

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Upton

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105090

Headteacher: Mrs M Stevenson

Lead inspector: Mrs J Thomas

Dates of inspection: 10 – 12 November 2003

Inspection number: 257865

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:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	190 (full time equivalent)
School address:	New Hey Road Upton Wirral
Postcode:	CH49 5LE
Telephone number:	(0151) 677 4088
Fax number:	(0151) 677 0885
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Parkinson
Date of previous inspection:	29 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary is about the same size as other primary schools. The number on roll is 190 including the children who attend the nursery. The roll is declining in line with national figures. Almost half of the pupils are in receipt of free school meals and this is considerably higher than most other schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above what is usually found. A small, but steadily increasing number of pupils, just under five per cent, are from ethnic minority families and about half of these do not have English as their mother tongue. The school provides a number of services to its community and these are to be inspected as a specific focus. Mobility of pupils in and out of the school other than at the normal time of admission was 10 per cent for the last school year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17711	J Thomas	Lead inspector	English Science Geography History English as an additional language Community provision
19344	D Jones	Lay inspector	
22578	G Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music
30651	M Entwistle	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Physical education Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Special educational needs

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NOTES TO THE READER

The data used in this report is the validated data for the year 2002. Reference is also made throughout the report to *unvalidated* data for the following year 2003 when referring to test performance.

Glossary of terms

Foundation Stage – the children who are not yet five years old in the nursery and/or the reception class.

The Early Learning Goals – the targets which children are expected to meet before they move into Year 1.

Key Stage 1 - pupils in the infant classes aged five to seven years taught in Years 1 and 2

Key Stage 2 - pupils in the junior classes aged seven to 11 years taught in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6

The National Curriculum is the required subjects and activities to be taught to pupils aged five to 11 years.

Assessment is the checks and decisions made by teachers on pupils' daily work and also by using tests to show how well pupils are achieving.

Baseline assessments are the information gained about what young children can and cannot do on entry to the school.

Average point scores are the points awarded to pupils based on the level they achieve in the national tests at seven and 11 years old. The average point scores are worked out by adding up the points pupils achieved and dividing by the number of pupils in the class who took the tests. The points awarded are different for each key stage.

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is effective in many aspects of its work. Good teaching and valuable classroom assistant support enable pupils to achieve well. High quality care, relationships and a happy atmosphere support pupils very well in their learning. The high aspirations set by the headteacher are supported actively by governors and have enabled the school to overcome many barriers, mostly related to staffing and finance. **The school gives good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision in the nursery, reception and Year 1 classes is vibrant and prompts pupils to achieve very well indeed. Elsewhere teaching is often good and most pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' increasing success in the national tests for Year 2.
- The leadership given by the headteacher is very good. The school plans accurately for improvement and the impact is evident in many aspects of school life.
- All pupils are very well included regardless of their needs, race or background.
- The support offered to the community, including parents is very good.
- The curriculum for infants and juniors is soundly planned but does not make best use of the full range of pupils' key skills to make daily work meaningful and motivating.
- Pupils are not consistently involved in improving their own work or knowing what to aim for next.
- Although satisfactory overall, the expertise and leadership and management by key staff in the infants and juniors could be better used.
- Attendance is too low, in spite of the school's good efforts.

Changes to effectiveness have been very good since the last inspection. Tensions have been resolved; assessment practice is better, statutory requirements are met and performance management is firmly in place. Coordinators' roles have improved significantly, further review is now needed to maximise the use of staff expertise. Pupils' achievements in science are improving with more work needed on improving scientific language and investigation.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			Prior attainment
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	E	D	C
mathematics	A	E	D	B
science	A	E	E	E

Standards are rising through the school and achievement is good including for those pupils with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is not their mother tongue. By the age of five many children have achieved very well and they are moving much closer to the goals expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematical development. This is very positive because, when children join the nursery many of them are less well prepared for learning than is usually found and the abilities of a good number are well below what is expected for their age.

Pupils achieve well in the infants and some do very well. The current Year 2 pupils look set to attain in line with national expectations and there is evidence of some pupils who are well on their way in writing to attain at above nationally expected levels. This is a significant improvement.

Many pupils in Year 6 are achieving well and they look set to attain as expected nationally by the time they leave the school in most aspects of English, mathematics and science, although skills of communication and investigation are not secure. In the other subjects, pupils attain broadly in line with national expectations by the ages of seven and 11 in their subject knowledge. However, subject specific skills and subject vocabulary are weaker. There are numerous examples of good quality art. Musical composition is weak.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. Attendance is unsatisfactory in spite of the school's good efforts. Holiday taking in term time and one-day absence are too frequent. Punctuality is satisfactory for most but a persistent minority of pupils arrive late for school. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good** and keenly illustrated by the recent 'One World' project which pupils talk about enthusiastically. Many pupils have a keen sense of what is right, wrong and fair.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching is mostly good and notably very effective in the nursery, reception and Year 1 classes. All teachers manage the pupils' behaviour very well and this keeps learning focused. Teachers in the juniors work hard to encourage some pupils to show energy, initiative and independence in their learning. The teaching of writing has significantly improved in the infants and science teaching is getting better. Day-to-day assessment of what pupils have learned in lessons is good. Pupils are not fully involved in improving their own work or in knowing what to aim for next. Marking of work in Year 6 is a good model to build on.

The curriculum is very inclusive and soundly planned to make learning worthwhile. Pupils' key skills are satisfactorily used. The school takes very good care of all pupils. Community provision is highly effective in supporting pupils and parents, before, after and during school hours. The school has made strong and concerted efforts to improve its links with parents. Disappointingly, a small minority do not support the school or their children's learning well enough.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has been highly effective in driving the school forward with the focus on improving pupils' achievement. The governors fulfil their role well. Leadership and management in the Foundation Stage are very good. Other key staff manage their roles satisfactorily; the joint management of science is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are happy with the school's provision. Some would like more out of hour's activities for younger pupils. Most pupils like school and feel safe and secure. A small number (about 10 per cent) feel unsettled by the occasional challenging behaviour of a few individuals.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Review the planning of the curriculum to improve pupils' skills of speaking and investigation and plan for the use of the full range of their other key skills.
- Involve pupils more actively in improving their own work and knowing what to aim for next.
- Review the delegation of management responsibilities to maximise the use of staff expertise.
- Continue to work with parents to improve pupils' attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The **achievement** of most pupils aged seven and 11 is **at least good** given their low starting point on entry to the school. **Standards in the school are improving.** However, in English, mathematics and science for Year 6 gaps in pupils' prior knowledge have created a ripple effect and higher than average levels of pupils with special educational needs still create an impact on test performance. There are few pupils who can be considered as higher attaining when compared to others nationally and this reduces the school's average point scores.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising swiftly by Year 2.
- Achievement for young pupils in the nursery, reception and Year 1 classes is very good and for pupils in Years 2 to 6 it is good.
- Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language do at least as well as others of their age.
- Pupils' achievements in investigation in science and mathematics are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' skills of speaking are not secure.

