils with English as an additional language in the infant or junior classes at present. Those in the Foundation Stage are well provided for and make very good progress, achieving well in line with the expected early learning goals.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their relationships with the staff and with each other are very good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are happy at school and like their teachers.
- Their good attitudes to learning help them to achieve well.
- Bullying has been almost eliminated from the school.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic participants in enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils respond very well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The attendance and punctuality of a significant minority of pupils are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

8. Pupils are happy and parents agree that they like school. The pupils' responses to a pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely positive. In lessons, particularly where the teaching is good, children are attentive, eager to answer questions and show enthusiasm for their learning. They co-operate and collaborate well and spontaneously help each other. Behaviour is generally good and often very good, especially in assemblies and on trips and residential visits. However, a few children, mainly boys, suffer from behavioural problems and have difficulty in listening and concentrating. The school works very hard with pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties, supported by the very good work of the learning mentors funded through the Excellence in Cities project. On occasions bad behaviour from a very few pupils affects the attainment and learning of a whole class. Nevertheless, the school's system of praise and reward for good work and behaviour is appreciated by the pupils and is mainly very effective. It has never been necessary to exclude a pupil from Monksdown. Relationships are very good throughout the school and bullying is extremely rare. No pupil suggested that bullying or harassment were causes for concern.
9. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy school and want to do well. Behaviour is generally as good as it can be. This is because adults are quick to notice when pupils are frustrated and provide appropriate help. Relationships with teachers and teaching assistants are very good. Other pupils show great tolerance when pupils struggle with work or become disheartened; in this they take a lead from the way teachers support and praise. This helps to raise the pupils' self-esteem. Most pupils know what they have to do to improve. Several take work home or often come to school early to practise things.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.9
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

10. The school does all it can to promote good attendance in the light of difficulties posed by the movement of families in the area. However, attendance rates are still below the national average for primary schools and are unsatisfactory. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory and procedures could be tightened to establish just how late a pupil is and why.

Personal development

11. In the Foundation Stage the children's personal development is very effectively and successfully developed. Throughout Years 1 to 6, pupils' personal development is very good.
12. The school provides very good opportunities for spiritual development through assemblies, class discussions, lessons and the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils are given time to reflect on events or their own thoughts and feelings. For example, after listening to stories pupils are asked '*Now what was all that about, what made them act like that?*' Discussions like this help pupils to put themselves in the place of others, they learn to challenge unfairness and show compassion, for example by working for the school's charities. Teachers encourage pupils to look beyond the mundane, for example through exciting discoveries in science or literature.
13. Provision for moral and social development is also very good. Teachers provide regular opportunities to discuss moral issues, and pupils have firm ideas on right and wrong. Adults act as good role models, and pupils think that they are fair and that they listen before criticising. Pupils enjoy being involved in making school rules. Their ideas reflect the positive tone that the school has established; for example, most of the suggestions in a lesson in Year 6 began with '*Always...*' rather than '*Never...*'. Teachers plan working groups and partners carefully so that pupils have a variety of experiences. The school has an exceptionally wide range of visits, clubs, visitors and events, including residential weeks. All of these provide contexts for pupils to relate to other people and make decisions. Pupils respond very well to these.
14. Provision for cultural development is also very good. Teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to encounter traditions and values from other cultural backgrounds in subjects such as art, history, religious education and geography. The school's achievement in French, and the way they learn about and visit the country, is a strength. Teachers promote interest in good quality literature and there is a generous supply of well-chosen books that provide insights into different ways of life. Teachers make good use of these in lessons, drawing out issues such as racism and intolerance. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities. Three are members of the Liverpool Schools' Parliament. They are responsible for getting views and suggestions from their peers and reporting on the parliament's discussions and resolutions. Other responsibilities are given to team captains, class monitors and a rolling programme of helpful tasks is given across the year groups. Older pupils help younger ones with reading and there are examples of formal paired reading. The children are offered superb opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities, clubs, trips and residential visits. The pupils' response to this outstanding provision is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and the school provides an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum, with exceptional opportunities for enrichment.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and there is a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching throughout the school, especially in French and science. The assessment of pupils' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching throughout the school.
- Pupils develop good learning skills as they move through the school.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The good quality teaching assistants are not always very well deployed.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 64 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6(9%)	14 (22%)	25(39%)	19(30%)	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.

15. The teaching varies between satisfactory and excellent. It is strongest in French, where almost all of the teaching was of excellent quality, and in science. Teaching is good in English and mathematics, and the use of new technology supports good teaching of ICT although this is used insufficiently at present in other subjects. However, none of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is strongest, it is characterised by:
 - Very good relationships between teachers and pupils
 - The very good deployment of teaching assistant who take a full part in the lessons
 - Effective behaviour management and the involvement of all pupils.
16. Where the relationships are strong, teachers are able to keep pupils interested and involved through their subject knowledge, well-planned and interesting teaching, and a good sense of humour. Possible areas of conflict are quickly recognised and defused. Pupils appreciate the work teachers put in to provide them with enrichment activities and after school clubs and trips. Resources are very well used, as happened during the very effective science lessons observed during the inspection.
17. In a few lessons, teachers attempted practical and active teaching without the necessary support given the behaviour difficulties evident in their classes. The deployment of teaching assistants and other support staff does not ensure that they are always timetabled to lessons for which they would offer the most effective support. However, when they are deployed appropriately, their work supports the pupils' learning very effectively and they provide teachers with very good quality support.
18. The management of pupils' behaviour is inconsistent. Where it is most effective, pupils are praised for their positive responses, relationships are very good and the lessons are pacy and interesting. The best lessons involve teachers using a range of techniques and methods, and breaking up their teaching so that pupils were not sitting listening for too long. In lessons where the behaviour management was less secure, and pupils' behaviour had a negative impact on learning, teachers did not vary the level of their voices sufficiently. Tasks did not keep pupils sufficiently occupied and activities were not well matched to pupils' prior attainment.
19. Learning is good and the best teaching clearly ensures that pupils are developing good learning skills ready for the next stage in their education. The teachers work very hard to overcome the difficulties provided by the backgrounds of some pupils, and the low expectations a significant number of children have for themselves. Much of the most effective teaching is clearly seen to improve the pupils' self-esteem. The marking does not always develop pupils' understanding of

what they need to do to improve. Overall, however, the assessment of pupils' progress is good and provides teachers with a good basis for the planning of lessons that meet the needs of all pupils.

