

INSPECTION REPORT

ST CATHARINE'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wigan, Lancashire

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106464

Headteacher: Mrs G M Armstrong

Lead inspector: Mr D Speakman

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th June 2004

Inspection number: 257610

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll; 218

School address: Scholefield Lane
Scholes
Wigan
Lancashire
Postcode: WN1 3LP

Telephone number: 01942 733081
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs V Brookes

Date of previous inspection: 11th – 14th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average sized voluntary aided Church of England primary school serves the district of Scholes, close to the centre of Wigan. An increasing number of pupils come from neighbouring Ince. The area from which the school draws its pupils has high levels of social need and an above average proportion of pupils claim a free school meal. The school population is stable and there has been a lower than average level of pupil mobility in recent years. All pupils are listed as White British. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average. Special needs include specific and moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural problems, visual impairment and speech disabilities. Pupils' attainment on entry to the reception class is well below average. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award, the Eco Schools Award and two school achievement awards. It receives external funding to support the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including out-of-school hours study support, and is part of an Excellence in Cities initiative.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20086	Mr D Speakman	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology Design and technology Special educational needs English as an additional language
11437	Mr A Anderson	Lay inspector	
27324	Mrs D Crow	Team inspector	Science Geography History Foundation Stage ¹
32633	Mrs M Haywood	Team inspector	Mathematics Personal, social and health education & citizenship Art and design Music Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

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¹ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school that provides a good quality of education and gives good value for money. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average but, because of good teaching, good levels of inclusion and a very good ethos, pupils learn and achieve well, leaving the school with above average standards in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT).

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of teaching is good at all stages of the school and all pupils achieve well; standards in English and mathematics are above average by the end of Year 6.
- As a result of good provision in the reception class, children have a good start to their education and achieve well in all areas of learning.
- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is very good and is fundamental to the school's drive to improve. The governors make a good contribution to the school's development.
- The ethos of the school is very good and underpins the development of good attitudes and very good behaviour.
- Provision for ICT is very good and pupils achieve above average standards.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and teaching assistants support their good progress well.
- The curriculum is of a good quality in reception but not balanced enough to ensure all pupils have adequate time for non-core subjects in Years 1 to 6. It benefits from very good levels of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- The school looks after its pupils very well and this reflects its very caring ethos. High levels of inclusion are evident in the work of the school.
- Links with parents are very good and the school has very productive contact with other schools and the community.

The level of improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school was inspected in 1998 and since then standards in English, mathematics and ICT have risen. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. Development of whole-school assessment procedures and their use has been good. The curriculum enrichment is much improved and the quality of leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is now very good; an improvement since the previous inspection. The school has responded well to issues raised in the previous inspection and these have been fully addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Achievement is good. Pupils start in the Foundation Stage with well below average attainment. Children achieve well and they meet the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception in their personal, social and emotional development and their physical development but not in the other areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, all pupils achieve well and attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Achievement is good in Years 3 to 6 and standards are above average in English and mathematics and above those nationally expected in ICT. Standards in science are average.

Pupils' personal qualities are **good**. Pupils' attitudes towards school and learning and their behaviour are good and their behaviour is very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are good at all stages of the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to plan challenging and interesting activities based on sound day-to-day assessment data. As a result, teaching meets all pupils' needs and encourages good levels of confidence in their own ability to tackle the work. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and are successful in achieving very high standards of behaviour in lessons. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good; teaching assistants provide valuable support and are effective.

The curriculum is satisfactory but good in the reception class. The school provides a broad and rich curriculum but which lacks balance due to the insufficient time allowed for some non-core subjects. The school has identified this as an area for development in the new school development plan. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is a good level of teachers and teaching assistants. Resources are good throughout the school and very good for ICT. The school shows very good levels of care for its pupils and there is a very good and supportive relationship between the school and its parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is very good. They have a very clear shared vision of the needs of the school, which is based on a very secure good knowledge of the school and its pupils. Plans for school improvement are well thought out and highly appropriate to the school's needs. They are effectively supported in their work by other staff with leadership responsibility. The governors provide good levels of challenge and support and contribute well to the work of the school. Statutory requirements are fully met. Procedures for performance management and professional development of staff are very good, and are effective in identifying the school's needs and moving it forward at a good pace.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very happy with the school. They are pleased with the school's work. The parents like the caring nature of the school and feel that the staff work hard to help their children to

achieve well. They feel that the school responds positively to their concerns and encourages them to help in school and with homework. The parents appreciate being able to approach staff informally at the start and end of the school day. The inspection team agrees with them. Pupils have very positive views about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Establish a better balance in the curriculum and the use of time, to raise the profile of some non-core subjects in Years 1 to 6.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are **above average** at the end of Year 6. Achievement is **good** for all groups of pupils at all stages of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and achieve well. Attainment remains below what children are expected to reach by the end of reception.
- Achievement in the infant and junior classes is good, so pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above average by the end of Year 6.
- Standards in ICT are above those nationally expected for pupils of this age.

Commentary

1. In the last three years, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 have mainly been below the national average. The school anticipates improvement this year and teacher assessments indicate average standards in English and mathematics. Lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work confirm this assessment; current attainment in English and mathematics is judged to be average at the end of Year 2. This represents a good level of achievement, since pupils enter Year 1 with below average attainment in literacy and numeracy.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.9 (14.4)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.2 (14.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.8 (15.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The situation by the end of Year 6 indicates good achievement year on year. In 2003, results in tests were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. This has been maintained this year and teacher assessment predicts above average results in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms this; in English and mathematics, attainment is currently above average and it is average in science. This is an improvement on the previous inspection findings, when standards were judged to be average in mathematics and science, but below average in English. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good throughout the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
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English	27.7 (27.7)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.9 (29.1)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	28.9 (27.6)	28.6 (28.3)

