

INSPECTION REPORT

ST OSWALD'S C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Netherton, Bootle

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104900

Headteacher: Mrs M Ellams

Lead inspector: Dr B Blundell

Dates of inspection: 22 – 24 September 2003

Inspection number: 257896

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:	214
School address:	Ronald Ross Avenue Netherton Bootle
Postcode:	L30 5RH
Telephone number:	0151 525 4580
Fax number:	0151 525 1715
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Walter Logie
Date of previous inspection:	29 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Oswald's Primary school is a Voluntary Aided Church of England school for boys and girls, aged three to 11, situated in Netherton, Sefton. There is an overall gender balance among the pupils, who are mainly white British, with very small minorities of white pupils with other backgrounds, Chinese, and mixed backgrounds. No pupils are at early stages in the acquisition of English. The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school, other than at the normal times in the school year, is approximately one in ten. The proportion of pupils having special educational needs is in line with the national average. Pupils' special needs include specific learning difficulties, together with moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural problems, multi-sensory impairment and physical difficulties. The school, which is situated in a socially deprived area, has received the DfES Achievement Award in 2001 and 2002, together with the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Arts Mark, Healthy Schools Scheme Award, Investors in People Award and Active Mark Gold. Pupils' attainment on entry has been well below average overall but, largely owing to the provision of a new on-site nursery, the school is attracting children from a wider area and attainment on entry is now below average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23868	Dr B Blundell	Lead inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology Educational inclusion
19430	Mr T Hall	Lay inspector	
29261	Mrs P Ward	Team inspector	Art and design Music Physical education Foundation Stage
30590	Mr G Longton	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs (SEN) English as an additional language (EAL)

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is good; it provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is very well led and managed;
- The overall quality of teaching is good;
- Standards of attainment by the age of eleven broadly match national standards, despite attainment on entry having been well below average overall; pupils achieve well;
- The school is working very hard and with increasing success to involve parents in pupils' learning;
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good;
- Standards in physical education by the age of eleven are well above national expectations
- Standards in mathematics are being held back by pupils not knowing their times tables off by heart;
- Assessment in subjects other than the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is in need of further development.

The effectiveness of the school has improved since the last inspection, with pupils now making good rather than generally satisfactory progress. A particular success has been the establishment of an on-site nursery, together with a state-of-the-art information and communication technology (ICT) suite. The school has responded well to the key issues raised at the last inspection. The school's initiatives in speaking, listening and writing are bearing fruit; pupils' investigative skills are better developed. Issues relating to health and safety have been addressed successfully.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Please note that results in 2003 were slightly better overall but national comparative data is not yet available.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. In the Foundation Stage, infant phase, and junior phase, pupils achieve well. Standards of attainment are rising in the Foundation Stage, with children on course to achieve the nationally expected standards known as the Early Learning Goals. Pupils in the infant phase, whose attainment was well below average on entry to the school, are below national expectations by the age of seven in reading, writing and mathematics, but meet national expectations in science and ICT. By the age of eleven, pupils meet national expectations in English, mathematics and ICT and are above national expectations in science. Standards in physical education are well above national expectations by the age of eleven. In the other areas inspected, standards meet national expectations and they exceed them in singing.

Pupils' personal qualities are good. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** is very good. **Pupils' attitudes and behaviour** are good overall. Although **pupils' attendance** has

improved since the last inspection, it is still below the national average. However, punctuality has improved markedly and is now satisfactory overall. The majority of families ensure that their children attend regularly and on time, but this could be improved still further if all families fully supported the school in its endeavours.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall, and very good in the Foundation Stage. Staff work hard on behalf of their pupils. **Pupils learn well** throughout the school.

The curriculum throughout the school is good and is greatly enriched by the activities the school provides both inside and outside of normal school hours. The curriculum is designed to make pupils really want to come to school, especially the sporting activities, including gymnastics, which are very popular. **The school's partnership with parents** is very good, and is having an increasing effect on helping to raise pupils' achievement. **The school cares** well for its pupils and guides and supports them appropriately.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is committed and caring, and has built up an effective senior management team with the coordinators for the infant and junior phases. The governing body is effective and fulfils its statutory duties; the governors visit school regularly, with the chair of governors taking assemblies on a weekly basis.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are positive. They feel that teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed. Parents feel very comfortable when approaching the school with problems. A minority of parents has a concern about behaviour at the school; the inspection team did not witness any examples of bullying or harassment but did observe very occasional inappropriate behaviour.

Pupils' views of the school are also positive, but again, a minority felt that other pupils do not always behave well. Pupils feel that they really have to work hard at this school! They feel that teachers listen to their ideas and give them help when they are stuck.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that pupils know their multiplication tables off by heart;
- Develop effective assessment procedures in subjects other than the core subjects and use them to track pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement throughout the school is good. Girls and boys perform at a similar level overall. By the age of eleven, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and ICT match national expectations; in science, standards are above expectations.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics and ICT by the age of eleven are in line, overall, with those expected nationally; in science, standards for these pupils are above expectations;
- Achievement throughout the school in the core subjects is good; children have entered the school until last year at well below average levels of attainment, yet they meet national levels overall by the time they leave. Children's attainment on entry to the school is now below average rather than well below as a result of a change in the intake since the school acquired an on-site nursery;
- Standards of attainment in physical education are well above national expectations by the age of eleven;
- Standards in singing by the age of eleven are above expectations;
- In other subject areas, standards meet national expectations by the age of eleven;
- In mathematics, pupils' attainment in their knowledge of multiplication tables is not as high as it should be, and this is hindering their progress.

Commentary

Table 1, below, shows that in the national tests in 2002 for pupils aged seven, standards were well below national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with those from similar schools, pupils' performance was below average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. Over the three years from 2000 to 2002 averaged together, pupils left the infant phase two terms behind pupils nationally in reading, and around six months behind in writing and mathematics. Girls performed a little better than boys. Results in 2003, for which national comparative data is not yet available, were broadly similar.