20. Teaching is good for pupils with special educational needs. The school keeps very good records, with realistic and up-to-date targets. Teaching is carefully planned to move pupils forward against these targets. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very well. They plan together, use similar approaches and keep things light-hearted when pupils begin to struggle. They make sure that pupils contribute to whole-class sessions when they can. For example, unobtrusive support from the teaching assistant meant that one pupil was able to join in a very good discussion on *what rules do we need?* in Year 6. This improved his motivation and confidence. Some pupils volunteer to work on their teaching programmes before school or at lunchtime. Several staff give up their free time to help them and this is appreciated by parents and pupils alike.

The curriculum

Provision is satisfactory overall. The school sensibly devotes very high proportions of the timetable to the teaching and learning of English and mathematics, and science and French are also very well provided for. However, the majority of other subjects are taught for far too little time to give pupils the breadth and depth required by the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The school has outstanding provision to extend and enrich the curriculum. The accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality provision in French is a very worthwhile addition to the curriculum.
- There is a very strong programme of visits and visitors to support the curriculum throughout the school. There is also a broad range of extra-curricular activities before and after school, at lunchtimes and at weekends. A high proportion of pupils take part in these activities.
- There is good provision for the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage.
- The majority of subjects at Key Stages 1 and 2 are timetabled for significantly less time than is found in other schools, and this means that pupils do not have the opportunity to gain a broad and balanced range of knowledge, skills and understanding in most subjects.

Commentary

21. In many ways, the school's curriculum provides very well for the needs of its pupils. The broad and balanced experience that they receive in the Foundation Stage enables most children to make substantial progress in all the areas of learning. Even so, standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics are well below average when pupils enter Year 1, so the school has taken the very sensible decision to concentrate on teaching and learning of these subjects. At present, there are very great differences in the time given to these subjects and to the majority of others. For instance, several classes have English activities for 90 minutes or more on some days. By contrast, subjects such as geography and history have the equivalent of as little as 20 minutes a week in some classes. Even so, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and the school recognises that since the recent amalgamation of the schools, it is time that some of these imbalances are redressed.
22. A good start has been made to identifying opportunities for the development of literacy skills in other subjects. This is not as far advanced for numeracy. By doing this thoroughly for both of these, and for ICT, the school will be able to pay the necessary attention to these core subjects while increasing opportunities for pupils to get their full entitlement to the remaining subjects. The school has effective termly planning, indicating that the requirements of the National Curriculum and locally agreed syllabus should be met. Personal, social and health education is well embedded in the curriculum, with appropriate attention paid to sex education and teaching about alcohol and drug abuse. The attention to developing literacy and numeracy skills helps pupils to benefit from what the school provides in other lessons. Pupils throughout

the school benefit from high quality teaching of French by advanced skills teachers from specialist schools. This is of great help to pupils' speaking and listening skills, and gives them very good preparation for this subject in secondary school. The school paid good attention to its curriculum when it opened and has kept it under close review. The French teaching, opportunities for enrichment, and the inclusive approach to personal, social and health education, demonstrate its capacity to be innovative.

23. The school makes very good curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs. Problems are identified early, and pupils benefit from the good relationships and inclusion which is evident throughout the school. The co-ordinator keeps records carefully and checks individual learning plans at least termly. All staff are brought into the process of developing an appropriate curriculum for each pupil, and support is organised very well. Pupils' personal and social development has a high priority; adults encourage pupils to think about their learning or behaviour and how to improve. The school includes all pupils well and the core curriculum is appropriate for all their needs, although more needs to be done to develop the non-core curriculum. More able pupils take a full part in a range of opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills, provided through the Excellence in Cities project.
24. The school has a very full programme of educational visits and visitors, and ensures through fundraising and use of grants and other funds that all pupils can benefit from these. These are very effective in helping overcome some pupils' lack of experience or support from home. In addition, an excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available before and after the school day, during lunchtime and sometimes at weekends. The school monitors pupils' participation: this reveals that 95 per cent of pupils take part in these activities for 15 hours or more per year. This monitoring also allows the school to manage access to these activities to ensure that as many pupils as possible can benefit.
25. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and support staff match the needs of the curriculum well. The existing indoor accommodation also meets the needs of the curriculum well. The original infant and junior buildings are soon to benefit from the completion of a linking building providing a central library and computer suite, administration suite and staff room, and a lift. The school grounds are adequate, but lack a grassed or artificially surfaced area for outdoor games. The accommodation for the Foundation Stage is good, and nursery and reception classes have access to a well-resourced and much improved outdoor area. Resources to support teaching and learning are good or better in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

The school has a caring ethos. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety and they are given very good support and guidance. The school is good at seeking and acting on pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents feel pupils are well supported and cared for.
- Pupils feel happy and secure.
- Staff have very good and supportive relationships with the pupils.
- Good procedures ensure pupils' health and safety.