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

3. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. When children leave the Foundation Stage to enter Year 1, most have achieved the Early Learning Goals² in their personal, social and emotional development and physical development, but standards are below those children are expected to reach in all other areas of learning. Those with special educational needs achieve well as a result of the good quality support from all staff in the reception class.
4. Standards in English in Year 2 are average and by Year 6 are above average. Overall, standards in English have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress well at all stages of the school. In the year 2000, the current Year 6 pupils attained average results in reading and writing, when they were at the end of Year 2. This represents good achievement for these pupils in the junior classes. By Year 6, pupils write to a good standard across a wide range of styles and purposes. Handwriting and presentation are of a good standard because teachers insist that work is presented well. Attainment in reading is above average in Year 6, with almost all attaining the standards expected for their age and a significant number attaining at higher levels. Older pupils develop higher order reading skills, such as analysing poetry and selecting words and phrases to back up their statements. By Year 6, pupils read with expression, using punctuation as a guide. Speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils are confident and speak with a good level of fluency. They have good command of the spoken language and a wide vocabulary, which they use effectively to express themselves clearly.
5. Standards in mathematics are average by Year 2 and above average by Year 6. Achievement is good overall. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of number and of other aspects of mathematics. The school makes a deliberate effort to provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their mental mathematics skills. This helps them to secure above average standards in their knowledge and understanding and use of mathematical skills and their ability to calculate.
6. In Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the nature of science and have developed sound skills in experimental and investigative science. They have satisfactory skills in planning and carrying out investigations. Pupils conduct a wide range of experiments and use their experiences to extend their knowledge and understanding satisfactorily across the full science curriculum.
7. Standards in ICT are above those nationally expected by the end of Year 6. Because of the improvement in teaching and learning and in resources since the previous inspection, very high attainment is found in Years 3 and 4 and well above average standards are working up through the school. From a very early age, pupils are taught basic computer skills and become familiar with the keyboard, using the mouse and a good range of programs in different subjects. This secure start enables pupils to achieve well and attain above

² Early Learning Goals are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards of ICT seen in other subjects are high and very good use is made of computers to support learning generally.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are **good** and their behaviour is **very good**. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour in the classroom help them to achieve well.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good.
- The very good ethos of the school helps to promote spiritual development.
- The school sets very high expectations of pupils' conduct, so pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and of taking on responsibilities within a community.
- A small minority of parents do not support the school in helping to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.

Commentary

8. Pupils show good attitudes to learning in most lessons. Virtually all listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and to undertake the tasks set. This is because of the good teaching, where teachers maintain a high level of interest and set appropriately challenging tasks, resulting in pupils of all abilities achieving well. Generally, pupils behave very well throughout the school, both in the classroom and around the school. The caring ethos of the school ensures that pupils know, early on, what is right and what is wrong and how to show consideration for others. The youngest children in the reception class quickly learn the right way to behave and how to take turns and share. By the time they enter Year 1, many children will have achieved the expected goals in personal, social and emotional development.
9. No signs of aggressive behaviour were seen during the inspection and both parents and pupils confirm that bullying does not occur. There have been no exclusions in the past year. Relationships are very good and this is a result of the caring ethos of the school and the very good role models set by the staff. Pupils work and play harmoniously together. Many examples were seen during the inspection of pupils co-operating well, when working in pairs or small groups. All staff, including support staff and lunchtime supervisors, give a very positive lead in engendering good relationships and good behaviour. They give praise and encouragement at every appropriate opportunity and act as very good role models. For example, six pupils, one from each year group, are chosen by lunchtime supervisors to sit at the 'top table' each day as a reward for good behaviour at lunchtime. Older pupils, in particular, have a clear understanding of the importance of living together in a caring community. They take responsibility for the organisation and running of the school council, which has had a number of positive outcomes. For example, they initiated the 'ribbon on the bench', where pupils sit if they haven't got anybody to play with at playtimes. The school council or other pupils then ensure that they are befriended. There is a good range of after-school activities that are well supported and make an effective contribution towards pupils' social development.

10. The school has a strong relationship with the church and assemblies provide pupils with a time for reflection and a good sense of spiritual awareness. In addition, the very good ethos in the school helps to promote spiritual development. Pupils are given good opportunities to visit places of cultural interest, such as Drumcroon Arts Centre. Pupils are provided with a good amount of meaningful information and experience in a wide range of subjects, including music, art and design, religious education and dance, to enable them to develop a good knowledge of cultures and religions other than their own. However, although they have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures, they are not given sufficient opportunities to understand the issues arising from living in a multicultural society. The good provision reported at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained.

11. Recent records show pupils' attendance levels at the school to be unsatisfactory. However, the school's pro-active initiative in this area has resulted in a current attendance figure which is in line with the national average and is therefore satisfactory. The incidence of unauthorised absence is low and is well below the national average. Some pupils are occasionally late for school and a small minority of parents are not supportive of the school in ensuring that their children attend school regularly and promptly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.1
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. Teaching is good across the school. The curriculum is satisfactory; it is good for children in reception and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. It benefits from very good opportunities for enrichment. The school provides very good levels of care, guidance and support for its pupils. The school has very good links with parents and the community and with other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. All groups of pupils learn equally effectively. Assessment and its use in planning lessons are good in English and mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach accurate knowledge and understanding.
- Planning is good. Planned activities effectively meet all pupils' needs and enable good learning by all.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They set challenging tasks and invariably expect high standards of behaviour in lessons.
- Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, which, combined with very good use of resources, sustain pupils' interest and motivation well.
- All pupils are fully included in all learning activities, regardless of ability, gender or background. Teachers and assistants are fully aware of inclusion issues.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants provide valuable support and are effective in what they do.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good at all stages in the school and is effective in enabling all pupils to achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is good in English, mathematics, science and in ICT. The good quality of teaching has been maintained since the time of the previous inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	6 (17%)	14 (40%)	13 (37%)	1 (3%)	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. Teachers give clear explanations, based on their good subject knowledge. They support these very well through the effective use of their good resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to give easily understood, very clear demonstrations of learning points. Consequently, pupils feel confident to move forward and work independently at a good pace. All teachers are fully aware of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, so they show competence in teaching these skills. All staff have completed training in the teaching of ICT and in the junior classes pupils receive specialist teaching in this subject. This combination ensures that pupils receive very good quality provision in ICT. Teachers guide pupils effectively in learning core skills, ensuring that they all achieve these well, to support their good learning in other subjects.
14. Pupils are taught well to use their knowledge and understanding, for instance in mathematics and ICT, so there is a clear purpose to their learning. Teachers ask accurately pitched questions focused on pupils of different ability, and these are effective in furthering all pupils' progress and ensuring that they are all fully included in activities. The best questioning observed was vigorous and made pupils think carefully about the answers to their questions. This was seen in a Year 6 English lesson, where the teacher moved from group to group, seeking their views on the poems they were studying. .
15. Planning is good. Tasks are challenging for pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and higher attainers. Teachers' expectations of pupils are therefore high, but well focused on their ability. Subsequent steps in learning are well rooted in the use of assessments carried out at the end of lessons, when a plenary session is often used to check up on what pupils have learned, or to extend learning in preparation for the next lesson. Some very good examples of cross-curricular links were seen, in which the teacher made learning meaningful and enjoyable. Science and design and technology are often effectively linked; in one instance, both were linked with music when pupils made musical instruments in design and technology, linked with sound in science and music.
16. Teachers share learning objectives with pupils at the beginning of lessons; this is good because pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Their management of pupils is good and teachers and support staff consistently apply the school's agreed approach to behaviour management. Pupils are therefore well aware of how to behave in school and that there is no compromise of standards. All staff recognise and comment on those pupils who are co-operating, so others soon follow their example and quickly settle at each change of activity. Because these approaches are applied consistently, pupils soon learn the classroom routines and comply with them. Because teachers have a positive approach to managing behaviour, boys and girls feel valued and this forms the basis of good relationships between pupils and teachers.
17. Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning methods, which suits these pupils and enables them to progress well. In mathematics and science, there is a strong emphasis on developing and using mental and investigative skills to support effective learning. Teachers enable pupils to use and apply their knowledge and understanding in challenging activities. Much of the learning in ICT is focused on quick, effective demonstration, followed by pupils having very good opportunities to practise the skills for themselves. Very good use of computers in other subjects further enables pupils to use the skills they have learned, giving a purpose and meaning to their learning. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the progress that they make.

18. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the good additional support given to them and learn successfully as a result. Their learning is enhanced by the teaching assistants who support them well in class. As a result, these pupils make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans.
19. Assessment systems have been developed further since the last inspection and are good. The school has an effective target-setting and tracking system in place for all pupils in mathematics and English; assessment in science is satisfactory but being developed. Pupils' progress is reviewed regularly and this has contributed significantly to improving standards. The school has plans to extend the system to include non-core subjects. Day-to-day assessment and marking now need to be developed, to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the steps to make towards longer-term targets.

The curriculum

The quality and range of learning opportunities are **satisfactory**. The school provides pupils with **very good** opportunities to widen their experiences through extra-curricular activities and by inviting a variety of visitors to the school. The school's accommodation is satisfactory and resources are effective in supporting learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad but not balanced enough to ensure that all pupils have adequate time for non-core subjects.
- Pupils have access to very good curriculum enrichment, through visitors, visits and extra-curricular activities.
- Resources are good and very good for ICT.

Commentary

20. The curriculum provided covers all aspects of the National Curriculum satisfactorily. Emphasis is placed on the key areas of literacy, numeracy and ICT and this reflects the school's aims to improve standards. As a result, however, pupils do not receive suggested time allocations for non-core subjects. They therefore have too limited learning opportunities. Long gaps between teaching in some history and geography, for example, mean that those skills learned are not consolidated sufficiently. This is particularly evident in art and design, where elements of the curriculum are only covered in depth once during a key stage. Pupils do not, therefore, have the chance to develop or apply these skills in other contexts at a later date. Opportunities for physical education are very limited and currently pupils only receive one physical education lesson per week. The teaching timetable needs to be revised to ensure better balance of core and non-core subjects within the available teaching time.
21. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The school ensures that pupils' special educational needs are identified as soon as possible, so that lessons can be modified to provide for their needs. All pupils on the special educational needs list have good quality individual education plans, accurately highlighting their individual needs. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that targets reflect the progress made and are up to date. All pupils with special

educational needs have full access to the same curriculum as other pupils. This is one of the features that make the school so inclusive.

22. There is a well-structured programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Circle time is used to develop ideas and understanding of relationships and other personal issues. In a very effective Year 6 lesson, drama and role-play were used well to develop a good understanding of co-operation, conflict and compromise. The school's approach contributes well to pupils' personal development.
23. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a very wide and varied range of activities, including sport, science and arts. The school brings in coaches and specialist teachers through the local education authority project WOOSH (Wigan Out Of School Hours). The school is constantly seeking ways to widen and enrich pupils' experiences and learning. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for participation in the wider community.
24. There is a good match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum and a very effective group of support assistants in the school. A sense of joint purpose binds all staff in the school and is, therefore, a key factor in the school's continuing improvement. Specialist teachers are employed for music and religious education and the deputy headteacher provides specialist teaching in ICT in Years 3 to 6. The range of resources in most subjects is satisfactory. There is a good range of resources to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and very good provision in ICT. The accommodation is satisfactory, very well maintained and effectively enhanced by attractive displays that celebrate pupils' efforts and success. The accommodation for the children in the reception class is good and the newly installed outdoor area has improved provision greatly.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures for child protection and welfare are **very good**, as are those for supporting and guiding pupils through monitoring. The procedures for seeking and acting on pupils' views are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and safety and child protection procedures are very effective.
- Teaching and support staff know their pupils very well and recognise their needs quickly.
- The school provides a very high level of support and guidance, as pupils progress through the school.
- Good systems are in place to seek and act on pupils' views of the school.

Commentary

25. The very high level of care and welfare support of pupils, together with very good procedures for promoting pupils' personal development and well-being, has a positive impact on their learning and is a significant strength of the school.
26. Child protection systems and procedures are well established and the reporting person is known to all staff in the school. Relevant staff training in child protection matters has also taken place. The teaching and support staff, occasionally supported by a range of external agencies, provides a high degree of welfare support to individual pupils, as exemplified by the good provision for pupils with special educational needs. This provision is enhanced by a pupil nurture group organised by the learning mentor, who provides a high level of pastoral and academic support for specific

children. The school's BIP (Behaviour Improvement Programme) and BAP (Behaviour and Attendance Programme) also add significantly to the promotion of pupils' personal development.

27. In the classroom, teachers and support staff know their pupils very well. They are quick to observe any personal difficulties exhibited by pupils and to take appropriate and remedial action. The school operates a good first-aid system for minor accidents and good records are maintained. Regular fire drills are carried out and the school also maintains a record log. The school also carries out occasional health and safety audits of the site and is proactive when considering possible risks on external trips out of school.
28. Lessons such as PSHE (including circle time) are used well to provide pupils with the opportunity to talk about themselves and to develop their self-esteem. In one observed lesson, pupils were invited to discuss, with their partner and the teacher, the potentially dangerous products and materials found in the home. The school council enhances this provision by providing pupils with a voice regarding how the school should develop. However, the present pupil selection systems and length of office for some pupils does not at present ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to serve. Pupils' personal development is further enhanced through the provision of both class and individual targets, towards which pupils are expected to work. The school acknowledges pupils' achievement through praise given to them in the classroom and, more formally, in regular sharing and presentation assemblies.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents. The school's links with the local community, including other schools, is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' views of the school are very good.
- The school reaches out very well to all parents with good quality information.
- The school utilises the community and other schools very well to support the curriculum.