Commentary

1. **Standards are improving rapidly for seven year old pupils.** More pupils than is found nationally attained at the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The trend of results for seven year olds pupils is above the national trend. Both boys' and girls' performance is improving although boys still lag behind girls in writing. This is so for the oldest pupils as well. In 2003 the table shows considerable improvement to test scores. This performance places the school well above others in similar circumstances.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003, 2002 and 2001

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.1 14.8 (15.4)	15.7 15.8 (15.7)
Writing	14.5 12.8 (14.3)	14.6 14.4 (14.3)
Mathematics	17.2 14.9 (16.3)	16.3 16.5 (14.9)

There were 25 pupils in the year group 2002. (validated results) Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Figures in bold italic are unvalidated for 2003

2. **Achievement by the end of the infants is good.** Pupils make a good start in Year 1 notably in improving their writing and this is built on well but not quite at the same fast pace in Year 2. The improvements to writing have been achieved through management action to buy in skilled literacy support which staff have used very well to improve teaching techniques. The school has adopted a 'writers' toolkit' which is having a significant impact. Pupils achieve well in number work. Many pupils achieve soundly in their science knowledge. Their achievements in investigation in science and mathematics are unsatisfactory. Most pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) and in improving their knowledge in the other subjects. Musical composition is weak across the school.
3. **Standards for 11 year olds are improving but at a slower rate than for infant pupils.** In the most recent tests in 2003, they remain stubbornly just below national levels. The trend of

results shows fluctuation. The school results dropped in 2003 against the previous year when they were well above similar schools in English and mathematics. The pupils did not fare strongly when measured against their 1999 tests scores. The impact of past inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' education since that time, higher levels of special educational needs in the class and the changes in the size and makeup of the group have affected pupils' progress during their time in the juniors. Few pupils could be considered higher attaining and so fewer scored at the higher levels. This is also true for the current Year 6 pupils where almost one third are on the register for special educational needs. English and mathematics results rose in 2002 but fell again in 2003. The school bought in extra resources in 2002 to improve literacy teaching and this impacted well on the tests results, noticeably in the proportion achieving the higher levels. However, in 2003 funding limitations brought the support to a halt. Management has managed to retain the staffing quotas for setting in mathematics in Years 4, 5 and 6, and this is helping pupils achieve to their potential in numeracy. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection. Monitoring of science teaching and close scrutiny of what pupils know, understand and can do have improved results to just below national figures. There is still some way to go before all pupils have a secure grasp of the investigative process, think scientifically and improve their vocabulary to describe their work accurately.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003, 2002 and 2001

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.1 25.8 (25.3)	26.8 27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	25.6 26.4 (23.3)	26.8 26.7 (26.6)
Science	27.2 26.5 (25.8)	28.6 28.3 (28.3)

There were 31 pupils in the year group in 2002. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Figures in bold italic are unvalidated for 2003

4. **Pupils' achievements by the age of 11 are good overall.** The oldest pupils have not had the positive start of young children now in the nursery, reception and infant classes. The impact of improved and mainly high quality teaching in the infants, along with improvements to standards there have not yet impacted fully higher up the school. However, mainly good teaching in the juniors, accurate evaluations of pupils' successes and weaknesses inform planning and support their learning well. Gaps in their knowledge in the other subjects are improving well but skills are less secure. Speaking, reading comprehension and writing skills are improving more slowly. Pupils do not readily transfer their taught skills to everyday work and need extra support to do so. The skills of investigation in mathematics and science are unsatisfactory. Pupils achieve well in ICT and are highly motivated by the work offered. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve well in art and design. In history and geography pupils achieve well in gaining new knowledge and this is true also of design and technology although the skills in these subjects are satisfactorily developed. In physical education and in singing and listening to music pupils achieve satisfactorily but they have too few opportunities to compose music and so achievement is too slow in this respect.

5. **Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve very well from a low starting point in many aspects of their learning.** A good proportion of the children do not speak well neither are they well prepared to learn about reading and writing. Nevertheless, they make rapid gains in their early years at school so that by the time they are five most are ready to begin the expected work for Year 1 pupils. This shows very good progress in their learning and is due to the high quality teaching they receive, the keen assessments made of the children's needs and the excellent planning to provide a very relevant and vibrant curriculum. The few children for whom English is not their first language are supported very well. The nursery works actively with parents and children alike to break down communication barriers and give both groups the confidence to engage, ensuring the children's early progress is rapid.

6. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve very well in the Foundation Stage, and they continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils are good. Within the Foundation Stage these aspects are very good, as is the behaviour of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Behaviour is good in the juniors. Attendance rates are too low.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils in the Foundation Stage.
- The school's high expectation for good conduct and its efforts to achieve this.
- The very good relationships and trust between staff and pupils.
- The calm, secure, well-ordered environment which sets a positive tone for learning.
- Low levels of attendance.
- Inconsistent provision to develop pupils' initiative and independence.

Commentary

7. The school has made significant progress in establishing an ethos and learning environment where pupils enjoy coming to school and most parents' value and support its achievement and provision. All staff have a caring commitment to the pastoral and educational well being of the pupils and this is evident in the friendly and trusting relationships, high expectations for behaviour, work quality and output.
8. In the nursery and reception classes children acquire positive attitudes and learn in school that they are one of many. They behave well and quickly develop appropriate levels of independence and self-confidence. The children enjoy very trusting relationships with adults and live up to the high expectations of them. They are eager to please and their behaviour is very good.
9. In the infants, the pupils' attitude to their work is good and this, supported by their very good behaviour, ensures that lessons are lively and make good progress. During a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 1 they were learning how to order numbers up to 20. They were very well behaved and eager to respond to the teacher's questions. All ability groups worked hard and responded keenly to questions.
10. In Years 3 to 6 pupils are mainly interested in the activities but some require vigilance from their teachers to remain motivated. They enjoy the practical aspects of lessons, especially ICT.
11. The quality of the pupils' behaviour is consistently good. Discussions with them reveal that they enjoy the organisation of school life, where they feel safe and secure from bullying or aggressive behaviour. They are confident of the support and response from all staff if they feel bullied or threatened. They enjoy their work but structured opportunities for most junior pupils to take responsibilities and exercise initiative are few and far between. A small group of pupils are unsettled by the challenging behaviour of a few who have specific needs.
12. **The school makes good provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values and this supports their positive attitudes and behaviour.** The school's links with the Church are a significant influence in the development of spiritual values and the children remember the needs of others as well as their own concerns in their prayers. Many respond well to the adults' high expectations of them for good behaviour and this was clearly in evidence during lessons and about the school. They understand right from wrong and the

need to be responsible. They are caring children and recognise that their words and actions can affect others. The school has a small group of children from minority ethnic backgrounds and they play a full part in the school community. The pupils have recently celebrated One World Week when they were introduced to lifestyles, customs and beliefs from around the world and they show considerable enthusiasm for the project.

13. **Attendance levels are unsatisfactory** and significantly affected by a minority of persistent absentees. The main reasons for absenteeism are holidays taken in term time and one day absence recorded as medical illness. There are regular instances of late attendance. The school has made good provision to promote and support regular and prompt attendance and has achieved some progress. However, a number of parents fail to respond to the school's hard work on this aspect and do not support either the school or their child's education.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002(%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.1	School data	0.4
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	176		
White – any other White background	2		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – any other mixed background	3		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6		
Black or Black British – African	1		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The curriculum and teaching quality in the nursery and reception classes are both very good. In the infants and juniors the curriculum is soundly planned and taught well. The school includes all pupils very well regardless of their race, background or ability.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in the nursery and reception classes supported by very good assessment and planning there. Elsewhere, assessment practice is satisfactory with good features. Teaching and the impact it has on pupils' learning have significantly improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, consistent behaviour management enables pupils to remain focused and productive.
- Teaching, learning, assessment and planning in the nursery and reception are very well planned and highly organised.
- Teaching in Years 1 to 6 has a good impact on many aspects of pupils' learning.
- Teaching of special educational needs and English as an additional language is good.
- The school collects a wide range of information in order that it might assess how well pupils are performing. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Day-to-day assessments of what pupils have learned are used well to help teachers fine tune their planning for the next day.
- Assessments in reading and writing are good.
- Assessment information is not recorded simply enough to allow for quick and easy checks on the pupils' progress against predictions.
- Pupils are not sufficiently involved in improving their work.
- Assessments in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and ICT are not yet in place.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	9 (23%)	20 (51%)	9 (23%)	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.