Commentary

26. Staff support the pupils well and the ethos of the school is both friendly and caring. The care and support given to children in the nursery and reception classes is particularly good. Induction procedures are good. Staff visit pre-school children at home, which helps them to settle quickly and easily in school. This gives pupils a secure and happy start and has a positive effect on their achievement. Very good arrangements are made to prepare Year 6 pupils for their secondary education.

27. The school satisfactorily implements the locally agreed child protection procedures. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are good. There is very good first aid provision. The school has a Healthy School Award; fruit is provided at morning playtime, and no sweets are allowed. No hazards were observed and regular risk assessment takes place, especially while the present building improvements are taking place.
28. Pupils are given very good support, advice and guidance. As well as enjoying comfortable and trusting relationships with their teachers, older pupils speak very highly of the support of the learning mentors. These give particular help to disaffected or at-risk pupils but all the pupils feel they can readily turn to them for help and advice. Among their many roles, the learning mentors run the breakfast club, which encourages children to come early to school and is improving the attendance of some pupils. Learning mentors are reinforcing teaching by helping pupils to deal with personal problems and promoting their self-esteem. The school monitors pupils' academic and personal progress very effectively and uses this information well to support them and offer appropriate guidance.
29. The school takes the views of its pupils seriously. A high proportion completed their pre-inspection questionnaire, showing great satisfaction with the school. The school council, which lapsed during the two schools' amalgamation, is about to be reinstated and will reinforce the effect pupils' opinions have on management decisions. Membership of the Liverpool Schools' Parliament gives children the opportunity to influence decisions affecting the wider community.
30. Pupils with special educational needs benefit particularly well from the school's well-established routines and consistent relationships. This is an orderly community and so pupils can work without distractions. Support and guidance are good for all pupils, because pupils are given a lot of one-to-one advice. Teachers, assistants and learning mentors all play an important part in this. A good feature is that adults do not dominate and spoon-feed, they expect pupils to make good choices. This leads pupils towards more independent work. The school has recently introduced procedures to record and celebrate the progress of those who make only small gains in learning and personal development.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is good. Parents are supportive of the school's work for the benefit of their children. The school has very good links both with other schools and with the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very pleased with the educational and personal provision.
- The school works hard to involve parents and carers in its work.
- The links with other schools through the Excellence in Cities project and the Education Action Zone are very good.

Commentary

31. About half the parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and their views were very positive, as were those of the parents who attended the meeting. There were some criticisms of pupils' behaviour, however. No parent spoken to offered any adverse criticism. They felt teachers were both accessible and helpful. All parents were extremely pleased with the school and several families who have left the area bring their children back to Monksdown. Assemblies, concerts and productions are very well supported. A high proportion of parents attend consultation evenings. Teachers encourage parents to discuss and agree targets that their children can achieve. General information given to parents about the school is good but

pupils' annual reports are inconsistent. Targets, when set in reports, tend to be very general. All reports make clear what children have done but there is not enough emphasis on their attainment and progress.

32. The school does much to help parents become involved in their children's education. The parent and toddler club encourages them to become familiar with the school. Home visits to pre-school children help to strengthen the school's partnership with families. Parent helpers are strongly welcomed. Few help in class though many of the teaching assistants were originally parent helpers. A small group of parents is currently giving valuable service by teaching road safety to Year 2 pupils. Parents willingly help to supervise trips and visits and, where necessary, offer transport. There is an active parents', teachers' and friends' association, where the prime objective is to give families fun rather than being mainly fundraising. However, every year they support a local charity which has some relevance to the school community. Courses offered to parents of all year groups help them to become involved in their children's learning. Family literacy and computer courses have been particularly successful.
33. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of progress and have opportunities to be fully involved. They are very appreciative of the care provided by the school, with comments such as '*My child is a different girl*'. Communication has improved since the merger, with more parents ready to talk about problems and become involved in the solutions.
34. Links with the local community are very good. Membership of the Excellence in Cities project and of the Education Action Zone helps fund some projects but the school has initiated many other beneficial links. A local firm has been extremely generous. It has offered grants to help with residential visits and funded buses for educational trips. It presents awards and financed the setting up of the breakfast club. There are close links with local churches, with the community police and other support services and with both Liverpool and Everton football teams. As well as parenting courses, the school offers examination courses for members of the community. Links with the Merseyside Children's Holiday Fund enable a number of deserving children to have a holiday. The school generously supports both local and national charities. These are just a few of the very beneficial links the school has made with the community.
35. Links with local primary and secondary schools are also very good. Monksdown works closely with one particular primary, especially through the teaching of French. They made a joint visit to France and have both been awarded "Centre of Excellence" status for the language teaching. The secondary schools are generous with help from teachers and resources and work closely with the school for the transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7. The very beneficial links the school has made with other schools and the wider community contribute very positively to the pupils' attainment and progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The governing body offers the school a good level of support and challenge and the school is well managed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The amalgamation of the infant and junior schools has been completed successfully.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and high aspirations for the pupils.
- The leadership of the junior section of the school and of the Foundation Stage is very good.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

- The school evaluates its performance well, monitors data in detail and works to address issues arising.

- The subject co-ordinators need more opportunities to develop their understanding of the key stage with which they are not familiar.