Commentary

29. The school's links with parents and the community provide a very strong contribution to pupils' learning and personal development and are a major strength of the school.
30. The parents' meeting with the inspectors was reasonably well attended and the parental questionnaire was returned by a moderate number of parents. A significant majority of parents are very supportive of the school and of its aims and objectives. Parents feel that their children like school and that they are making good progress. Parents also feel that the teachers are good and that the school is well managed. They feel comfortable in approaching the school with any problems. Pupils have very positive views about their teachers and the school.
31. The information provided by the school through the prospectus, the annual governors' report to parents and via regular, well-designed communication letters is of a good standard. Annual academic reports to parents are of a good standard and they also include targets for pupils' further development. There are two parents' evenings each year, during which parents have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress. These evenings are generally well attended by parents. The school also encourages parents of reception-aged children to visit the school for half an hour every Wednesday afternoon in order to play with their own and other children. This pre-school opportunity is very good and contributes well to the school/home partnership.

32. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their children's progress by the teacher with responsibility for special educational needs. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning and strategies for doing so are shared with them.
33. Several parents are frequent visitors to the school both in terms of providing very welcome classroom support and in listening to children read. All parents have been invited to enter into a home/school agreement, which is designed to promote improved communication between the school, parents and pupils. In discussions with a number of parents during the inspection, all had only positive comments to make in relation to their children's education and all-round support by the school. Parental attendance at school concerts, celebrations and sports days is very good.
34. The school also makes very good use of the local environment to enhance pupils' curricular access and the range of extra-curricular clubs and activities is impressive. The school has good links with the church and regular field trips are made to study the local environment. For example, a group of children are visiting Wigan Pier in June and this is linked to the school's merit award system. The school also has good links with Trencherfields Mill, where the local newspaper is published. The school's links with WOOSH (Wigan out of School Hours) and with EBP (Education Business Partnership) are excellent additional provisions, which give all pupils outstanding opportunities to enhance their personal development through taking part in a very wide range of enrichment activities.
35. Very close links with several local schools are also apparent. New parents and children are invited to an open afternoon and there is an Early Years' workshop. Year 7 teachers from the two main secondary schools visit Year 6, accompanied by some Year 7 pupils who revisit their old school and talk to the Year 6 pupils about their new school. One of these new schools has an excellence centre and pupils in Years 2 and 6 have attended an arts club there to effectively develop their skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher and deputy headteacher together provide very good leadership. Leadership of other key staff is good. Governance is good. Management systems are effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and she is very effectively supported in her work by a very competent deputy headteacher. They work in close partnership.
- Teamwork between the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and governors is a strength of the school.
- The governing body is effective in its work and provides good levels of support and challenge to the leadership of the school.
- Management systems are good and effectively support the school's work.

Commentary

36. In the time since the previous inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have played a pivotal role in the continued development and improvement of the school. Under their guidance, the school has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Taking account the wider picture, standards have improved and the specific key issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been tackled in an effective manner. This is

a school that is not satisfied with second best, but is determined to continue to introduce new initiatives and provide high levels of care for all pupils, regardless of ability or background.

37. The headteacher has been successful in building a team of staff that works very well together to enhance pupils' personal and academic achievement. That the headteacher has the respect of staff, governors, parents and pupils, was made clear during the inspection, at the parents' meeting and through the parents' questionnaire.
38. The headteacher has a high profile within the school. She is very accessible and often joins in or takes school activities. The headteacher receives a very good level of support from her deputy. They make a very effective leadership team and are very much in tune with each other's vision of high quality provision. The senior management team also share this vision and leads by example. What makes the school successful is the shared commitment and close teamwork of all staff, including non-teaching staff. Together with the governing body, they ensure that their pupils have the best possible opportunities.
39. The leadership of literacy and numeracy is good. Both subject leaders are knowledgeable and have successfully led the implementation of initiatives, so that there has been a good level of improvement in standards since the previous inspection. They oversee the development of these two important areas and ensure that development is kept going. They introduce new initiatives and analyse school-specific areas for development, such as the current priority of improving the transition from mental to written methods of calculation in mathematics. The leadership of ICT is very good and has led to a significant improvement in provision and standards.
40. The school benefits from a supportive, effective governing body, which has a high level of contact with the school and a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors share the senior leaders' vision and aspirations for the school and are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities and in shaping the direction and development of the school. The governing body fully meets statutory requirements and there are policies in place for all aspects of the school's work, including those for inclusion, race relations and equality. Governors receive from the headteacher and deputy headteacher very good information relating to standards and the work of the school. Governors also take it upon themselves to raise their own awareness of the school. They all have subject links and meet with relevant subject leaders each year. Governors take up opportunities to visit the school as much as possible. Relationships between the school and the governors are very good and there is a close, informal working relationship between the headteacher and the chair of governors. They are an important part of the strong sense of community that exists in the school.
41. Governors are involved in approving and monitoring the school improvement plan. There is a good match between the financial planning and the priorities outlined in the plan. Financial planning and management are of a very good quality and the school evaluates the impact of major spending decisions on standards well. A good example is the lengths that the headteacher and the governors have gone to, to ensure that all pupils have good access to computers. This has resulted in a better than average provision and standards in ICT have improved as a consequence. The school has a substantial carry forward but more than half has been committed to a project to improve the library and the development areas to support provision in art and design and design and technology, including food technology. Work is due to be done during the summer holidays.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	543,155
Total expenditure	539,166
Expenditure per pupil	2,596

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	38,433
Balance carried forward to the next	42,422

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Most children enter school with attainment that is well below average. In particular, a significant number have poorly developed speech, language and communication skills. Staff concentrate on the development of language and communication skills and as a result children make good progress, which is reflected across all areas of learning. Teaching is consistently good and children learn and achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. Children are provided with a variety of challenging and stimulating activities that they enjoy and are well matched to their needs.
43. The provision is well organised. All of the staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work well together as a team. Satisfactory practices are in place to assess what children can do and how well they are learning. This information is used appropriately to plan future work. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage by the class teacher is satisfactory overall. Although she acts as a good role model and manages the class environment well, she has not yet been in the post sufficiently long to be fully effective in her role. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Procedures for assessing children's learning have improved and there are better opportunities for children to develop their physical skills through outside play.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high expectations offset by staff ensure that children quickly learn the right way to behave, what is right and what is wrong.
- Children develop good attitudes to learning because of the good teaching and interesting range of activities provided.