14. The school has spent considerable time and energy in improving pupils' behaviour since the last inspection. Records from this time show there were some serious concerns about many pupils' behaviour. The impact of the school's efforts is that pupils know what is expected of them, know how to behave and have a keen sense of what is right, wrong and fair. All teachers and non-teaching assistants consistently apply the school's code for behaviour management. Pupils have had a say in devising their own classroom rules and they can readily share what is expected of them. The most noticeable outcome is that learning is allowed to progress without disruption and wasted time. An exception to this positive picture was raised by a few parents and pupils and that is the challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils who are on the register of special educational needs unsettles some pupils. Classroom assistant staff are effectively deployed by teaching staff to minimise concerns and no such issues arose during the inspection.
15. Teaching and learning for the youngest pupils aged 3 to 6 is very good. They are given a thorough grounding in reading, writing and mathematics and the progress and output of their work is very good. The key to this strong teaching is staff who are creative, thoughtful, know the pupils well and adapt the work to meet their needs. Planning and assessments in the Foundation Stage are very good and drive the learning forward. Activities are well crafted, classrooms organised for independent learning and adult intervention checks on progress and helps children to understand what they do. Pupils show great enthusiasm for the activities and quickly settle. They particularly gain when they take an active role for example when Year 1 pupils made up a short story as a group and told it to the class. Their confidence and self-esteem was sky high.
16. In Years 2 to 6 teaching is mainly good and builds well on pupils' prior learning. Teachers display a determination to ensure pupils understand the work and achieve success. Relationships in all classes help pupils feel secure and they show the confidence to ask questions. Time is well used and there is an air of 'not a moment to lose' in many lessons. Lesson introductions set the tone for pupils to listen, recap well on what went before and give crystal clear explanations of the work to be tackled. Non-teaching assistants are mostly well deployed to work actively with pupils, explaining and supporting their efforts. On occasion, some assistants spend too long listening to the teachers' introductions when they could be

supporting groups or individuals in understanding better what is being discussed. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good the tasks offered to pupils are not always finely tuned to extend their learning to maximum effect. Some scrutiny of work reveals that tasks for the few higher attaining pupils could be more challenging and place more demand on them to enquire and find out for themselves. Some staff show a reticence to let pupils exercise independence in their learning and so at times learning is about receiving information and fulfilling tasks rather than active participation. This approach is restrictive to pupils using their skills, developing independence and to the school's aim of broadening the taught curriculum.

17. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language (EAL) is good overall. It is most effective in the nursery and reception classes, where it is very good. It is also good in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory, with good aspects, in Years 3 to 6. Teachers include these groups of pupils fully in all parts of the lesson. They ask them carefully framed questions and are vigilant about checking their understanding as the lesson develops. A particular strength is the teachers' ability to shape the behaviour of those with individual behaviour plans, so that in several cases, it has improved dramatically. The targets on the individual education plans, although very specific, do not always relate well to the aims of a particular series of lessons. The learning support assistants in the junior classes often give effective and very caring additional support but they have had no specialist training for this work, and so do not always have the most effective strategies for support at their fingertips.
18. The school has made significant progress in setting up procedures for assessment, which are satisfactory with some good features. In the Foundation Stage of learning they are very good. Although assessment procedures are satisfactory in the rest of the school, the mass of data collected sometimes masks the information which teachers require. The school understands that there is a need to rationalise the assessments so that when they are recorded, they give teachers not only a clear picture of pupils' progress, but the ability to check whether pupils' are on track to meet the targets predicted for them to achieve.
19. On a daily basis, teachers use assessments well in order to check the progress pupils' make during lessons and influence how they plan the next steps in learning. The marking of work is satisfactory, but in Year 6 and in English in particular, marking is good. It not only shows pupils what they have done right or wrong, it gives them a clear picture of how they might improve their work. Teachers set targets for their pupils in English which are helpful but those in mathematics are written in language which pupils do not clearly understand. Although the school has planned for pupils to become more involved in checking and improving their own work this has not yet come to fruition and is an important next step in helping pupils aspire to greater success and understand the standards to which they could aspire.
20. The school is aware that although it has made progress in assessment work in English, mathematics, science and ICT, it has not yet made inroads into providing assessment procedures for other subjects.

The curriculum

The youngest pupils receive a very good curriculum and for infant and junior pupils the curriculum is satisfactory. It is very inclusive for all.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made improvements to its curriculum since the last inspection.
- The school provides a very inclusive curriculum for its pupils.
- The system the school employs for teaching mathematics helps older pupils make faster progress in their work.
- The school's accommodation is good.

- The school prepares its pupils well and sometimes very well for the next stages in their education.
- There are weaknesses in the development of skills in communication and investigation, noted in English, science and mathematics. Pupils have limited skills in composing.

Commentary

21. The school has made significant progress in the planning and delivery of its curriculum since the last inspection which caters very well for all pupils, irrespective of gender, race or ability. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is not their first language make similar progress to other pupils as a result of the curriculum opportunities they receive. Planning for all curriculum areas is sound, with the exception of music. The curriculum is soundly enriched through additional clubs, visitors and visits.
22. The school's use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is good and is helping to raise standards in those two subjects. Also in mathematics, the use made of a specialist teacher is having a positive effect on the progress that pupils' make. As a result, they are keen to respond to the work, achieve well and sometimes very well and make good progress in their learning. The school used similar arrangements for English last year for a short time but funding limitations have cut this short.
23. The assessment systems are very good and ensure the continuity of the pupils' education. As a result, pupils are confident about moving and are well prepared for their new classes and schools.
24. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and additional language needs is good overall and much improved. In the Foundation Stage children's needs are identified very early, monitored with care, and given very good support through teaching, careful record keeping and accurate, detailed planning. All pupils have individual education plans that are reviewed regularly, at least once in each term. They are written by the class teacher and this shows that pupils' needs are well understood on a daily basis. Parents are kept well informed from the earliest stages of identification. Several pupils have medical health care plans and are very well cared for so that they can take full part in the school. Some teachers would benefit from support in interpreting targets into practice. The lowest attaining pupils are withdrawn and some pupils could gain from more of this focused withdrawal teaching directed particularly at their reading and writing needs.
25. The school's accommodation is good and space is used well. Resources are satisfactory and good use is made of what is available particularly the ICT suite.
26. The curriculum for the development of communication and investigative skills, in English, mathematics and science, is not yet developed sufficiently to raise standards to the highest levels in these areas of learning. Pupils' vocabulary is often limited when they come to school and provides an on going challenge for teachers to develop. They are not given enough opportunities to experiment and investigate using what they know to enquire and test ideas for themselves. There are weaknesses in the overall provision for music. Although music is taught in all classes, the previous lack of a scheme designed to support all class teachers, has meant that aspects such as composition are not well taught and standards are not as high as they should be.
27. There is a sound range of extracurricular activities mainly linked to sport. These are largely offered to the oldest pupils. A small number of parents say they would like these clubs to extend to the youngest pupils. The oldest pupils also have opportunity to visit a residential outdoor centre about which they talk enthusiastically particularly the aspects related to orienteering and physical education.

28. Now the school has established the core subject curriculum it is eager to review how it plans and organises the taught curriculum to enrich it further and embrace the new National Primary Strategy but has not yet formulated clear plans to do so.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision for the care, welfare and health and safety of pupils is very good overall. It is excellent within the Foundation Stage. The provision of support, advice and guidance is good, whilst the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good quality of relationships.
- The very high level of pastoral knowledge and support.
- The very high level of care, welfare and health and safety provision.
- Seeking, valuing and acting on pupils' views is not yet embedded in the school's work.