Table 1. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores* in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.9 (15.1)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.0 (14.1)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	15.5 (15.6)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 27 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

** Please note that pupils are expected nationally to go up by one point every term. It may be helpful to the reader to think of the mathematics example in the table above. In 2002, pupils nationally averaged 16.5 points but at St Oswald's they averaged 15.5 points and pupils were therefore one term behind pupils nationally.*

Table 2, below, shows that in the national tests in 2002 for pupils aged eleven, standards were in line with the national average in English but below average in mathematics and science. Compared with those of schools of a similar type, standards were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science. Over the years 2000 to 2002 taken together, pupils have left the school just ahead of pupils nationally in English, just behind pupils nationally in mathematics, and one term ahead in science. Boys have performed better than girls in English, but in mathematics and science,

there has been little difference. Results for 2003, for which there is as yet no comparative data, were better than 2002 overall.

Table 2. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.0 (26.6)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	24.9 (26.8)	26.7 (26.6)
science	27.2 (31.1)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 1 **Pupils achieve well** in all subject areas at this school by the time they leave at the age of eleven. Until the establishment of an on-site nursery this year, children entered the school with well below average attainment overall, and yet have left broadly in line with pupils nationally. This represents good achievement. In the inspection, no difference in achievement between boys and girls was noticed. (Note that they now enter below, rather than well below average.)
- 2 **Standards of attainment in English** have improved since the last inspection, when they were below average. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in the subject as a result of the good teaching. The issues highlighted at the last inspection, concerning speaking, listening and writing, have been well addressed. Literacy skills are taught well throughout the school.
- 3 **In the Foundation Stage, children’s literacy skills** are particularly well developed as a result of very good teaching. The children who are currently in the Foundation Stage are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals, and this is a change from previous years, as explained above.
- 4 **In the infant phase and junior phase, reading, writing, speaking and listening** are consistently developed; pupils are given the opportunities to extend their oral skills through drama and in assemblies.
- 5 **Standards of attainment in mathematics** have also improved since the last inspection, but still lag slightly behind standards in English. Although the subject is taught well overall, insufficient attention is given to the learning of multiplication tables; this slows the pupils down and hinders their work in problem solving.
- 6 **In the Foundation Stage, children’s number work** is very well developed as a result of the very good quality provision and the teachers’ high expectations.
- 7 **Through the infant phase and on into the juniors,** pupils make good progress overall in the development of their mathematics, most especially in shape and space.
- 8 **Standards of attainment** in science are higher than at the last inspection. They are now above national expectations by the age of eleven, rather than in line with expectations. Pupils really enjoy their science; teachers have high expectations and the subject is particularly well led and managed by the headteacher.
- 9 **In other subject areas,** standards meet national expectations, except in **physical education,** where they are well above national expectations, and in **singing,** where they are above expectations. In these areas most especially, the school has invested a lot of time and effort to give pupils a broad curriculum.
- 10 **Pupils with special educational needs** are very well catered for; they make good progress as a direct result of the school’s support policy. These pupils are not withdrawn from class for support; they are either helped in class or given extra lessons at other times of the day.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils enjoy their lessons and generally behave well. This is a credit to the teachers, who encourage them at all times.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance has improved in the last year but is still below acceptable levels;
- Attitudes are consistently good as a result of interesting lessons and careful management to achieve the lesson objectives;
- Behaviour is good overall. A minority of pupils and parents are not happy with occasional offensive behaviour;
- The school's attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is thorough and sensitively structured. It reflects the caring ethos of the school.

Commentary

- 11 Attendance has improved in the last reporting year, after the very low levels since the last inspection (See Table 3 below). This is largely due to the patient, simple and consistent steps taken to encourage the pupils to appreciate the value of learning together, every school day, and always starting the day on time, such as class certificates for weekly achievement and individual certificates for longer periods of time. Closer links with parents and their increased co-operation has also brought about this more acceptable standard of attendance and punctuality, although there are still too many holidays taken during term time. The Breakfast Club is successfully helping parents who go off to work early. The recent introduction of the Behaviour Improvement Program, where pupils' daily routines [including any lateness] are closely observed, has improved punctuality greatly. However, there are still some who are too often late, and for whom parental help has to be regularly sought.

Table 3 Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.7	School data	0.0
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.

- 12 Pupils are generally a pleasure to observe in lessons. Although only in the third week of the new school year, pupils have settled well into their new classes. They are eager to respond to questioning and remember what they have learned earlier quite well. They can work well independently. Pupils are seen to be busy in pairs or groups, sharing resources cheerfully. There is a sense of common purpose, created by the good relationship teachers and teaching assistants have with their classes. A few pupils need the constant attention of teachers to stay on task.
- 13 Behaviour is good overall in lessons, and about the school during breaks. The pupils show self-confidence, and even the youngest quickly build up self-esteem. Play is joyful, with a wide variety of large- and small-scale activities happily involving every one. This is largely due to the imaginative planning of the play area, which is divided into tennis-court sized sections. However, a few pupils, who generally present reasonable attitudes in lessons, let themselves down in unstructured situations. Nevertheless all pupils, even those who offend, support the rules and are very familiar with the high expectations of their conduct. They know how seriously lapses are viewed. Exclusions are not part of the ethos of this school. Rather, there is a family atmosphere where pupils are good-natured and mix well together. However some parents and pupils, as indicated in the inspection questionnaires, have a perception of

aggressive behaviour. This impression is viewed with disappointment by the school and will be positively addressed. The inspection team found there were no recorded incidents of bullying during the past school year, and no bad behaviour was observed during the inspection. Any emerging issues are dealt with promptly and effectively, with parents involved at the earliest opportunity. There have been no exclusions. See Table 4 below.