Commentary

44. Relationships between the staff and the children are very good. Children respond very well to the high expectations set, so they learn and achieve very well. Many children are likely to attain the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Children are provided with a good balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities, which enable them to learn to work as part of a group or independently. They are confident in trying new activities, but maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate. They work and play well together. When needed, staff correct the children firmly but sensitively, thus supporting their self-esteem. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for undertaking simple day-to-day tasks, such as clearing away after activities, and they respond well. Resources are well prepared, which enables children to find the things they need and return them after use. Many examples were seen where children concentrated for periods of time, behaving sensibly and sharing resources.

45. Activities are very well planned to stimulate children's interest and curiosity and teaching is good. As a result, even at this stage, many children show good attitudes to learning. During the inspection, a tortoise that had been brought in for them to study, as part of their current topic on animals, fascinated children. They were encouraged to look closely at its features and helped to find the right words to talk about them, which helped to develop their communication skills. They then made satisfactory attempts to record their observations on a chalkboard.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good ratio of adults to children helps children make good progress in developing their language and communication skills.
- Children get many opportunities to develop their literacy and so achieve well.

Commentary

46. Teaching and learning are good, so children achieve well. However, because they have well below average attainment on entry to school, many children will not achieve the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. In particular, many children start school with well below average speech and language skills. For example, their speech is not clear, or they speak using single words or incomplete sentences. Staff work hard to develop children's communication skills through all activities, both formal and informal. Adult-led sessions with small groups of children provide good activities, where children share their ideas with an adult and extend their vocabulary. In these situations, they start to sustain attentive listening and to respond with relevant comments. Other activities, such as role-play, encourage children to develop their communication skills. However, unless an adult is present to promote these skills, some children just play happily alongside each other, with very little discussion. This was observed during the inspection when children were playing in the role-play area.

47. The teacher, who has a clear understanding of how young children learn best, provides well-organised activities that motivate them and help to develop their reading and writing skills. From early on, children learn to enjoy stories. The whole-class shared reading of books, such as 'The Zoo', helps children to understand that words and pictures carry meaning. Children know how to handle a book correctly and many recognise some familiar words. A few of the more able children can read a simple book confidently. Children make good progress with developing their writing skills. They learn how to hold a pencil correctly and are beginning to form some recognisable letters. During the inspection, a small group of more able children were 'writing' a letter. They used their knowledge of letter sounds well to write simple words such as 'went' and made good attempts at less familiar words such as 'pupy' (puppy).

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many opportunities are provided for children to develop their mathematical skills, so they achieve well.
- Work is well planned to cater for the needs of children of different abilities, which ensures they all make good progress.

Commentary

48. Teaching and learning are good. However, because of their well below average attainment on entry, many children will not attain the expected goals. Children make good progress because suitable emphasis is placed on teaching mathematical skills through a wide range of practical activities, songs and games, which is relevant to children's needs. They learnt about mathematical shapes, for example, by making cylinders that can roll. They identified cylinder shapes around the classroom and they found out that the ends of the cylinders are circles. The teacher is skilled at questioning children whilst they are engaged in activities in order to develop their mathematical understanding and to develop mathematical language such as 'more' and 'less'. Work is well planned to cater for children's varying needs. In a good lesson observed, children were working at tasks devised to challenge them at their particular level. Whilst the teacher was working with a group of pupils playing a game, which was helping them in learning to order numbers to ten, other children were making their own number lines to 20. The most able children were working on finding missing numbers in given sequences to 100.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

49. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards. However, an analysis of teachers' planning and work on display shows that all aspects of this wide area of learning are well thought out. Visitors into and visits out of school provide effective support and extend learning in this area. Last term, linked to the topic 'people who help us', children gained first-hand experience from the visit of firemen with their fire engine. They followed this up by building a model of the fire engine from cardboard boxes. This term, linked to their topic on animals, someone from the local veterinary surgery came to explain to the children what they do there. This has helped to extend their role-play in the class 'Vet's'. There are regular opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills, using the two classroom computers. They have used them for simple word processing and for painting pictures. Children were seen observing and identifying the special features of a tortoise and they have had opportunities to plant seeds and bulbs and observe them growing.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many activities are provided for children to develop their manipulative skills, so they make good progress.
- The outside play area is well equipped and provides children with good opportunities to develop their physical skills.

Commentary

50. Children enter school with well below average manipulative skills. Because of this, although teaching and learning are good, many will not achieve the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Staff are well aware of the need to improve children's fine manipulation. They therefore

provide a good range of activities that develop their skills, for instance by handling small toys, a variety of tools and a range of construction materials. Two children concentrated for a good length of time carefully building with and placing blocks in long rows.

51. Since the last inspection, a new outside play area has been constructed. This has extended the opportunities for physical activity. There is an appropriate range of outdoor equipment, which is effective in developing children's climbing and balancing skills. Children move confidently and manoeuvre a variety of wheeled toys with satisfactory control and without bumping into each other. There was no opportunity to observe more formal physical education sessions in the school hall, but these are planned for on a regular basis. Overall, children make good progress and achieve well.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

52. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards in this area of learning. In a short session observed, a small group of children were enjoying making models of mini-beasts with malleable material. The learning support assistant used this activity well, not only to develop children's creative skills but also to develop their language and observational skills. The children showed good attitudes to learning and concentrated well. An examination of planning and work on display shows that children are given suitable experience of a range of techniques and a variety of media. They enjoy singing; children confidently sang a little song about their pets that they had helped to make up, in front of the whole school, as part of the assembly they were leading. Children have many opportunities to develop their imagination through participating in role-play. Staff set up role-play areas related to the topic children are studying, such as a doctor's surgery last term and currently the 'Vet's'. There is also a good range of equipment for children to choose for themselves; two children were busy washing dolls' clothes and hanging them on the line to dry before undertaking the ironing! Visits out of school, such as the recent visit to Drumcroon Arts Centre, support this area of learning effectively.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The school teaches French to pupils in Year 6. One lesson was seen and therefore the subject was sampled. A short report is included in this section.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.
- There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to use their language and literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening, in a good range of other subjects.
- Although in a temporary capacity, the headteacher provides good subject leadership, and development is ongoing.