Commentary

29. The high level of pastoral support provided to the pupils by all members of staff is a strength of the school. The pupils respond to staff with affection, respect and trust and their learning and progress are positively affected. Provision for care, welfare, health and safety within the Foundation Stage is excellent and the children quickly become secure and confident.
30. The school building and its grounds are well maintained and secure and access is well controlled. There are well-structured policies and strategies to guide practice in behaviour management and these are successfully applied throughout the school. The school has made significant extra provision for care of the pupils at either end of the school day and parents' voice strong approval for its efforts. Child protection matters are well understood by all staff and the quality of relationships ensures that such issues would be quickly recognised and referred.
31. Although the pupils have contributed to rules for conduct within school, there is no provision for their wider involvement to matters that affect them. The school is currently seeking to establish a school council in order to provide a forum for the views of the pupils. Extra tuition is provided for those pupils identified as more able at mathematics. Parents expressed approval for this arrangement.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's efforts to strengthen links with parents, other schools and the community are very good. **The effectiveness of the links with parents is good.** It has had significant success in some areas and continues to build on this.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of learning programmes and liaison with external agencies to support families.
- The use of Beacon schools to support school improvement programmes.
- Use of the City Learning Centre to support ICT and science.
- Encouraging parents to embark on additional qualifications in childcare.
- The provision of 'Wrap Round' care and childcare.
- Not all parents ensure their children attend regularly.
- Although the school consults with and informs parents about individual matters the process is not formalised through questionnaires or general surveys.

Commentary

31. Many parents express strong approval for the school's provision to involve them with the children's learning and the life of the school. A small minority is not supportive of the school's work especially in respect of ensuring their children attend regularly and promptly. Many parents feel that they are welcome in school, say teachers are approachable and express satisfaction with information on their child's progress. Most view the provision of support through the 'Wrap Round' care and before and after school clubs and childcare arrangements as very supportive. Some express disquiet that younger children have no access to after school sport clubs. Although they express satisfaction with information provided by the school about their child's progress, with regard to its consultation, they regard themselves more informed than consulted. There is limited evidence of many parents providing significant contribution to the children's learning at home other than with reading.
32. The school's links with other educational establishments are very good and include the use of Beacon schools to support their school improvement programme which involves support for the curriculum in the areas of ICT, design and technology and mathematics. They have also engaged in partnership with Wirral Metropolitan College and other secondary schools to provide placements for work experience. Community links include liaison with local businesses, sporting links with a local judo club and Tranmere Rovers football club. The range and consistency of provision gives significant support to pupils' personal development and their attitudes to learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school are good. The headteacher has provided very good direction to focus on raising achievement, improving standards and building a team with common goals. Governance is good. The leadership given by key staff has improved since the last inspection to satisfactory with good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Changes to the school's effectiveness since the last inspection have been very good.
- The headteacher's highly effective leadership has created a strong and productive team.
- The school knows itself very well and plans accurately for improvement.
- Initiatives to improve behaviour have impacted very well on pupils' achievements.
- Staff development has been good.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are highly effective.
- The governors know the school well and hold it to account for the pupils' achievements, manage finances very prudently and achieve best value in most aspects of provision.
- Improvements to community provision impact strongly on adult and pupils' learning.
- Coordinators fulfil their duties satisfactorily but there is scope for further improvement.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	481, 918
Total expenditure	467, 402
Expenditure per pupil	2, 291

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	26, 893
Balance carried forward to the next	14, 515

Commentary

33. The headteacher knows her school and staff very well. Since her appointment she has accurately pinpointed where improvements were needed and sought determinedly to address the most significant weaknesses swiftly and effectively. This has been achieved by a rigorous review of teaching, checking on performance and identifying where changes had to be made to improve the quality of education for pupils. All of the issues highlighted in the last report have been addressed successfully although improving standards in science has taken longer than expected. A striking feature of improved effectiveness is the comparison between the poor relationships within the staff team at the last inspection with the current happy sense of purpose, high levels of cooperation between adults and common drive to do the best for the pupils. Significant barriers in terms of staffing and financial constraint initially slowed the pace of change but new appointments, reallocation of staff to teaching groups and ample staff development have borne fruit and are evidenced in the rising standards and raised quality of teaching and quality of provision.
34. The attention given to behaviour management, striving to improve pupils' attendance, working with and supporting parents and improving provision at the start of pupils' school careers has set the school on the right track to go from strength to strength. Costly initiatives such as the involvement of literacy consultant support to improve standards in writing and the setting system for mathematics have paid off. The involvement of the local authority adviser has been beneficial in moving standards in science to reach nationally expected levels in knowledge and understanding of scientific phenomena.
35. The roles and responsibilities of coordinators had some serious flaws at the last inspection. They are improved vastly to satisfactory with some good features. There is scope to build on the secure foundations now in place and the willingness and enthusiasm of staff to use their expertise more widely. One key area for review is the system of delegation of subject responsibilities across the key stages. This leads to some fragmentation and a lack of a whole school view of standards, achievement and provision. The need is greatest but not exclusive to English and mathematics. Some staff do not have the necessary expertise to lead others to success in spite of good intentions for example, in mathematics and ICT in the juniors. The split range of responsibilities means that some staff have too many areas to manage to be fully effective.
36. Nevertheless, some subject managers have made good progress, for example, in science both coordinators show in their own teaching a strong emphasis to the investigative element of the subject. These skills and allied methods have not been successfully shared with the rest of the staff and consequently investigation in science is weak. In English, some effective assessment activities have been put in place. In mathematics, investigation skills and problem solving have not been given enough attention in subject planning. The art and design coordinator has skills which could be used more widely, and this is true also of the music coordinator.
37. Governance is good. Statutory responsibilities are well met. The chair of governors leads the governing body wisely drawing on his broad knowledge of the school's strength and areas for development. He is regularly round and about the school. The partnership with the headteacher is based on mutual respect but with a healthy element of challenge to hold the school to account. Other governors fulfil their roles diligently and are knowledgeable about target setting and the school's performance. Planning for improvement has taken account of the steadily increasing number of pupils who come from non-catholic backgrounds and those from minority ethnic groups. The governors are mindful of retaining the catholic character of the school whilst ensuring racial and social harmony. This is a strength of their work. All reasonable efforts have been made to making the school accessible to pupils and adults with disabilities although the split levels provide a difficulty. Financial planning has been rigorous and prudent. The school has done well to overcome the large deficit from 1998 and at the

same time raise the quality of education, standards and pupils' achievements. The school gives good value for money and is effective in most aspects of its work.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

COMMUNITY PROVISION

The school has in place a broad range of initiatives to enhance its links with the community and **provision is very good.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care and academic support for pupils is significantly enhanced by the provision, and it has begun to have an impact upon achievement.
- The provision is broad and inclusive of parents, pupils and many staff of the school, so that relationships between all who work in the school and the local community are very good.
- The quality of the sessions is high because of the very good liaison between providers and the teachers employed in school.
- The community activities are well-organised, well-managed, and make good use of the school building, although resources are limited because of tight budgets.
- The activities and experiences have a direct impact upon the aspirations and life experiences of many who attend.
- Although the school seeks to stretch out to the whole community, attendance levels at some of the activities remain disappointingly small.
- The school does not monitor the effectiveness of the programmes as rigorously as it might.