Commentary

36. The school was formed just over a year ago through the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. Although building work is still in progress, the creation of the new school has been very well managed. This is so, even though the school is working in incredibly difficult circumstances locally caused through the run-down housing and movement of families.
37. One of the major strengths evident in the leadership of the school is the willingness to address and improve issues arising, either from the school's own self-evaluation, or from the local education authority or other outside advice. This stems from the headteacher and the way he has tackled the amalgamation in a positive way. He has a clear and shared vision for the future of the school, high expectations of what the staff and pupils are capable of and a willingness to work hard to achieve these goals.
38. The decision to base himself in the infant section of the school was a good one as this was perceived to be the part of the school needing the most urgent improvement. This has been effective in raising morale among the staff. The leadership of the junior section has been taken on by the deputy headteacher and has been very effective. The positive relationships evident largely stem from her example and style of teaching and leadership. The infant deputy headteacher provides very effective leadership in the Foundation Stage. All senior staff have a very good, clear commitment to inclusion and to do the best possible for the pupils, including the many who are from difficult and disadvantaged backgrounds.
39. The governing body have also played a positive part in the amalgamation of the two schools. They benefit from the very good local knowledge of the Chair and other governors. They support the school well and are aware of many of its strengths and weaknesses. All of their statutory duties are fully met.
40. The management of the school's involvement in the Excellence in Cities project and as part of the Education Action Zone has been very well done, again largely led by the junior section deputy headteacher. The school has happily taken on extra responsibility such as becoming part of a Centre of Excellence for teaching a modern foreign language, and this is having a range of benefits, both for the pupils' learning and in the close partnerships with the other school involved. The subject co-ordinators, many of whom have taken up the responsibility fairly recently, need more opportunities to monitor work in the key stage other than that in which they teach, to extend their own knowledge and expertise, but also to enable them to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and to spread around some of the very good practice that exists.
41. The school ensures that it is familiar with the available data, which are analysed in some detail to enable them to address issues arising. For example, staff are aware of the different achievement of boys and girls in the school. This has been compared with other schools in the Education Action Zone to see what similarities might help them address the girls' underachievement in the junior classes. Underachievement by boys in the infant years has been addressed, especially in reading and writing, through improved resources and raising teachers' expectations. Performance management systems are appropriately in place and statutory requirements are met. The school development plan contains appropriate priorities and, in the light of the amalgamation, was produced in an efficient way. However, the governing body need to be more closely involved in producing the plan in future.
42. The special needs co-ordinator has been very effective. She has worked well with senior staff to establish very effective teamwork and well-understood procedures. The school keeps up-

to-date records, these are relevant and focus on raising achievement. The school is flexible and imaginative in arranging support, for example in trying new learning materials or sharing ideas with other schools. When outside help is needed, the school has good relationships with other agencies so there are few delays. Some of the support team have experience and training in helping pupils with special educational needs. They are often well deployed, feel valued and make a good contribution to learning. There is a well-informed governor for special needs. The school pays due regard to its race relations policy.

Financial information

43. As the school only opened in its present form in September 2002, there has not yet been a full year's budget to provide information. The evidence of the inspection is that the school works very hard to ensure best value in its work. The governors are responsible for a range of sources of income owing to the school being part of the Education Action Zone, the Excellence in Cities project, and a Centre of Excellence funded by the city council. All grants are used well and monitored well through their analysis of the regular reports received from the local authority, administration staff and the headteacher.

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 a strength of the school. Children's levels of attainment when they start in the nursery are very low when compared with those typically expected for their age. This is particularly the case in speaking and listening skills. Children gain ground at a good rate and respond very well to the sensitive though effective teaching in the nursery. Teaching is good overall with some very good teaching observed in both the nursery and reception classes. The curriculum is planned with great care to provide a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities, which are matched well to all children's needs. Assessment procedures are very thorough and are used effectively to build up an accurate and informative profile of each child's achievements during the time spent in the Foundation Stage. The accommodation is spacious and organised so that resources are used to good effect to provide an exciting environment for young children. The outdoor area is used productively to support all areas of learning and its use has improved since the last inspection.

Leadership and management are very good and a strong team of qualified and experienced staff work closely together to ensure that organisation is seamless. Indeed, in the current absence of two members of staff, the very well established routines have ensured that provision has continued to run smoothly. Children with special educational needs and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language achieve very well because of the support of adults and the good visual and practical aids available. Staff work hard to forge strong links with parents, not only when children are due to start in the nursery but also throughout their time in the Foundation Stage. Parents are right to be happy with the flying start their children get.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because of the very good teaching and high expectations set by all staff.
- Very strong relationships between staff and children promote children's confidence and encourage them to work hard.
- The curriculum is planned to allow children to initiate their own activities and to make choices and decisions.

Commentary

44. Children's personal, social and emotional development is nurtured very well, although they are unlikely to fully achieve the expected early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Staff are very skilled at promoting this in a very natural way in everything children do. As a result, the gap between what would be expected nationally by the time they leave the reception year and what they are likely to achieve, from such a low starting point, will have closed considerably. Teachers and assistants provide very good role models for children to follow. They are calm and organised and treat children with respect and courtesy. This leads to warm and trusting relationships and helps children to be kind and considerate and to care for each other. The very positive attitudes and high expectations of all staff continually boost children's self-esteem and spur them on to try even harder and to do their best. Teaching promotes children's independence well, and because they are given a manageable choice of

tasks and the opportunities to make simple decisions, their sense of responsibility grows. In the nursery, routines are established quickly so that children know what is expected of them from the word go.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reception and nursery staff make many opportunities to develop language skills, and consequently, children's achievement is good.
- Resources are used well to engage children's interest.