Commentary

53. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and this promotes good achievement by all pupils. Pupils enter Year 1 with below average language skills, but by the end of Year 2, attainment is average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils continue to achieve well and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. National Curriculum test results were above average in 2003 and are set to be above average again this year. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, when standards in English were below average at the end of Year 6. Standards are now better because the school implemented a wide range of initiatives, focused on improving basic language skills throughout the school, and is building on these to raise standards successfully.
54. From an early age, pupils develop a lively interest in reading, through being provided with good opportunities to read stimulating texts. They read with a good level of understanding of a wide range of literature. In response to very well-targeted guidance, pupils in Year 6 are able to express their understanding of a range of poems, for example. They identify phrases and lines that tell them, for instance, how the poet is feeling on the last day of school. Pupils at all levels of attainment read fluently and without hesitation. Most are able to use punctuation cues, such as speech and exclamation marks, to read with a lively expression in their voices. Pupils say they like books and enjoy reading.
55. Speaking and listening feature in the teaching of a good range of other subjects, enabling pupils to achieve well and reach average levels. By Year 2, pupils listen with sustained concentration and explain, using simple but clear vocabulary, how the story in the poem 'Funny Bones' develops. By now, most pupils are answering questions in complete sentences. This good achievement in developing speaking and listening skills results from teachers establishing a high profile for this aspect of language in lessons. They provide pupils with good opportunities to talk and listen to partners, adults and whole-class groups. By Year 6, pupils show respect for others' views by allowing each other to express their opinions whilst listening attentively. Pupils talked fluently about their memories of their time in St Catharine's, expressing their thoughts clearly, with fondness and, sometimes, humour.
56. Pupils are presented with a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes and using diverse styles. They respond well to these tasks and their writing in Year 6 shows that they write very effectively, using appropriate styles for different purposes. Their writing includes creative fictional writing, factual writing or re-telling stories in their own words, using classic authors such as Shakespeare or Charles Dickens as stimuli. Most pupils use imaginative vocabulary effectively. They organise their work accurately into simple or complex paragraphs, which include appropriate punctuation and accurate spelling. Teaching in an extended writing lesson in Year 3 was imaginative and captivated the pupils, who were able to write letters to a friend, using a structure provided by the teacher for guidance.
57. Pupils work purposefully in groups based on their levels of attainment in the subject and their learning needs. Work in all classes is well matched to the needs of pupils in all groups, including the more able pupils and those with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils with special needs in their learning. This is done without restricting the pupils' opportunities to learn independently.
58. Assessment in English is good and is used to inform how individual pupils' learning needs can be met. Pupils have targets for their learning in writing and reading, which are reviewed and updated regularly. This gives them a clear focus for their learning and indicates what

they need to do in order to improve. These targets are also used to ensure that all pupils' achievement is carefully tracked and that each pupil is given well-matched, yet challenging, work which builds upon their' previous learning. These initiatives are effective; standards have improved since their introduction in response to the key issues raised in the previous inspection.

59. The literacy subject leader left the school in the summer of 2003 and, since that time, English has been well led by the headteacher in a temporary capacity. She has widely acknowledged skills in this subject. She records pupils' progress carefully, analyses data and applies this information to identify areas of underperformance, or target extra support, where needed. She uses her expertise in suggesting to colleagues innovative ways of teaching aspects of English, following observations in lessons, as part of her programme of monitoring teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented well and a good range of opportunities is taken to develop literacy skills across the curriculum. Speaking and listening feature well in many subjects. Language is developed well in history. Extended writing tasks are provided, such as that where pupils produced a word-processed newspaper report on World War II. Discussions feature in a number of subjects, when pupils have the chance to listen to others' views and speak their views on a range of topics.

French

61. The school has extended its curriculum since the last inspection by the introduction of French for all pupils in Year 6. They study French for one hour each week and during the inspection, this was taught in a single period. In this time, they build up their speaking and listening skills well because they are attentive and very willing to use the language for themselves. Standards are therefore high. For example, pupils worked enthusiastically and confidently in pairs, asking questions about each other's personal details, such as their name and age. They spoke clearly and in correct sentences.

62. In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching and learning was good because the teacher made sure that explanations were clear and that questions were tailored to suit pupils' ability. This meant that everyone took part. Earlier work was reinforced briskly at the start of a lesson. This consolidated vocabulary effectively and built up flexibility and fluency in understanding. French was the normal language of the classroom in this lesson, ranging from simple instructions to words of praise and encouragement, which helped maintain a highly constructive atmosphere and made full use of time. English was used sparingly and only when necessary to ensure understanding of more complex explanations. The development of pupils' vocabulary was supplemented by their learning simple grammar patterns and this helped them to construct grammatically correct speech.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards are above average by the end of Year 6.

- The use of ICT to support learning is very good.
- Target setting contributes positively to pupils' achievement.
- The subject is effectively led.

Commentary

63. Standards in mathematics are above average by the end of Year 6 and higher than those found at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers focus on the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and their understanding of the processes of mathematics has contributed significantly to improved pupil performance.

64. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to explain new content simply and in a way that is understood by the pupils. Teachers make good use of the mental, oral starter at the beginning of the lesson. This engages pupils and ensures that the mental skills and strategies learned are practised through the school. Good use is made of number fans and individual whiteboards, so that all pupils are constantly involved.

65. Activities are interesting and, in the best lessons, planning is of high quality, ensuring that a wide range of mathematical skills are covered. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils investigated a challenging problem about a new monetary system. This activity was also very effective in developing pupils' logical problem-solving skills. Effective teaching methods are used and teachers are very careful to include all pupils, of all abilities, fully in sessions and to challenge pupils at all levels of attainment. The ends of lessons are used very effectively to extend pupils' learning even further and to set the basis for the next lesson. Meaningful homework is set to consolidate and extend learning. This means that, by the end of their time in the school, pupils in Year 6 generally work at least at nationally expected levels and a good proportion at higher levels than expected for their age. Attainment is consequently above average by the end of Year 6. This year, eight pupils from Years 4 and 5 took the online 'World Class Maths' tests and a good number gained creditable results. Use of these tests has ensured that higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently and achieve very high standards.