Commentary

38. The school has strong links with local schools, colleges, local businesses and sporting clubs and the local library. The expertise that this brings to the school has a direct good benefit to the children's achievement in areas such as ICT, design and technology, mathematics, judo, football and basketball. However, the most distinctive features of this school's community provision are the out-of-school care and the family learning programmes which are very good. Parents value these not only for the actual provision, but for the way they open up the school and their children's education to the families, and for the personal relationships they encourage between teachers and parents.
39. Family Literacy, Numeracy and ICT and Keeping Up with the Children programmes have been in place for four years. The work has involved six members of staff who have been trained for this work. They, along with specialist staff from local colleges, have led these six or eight week series of half and full day sessions in the school. The parents who attend these sessions speak very highly of them. They say that they see 'drastic improvements' in their children's confidence and level of working through the shared activities that are part of the sessions. They also praise the quality of the instruction, and the confidence it has given to them personally, to 'speak out' and renew their own interest in learning. Several have enlisted for NVQs in child care and other areas. They believe, as does the headteacher, that the impact upon the children's attitude and learning is very strong. They say that 'the sessions help the parents to teach the children to learn'. What better endorsement than that! It will be important for the school to broaden its recruitment base, to involve as wide a range of families as possible.
40. The school has invested time, energy and commitment in researching and setting up before and after school clubs to create a whole package of 'wrap-around' care. There is a weekly Mum's, Dad's and Tot's Club in the school hall, a daily breakfast and after school club, and particular wrap-around care for children in the nursery who have the option to stay on in school beyond the half day entitlement to support working parents. Each of these activities is

well organised and led. The headteacher has recruited carefully and well, so that staff involved are suitably trained and in tune with the aims of the school. For instance, volunteer parents or ex-parents who run the Mum's, Dad's and Tot's club have been involved with play-groups or child care, and are good role-models for interactive play between toddlers and carers. The mums attending appreciated the social and emotional benefits to their children, and also enjoyed the chance to relate to others outside the home and play purposefully with their child without other distracting responsibilities. There is very good liaison between the nursery and the wrap-around carers, both of whom are qualified in child care and have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. This means that they plan activities that build upon what the children have already experienced, so that there is good continuity, and they offer good quality learning experiences as well as good care.

41. The resources available to these groups are adequate because of the personal efforts of those leading the groups to beg and borrow suitable play equipment and other materials.
42. A core team of staff in conjunction with the headteacher have invested a good deal of time into setting up these initiatives. Effective recruitment of staff has now enabled programme managers and in-school liaison personnel and leaders to take over day to day management. The headteacher has already identified the need to bring more structure to the programme to avoid overlaps. Although the school seeks to stretch out to the whole community, attendance levels at some of the activities remain disappointingly small. The school does not monitor the effectiveness of the programmes as rigorously as it might.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for the children in the Foundation Stage has improved significantly since the last inspection and is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and they achieve highly.
 - Children feel secure, happy and motivated to learn because of the enticing, welcoming ethos.
 - The curriculum is creatively and rigorously planned to capture interest, engage the children and develop the key skills.
 - Teaching is very good because planning ensures highly focused, purposeful intervention in every activity.
 - Co-ordination is very good and teachers, teaching assistants and other involved adults work very effectively as a team.
 - Children, who may have a special educational need, and those with English as an additional language, are very well provided for.
 - There are very good links with the children's families and the wrap-around care facilities.
 - The outdoor curriculum is not yet fully developed but a newly created outdoor play area is already improving this area.
43. Most children come into school with poorly developed reading, writing and social skills but they achieve very well. They attend part-time in either the morning or afternoon 'Foundation 1' (nursery) classes, and then move into a single 'Foundation 2' class (reception). By the end of the reception year, the majority of children have achieved the expected goals. Teaching is very good. Teachers plan meticulously around a common theme for both age-ranges, and monitor the children's learning very carefully. The result is an exciting and relevant curriculum that provides tempting activities well matched to the children's needs in both classrooms. Teachers use the large teaching spaces well, to give variety and good access to resources and large equipment. Both classrooms are lively and welcoming, and the nursery environment in particular sets a very high standard for the display of children's work and production of teaching materials.
44. A weakness until very recently has been the lack of provision for a full outdoor curriculum. However, the school has just completed a well-equipped, secure outdoor area, and this should lead to a fully integrated indoor and outdoor curriculum. Induction arrangements and on-going links with parents are strong, and there is a good working relationship with the wrap-around care managers. Links with the rest of the school are less strong.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for personal, social and emotionally development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well, and reach the expected learning goals in this area.
- Children become eager learners because the teaching is highly motivating.
- The children learn to behave very well indeed and grow in confidence and self-esteem.

Commentary

45. Although many children have immature social skills on entry to school, they quickly gain confidence because of the warm, secure setting created by all of the adults. The newest little boy in the nursery smiled his way through every activity! All of the adults put a high priority upon developing independence and good behaviour. In the nursery, the children quickly learn to hang up their coats and tuck away their own belongings at the start of the session, and register themselves, guided by the parents, which is a lovely touch. Older pupils in the reception class choose their activities sensibly, and treat the resources and equipment with respect. During a music lesson, they resisted any temptation to lift up instruments at the wrong time, and replaced them in the boxes at the end of the lesson with the greatest of care. They regularly behave very well indeed, concentrating fully during the whole-class introductions to literacy and numeracy lessons, because the teacher makes them so interesting and invites, as well as expects, full attention.
46. The teaching team uses every opportunity to promote self-esteem and sensitivity to the needs of others. During an excellent lesson, the nursery children were encouraged to talk about their own feelings and fears through thinking about the feelings of a 'baby mouse' hiding under the teacher's clothes, and 'passed a hug' around their circle very lovingly. As a result of this excellent start, reception class children are caring and gentle towards each other. They clapped and smiled with genuine pleasure for the success in mark-making efforts of a child who found pencil control difficult. The more confident speaker of two pupils with English as an additional language helps out the other almost too well! The sense of community within each classroom is very strong, and is beginning to extend to an appreciation of other cultures and faith communities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have an excellent understanding of how to develop the early skills of reading and writing.
- Children with English as an additional language, and pupil with special educational needs, are very well supported.
- Teaching sessions and activities are exceptionally well organised and planned to promote reading, writing and language development.

Commentary

47. The children start school with poor speaking and listening skills. In the nursery, talk is limited as they play, and answers to questions are often in one or two words. They make very good progress because in Foundation 1 and 2, the adults take every opportunity to ask probing questions and engage the children in talk. Nevertheless, the extent of their vocabulary is below average. The children achieve very well learning to read. The nursery teachers set the children off to a flying start by teaching the links between letters and sounds through 'fun' activities and rhyming words, songs and games. The better and average readers in the reception class can already read a series of simple sentences independently, using their knowledge of familiar words, and some can use their phonic knowledge to try out unfamiliar words. Achievement in writing is equally good. Teachers know exactly how to move the children from one step to the next in learning to write, by linking the learning of letters and sounds to spelling as well as reading, and by showing them how to create letters at just the right point in their learning. Examination of writing portfolios shows that the majority of children reach the expected level and a number go beyond this by the end of the Foundation Stage. They are very well prepared for the writing challenges of Year 1 literacy lessons.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a very good range of methods and activities to teach an understanding of number.
- Carefully kept records ensure that tasks are set at the right level for individual children.

Commentary

48. The teaching is very good and children achieve broadly as expected by the end of the reception year. Lessons are made interesting and fun in both classes. In the nursery, the children are already beginning to recognise the numerals that represent one to five and to select these from an array, with adult support. During one well-planned, well taught lesson, the class sang 'Five Little Mice Went out to Play', as five little children wearing mice ears and holding number cards from one to five, left their friends and joined the group. The teacher constantly asked 'How many next?' and 'How many left?' to encourage all of the children to think about number order and begin to understand that the total always remained the same. Teachers make sure that children have ample opportunities to try out their learning for themselves as they play, cook, paint and investigate other materials.
49. The nursery children can already name the shape and colour of their sitting mat. Reception children can name simple shapes, and during a very good lesson, some higher attaining children were able to describe the properties of a square compared to a rectangle. Again, very good quality questioning by the teacher and teaching assistant consolidated the knowledge of shape names and their properties. All these practical activities ensure that the children really do *understand* the mathematical concepts, and pave the way for future learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT.