Commentary

45. Teaching of good quality means that even the youngest or the most reticent children in the nursery soon begin to offer simple contributions to discussions. Almost every activity involves asking questions and emphasising words and names. In both nursery and reception classes, best use is made of the opportunity to create a number of adult-led groups to provide more occasions for children to speak to an audience. Teachers encourage children to speak clearly and employ their own good use of language to help children to broaden their vocabulary. There are times, however, when staff accept one word answers without modelling a more appropriate reply or ask too many questions that require one word answers.
46. A good feature of the teaching is that staff pay particular attention to reading and writing. All children are given plenty of opportunities to look at books and to listen to stories in very attractive and comfortable reading areas. There is a strong emphasis on learning to recognise the sounds of letters, beginning in the nursery with the initial letters of their names. The reception teachers make very effective use of toys and games to help children to build up their knowledge of vowel sounds. Writing skills are taught carefully and systematically so that children learn to form letters correctly. Many informal opportunities are provided for children to write. However, opportunities for more formal writing sessions working with an adult are not as frequent and this slows progress in writing skills, particularly for the more able children. The willingness of some parents to read with their children furthers their progress in developing reading skills and in their understanding of the story content. Children achieve well during their time in nursery and reception classes, but, because of their very low starting point, many are on course to attain levels well below those typical for five year olds in language and literacy skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have a good knowledge of how to teach basic numeracy skills through talk and the use of resources.
- Opportunities are taken to develop mathematics in other areas of learning.

Commentary

47. Good teaching develops children's interest in numbers and they achieve well. They gain an understanding of number, pattern and shape through practical activities such as counting objects, playing and sorting shapes into sets. A strong feature of the teaching in the nursery is the daily focus on counting routines that develop children's sense of number sequence. The

older, more able children count the number present for the register, and choosing the correct day of the week helps children to remember the sequence of days spent at school. Children develop a good understanding of mathematical terms to do with shape and size. As children in the nursery choose squares or circles to glue on to their calendars, the constant reinforcement, by the nursery nurse, of 'smaller' and 'larger' together with the names of the shapes, fosters their awareness of size and shape successfully. Children in reception are motivated to help their teacher when she pretends to forget how to put decorations on a Christmas tree in a symmetrical manner. They begin to understand 'one more' and 'one less' as they use, for example, teddies to count up to five. There are times, however, when there are too many children in a group and progress is slowed as they wait too long for their turn and consequently lose interest in the activity. Despite the good teaching, many children, because of their low starting point, will reach levels well below those expected by the end of the reception year in mathematical development.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for the development of knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A range of interesting activities is planned to promote learning in this area.
- There is a strong emphasis on healthy eating.
- Children have sufficient opportunities to use computers although the pace of the lesson is slow at times.

Commentary

48. Children's knowledge and understanding are very limited when they start in the nursery and they have little experience of common objects. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to learn about everyday items in the classroom, during outdoor activities and on visits in the local area. Children in the nursery responded with great enthusiasm to the nursery nurse's request for them to investigate the mechanical toys in her 'special' box while children in reception were enthralled by the examples of light sources including a fibre-optic lamp. They know that eating fruit is good for them and tuck in to their healthy snacks of apples, pears or tangerines, provided by the school, twice a day. Children have many opportunities to design and construct large-scale models. A group of children in reception arranged the 'front door' block into several different positions and elevations until they were satisfied they had found the best place for it. Throughout the Foundation Stage, teachers ensure that children use computers regularly and they know how to use tape machines when they want to listen to a story. However, when the reception classes use the computer suite, there are too many children for the staff available and some time is lost as they wait for attention. All staff encourage children to talk about their families and use stories and assemblies to help them learn about the significance of special festivals such as Christmas and Diwali. Due to the good teaching children achieve well but most will not reach the levels of knowledge and understanding expected for their age by the end of the reception year.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

49. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision and standards. The new outdoor area has been carefully designed to ensure the best possible use of the space available. Staff use this area well to support all areas of learning. Children's skills in manipulating small tools, scissors and pencils develop well because of the good opportunities they have to practise and apply them.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

50. Again, it was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards. Planning denotes a good range of interesting activities. The work on display indicates a variety of media being used. The shoe shop in the nursery and the impressive cave in reception stimulate role-play effectively.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Teaching is good overall and sometimes excellent, and teachers use effective methods to teach phonics, spelling and punctuation.
- The pupils achieve very well.
- There is good support in lessons by teaching assistants and other adults.
- Teachers make good use of drafting techniques and this is supported by good marking.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Teachers promote good attitudes to reading.

Commentary

51. Many pupils enter the school with weak communication skills. Comparisons with other schools in 2003 show that standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above those seen in similar schools. The work seen during the inspection confirms this picture. Standards remain below average when compared to all schools, but this is due to the significant number of pupils with special educational needs. Even so, these pupils are taught very well and also make very good progress. Almost all of the other pupils reach the expected level by the end of Year 6. Pupils do well and in many cases exceed the targets set for them. They succeed because the teaching is good and the pupils listen well, work hard and enjoy their lessons. One boy in Year 6, for example, said '*We must be going to do something exciting in literacy because the teacher is smiling.*' He was right.
52. There are several strengths to the teaching, which is never less than satisfactory. Over half the lessons seen were good and one, in Year 6, was excellent. Teachers plan lessons well. They use a wide range of texts and learning experiences to illustrate the features of good reading and writing. They bring these examples to life, sharing their own enthusiasm and knowledge. This captures interest and gives pupils a better understanding of what they have to aim for. Teachers manage discussions well, they ask good questions and make sure that everyone has a chance to contribute. Relationships are good and pupils try to help, for example when hesitant pupils are speaking, the others give them space and quiet to answer. Teaching assistants are used effectively to work with individuals and small groups; this helps to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress.
53. In about a third of the lessons, the oral work and explanations went on too long. Teachers were understandably anxious to make sure that the pupils understood, but interest dropped and the pace of learning slowed. In some lessons this did not leave sufficient time for the writing tasks. In a small number of lessons the written work was the least successful part. This was occasionally because the task was not very interesting, but more often because teachers made too many allowances for pupils who find writing difficult, and so their expectations were too low.