Table 4 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	210	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

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

- 14 The nature of this school is to encourage pupils to have high personal standards and spiritual values, such as caring for others, self worth, healthy living and self-discipline. This is promoted at all times by the very good role models presented by all staff, during lessons, assemblies and, for example, in circle time. Consequently, pupils develop an awareness of what is around them, looking after their environment and showing concern for those in need. They enter into charitable causes and are pleased, for example, to sing for the elderly at Christmas. Most pupils are proud of their work. Many take advantage of the after school Homework Club. Parents may attend these sessions, and find them helpful when assisting their children's work at home. Pupils enjoy sport and willingly join in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Their growing love of music is evident in their expressive singing at assemblies. Pupils' growing understanding of culture and expression in art is demonstrated by the colourful artwork displayed about the school. Each class has contributed to imaginative collages about creation, and there are splendid records of pupils' summer holidays with beautifully illustrated written work and photographs. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures, as demonstrated by a stimulating Year 3 display about the Egyptians. Pupils show care for one another. All pupils enjoy sharing in the daily routines and cheerfully accept responsibilities. Older ones enjoy a wider range of opportunities, including the Young Leaders project, where Year 6 pupils enjoy assisting staff in supervising play for infant pupils.

Areas to be addressed.

Continue to improve levels of attendance and punctuality.

Address the perception by some parents and pupils of aggressive behaviour.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides is good. Teaching and learning are good and the curriculum is broad, balanced and suitably enriched. Pupils are well cared for; the school works very well in partnership with its parents.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is good and as a result, learning is good; teachers assess pupils' work satisfactorily overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is very good, and the children learn very well; teachers question children very well to promote further understanding;
- In both the infant and junior phases, teaching is good, with very good lessons seen in Years 2 through to 6;
- The use of support staff is good, and very good in the Foundation Stage;
- Assessment is good in the core subjects but under-developed in the foundation subjects;
- Very occasionally, the management of pupils does not help pupils' learning.

Commentary

- 15 The school has a good team of teachers who are committed to their pupils and work hard on their behalf. This is recognised by pupils and parents alike, who feel that teaching is good. Pupils feel that teachers are particularly effective in showing them how to work better. The leadership and management team of the school includes the coordinators for the infant and junior phases, both of whom are skilled and effective teachers who promote good quality teaching in their sections of the school. The Foundation Stage coordinator, who is not on the senior management team, is also a high quality teacher. The school has a great atmosphere for learning!
- 16 Table 5 below, shows the quality of teaching observed during the inspection. In approximately two thirds of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better and in nearly half the lessons, it was very good or better. Two excellent lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage.
- 17 The greatest strengths in teaching include the use of the support staff, who work well with teachers to promote pupils' learning, the degree of challenge in the majority of lessons, and the high expectations of good behaviour throughout the school.

Table 5 Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in [number] lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2(5%)	16 (40%)	9(23%)	13(33%)	0(0%)	0(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.

- 18 The support staff for pupils with special educational needs work well with teachers to promote pupils' learning. All teachers are familiar with the new Code of Practice. Pupils' special needs are identified as soon as possible, and the special educational needs co-ordinator and the teacher discuss the pupils' individual education plans, identifying the targets that need to be worked on. Long-term plans, and the short-term targets that are essential to enable the pupils to realise that progress is being made, are shared with pupils. Class teachers work hard to help special needs pupils to make progress, and receive good help from all support staff.
- 19 In a very good mathematics lesson in the ICT suite for pupils in the junior phase, the teacher used well-differentiated questioning to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the properties of a variety of mathematical shapes very thoroughly. The pupils were focused on the teacher and the class management strategies displayed were very good. However, in one lesson in which there was a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the teacher did not always make sure that pupils were paying attention, and this hindered their further learning.
- 20 Children learned very well indeed in a lesson in the nursery on communication, language and literacy. The learning environment really stimulated children's learning, the teacher was very well organised and children's learning was enhanced by role play.

- 21 Teachers assess pupils' work well in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT most especially. They use the assessments well to plan future work and track pupils' progress. However, this system has yet to spread to assessment and tracking in the other subjects.

The curriculum

How well does the curriculum meet pupils' needs?

The school provides its pupils with a good range of worthwhile learning opportunities, successfully meeting their interests, aptitudes and learning needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage;
 - The effective provision for the support of pupils with special educational needs;
 - The effectiveness of the strategies for teaching Literacy;
 - Provision for the development of the skills of literacy through work in other subjects;
 - The availability of computers and good quality software for information and communication technology;
 - The planned use of visits to support the curriculum and to enhance pupils' personal development.
- 22 The curriculum meets the statutory requirements to teach all subjects in the National Curriculum. Appropriate schemes of work are in place for all subjects based on the latest national guidelines. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a rich curriculum. Through Years 1 to 6, good curricular planning ensures that teachers are provided with a range of suitable topics upon which to base their lesson plans.
- 23 Arrangements for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs are good. Special educational needs are identified well and appropriate learning targets and extra support are provided where necessary. Good provision is made to review the progress made by pupils with special educational needs, helping to ensure that learning programmes are adjusted as needed.
- 24 The school is implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well. This results in pupils of all levels of attainment being provided with a good range of learning opportunities to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise skills in a variety of learning settings. Similarly, the development of skills in information and communication technology complements and enhances the development of those in literacy.
- 25 A central feature of the school's work is its determination to value all pupils and to include them in all aspects of its work. Girls and boys have the same access to all aspects of the curriculum, including games, with no noticeable differences in the standards they achieved during the inspection.
- 26 The school makes good provision for the teaching of citizenship and for personal, social and health education. It gives appropriate attention to sex education and to warning its pupils about the dangers of drugs misuse. The planned provision for pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are encouraged to share opinions during circle time and in religious education. Each class elects representatives to the school council. The class discuss what they would like to put on the agenda and their representative reports back to them on the results. The school is taking part in healthy eating initiatives, providing fruit and water for pupils during the day.