These areas of learning were sampled so that it is not possible to make a full statement about teaching, as not all aspects of each area were observed. However, there is sufficient evidence from examination of planning, scrutiny of completed work and classroom display to show that provision for **knowledge of the world, creative development and physical development is very good**. Children reach the expected goals in physical and creative development. They remain slightly below the average in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching units are large, well organised and well equipped for a full range of direct experiences.
- Space is used very well to create good-sized role-play areas that contribute to the children's imaginative and language development.
- A new outdoor play area gives continuous access to a range of good quality large apparatus and a safe surface.
- Children have regular practice at the computer and use it confidently.
- Teaching was very good in the music lessons observed.

Commentary

50. It was not possible to observe any lessons in **knowledge and understanding of the world** and so no judgement can be made about teaching. However, examination of planning, work on display and on-going activities show that the children achieve well, given their mostly

limited experience of the world when they start school. They are on target to achieve the expected goals in ICT, and in finding out about living things, but their low level of background knowledge makes it unlikely that they will reach average standards across all of this area of learning. Because of the many supported opportunities to use computer in the nursery, the children are able to make good progress in the reception class. They use the computer suite and learn to carry out all the simple basic functions of opening, saving and retrieving work. Observation and language skills are regularly developed through cooking and baking.

51. Children's **physical development** is average No hall sessions were observed during the inspection, but observation of the pupils in the outdoor area shows that they have average skills in moving and travelling. They use a range of small and large equipment with safety.
52. Provision for **creative development** is **very good** and the children achieve well. Role-play is well used to extend the children's learning in the other areas of the curriculum. Children in both classes took on doctor, patient and parent roles in the 'Humpty Dumpty' hospital, taking care of the sick and learning about the routines of hospitalisation. In the reception class, children communicate the ideas freely, using a suitable range of materials and tools.

Example of outstanding practice

A lesson to a group of nursery aged children was an outstanding example of the captivating teaching that engaged the children in the nursery and reception classes. Every detail was planned and prepared exquisitely, so that pupils were entranced. They sang their week's new rhyme of 'Hickory Dickory Dock' as they made puppet mice run up the clock. They listened carefully to each other play chime bars and wooden sticks, and with the help of the teacher's sensitive speculative questioning, 'decided' that the wooden sticks would be the best accompaniment to their singing. They achieved excellent results, striking their sticks in perfect time to the 'tick-tock' rhythm and had the chance to appraise their own performance by listening to the taped recording of their work. A perfectly planned, timed and executed lesson.

53. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator is highly effective. She has excellent relationships with all staff, and so is able to draw them together into an innovative and cohesive team.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory overall with some good features** which have led to improvements in pupils' achievements and raising standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well overall by the time they leave the school aged 11.
- Improvements to standards for seven-year old pupils.
- Improvements to writing including the quality and usefulness of the writing portfolios.
- Assessments, marking and target setting are considerably improved, as is their use.
- Test results last year at the end of Year 6 still hovered below national comparisons.
- Pupils' speaking skills are an on going challenge for improvement.
- The use of reading and writing skills is broadly satisfactory but could be better.
- Leadership and management in the subject although satisfactory are fragmented and bear further scrutiny to maximise expertise.

Commentary

54. By the end of Year 6, well over half of pupils are set to attain in line with the nationally expected Level 4 although only a few look on target to do better. About one third of pupils have identified special educational needs and some of these are unlikely to meet the national

expectation. This is similar to last year and mirrors the results in the 2003 tests. Nevertheless, pupils are achieving well in many aspects of their work given their low starting base. Writing has improved notably for boys and girls although boys still lag behind.

55. The Year 6 pupils represent the tail end of the year groups who have been subjected to disruption and some unsatisfactory teaching earlier in their school life. They have not had the very good grounding of current pupils aged three to seven nor the consistently structured teaching of literacy evident in the lower junior classes. This is telling in gaps in the knowledge and skills of a significant minority who lack the necessary reading skills to decode words and read with any reasonable fluency and expression. The least able pupils' skills of prediction are weak as is their ability to take inference from text. Many pupils can listen carefully and speak clearly to explain themselves but they lack a broad range of vocabulary to talk in a range of contexts. Since September Year 6 pupils' written work shows a definite momentum of improvement. This is largely due to the thorough marking of work and structured expectations of the teaching. Spelling is adequate but pupils do not readily transfer their skills to other subjects. However, work shows the necessary understanding by many to complete the tasks and pupils succeed in most cases. It is fair to say that teaching will need to be ever vigilant to keep these older pupils motivated and supported. Organisation of the lessons does not have the luxury of the setting in mathematics.
56. The picture by the end of Year 2 is good. In 2003 the number of pupils who attained the expected Level 2 was higher than found nationally and well up on the previous year. The trend of improvement has been steady and productive. The results represent very good achievement given the low starting base of many pupils. The test results are echoed in the inspection findings, which judge standards in Year 2 to be well on line with national expectations. Already a small group of pupils show signs of attaining above what is expected for their age in reading and writing.
57. Teaching is good through the school and in Year 1 it is very good. The very best teaching offered learning which was infectious. The direct teaching set a pace so as to engage, enthuse and captivate the pupils' imaginations while ensuring enjoyment did not divert the learning. The follow up activities were broad and drew on the pupils' speaking, reading and writing skills and required them to be independent. Pupils' achievements, including those with severe needs were high and demonstrated by their ability to join in about what had happened 'When the Tiger came to Tea'. The most disaffected of pupils could not fail to benefit and learn from such teaching.
58. Key strengths of all teaching are the direct teaching of skills and very effective behaviour management. Literacy hours are well structured and effectively taught. Guided reading has effectively been taken out of the literacy hour to enable better organisation and allow for higher quality teacher input. Some teaching in the juniors was satisfactory. Although it was well structured, and knowledge of what was to be taught was evident and clearly put across, it lacked the sparkle to stimulate and engage pupils fully. At times, the learning was not extended to its full stretch for the few more able pupils. Classroom support staff are well used in the main. More thought could be given to how they can add value during whole class teaching sessions.
59. Assessments are good and well used overall. The guided reading assessments give valuable information on how pupils need to improve. This information is not always shared fully with pupils so that they know what to aim for next. This is also true of marking which is good in Year 6 but not to this standard elsewhere. The pupils' writing portfolios are an excellent tool for seeing at a glance the progress pupils have made. In a few of them, the work has been levelled a little too harshly, this could dim the true picture of achievement.
60. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory but initiatives are driven by school rather than subject leadership. Effective support strategies have been introduced from external sources. Having two coordinators across the key stages fragments continuity

and hinders a clear overview. There is not a good enough view of how boys' writing can get better.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Pupils' literacy skills are used satisfactorily. The challenge is to create a broader curriculum, which uses pupils' speaking, reading and writing skills fully and so drives achievement upward. Planning for speaking opportunities in the other subjects is a priority.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics.
- Teaching in mathematics is good.
- The organisation of setting for mathematics is successful in helping to raise standards.
- Monitoring and assessment in the subject has improved.
- Standards of investigation and use of mathematical knowledge are weak.
- Not enough use is made of ICT in mathematics especially for the higher attaining pupils.
- The setting of challenging work directed at different groups of pupils is not as good as it could be.