66. Pupils' work is marked up to date, but the quality of marking is variable. Too often, it consists of a series of ticks with no identification of the standard of the work or information for pupils on what they could do to improve. A good system of target setting has been in place for the past four years and effective records are kept for tracking pupils' progress. This has had a considerable impact in raising expectations and achievement in mathematics. Good use is made of ICT to support teaching and enable pupils to consolidate learning independently at a challenging level.

67. The subject is well led by an experienced and enthusiastic co-ordinator, who provides good guidance for her colleagues. Lessons are observed, improvements suggested and further training provided. She has a clear idea of future developments for her subject and thoroughly analyses data from assessments regularly to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and pupils' achievement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. This curricular feature is good and numeracy is promoted well in other subjects. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their skills, particularly in science, where they use graphs and tables frequently. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils were seen calculating exterior angles of shapes when using LOGO, an ICT control package.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to school.
- Teachers provide activities that pupils find interesting and help to develop their knowledge, understanding and investigative skills.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, resulting in very good behaviour and good attitudes to learning.
- Marking of pupils' recorded work does not tell pupils sufficiently what they have to do to improve their work.
- The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator.

Commentary

69. Standards in science are average at the end of both Years 2 and 6, which is similar to those reported at the last inspection. However, there are now more pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in national tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils enter school with well below average knowledge and understanding, so they achieve well to reach current standards. Discussions with pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 showed that they have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. They also have satisfactory understanding of how to undertake investigations and experiments, relative to their age. More able pupils have above average knowledge and understanding. For example, Year 2 pupils were able to use their knowledge and understanding of basic life processes well when differentiating living and non-living things. Year 6 pupils demonstrated good understanding when explaining the effects caused by the earth's movement, such as length of day and the seasons.

70. Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils make good progress throughout the school. Relationships are very good. Teachers manage their classes well and, in consequence, pupils behave very well and show respect. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is secure. They provide pupils with an interesting range of activities, which stimulates interest and curiosity and develops good attitudes to learning. In a good lesson observed, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, were enthusiastically investigating samples of soil. They carefully prepared slides for examining the samples under a microscope and handled the equipment sensibly. By the end of the lesson, most pupils were able to recognise that different plants are suited to different types of soil. Pupils are given good opportunities to co-operate in pairs and small groups, which is effective in supporting their social development. However, the marking of pupils' recorded work does not often show pupils ways in which they can improve, or give them their own achievable targets to work towards, which would give them a better understanding of their own learning.

71. Occasionally very good links are made with other subjects. Pupils in Year 5 made parachutes as a design and technology project, which was used to initiate an investigation into air resistance in science. An interactive computer program was used effectively in an ICT lesson to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of gravity and air resistance.

72. The subject leader has good knowledge and understanding. She is a very competent leader and manager with a clear sense of direction. She has monitored teaching and learning across the school and has a good understanding of what needs to be done in

order to improve it further, such as improving procedures for assessing how well pupils are learning. She has made good use of available additional funding to employ a secondary specialist to work with Year 6 pupils as an out-of-school activity and to obtain additional resources. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils, regardless of their ability, achieve well, so standards are above those nationally expected by the end of Year 6.
- There is very good use of ICT in other subjects.
- All aspects of subject leadership are very good.
- Assessment of pupils' progress and achievement is good.
- The very good resources for the subject are used very effectively by both teachers and support staff.

Commentary

73. The achievement all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Standards by the end of Year 2 are average and above average by the end of Year 6. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school has improved its provision through better resources, the introduction of specialist teaching and very good use of ICT to support work in other subjects.

74. The pace of learning is brisk with teachers skilfully ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to explore within programs as well as developing their skills in controlling equipment. As pupils progress through the school, teachers ensure that a secure skills base for all pupils is established. The curriculum is well designed, so that knowledge and understanding are developed in a progressive way. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 already have good routine skills in manipulating computers. They readily access programs from a desktop menu. They use a mouse and the keyboard efficiently to locate the cursor, delete text and insert edited text when editing on screen. The standards reached by pupils in Years 3 and 4 are well above those expected for pupils of this age. There is firm evidence that well above average attainment is working its way up through the school because of very good teaching and the very good resources now available.

75. Year 6 pupils prepare multimedia presentations linked to their leavers' activities. These presentations include images of their lives in school, scanned in from photographs, or using a digital camera. They blend sound and graphics effectively, linking them by text. Pupils make their own choices and prepare presentations, but have decided not to include sound, so as not to be intrusive to the parents' conversations at the event. Pupils evaluate their own work to good effect and critically edit their presentations. They use ICT to organise, improve and present information for specific purposes and audiences in various forms and styles. All pupils work confidently at levels beyond those that are reasonably expected for their age.

76. High standards result from consistently very good and excellent teaching by the specialist subject leader; other teachers back up this work in class and through other subjects

effectively. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work and allow them to make choices and develop their own style of presentation. Pupils respond to high expectations with high levels of confidence and seek improvement in their work. Their very good attitudes towards work in ICT provide a very good support for their good achievement.

Example of outstanding practice

An exemplary lesson as part of a series for the youngest junior pupils, showing them how to use a range of e-mail skills to communicate electronically.

In this lesson, the teacher gave pupils opportunities to further develop their skills and knowledge by making the whole session highly enjoyable in a challenging atmosphere with lots of opportunities for them to acquire computer skills beyond those expected for their age. The teacher made very good use of clear, step-by-step structures, evaluating each part of the lesson to ensure that pupils had confidence and understanding before reinforcing and developing learning further. She used the school's very good resources extremely effectively to provide vivid and clearly understandable demonstrations. The lesson was very well prepared and each pupil received their own individual e-mail to which they had to reply. Things were made harder for them by having to select the recipient from the address book, rather than use the reply function, which they had practised previously. The whole activity was conducted at a rapid pace, filled with challenge and flair that gave pupils frequent opportunities to evaluate their learning. Especially valuable was the teacher's very well-developed ability to allow the pupils to work on their own, yet be supportive if needed. This helped pupils to concentrate and remain focused, right until the last minute of the lesson.

77. The very good leadership given by the subject leader has been particularly effective in raising the confidence of teachers and pupils alike. A well-skilled and knowledgeable teacher, she has managed events well. She has ensured that all teachers and support staff have had training in using computers with pupils. She has made sure that equipment is up to date and maintained well, without drawing all the computers from classrooms. This enables pupils to continue work started in the suites, allowing them especially to practise and develop support activities, across a wide range of subjects, at other times of the week. She has worked hard to ensure that the scheme of work is matched to the resources available and supports work in other subjects very well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. ICT is used as a very effective tool to support learning across the curriculum. Pupils use their skills very well to support learning in other subjects, such as mathematics, English, art and design and history. Pupils use the Internet effectively to gain information to support their work in a good range of subjects. They use word-processing skills to consolidate editing skills and improve their knowledge and understanding of punctuation and mathematics. Younger pupils developed their ideas about graphs effectively, when observed handling data using the computers.