- 27 The school enriches the pupils' curriculum through visits to places of interest such as The Botanic Gardens, Rufford Old Hall, Croxteth Park, The City Farm, and Quarry Bank Mill.
- 28 There are two residential visits for Year 6 pupils. During the inspection, all Year 6 pupils were very busy preparing for their residential visit to The Lake District, due to take place the week after the inspection.
- 29 There is a good range of well-supported extra-curricular activities including clubs for keyboard and guitars, drama, art, science, gardening, football and netball, as well as the popular breakfast club. Pupils make good use of the homework club, where they can complete their work in very pleasant surroundings and receive help if required.
- 30 The school makes every effort to involve the community in its activities. For example, there is an annual community sports day, involvement in local music festivals, and visits to the theatre. There are good links with the local secondary school; the transfer of records and attainment data is effective, and good opportunities are provided for pupils to visit the school. A member of staff from the secondary school visits St. Oswald's regularly during the pupils' final year, and helps to prepare them for their transfer. The school has very close links with St. Oswald's Church.
- 31 The school is staffed by a dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers, learning assistants and administrative staff. Teachers are effectively deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning needs; this impacts very well on pupils' achievement. The school's improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for staff development. Lunchtime supervisors provide a good standard of care at midday and know the pupils well. The site manager and cleaning staff ensure a high standard of cleanliness at all times.
- 32 The quality and adequacy of the accommodation for teaching the curriculum is good. The overall impression of the building, with the latest additions and alterations, is now good, though the school experiences a high level of vandalism. During the inspection, the gardening club were very busy planting bulbs to improve the school grounds. The staff present attractive displays of work throughout the building and this adds to the pupils' interest in the curriculum. The resources in most subjects are good.
- 33 The curriculum provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good, covering the recommended six areas of learning in full. Children are provided with an effective and very well planned range of learning opportunities that allows them to develop their skills very well. Children with special educational needs are very well provided for.

Care, guidance and support

The school's whole approach to care and guidance is sensitive and thorough. Staff know the pupils very well and encourage them according to their individual needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is warm, clean and welcoming. Staff create a happy and purposeful atmosphere;
 - Staff are caring and understand pupils' individual needs very well. As a result, pupils have very good relationships with staff;
 - Pupils' views are listened to.
- 34 All the school's arrangements for the care, welfare and safety of pupils are very well organised and secure. Of particular note is the Healthy Schools initiative.
- 35 Relationships throughout the school are very good. Teachers and support staff talk constantly about the pupils and their individual needs, and have their personal development at heart. The

pupils feel that they are able to talk freely to all adults, including those in administration. They can always share any concerns, and are very well looked after should they be unwell. Teachers give pupils continual guidance on their next steps in education, in order to build further on their strengths and help them improve in weaker areas. Parents are very pleased with the thorough induction arrangements for their children. They feel staff are warm and welcoming. Parents are particularly pleased to note how quickly their children settle into their nursery and reception classes.

- 36 Pupils' questionnaires, circle time and class discussions on personal and social issues are all well used to measure pupils' interest and involvement in the life of their school, as well as seeking their views. Equally, pupils respect the decisions made by their own class councils and the school council, and the process gives them a sense of contributing to the running of the school. They feel staff encourage them to voice an opinion, and are happy to deal with proposals appropriately.
- 37 The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. Initial assessment is quickly followed up by the formulation of individual education plans to tailor learning and provision to the pupils' needs, using whatever support is required. Regular reviews ensure that pupils are making progress and developing in their learning. There are good working relationships with outside agencies.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

This school takes imaginative and innovative steps designed to involve parents in supporting their children's learning. The majority of parents appreciate this approach by the school and co-operate well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Home, school links are consistently very strong and effective. There are very helpful courses for parents;
 - The school is a focal point in the community;
 - There are very strong links with other schools and colleges who work in partnership with the school.
- 38 The effectiveness of the school's links with parents continues to improve since the last inspection, and is very good. There is ample, high-quality information about all events and curricular matters. Reports are individual to the pupil and give opportunity for pupils and their parents to comment. Statutory information is good, with a real insight offered into governors' activities for the good of the school in the past year. Of particular note is the record of teachers' wide ranging professional development activities for the benefit of the school. Parents' views are regularly sought. Parents value the ample opportunities for discussion on their children's progress, especially at Parents' Meetings. Parents' Workshops are held to air particular topics outlined in the school's own questionnaires. Decisions are responsibly made for the overall benefit of the pupils. The return of questionnaires for this inspection was modest, but demonstrates good all-round support for the school. All parents spoken to, during the inspection, feel that the school does well for their children. All parents indicate that they feel welcome in school, and can highlight any concerns with confidence and know they will be dealt effectively. A small number give regular help in school, and it is clearly evident that parents give increasing support for their children's learning at home. The school has hosted a variety of successful courses for parents. For example, 'Literacy for pupils with special educational needs' and 'Even Better Parents', where parents have trained as 'mentors' for their children's independent learning. Nursery parents and staff talk of the benefits from the 'Top Start' course in literacy, numeracy and physical education. A good number of parents jump at the opportunity to share their children's learning in school, as was viewed in a Year 2 information and communication technology lesson. Parents regard all these courses as valuable experience for helping their children effectively.

- 39 Community links are strong. Parents, extended family and friends enjoy all the opportunities to attend celebrations and services in school and at the local church. The Parent & Friends Association is strong and committed to helping the school in every way it can, from social events, splendid fund raising and much help at school events. The natural bonds between the church, parents and friends of this school underline the 'family atmosphere'. Consequently, all involved enjoy the many opportunities to attend celebrations and services in school and at the local church. There is willing support for the school fairs and events. Generous sponsorship from a national financial institution has supplied funds for the Year 6 annual residential trip, and for the bulbs planted in the school grounds.
- 40 Transfer to secondary education is secure and very well organised. Pupils and their parents are very well informed and supported by the staff of St. Oswald's and the receiving school. Further, there are excellent consultations and arrangements for the benefit of pupils with special educational needs. Links with partner institutions are also very well organised, and helpful to the school and to parents, as, for example, Sefton College's 'Learning through Role Play' and 'Art in Early Years' initiatives. Kirkby College runs successful 'Taster Courses' on computers. There are strong links within the local cluster of schools to share skills and experience, to the distinct advantage of professional development.
- 41 As far as possible, the school establishes close relationships with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are always invited to reviews of pupils' individual education plans and an increasing number now accept the invitation.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher drives the school forward; she leads by example;
- Management by the headteacher is efficient and she is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school;
- The senior management team, which comprises the headteacher and coordinators for the infant and junior phases, is very competent and committed;
- The governing body is fully involved in the school's initiatives and fulfils its statutory duties well.
- The management of special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

- 42 The headteacher is a shrewd and diligent leader who has bid very successfully for additional funding for the school. She has re-structured the senior management team completely since the last inspection, providing very good quality leadership for the school and its pupils. She leads by example in all areas, and has a regular timetabled teaching commitment. A particularly effective innovation in leadership is that the two key stage coordinators have rotated their roles, to give them a whole-school vision. This is a very effective tool in the pursuit of improved achievement, as the leaders know the strengths and difficulties in each main area of the school.
- 43 The headteacher manages the school's budget very efficiently. The large surplus shown in the Table 6 below was held to finance the building of a new nursery and ICT suite, the completion of which has now eaten most of the surplus away.
- 44 All members of the senior management team regularly monitor and evaluate teaching effectively through the school, in their roles as team leaders in performance management. The role of subject coordinators has improved since the last inspection.