54. Pupils in all classes enjoy reading and know that they are making good progress. Standards are just below average overall, but by the end of Year 6, most pupils reach the expected level and some go beyond this. Strengths that have helped to raise standards are:
- Teachers give pupils the skills to tackle unfamiliar words and more difficult books.
 - There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to read in small groups and by themselves. They particularly enjoy the guided reading groups with a teacher.
 - The home/school scheme is well organised and this helps pupils to improve.
 - Teachers act as good models when they read aloud; as a result many pupils read with expression and understanding.
 - There is a good stock of well-chosen books.
 - Many teachers read part of a longer book to the class each day. In some cases there are copies for the class to follow. Pupils like these sessions and sometimes want to read the book for themselves.
55. Standards in writing are still a little below those seen in reading, but the school has worked successfully to raise attainment. This is now better than that typically seen in similar schools. This represents very good achievement, because many pupils enter the school with a limited vocabulary and need a lot of help with their early writing. The school has organised demonstration lessons, extra training for staff and ensured that teaching of writing is consistent in all classes. Teachers are good at highlighting specific areas to work on, as when pupils in Year 5 study story openings. As a result, pupils can concentrate on one thing at a time and are building up a useful range of writing skills. Spelling is taught and practised in a systematic way, pupils have strategies to get words right and know how to use a dictionary or thesaurus. All teachers emphasise good handwriting and punctuation.
56. Standards in speaking are patchy. For example, in one class in Year 5, the pupils read their work in a lively and clear way, whilst next door, several pupils were almost inaudible. Overall, standards are below average. Many younger pupils are limited by a restricted vocabulary. Teachers are aware of this, and use many strategies to help. They encourage pupils to talk to partners and the class, and use drama activities to help pupils communicate confidently.
57. The subject leader has worked well with staff to raise standards. However there is still work to be done to gain a whole-school view on standards, teaching and learning. Good procedures for keeping an eye on these things have had a low profile since the merger. The school has rightly, and successfully, given priority to building a new team. Now that this is in place, it will be necessary to resume monitoring if the improvement in standards is to be maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. A strength is the wide variety of interesting writing tasks that pupils enjoy in different subjects. These links to other work motivate pupils to present their work well. For example, pupils in Year 2 write instructions for mask making, and in Year 6 the class spends several busy lessons on the autobiography of an Ancient Greek hero. Opportunities for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills are sometimes very successful. For example a girl in Year 6, transformed into a King from Ancient Greece, became a highly articulate authority, dealing scathingly with her irritating subjects.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a wide range of techniques and excellent command of the language.
- Resources are well chosen and imaginatively used.
- Excellent relationships promote very good response from pupils.
- Planning is very good overall.
- The feedback teachers give to pupils in lessons needs to be developed in order to raise achievement.

Commentary

59. Pupils demonstrate a real enthusiasm for learning French and achieve very well in the listening and speaking elements of the work. The teachers promote a very positive and enthusiastic view of foreign language learning and encourage learners to improve their language skills and develop self-confidence. The school is aware of the need to address the elements of reading and writing at a later date in their very thorough medium-term plan. This very positive response is directly related to the quality of teaching, which is very good overall and often excellent. Teachers have very good command of French and make the best use of the language in lesson time so that pupils have excellent models to copy. As a result, they are able to cope in lessons conducted entirely in French and are developing good accents themselves. This emphasis on language development in general is also supporting their progress in English.
60. Teachers' choice of materials and exciting, imaginative use of methods ensure that pupils actively enjoy their learning. Planning is generic while the school is in the early stages of developing its centre of excellence status, but there are clear plans for review and development of procedures. There is also a need for clearer feedback to pupils in order that staff and pupils are able to track and extend progress.
61. Many of these very positive elements are due to the very clear vision and very well developed skills of the advisory teacher who has responsibility for French. The foreign language assistant is being trained to continue this work and is a great asset to the school and an excellent role model. Both members of staff are very well supported by the local education authority in their work. The school is ready to manage the transfer of responsibility of French to the in-school co-ordinator efficiently and to further involve classroom teachers in teaching the language. Plenty of extra practice in French lessons is also developing pupils' skills in using mathematics and number. A particularly positive feature of the whole initiative is the inclusion of all pupils. The lessons have a clear effect on the motivation and desire to learn across the whole range of age and ability.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Less able pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well although the achievement of more able pupils is generally only satisfactory.
- Very strong teaching in Year 6 raised standards in mathematics to national expectations in the 2003 national tests.
- There is good emphasis on the use of specific mathematical language.
- Not enough attention is given to marking and assessment to set targets for future work.