HUMANITIES

History and geography are reported as samples, as only one lesson was seen in geography and one in history.

79. In the **history** observed in the Years 1/2 class, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Pupils attained standards in line with national expectations, which indicated good achievement in relation to their attainment on entry. Discussions with pupils in Year 2 showed that they have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the events of the past. They have a satisfactory awareness of the sequence of events that led up to the Great Fire of London and can describe some of the differences in how houses were built then, from nowadays. They talked enthusiastically about Florence Nightingale. They knew why she was important, roughly when she lived and how we know about her life. Discussion with pupils in Year 6 showed that they have a sound factual knowledge and understanding of World War II. They talked briefly about other periods and societies they have studied, such as the Anglo-Saxons, the Tudors and the Victorians. They know that information can be gained from a variety of sources. Pupils showed good interest in the subject, but said that it was a long time since they had done any history. Good links are sometimes made with literacy. For example, pupils in Year 6 have used their word-processing skills well to write newspaper reports about happenings in World War II. Visits to places of historical interest and visitors to school are used well by teachers to enrich and extend pupils' learning. During the inspection a visitor from Wigan Pier brought in a history chest related to the topic on the Victorians being studied by Year 5 pupils. This aroused the interest of pupils of all abilities. They showed very good attitudes to learning and sustained concentration for a long period of time. By the end of the session, pupils had a good understanding of how studying old objects can help you find out about people in past societies and how they lived.

80. In the Year 3 geography lesson observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory. However, it was a very long session and towards the end, many pupils were finding difficulty in sustaining concentration, which meant that the pace of learning slowed. Overall, there was only a small amount of recorded work in pupils' geography books, insufficient to make a secure judgement on standards and achievement. Discussion with pupils in Year 2 showed that they have satisfactory awareness of a locality beyond their own, such as Tocuaro in Mexico, and know how it differs from their own. Analysis of the long-term planning for geography shows that there are long periods when pupils do not receive any teaching in geography at all, particularly in junior classes. This was reflected in discussions with Year 6 pupils, who had only a limited understanding of important aspects of the subject, such as environmental change.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Owing to timetable arrangements, no lessons were seen in art and design or music and only two in physical education and design and technology. It is, therefore, not possible to make secure judgements on teaching and learning or achievement in these subjects.

81. Examples of **art and design** are displayed to good effect around the school and contribute to the bright, stimulating, learning environment. Year 6 pupils have completed effectively pencil drawings of a still-life composition. Year 5 have used clay to design and make Victorian tiles and have produced bold, eye-catching three-dimensional models of guitars to enhance work in design and technology. A focus on the work of Van Gogh in Year 4 has led to high quality painting in the style of his work, while Year 3 have learnt the technique of batik and have used salt dough to model figures and tiles for wall hangings.

82. Work seen is of a satisfactory standard, and review of teachers' files shows that activities have been well planned. However, the lesson time allocated to art and design each term falls below that recommended. This leads to a lack of opportunities to revisit techniques or build upon prior learning. Opportunities for pupils to make their own choices in the selection of media are also lacking. Good use is made of visitors and visits to Haigh Hall, Drumcroon Arts Centre and Arts in the Park to enrich the curriculum.

83. One **design and technology** lesson was seen in Year 1 and one lesson in Year 5. In both these lessons, as a result of good teaching in Year 1 and very good teaching in Year 5, pupils planned and produced above average work. Very good links were made with literacy and science in Year 5. Here, pupils considered the order of doing things when designing and making a parachute to slow down the rate of fall of a cork, in an experiment linked with their science work on air resistance. Pupils at all levels of attainment learned how to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding quickly, while developing a good awareness of the design process. A particularly good quality display was seen in Year 5, where pupils had made musical instruments of a good quality and links with science and music were evident. The quality of the finish in all work seen was a particularly strong feature.
84. Pupils are very enthusiastic about **music**, which is taught by a specialist teacher. Years 5 and 6 pupils learn the recorder and individual instrumental lessons are taught by visiting peripatetic teachers. This impacts well on the achievement of the pupils involved. Pupils' musical talents and interests are highly valued and good opportunities are given to sing and play in lessons, assemblies and productions. Year 6, practising for their leavers' assembly, performed a song as a class, accompanied by a pupil on the keyboard, the recorder club and tuned percussion instruments. All pupils know a range of songs from memory, sing tunefully and enthusiastically and are able to follow instructions to improve their performance.
85. In **physical education**, teachers' planning indicates that gymnastics, swimming, games and dance are all covered according to National Curriculum requirements. However, the curriculum time allocated to physical education is too short, which means that it does not contribute sufficiently to pupils' health, well-being or physical development. A good range of extra-curricular sport is provided and local students support games lessons. The school also has good links with Wigan Warriors, all of which enhance provision. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in local tournaments, but the lack of space for a football pitch restricts training.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This subject was sampled.

86. The subject leader provides a good level of subject leadership. She has a good knowledge of the subject and she has developed a good quality curriculum that is carefully constructed, broad, balanced and corresponds to these pupils' needs. It is well designed to help all pupils develop the confidence to make the most of the skills and abilities they possess, whilst raising their social awareness and knowledge of personal issues. She has worked hard to ensure that good resources and support are available to support teaching.
87. Pupils are especially encouraged to feel positive about themselves, to be actively involved in the life of the school and the wider community, and to make wise choices about developing a safe, healthy lifestyle. The school's needs for supporting pupils' personal development have been successfully identified and the school meets these well. The school council makes a positive contribution to the life in school. Members discuss sensibly the views brought to them by others in their classes. Younger pupils on the council are not forthcoming, but are learning well from the older ones. In this way, the whole pupil population has a voice in school development.

88. In the lessons seen, teachers had a pleasant, warm manner and related well to the pupils. They showed sensitivity when they carefully discussed different feelings. Teachers ensured that pupils at all levels of attainment were fully involved. Pupils discussed sensibly the proper use of medicines and how they might develop the social skills that enable them to sustain relationships. Discussions of this nature add significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and also to their literacy skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
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).