- 45 Governors fulfil their duties well. The chair of governors keeps well abreast of pupils' progress at the school, and takes assemblies each week. Governors liaise well with subject coordinators and act well as critical friends of the school.
- 46 The management of special educational needs is very good. Documentation is well organised, allowing pupils' progress to be checked quickly and accurately. Parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to attend reviews. All pupils are fully included.

Table 6 Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	519,748	Balance from previous year	104,043
Total expenditure	530,103	Balance carried forward to the next	97,109
Expenditure per pupil	2,465		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 47 The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The attainment of children who enter the nursery varies considerably from year to year. Records show that when the present reception children started nursery, the attainment of the majority was below average. This was an improvement on previous groups of new pupils, whose attainment was judged to be well below average; the provision of the new on-site nursery has resulted in a change in the intake. Children's present work, when compared to earlier work, shows clearly that children are making good progress, achieving well, and are likely to attain the recommended early learning goals. This is because teaching is of a very good standard. Teachers and nursery nurses work as a very effective team to the benefit of the children. A wide range of challenging experiences and stimulating activities are well matched to the children's learning needs. Improvements since the last inspection include a new purpose built nursery and a refurbished reception classroom. There is now a close working relationship between the nursery and reception classes. The coordinator for the area provides very good leadership. Teachers and nursery nurses have attended many courses to enable them to provide a high quality education for the children in their care.
- 48 The new curriculum is being implemented very well in a carefully structured way, which enables children to increase their skills, knowledge and understanding. There are very good arrangements to ensure that children settle into the nursery class with ease. Where parents wish, home visits are made prior to children commencing school. Parents are also invited into school to learn about how children are taught, and teachers and parents share information to ensure that individual needs are well met. Very good arrangements are made when children move from nursery to reception and from reception into Year 1.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal and social development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision is made in this area of learning;
- An effective learning environment has been established;
- Most children are now expected to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of reception.

Commentary

- 49 When children enter the nursery, many have not yet developed the skills needed to participate in unsupervised activities. They find it difficult to take turns and share equipment. Personal and social development is therefore given high priority. Relationships between adults and children are excellent, and have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Even though children have only been in the classes for a short time, routines have been established very well and children know the classroom rules. They are taught how to greet others, with the teacher showing the children, 'This is the way we say 'Hello'.' When a child in school for the first time is upset at leaving mum, the nursery nurse intervenes sensitively, ensuring that the child feels secure and is soon smiling and happy again. The clear expectations that the children will grow in independence and develop good behaviour enable the children to make very good progress in their personal and social skills. Spiritual development is carefully nurtured, as was shown by the prayer spoken to thank God for the lovely bulbs. Teachers and nursery nurses model how to pray respectfully. All the activities promote self-esteem and encourage children to form good relationships, and so the children achieve very well. A very

close working relationship with parents ensures that they are aware of how their children's personal and social skills are developed.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in their learning and most are likely to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year;
- Teachers identify children with particular difficulties in language development;
- The teaching of language skills is excellent.

Commentary

- 50 Many children start school with poorly developed language skills. They can only give one or two word answers. They find it difficult to express their thoughts and talk about what they are doing. In the nursery, children make good progress developing confidence to speak to each other. This is seen when children greet each other and when they chat with each other about their work, as they draw or cut out shapes. From the outset, children are encouraged to remember letter sounds and to share books. They are learning to recognise their written name. Good progress in the nursery is built upon in the reception class, where most children show growing confidence in speaking. They use talk to explain what they are doing, for example, when ironing in the home corner and chatting on the telephone. They listen well to their teacher and follow instructions well to write the initial sounds at the beginning of three letter words. They are able to join in with familiar parts of stories, rhymes and respond to songs with enjoyment. Higher attaining children attempt to write simple sentences and lower attaining children make marks and drawings to communicate their feelings.
- 51 Teaching is very good overall, and in the nursery is excellent. In both settings, the varied activities encourage children to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Very good opportunities to increase children's listening and speaking skills are provided by the staff, who chat with them, asking them to explain what they are doing and what they will do next. When the whole class is involved, discussion is used very well to increase children's vocabulary, their knowledge of letter sounds and simple rhyming words. Questioning is skilful, directed at children of all levels of attainment to ensure all are fully included, challenging them all to think and to share their knowledge. Lively songs are used to make learning fun, and to increase children's knowledge of colours, letter sounds, and vocabulary.
- 52 Library and reading books are sent home regularly and parents are very much involved in encouraging children to read.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in their mathematical development and are on course to achieve the early learning goals;
- Teaching is very good. Mathematical understanding is developed through stories, songs, games and imaginative play.

Commentary

- 53 Whilst in the nursery, children make good progress in their mathematical development. They show interest in numbers, as when counting name cards. They are beginning to use number names correctly in play, and count up to five objects. In reception, children use mathematical names and terms correctly when describing shapes. Most are able to recognise circles, rectangles and squares. When making cakes with plasticine, a group of children count the number they have made. They can also count in rote up to 29 but are not yet sure of t30.
- 54 This area is particularly well taught. All members of staff make learning fun. Children are encouraged to learn about mathematics through a very good range of activities, including counting, number matching, painting, modelling and baking. Staff use every opportunity to develop children's mental agility and mathematical language. In both classes, when registration takes place, children are included in counting the number present. In the nursery, children are encouraged to count their name cards and in reception, to count the number of drops of colouring placed in the water tray. Higher-attaining children are able to reckon up quickly and complete simple addition and subtraction. Those working with building cubes show good understanding of 'more' and 'less'. Lower-attaining children and children with special educational needs have more difficulty understanding and remembering mathematical vocabulary. However, because the teacher and nursery nurse repeat the same activity in different ways, children make good progress in acquiring knowledge such as the number of sides of a square or a triangle.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Provision in knowledge and understanding is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress and most are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the year;
- Activities are based on first-hand experience that encourage exploration, observation, investigation, problem solving, decision-making and discussion.