Commentary

62. For the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, standards are below those expected nationally. This is an improvement in Year 2 compared with the previous year, when they were well below average in the national tests. This rise in standards is due mainly to the very strong teaching in Year 2 and a focus on filling the gaps in provision highlighted by an analysis of test results. A factor in why standards are lower in Year 6 than in the previous year is the higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs. However, with the very good teaching in Year 6, together with booster classes and holiday clubs, it is likely that pupils will do as well in national tests as in the previous year. This represents very good achievement since they started school.
63. The quality of the teaching is good. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and frequently make use of number charts, models or everyday materials to illustrate a mathematical concept. Work is explained in clear mathematical language and pupils quickly add the new words to their own vocabulary. Pupils in Year 4 confidently talk about 'tally' charts while pupils in Year 5 use 'coordinates' and 'quadrant' as they plot two-dimensional shapes in the first quadrant.
64. Teachers are very positive about pupils' abilities and this raises their self-esteem and encourages them to try harder and live up to their teachers' high expectations. Teachers ensure that less able pupils, and those with special educational needs, benefit from further explanations, in small groups, from classroom support staff. These efforts to make sure that they understand the main ideas of the lesson contribute significantly to the very good achievement they make in overcoming their difficulties with mathematics.
65. Teachers are not consistently using the information from their records of pupils' progress to identify what different groups of pupils need to learn next. Too often, as seen in pupils' books throughout the term, the starting point for activities is the same for all pupils. This is particularly detrimental to more able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented in mathematics. At times, even when work is differentiated, the differentiation is superficial rather than getting to grips with the needs of these pupils and their achievement is not fast enough. However, there are examples to show that the more able, and the gifted and talented, are stretched mathematically. For instance, in a Year 5 class, their achievement was very good when they rose to the challenge to translate two-dimensional shapes rather than practising the same skills as less able pupils in the class. At times teachers are not using their marking consistently to support and reinforce points made in lessons and to indicate how pupils can improve. Some helpful advice is given but too often comments like 'well done' are written.
66. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Recent improvements to provision include a thorough analysis of national tests results to highlight areas for development. New assessment procedures have been introduced with a particular focus on the underachievement of girls. The co-ordinator is aware that she needs to approach the co-ordination of Key Stage 2 mathematics with much more rigour if standards in mathematics are to improve further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects, particularly science. For example, pupils in Year 1 sort into sets using living and non-living as criteria while pupils in Year 4 use their measuring skills to find the length of their arms in centimetres. Time lines are used to good effect in history and ICT is used regularly during numeracy lessons to reinforce or extend mathematical concepts.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving rapidly in the infant classes and by the end of the current Year 2, pupils are likely to be reaching levels in line with those expected.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils achieve very well and standards are likely to be above average.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, and excellent in some lessons in Years 2 and 6.
- The subject leadership is dynamic and very positive, but more time is needed to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning, and spread good practice throughout the school.
- Untidy writing and presentation of results, together with insufficient variety in the methods of recording, often spoil pupils' good work.

Commentary

68. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. Their knowledge and skills are further developed throughout the junior years, and with the very good and excellent teaching they get in Years 5 and 6, they achieve very well by the time they leave the school, given their low attainment on entry. Progress in the subject is very good. The current infant pupils are attaining standards broadly in line with those expected, while the present Year 6 have a good proportion of pupils who will exceed the expected levels. However, the pupils' performance in the national tests is hindered by their below average communication and thinking skills, and this is an area the school knows needs improvement.
69. The curriculum is planned well through an amalgamation of the previous school scheme and a nationally produced scheme. It covers all statutory requirements. This has enabled teachers to link the work in the infants and the junior schools well, although there is a need for this to be monitored more closely in future to assess where weaknesses in provision may exist. The subject co-ordinator is aware of this. Her hard work and dynamic leadership have had a big input in the subject's present success. She has monitored pupils' work and the teachers' planning but has not yet had sufficient time to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. Overall, the leadership and management is good.
70. The teaching strengths are:
- Very good use of resources
 - Year teams working well together, resourcing, planning and even having joint input such as the Year 6 plenary session
 - Well planned and managed lessons
 - Assessment provides useful information about how well pupils are doing and what areas need to be further addressed.
71. Where the teaching is strongest, pupils are given very good opportunities to experiment, to question results and for the more able to extend their work to a high level. For example, in Year 6 pupils tested the strengths of the light of a bulb in relation to the number of bulbs in a series circuit. The higher attaining pupils, with minimal guidance, extended this by creating parallel circuits.
72. Where the teaching is less effective, it is due to:
- Lack of firm behaviour management techniques
 - Lack of sufficient support from teaching assistants
 - Less secure subject knowledge and understanding
 - Not providing pupils with key words to support their understanding and recording skills.
73. The presentation of pupils' work is too often untidy and recorded with insufficient care. Tables and graphs are not drawn carefully enough and the incorrect spelling of scientific vocabulary does not encourage a logical and thoughtful approach to the subject. In addition, pupils are taught insufficiently varied methods of recording.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The computer suite is a very good resource for teaching and learning.
- Basic ICT skills are taught well, but there are gaps in what pupils know and can do because learning has been interrupted by technical issues and building work.
- Teachers make good use of the new electronic white boards and this is helping to raise standards in ICT as well as other subjects.
- There is now a good programme of work, which meets all National Curriculum requirements, but ICT is not sufficiently used in other subjects.

Commentary

74. The school has come a long way since the amalgamation. It has solved the problem of incompatible systems, invested heavily in getting up to date equipment in place and made sure that all staff have enough training and support to teach the new programme. As a result, standards are beginning to rise. Pupils enjoy the lessons and know that they are making progress. Despite this, standards remain below average because no groups have followed the new curriculum all the way through. Pupils' knowledge and skills are patchy. In some areas, they have not had enough opportunities to go beyond the first stages. For example, some of the older pupils remember using a database or simple spreadsheet, but they have not used these to do calculations or investigate the effects of changing values. When new work is taught in more depth, over a series of lessons, pupils achieve well. In Year 6, for example, pupils have almost reached the expected standard in their multimedia presentations. This is because the teaching is very good and pupils have been able to use and refine their skills in a challenging task.
75. Teachers make commendable efforts to prepare before they begin unfamiliar units of work. They use the electronic screen effectively to demonstrate, explain clearly and make sure that enough adult help is available. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and usually remember what they learn. In the best lessons, there is a good balance between mastering new techniques and exploring ways that these can be used. Most pupils enjoy this and work hard to improve their work. Some pupils find this sustained effort difficult; the work is too new and too much fun. Teachers are aware that there will be an increasing need to plan different levels of challenge and support in lessons, as the new curriculum becomes established.
76. The subject leader has done well to bring the school this far in difficult circumstances. Apart from the disruption of the merger, there have been technical problems with the older computers, a lack of suitable software and some training which did not do much to increase the confidence of staff. These issues have all been resolved. For example, there are useful arrangements for teachers to observe each other's lessons and effective teaching, and technical support from the Mersey Grid for Learning. A popular computer club enhances the curriculum and good use is made of regular visits to ICT facilities at local football clubs. The priority now is to keep a close eye on teaching and learning, so that pupils improve their knowledge and understanding across the full range of National Curriculum requirements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. There is insufficient use of ICT in other subjects, but the school has appropriate plans to put this right now that the suite is in full use. Other hardware is used well at times. For example, in Year 5 science pupils learned to use digital pulse meters to measure their heart rates. Appropriate software is used in art and design to create patterns and pictures, such as those in the style of Mondrian made by junior pupils. Older pupils are learning to use the Internet for research purposes in geography and history.