Commentary

62. Standards in mathematics in both Year 2 and Year 6 are average. In the recent tests all pupils in Year 2 achieved Level 2, the nationally expected level for their age. These pupils achieved very well, bearing in mind that on entry to school they were below average in ability. The momentum of learning was not maintained throughout Key Stage 2, due to changes in staff, high levels of special needs and other problems. Pupils still achieved well by the end of Year 6, but the number of pupils gaining the above average level was low.
63. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. In the ten lessons seen, two were satisfactory, seven were good and one was very good. In the better lessons, the direct teaching of skills and understanding was clearly in place and questioning was used very well to establish that learning had taken place. These lessons were well managed and the pupils spent maximum time on task.
64. The school organises the teaching of mathematics in ability groups from Years 4 to 6. In the lessons observed, this was having a positive effect. The teacher, for the more able pupils, was providing challenging work, making them think and discuss their strategies and probing their understanding with his very good questioning skills. What was lacking for these groups of pupils was access to ICT to support their learning.
65. While the higher attaining pupils were working in their small group, the system allowed the class teacher to remain in the classroom and work with a group much smaller than the size of the class. This allowed for more focused work in the subject, but teachers did not always capitalise on the small number of pupils by making their work individually challenging. Too often all pupils did the same work and the outcomes were only different as a result of extra help being given or by the speed in which some pupils completed their work.
66. The school has made good improvements to its assessment systems since the last inspection and the results of these, together with the monitoring of both teaching and learning, are used well to organise the setting system and check on pupils' progress. Targets often result from assessments, but sometimes they are written in language which pupils do not always understand.

67. An overall weakness, across the school, is the use and application of the pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding when carrying out investigations, for example. Teachers appear to lack confidence to tackle this type of work and the co-ordination of the subject has not yet addressed the issue.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical knowledge in other subjects. They make tables and charts in their science work and measure materials in design and technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvements to standards since the last inspection so that pupils broadly attain in line with expectations for their ages.
- The subject action plan is comprehensive and management of the subject so far is good.
- The teaching of investigative science and the development of scientific vocabulary require further improvement.

Commentary

69. Results in the national tests over the last three years have seen a rise in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 by Year 6 but still test scores hover just below the national comparative figure. In 2002 and 2003 two more pupils gaining Level 4 would have brought the school in line with national comparisons. Given that these pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world on entry was well below what is usually found, this represents good achievement. The results mask the fact that few pupils in the school could be considered higher attaining in a national context. In 2002 the school's results were below average because few pupils attained the higher Level 5. In 2003 more pupils attained at the higher Level 5 and less at the lower Level 3. This is a result of a concerted effort to improve science through monitoring of teaching to diagnose weaknesses. Year 2 pupils in 2002 were assessed as attaining well above similar schools and in 2003 they were above. As in English the school assessed a few pupils rather more harshly than might have been justified.
70. Standards of work in science have improved since the last inspection as a result of the impact of clear diagnosis of need and sound action. There is still some way to go before pupils attain as expected nationally by the ages of seven and 11 in all elements of the subject but pupils have sound knowledge of scientific phenomena for their ages. However, their abilities to investigate, think scientifically and make sensible hypotheses are still too limited for them to attain as required in the investigative process. There is more evidence that younger pupils in Year 1 are beginning to plan investigations and to be challenged to answer scientific questions such as, 'Do our hands or feet have the best sense of touch?' The more able pupils use their skills to give justifiable explanations to their predictions and record 'I think our hands get messages to our brains quicker than our feet do'.
71. The oldest pupils in Year 6 can discuss a range of work they have covered and convey facts about the heart and human body, habitats and the processes of change to water. Their written work shows they have encountered fair testing, using variables, predicting results and drawing comparisons. However, there is not yet sufficient confidence in their explanations to suggest that they are well versed in investigating for themselves and the planning does not place enough emphasis on pupils setting up their own lines of enquiry.

72. Teaching is satisfactory overall and enables pupils to achieve soundly in lessons. Five lessons were observed. Four in the juniors of which three were good and one was satisfactory and one satisfactory lesson in Year 2. In the best lesson in Years 3, 4 and 6 a strong emphasis was placed on pupils experimenting for themselves. Good recapping of previous work to assess recall; clear explanations; and pupils being challenged to deduce what might happen to the roots of their plants by using role-play with straws to suck up water produced/led to good achievement. Pupils gained a good grasp of the structure of plants and their functions. In Year 6 pupils were excited by the practical nature of the lesson but were effectively managed. A few lower attaining boys 'switched off' but were successfully drawn back in. Clear objectives are set for learning and this motivates many pupils very well. Most pupils say they enjoy science and the most able know they are aiming to achieve a Level 5 and what this entails for them. Scrutiny of books in the juniors suggests that on occasion too much work is recorded by completing worksheets. This stifles pupils' abilities to use their core skills. Assessment and marking of work are adequate although day-to-day assessment and evaluation of lessons to inform planning are good. Clearer diagnosis on a class-by class basis would be beneficial to pinpoint where strengths, gaps and weaknesses lie.
73. The joint management of science has been effective in raising standards and has taken on well the evaluations made through monitoring. The subject action plan is clear and the school knows that improving the pupils' skills in investigation is the key point for improvement. The school is considering how investigative activities are best organised and managed so that small groups of pupils can benefit from high level teaching input to develop scientific thinking and vocabulary whilst encouraging other pupils to use their skills to research, reinforce and extend their learning. These initial discussions link in with the school's plans to embrace the national document 'Excellence and Enjoyment'.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of its ICT suite and pupils achieve well in the main elements of the subject.
- Teaching overall is good in the subject.
- Pupils are often excited and well motivated in ICT lessons.
- Teachers use ICT well in history.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support the higher attaining pupils in the setting system for mathematics.
- Although pupils have weekly access to the computer suite, there are insufficient computers in classrooms to support effectively all curriculum areas.

Commentary

74. Since the last inspection, at which time standards were noted as satisfactory, ICT has moved forward considerably. The school has endeavoured to keep pace with this through the creation of a computer suite. It has been largely successful in this and pupils achieve well in the subject and have maintained satisfactory standards.
75. Each class has specific time set aside for it to use the suite and many classes use this time for work in English, mathematics and in a discrete way to improve computer skills. To this end, the teaching of ICT is good. Teachers have completed their training well and appear confident and competent. They make very good use of the interactive white board and give clear demonstrations of the skills they want their pupils to acquire.

76. As a result of the good teaching and pupils' interest and excitement in the subject, they are well motivated in ICT lessons, often listen very carefully and are keen to put their new skills into effect. This has a positive effect on the progress they make.
77. The school has purchased the services of a private company, 'Merseygrid' to support teachers in making effective use of ICT within the curriculum. The impact is evident in the way teachers are able to make good use of ICT in history. Pupils were seen working from web sites downloading information and saving it in their own documents. However, in the mathematics set for the higher attaining pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, there is no regular access for them, in lessons, to use computers to support their learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. Every classroom has a stand alone computer. Some of these are a little old and have not been updated for some time. Equally, with just one computer in classes, it makes regular use of ICT to support learning in class lessons difficult. As a result access to computers is still a little limited on a daily basis for many pupils.

HUMANITIES

Provision in history and geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of ICT to deliver the taught curriculum motivates pupils strongly.
- Subject action plans set a clear agenda for improvement.
- Pupils broaden their limited knowledge and understanding of the world but subject skills are not yet well developed.