Commentary

- 55 In the nursery, children show developing techniques and skills to build, construct and join materials together. Two children persevere to finish their work and proudly show a visitor the cup and model car they have made for their mum and dad. In both classes, children are growing in confidence in using the listening centre and are able to complete simple operations using the computer. Reception children are able to use the mouse to drag clothes and dress teddy. Earlier work shows that, in the nursery, they had observed living things closely, following, for example, the growth of a bean. In reception, children develop their sense of smell and taste when investigating fruit and making fruit salad.
- 56 Teaching is excellent. In both settings, the staff ensure that the customs and faiths of others are celebrated, and also increase knowledge and understanding about other people's cultures, for example through participation in a Chinese New Year banquet. In the nursery, an autumn walk and the opportunity to plant bulbs and plants in the garden area increase knowledge of living things. In both classes, exciting visits to the theatre, to a garden centre, the baby clinic and a visit to the dentist are just a few of the activities that help broaden children's knowledge and understanding. A major improvement since the last inspection is the scope for children to use computers.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in their physical development and achieve well;
- Reception aged children are already achieving the early learning goals;
- The involvement of parents in children's learning.

Commentary

- 57 In the nursery, children hold their brushes well to apply paint to paper successfully. They have carefully drawn self-portraits, which show increasing attention to detail. In the playground, they ride, push and pull wheeled toys with increasing control. In the reception class, children are beginning to move with confidence and to show satisfactory awareness of space. They listen and respond to their teachers' instructions and signals to start, stop, stamp feet five times, walk, crawl and move like a crab using hands and feet. They move round the hall briskly, without bumping into each other. They are confident when asked to demonstrate their movements to the rest of the class and practise to improve their movements. Children show good understanding of the reasons for warm up activities and the need to behave sensibly.
- 58 Teaching in this area is very good. The teacher and nursery nurses encourage children to try new experiences. Very well planned opportunities are provided for children to run, jump, and skip. Staff enter into discussion with children about their paintings and models, and, in the reception class, about their gymnastics, encouraging them to talk to each other about what they like and how their exercise could be made better. Very good opportunities are provided for children to develop their own ideas. Children are taught skills, such as how to use such equipment as scissors safely. Participation in an arts week and an innovative physical education project, where parents also participated, have had a significant impact on the quality of learning and children's physical development.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and make good progress in their creative skills. Reception children are likely to achieve the Early learning Goals in this area by the end of the summer term 2004;
- Teachers and nursery nurses give children the opportunity to develop their own ideas and provide an environment where materials and experiences promote an appreciation of things of beauty.

Commentary

- 59 Children join in singing hymns and songs from memory. Nursery children have the opportunity to move in response to the sound of music, and listen to music of different styles. In reception, children join in clapping and singing, showing a good sense of rhythm. Nursery children make marks on paper and enjoy experimenting with paint. Reception children investigate what happens when they mix two different colours together. These opportunities support children's spiritual development, as they work with great care and demonstrate joy and pride in their achievements.
- 60 Teaching is very good. A wide variety of activities are provided for children to develop their imaginative skills, including imaginary play in the home corner. The displays of work and

teachers' planning, as well as examples of earlier work, all show that there are carefully planned opportunities for children to explore, experience and respond through their senses; for example, feeling textures, mixing paints, experimenting with musical instruments and listening to sounds. Teachers and nursery nurses intervene, whilst children experiment, to extend vocabulary and art skills effectively.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Overall provision in English is **good**

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the national average in reading and writing by the end of Year 2;
 - Standards are broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 6;
 - Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6 when compared to similar schools;
 - Teaching is effective in helping pupils make good progress overall;
 - Good subject leadership gives a successful impetus to improvement.
- 64 The 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 showed that pupils attained well below the average standards in reading and writing when compared with pupils in primary schools nationally, and below the average standard when compared to pupils in similar schools. However, the Year 6 tests showed that pupils attained standards in line with primary schools nationally, but well above the average when compared to similar schools.
- 65 This improvement in attainment is due to:
- The effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy;
 - The clear setting of relevant targets;
 - The results of new initiatives in English, which are now bearing fruit.
- 64 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now good with some examples of very good teaching in the junior department. This is enabling pupils to achieve as well as they can and they are now making good progress. The key to this effectiveness is:
- High expectations of what ALL pupils can achieve;
 - Rigorous planning to enable them to do this;
 - A strong focus on learning in most lessons;
 - Very good relationships in most classes, providing an effective climate for learning.
- 64 Attainment in speaking and listening has improved substantially. There is, however, a wide variety of attainment in all year groups. Many pupils enter the school with very poor language skills. Although they make good progress by the age of seven, standards in speaking and listening are still below those expected nationally. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 have short concentration spans and come to school tired, which means they only listen for a short time. As pupils move through the school, they make good progress. Pupils enjoy contributing during the literacy hours and in other lessons. Most teachers make effective use of discussion and use questions skilfully to check understanding of vocabulary and to develop confidence in speaking. A good example was seen in a Year 6 geography lesson, when pupils discussed systems for providing pure water in Britain after watching a video on the subject.
- 65 Teachers have worked hard to improve the standard of reading, and pupils are now making good progress. There is good additional help in reading for pupils with special educational needs. Classroom support assistants provide valuable help to all pupils, and the school is

helping parents to assist their children with reading homework. This is as a result of the school's initiatives to help parents understand their children's needs. Overall, the use of homework is satisfactory.