HUMANITIES

Geography and History

78. There was little opportunity to enable firm judgements to be made about standards or different aspects of the provision for **geography**. Very little pupils' work was recorded in books or on display, and no lessons were seen. The subject has not been a recent priority for development. A discussion with pupils in Year 6 revealed that their geographical knowledge, skills or understanding is below that expected for their age.
79. The school's **history** teaching is based on a nationally recommended scheme of work and folders of commercially produced worksheets linked to these. As well as spending too little time teaching the subject, there is a tendency for teachers to choose from and use these worksheets without thinking enough about what the National Curriculum expects pupils to know, be able to do or be learning about. Pupils are therefore not receiving a balanced curriculum. The subject co-ordinator checks teachers' planning but has had little opportunity to find out about teaching and learning for herself, especially in the building where she does not teach.
80. In the six lessons seen, teaching and learning were usually satisfactory. Two good lessons had a strong focus on developing pupils' research and recording skills, and developed pupils' literacy well. One of these lessons also made good use of opportunities for pupils to learn from the Internet. Overall, though, scrutiny of samples of pupils' work in books and on display, and discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils, reveal that they do not learn in sufficient breadth or depth, despite their obvious enjoyment of finding out about the past.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**, due to the amount of time allocated for its teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is effective in arranging a good programme of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' often scant experiences.
- Not enough time is given to teaching and learning of the subject.

Commentary

81. Samples of work, in books and on display, and teachers' planning from different years were scrutinised; discussions were held with the subject co-ordinator and a group of Year 6 pupils; and two lessons were seen. Teaching in the lessons was satisfactory overall, and good teaching was seen when a lesson had good pace and the teacher introduced key language and modelled its use. The pupils were stimulated by their good relationship with the teacher and her linking of religious elements with events that they had experience of. Overall, though, there was insufficient recorded work, the subject was timetabled for too little, and pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding were less than those expected for their age.
82. The co-ordinator was appointed when the new school was formed. She has worked closely with the local authority adviser to put in place a policy and scheme of work that have given good guidance to teaching and learning of the subject, although statements in the policy relating to pupils' moral, social and cultural development are not linked sufficiently to learning through or from the subject. She has also worked hard to acquire and organise a good range of resources. The co-ordinator has not yet been given the opportunity to see teaching and learning of the subject across the school for herself.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

83. No lessons were observed in art and design or design and technology. The scrutiny of displays and sketchbooks show that standards in **art and design** are broadly in line with those expected. Pupils are introduced to a good range of media and materials. Two- and three-dimensional work is evident. Good links to other subjects exist. For example, in Year 6 painted paper plates are created in the style of the Ancient Greeks, as part of the pupils' history work. Very good friezes illustrating scenes from Bible stories use a range of methods to create very effective three-dimensional collages. Work on symmetry links well with pupils' mathematical learning, as does the creation of tangram patterns. Very good use is made of the expertise of a teacher from a local secondary school who works with each junior year group.
84. **Design and technology** planning indicates that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills using a range of tools and materials. They incorporate diagrams and labels into their designs and older pupils draw different elevations of, for example, slippers. Pupils are taught to evaluate their work and to make changes when necessary. The evidence of pupils' work shows that, in Year 3, they experiment with pipe cleaners and card to find the best way to support their picture frames, before embarking on making the frame itself. Pupils in Year 2 are taught a range of techniques such as cutting, gluing and sewing during the making of their hand puppets.
85. One **physical education** lesson and part of a dance lesson were observed. The Year 3 gymnastics lesson resulted in a good level of achievement among most of the pupils due to some very good teaching. They show sound skills in creating sequences of balances on different parts of their bodies. Good use is made of pupils working in pairs to support and criticise each other. The provision of sports coaching and teams competing against other schools is well supported by the Excellence in Cities project. One **music** lesson was observed, alongside pupils singing in assemblies. In the lesson, Year 3 pupils listened well to music from 'The Carnival of Animals' and used terms such as 'high', 'low' and 'slow' appropriately. They are unable to recognise the instruments used. Pupils show good knowledge of 'Peter and the Wolf' from earlier work. In the infant assemblies, children sing with enthusiasm and tunefully, especially the songs they are learning for Christmas. Selected pupils play percussion instruments well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. Only one lesson was observed and so no judgements are made about overall provision. Topics such as smoking, drugs and alcohol abuse are addressed as well as work on diet, health and personal safety. The curriculum is planned very well and there are particularly strong links with religious education. Teaching was very good in the Year 6 lesson observed because the teacher was skilful at exploring pupils' comments which in turn led them to gaining a better understanding of their social responsibilities. The curriculum is supported well by visitors from outside agencies. Year 5 pupils responded in a thoughtful and serious way when a local police officer discussed the problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	N/a
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	2

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
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	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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