Commentary

79. Only one lesson was observed in history and one in geography. A number of lessons in ICT were sampled where history was the vehicle for teaching. In addition, discussions were held with Year 6 pupils about what they know about both subjects and work was sampled. This evidence gives a strong enough base to say that standards are broadly as expected nationally for seven and 11 year old pupils in their knowledge but pupils' subject skills are less secure. No overall judgements are made about teaching. In both subjects, pupils achieve well in gaining knowledge against a background of limited knowledge and understanding of the world when they entered the school. Geography is not a focus for study this half term in the juniors.
80. In **geography**, by the age of 11 pupils can readily name capital cities of well-known countries, the continents of the world and the great oceans. They know about river formation and the key points in a river's journey to the sea but not necessarily in the correct order. Pupils have studied the local environment and have carried out fieldwork activities locally and on their residential visits. A few could talk with confidence about using a compass and orienteering. They were vague on using grid references. Younger pupils by the age of seven can describe types of home, say what category their home falls into and say the names of animal homes. They show confidence in using ICT skills in class work to place the categories of home for example, igloo, castle, house, flat in alphabetical order using an interactive whiteboard. Pupils also use 'colour magic' to draw and design homes on screen. Teaching in the lesson seen was good but this is not enough to make overall judgements.
81. In **history**, by the age of 11 pupils talk well about their current topic of study, World War II. They know that there were two Prime Ministers during this war and can name them both readily. They have used the website to research about life during the war and have completed

a challenge on screen to feed a family using the rationing allowances. They also know about other periods including the Vikings, the Romans, the Tudors and Victorians but make inaccurate guesses at the order of each era and this shows their skills in chronology are weak. However, contrary to this, the more able pupils can recall which of Henry VIII's wives died, was beheaded, divorced or survived. Pupils in the infants have studied famous characters including Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale. They have some experience of studying artefacts at close quarters to gain clues about the past. In the lesson seen pupils in Year 6 were using ICT to devise a multi media presentation. They were enthusiastic and well motivated by the task and achieved well in the lesson. Teaching was good. Work scrutiny would suggest that teaching is at least satisfactory.

82. Leadership and management in the subjects are satisfactory. The action plans show a revision of policy guidance is underway to embrace for both subjects Personal, Social and Health Education, Education for Sustainable Development and Citizenship. The agenda is based on curriculum review and looking for links between subjects. The plans make no mention of monitoring teaching or the outcomes of pupils' learning. The geography co-ordinator has recently attending training on developing geography skills through using the outdoor environment but the impact of this is not yet measurable.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Provision is **broadly satisfactory** in art and design, design and technology and physical education. **The composition element of music is weak.**

83. Only one lesson was seen in design and technology, and one lesson and one part lesson in each of art and design and physical education. No lessons were seen in music. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke with coordinators and pupils about their work, looked at planning, and examined work on display around the school and in the art and technology room.
84. It is evident from work displayed around the school, and particularly in the specialist room that provision for art and design is satisfactory and becoming good. This is because specialist teaching by the subject coordinator is an emerging development. She currently teaches the Year 3 and 4 classes, and because of her good subject knowledge, they produce good quality work. A strong feature of provision is the dedicated art and technology room, used by classes in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. The additional space that this offers for the storage of materials and half-completed work, and the unique atmosphere of working in a dedicated space, adds a spice to art lessons that helps the pupils to think and work in creative ways. The room is very much a 'workshop', which adds to a sense of artistic endeavour, although currently some resources are stored untidily and take up valuable worktop space. Plans to extend the use of the art room to younger pupils are in evidence.
85. Teachers and pupils take a bold approach to art and design. This helps the pupils to achieve well. There are examples of lively print work across the school, much of it on a large scale. The stairwells of the junior classes display an inviting range of prints on cloth, alongside other techniques that give a dramatic effect. Pupils learn to mix colour well. This begins in the Foundation Stage, and by Year 4, pupils are able to produce abstract interpretations of their journey to school. Good attention was paid to composition in a lesson with Year 4. They used pastels and charcoal with confidence, and with adult help, applied a colour wash to intensify the effect. The pupils' evaluative skills are underdeveloped, largely because the teaching does not focus sharply enough upon this skill as a part of every lesson. The oldest pupils have less well developed art skills and techniques.
86. Overall, standards in the subject are satisfactory and the subject has the potential to become a strength of the school. For this to happen, all of the teachers require greater guidance about how to interpret the national guidance adopted as the school's scheme of work, and

there needs to be more rigorous assessment of skill development as pupils move from class to class.

87. It is not possible to make a firm statement about provision in **design and technology**. Only one lesson was seen. There is very little stored work from the previous year, and few examples of completed work in the classrooms themselves. Planning charts show that the programme of study has been covered and, as in art and design, the strongest work is in Years 3 and 4. They have made some exciting seats to match the attributes of different fictional characters, and finished these to a good decorative standard. Evidence from lesson plans and the single lesson observed, shows that pupils understand that they need to plan their designs, and explore ways in which the materials to be used can best be joined together. There is some evidence from sketchbooks that by Years 3 and 4, pupils are able to reflect on their work as they design and make torches, as well as evaluate the completed product. Assessment and tracking of individual and group achievement is not yet in place, which hinders planning for skill development and step by step steady progress.
88. Only one full length lesson of **physical education** was observed, but several shorter observations of part lessons show that provision is satisfactory. All strands of the subject are taught, including swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities. Orienteering and other activities during a residential visit to North Wales for older pupils make a good contribution to this strand. The school makes use of its links with local secondary schools and other outside providers to give specialist training in, for instance, judo and fencing. The large sports hall adds to the quality of teaching and learning in such areas. There are opportunities for competitive sport with other schools, and a range of after school clubs develop games skills further.
89. The co-ordinator has very recently carried out an audit of gymnastics teaching across the school, and identified the need to improve the teachers' subject knowledge through further training, particularly in the teaching of the three part gymnastics lesson. New equipment is to be ordered when funding is available. A new creative dance scheme has been introduced in the Year 1 and 2 classes since September. During a lesson with Year 2 pupils, standards of dance were below average, but improved in the space of a lesson. At first, they found it hard to control their enthusiasm for changing levels or making different body shapes, but by the end of the lesson, they had learned to co-ordinate their movements better, and to mirror each other during partner work.
90. No direct teaching of **music** was observed during the inspection. However, the school agrees that provision for the full range of music activities shows some gaps. For example, although a specialist teacher gives support for singing in the classes for older pupils, class teachers themselves lack confidence in teaching the compositional side of the subject. Music has not been a school priority, as the school has put most of its time and energy into making improvements in English and mathematics. A recently purchased scheme of work should now provide the impetus needed for the school to focus on the subject and for teachers to take on the full range of activities in music, in the near future.
91. In all of these subjects, the role of the coordinators is satisfactory. They are knowledgeable about their area of responsibility, and have undertaken some monitoring and evaluation, but do not have the opportunity to work alongside other teachers to share expertise and extend their influence.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) **is satisfactory**.

Commentary

92. The school is in the process of reviewing its provision in this area. For example, a school council is being established and pupils spoke enthusiastically about their role in this. The school's sex education policy is being revised in line with recent government recommendations and parents are being consulted on the delivery of sex education across the school. The school acknowledges that citizenship requires further improvement. Evidence of this is in the action plans for geography and history where both subject coordinators have highlighted the need to incorporate elements of citizenship, PSHE and Education for Sustainable Development within the curriculum planning. There is a specific plan for improvement contained in the school plan which highlights issues related to multicultural awareness. The impact is evidenced where for example, the mother tongues of pupils with English as an Additional Language are displayed around the school, parents are invited to speak to pupils, and the celebration of the 'One World' week drew out similarities and differences in cultures around the world. The school plans to measure the success of its initiatives in PHSE by judging how well pupils show awareness of other cultures and respect for the diversity of race in the world in which they grow in their daily work.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
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	3
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	4
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).