- 66 Pupils continue to make good progress in reading in Years 3 to 6. Higher attaining pupils in the upper juniors are confident readers. They were familiar with Harry Potter books and some pupils are now members of the local library. In all year groups, there are still pupils who find reading quite difficult, especially when it comes to tackling unfamiliar words and texts. The school is doing all it can to encourage these pupils and teach the strategies that will help them to read with greater accuracy and understanding.
- 67 Pupils have entered Year 1 with below average writing skills. Successful targeting of writing skills by teachers has led to an improvement in standards. More able pupils write in simple sentences and use full stops. They join sentences by using "and " and use phonic skills to spell words they do not know. There is not always enough length, description or detail in their writing. This means that, overall, their writing is still below the level expected nationally.
- 68 Older pupils are given good opportunities to write. Writing skills are taught well in the Literacy hour so that pupils of all abilities achieve well. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils enjoyed writing an account of "What happened when their teacher found a box?" After a very exciting introduction to the lesson, the teacher's high expectations and very good relationships with her pupils enabled them to achieve particularly well. The school has targeted writing in other subjects to give pupils added practice, and this is helping to improve standards.

Leadership and management.

- 69 The shared approach used by school staff is led and managed well by the subject co-ordinator. Her own level of knowledge and understanding of teaching enables her to support colleagues and to lead by example. Assessment is used well to inform the planning of future work.
- 70 The school has made good improvements to the teaching of all strands of the Literacy curriculum, especially the use of writing in other subjects, and information and communication technology to improve written work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 71 Language and literacy skills are well developed across the curriculum, most especially in subjects such as history and geography. Language skills are well developed in assemblies and drama.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics **is good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well overall by the age of eleven and broadly match national expectations;
- Learning is good overall throughout the school;
- Pupils have insufficient knowledge of their multiplication tables and this is hindering their further progress.

Commentary

- 72 Children currently enter the school with standards in mathematics below, and previously, well below, average but leave with standards that broadly match pupils nationally. Over the years from 2000 to 2002 taken together, pupils have left the school with attainment just fractionally

behind national standards. 2003 results, for which there is no national comparative data, show some improvement. Boys and girls leave the school with similar standards. This represents good achievement.

- 73 Pupils' learning is good as a result of the good quality teaching. In the seven lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was very good in three lessons, good in one and satisfactory in the other three. No differences were observed between the learning of boys and girls.
- 74 In the best lessons, the pace was very brisk, with pupils given very short, but appropriate, time slots to complete each task. Expectations were high, and the pupils were very well managed. For example, in a very good lesson for Year 6 pupils on multiplication by partition, pupils were given either ten or fifteen seconds to complete each sum. Pupils rose to the challenge, remained focused on the task and worked both speedily and accurately. No time was wasted and pupils' learning was maximised.
- 75 In the lessons that were judged to be satisfactory, the pace flagged at times and very occasionally, the pupils were not managed as well as they could be, most especially in one class where pupils were not seated to face the teacher.
- 76 The school has appropriately been putting much greater emphasis on investigative skills and problem solving. However, pupils are sometimes hindered in their problem solving by not having instant recall of their multiplication tables. Discussions with the competent mathematics coordinator showed that there is no whole-school approach to pupils, saying their tables as a class on a regular basis. Indeed, on occasion during the inspection, when pupils did not know, for example, seven times three, they were told to "say their tables" but this merely consisted of them going 3,6,9,12 etc. This does nothing to reinforce the memory trace that "seven threes are twenty-one". The school has usefully introduced a record of achievement on knowledge of multiplication tables for each pupil, but there is too little evidence of regular, consistent practice of tables in school.
- 77 Standards have improved since the last inspection, when standards were judged to be below average by the age of eleven.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 78 Mathematics is developed appropriately across the curriculum in subjects such as geography and design and technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the age of eleven are above national expectations; over the three years from 2000 to 2002, pupils have left the school a term ahead of pupils nationally;
- Pupils' achievement in science is good;
- Pupils greatly enjoy their science;
- The subject is effectively led and managed by the headteacher.

Commentary

- 79 Pupils really enjoy their science and this results in a thirst for knowledge. Year 2 pupils, whilst appreciating that a force applied to an object could produce movement, were desperately keen to know what made a dropped ball move **downwards**. Teachers use a practical approach to teaching science and this stimulates pupils' learning, resulting in good achievement.

- 80 Teaching is good and teachers use correct scientific vocabulary throughout the school. Learning objectives are sharply focused so that pupils know the precise purpose of each lesson.
- 81 In the lessons seen, teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory, although there was only one instance of the latter. In the best lessons, there were lively question-and-answer sessions “thrashing out” the pupils’ ideas, as in a Year 3 lesson on investigating how sound is produced. Teachers really challenge their pupils in such lessons, expecting them to try to explain, for example, why the sound from an under-water tuning fork is different from that produced in air. Pupils are full of ideas. They find science fun, and said this in their questionnaires. In a satisfactory lesson in the junior phase, pupils did not learn as much as they might have done, because the pace of the lesson was allowed to flag a little.
- 82 The subject is very well led by the headteacher, who is the science coordinator. She teaches some science herself and leads by example. A great feature of the school year is science week, where all other subjects are barred and pupils can really get to grips with their investigations. Assessment is good and pupils record their work in an appropriately scientific manner. ICT is used well and the subject benefits from a microscope directly linked to a computer for close observation studies.
- 83 All pupils are fully included in science; no discernible differences were observed between the performances of boys and girls.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school benefits from a new state-of-the-art ICT suite with interactive whiteboard;
- All classes are timetabled for two full sessions in the ICT suite each week;
- Standards of attainment match national expectations; pupils’ achievement is good.

Commentary

- 84 Standards in all areas of ICT match national expectations. The new ICT suite is having a most positive effect in raising standards further. They are further enhanced by the use of technology across the curriculum with smartboards in Year 2 and Year 6.
- 85 Pupils take part in two ICT lessons each week. Appropriately, one of these involves the direct teaching of ICT skills, whilst the other is used to support other subjects across the curriculum.
- 86 Teaching and learning are both good. Pupils want to learn because they really enjoy their ICT lessons. In a very good Year 2 lesson, pupils worked diligently developing their word processing skills. An innovation is that parents worked alongside their children; parents found this very useful indeed.
- 87 In a well taught lesson in Year 5, pupils worked competently using a graphics package to produce high quality presentations. Year 6 pupils routinely use ICT to produce animations involving both text and images. They are aware of the needs of their audience, producing, for example, interesting presentations on the subject of “Hobbies”.
- 88 ICT benefits from the services of a most competent technician who manages to keep computers working, thus saving time and maximising pupils’ learning. The subject is well led and managed. Assessment procedures are appropriate and are leading to the tracking of pupils’ skills.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

89 ICT is used well to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. For example, literacy and numeracy lessons regularly take place in the spacious suite, further enhancing pupils' learning.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography **is good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6;
 - Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy geography.
- 90 Although it was only possible to observe one lesson in geography, an analysis of work on display, together with discussions with teachers and pupils, indicates that the pupils achieve well and reach the expectations set nationally. This is a similar result to that found at the previous inspection.
- 91 Pupils throughout the school enjoy geography. Teachers had made an excellent display of summer holiday postcards from pupils of all ages, linking the postcards most effectively to large maps of the world, Europe and the British Isles. Pupils were very excited about this, and many could say where they had been and what they had seen. Younger pupils make a study of their immediate area. They know where they live, they can write their address and know their route to school. As part of a study of Brazil, pupils had decided to support a boy there. This helped them understand how some people live in other parts of the world. Geography makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 92 Teachers make the lessons interesting. Pupils in Year 5 were proud of their display contrasting Bootle with St Lucia. They understood how climatic differences affected how people lived. Increasingly, information and communication technology is now being used very effectively to help research and motivate pupils' interest.
- 93 The co-ordinator gives good support to all staff. She is aware that assessment is in the early stages of development and requires further attention.

HISTORY

Provision in history **is good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 122 Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- 94 There was no history being taught during the inspection. An analysis of work on display and discussions with pupils and teachers indicate that the pupils achieve well and reach expectations set nationally. This is a similar result to that found at the previous inspection.
- 95 Pupils were keen to show photographs of the whole school taking part in a production dressed in Victorian costumes. They had enjoyed their visit to Quarry Bank Mill. History provides pupils with many opportunities to practise their writing skills, which is helping to improve standards in Literacy across the school.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Provision for physical education is good. The school has a strong musical tradition and pupils throughout the school benefit from a rich and varied curriculum. They have many opportunities to handle different media and materials and develop their creativity. Good use is made of involvement with established artists and musicians. Dramatic productions are also used well to broaden pupils' experiences.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in gymnastics at the age of 11, are well above the national expectation;
- Staff development in teaching physical education is very good;
- The school has gained the Active Gold Award for overall provision for Physical Education;
- There is no formal tracking and recording of individual pupils' progress as they move through the school; however, in swimming clear records are kept.

Commentary

- 96 Standards of attainment in gymnastics for pupils at the age of 7 are above national expectations, and well above such expectations by the age of eleven. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards at both key stages were satisfactory. Pupils in Year 1 hop, skip and jump with increasing agility and travel along the floor using hands and feet. They vary their speed, and most pupils show good control and spatial awareness. Work in Year 2 is more challenging. Pupils follow the teachers' good demonstration and guidance to learn how to perform complicated rolls. In Years 3 and 4, these skills are built upon. Pupils work hard to refine their balancing skills. The above average attaining pupils are able to explain their balances. Some pupils with more restricted language find this difficult. By Year 5, pupils are able to perform a complicated sequence of movements using four different types of balance. In Year 6, pupils perfect their balances, mirroring their partner's balance and also supporting their partner's weight. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate very good awareness of the need to warm up muscles, and the majority demonstrate good co-ordination skills and recognise the importance of teamwork. They are enthusiastic, enjoy physical education lessons, and generally try hard to improve their work. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning.
- 97 Two lessons were observed in the infant department and four lessons in the junior department. In all these lessons, the focus was on gymnastics. In both areas of the school, the overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is focused well and lessons are usually paced to maintain motivation and interest. Pupils are identified as exemplars to demonstrate movements. Activities are interesting. Due attention is drawn to health and safety. Appropriate warm-up and cool-down periods are used to reinforce their importance. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of all pupils. They provide encouragement and praise to boost pupils' confidence and self-esteem, so that most persevere and make effective progress. Occasionally, some teachers find the management of a small minority of pupils difficult. This interrupts the lessons and the achievement of those particular children. However, most pupils enjoy their lessons and want to please their teachers and improve their skills, and this motivates them to further efforts.
- 98 Discussion with teachers and recorded evidence shows that by the time they leave the school, pupils have experienced a wide range of physical activities. Most are able to swim well, higher-attaining pupils being able to swim 400 metres and also having good knowledge of life-saving skills. Because the school has managed to get a lot of specialist teaching, pupils have had the

opportunity to participate in such areas as athletics, tennis, football, hockey and also dance, which represents a good range of cultures. Residential visits provide opportunities for all junior pupils to experience more adventurous outdoor activities. A good initiative is the introduction of structured play during lunchtimes, where Year 6 pupils lead and plan the games. This is having a positive effect on skills and sportsmanship.

- 99 Leadership of this area is very effective. A suitable scheme of work assists teachers in their planning, and additional training has taken place to ensure teachers are confident in teaching the subject. Informal assessment of pupils' progress takes place; however, a more formal method of tracking and recording pupils' skills development has yet to be adopted. The overall quantity and quality of resources are good. Visitors to the school make a very positive contribution to the curriculum. The range of extra-curricular sports activities for the pupils is excellent. Very good links have been forged with neighbouring schools and also with parents who make active contributions.

MUSIC

Provision in music **is good**

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Standards in singing at the age of 11 are above the national expectation;
- Good opportunities are provided for musical performance;
- There is no formal tracking of the development of pupils' knowledge and skills.

Commentary

- 100 During the inspection, only two lessons were observed. Judgements are also based on the standards observed during assemblies.
- 101 Singing throughout the school is of a good standard, attainment being above that normally found for pupils by the ages of 7 and eleven. Younger and older pupils sing well. During assemblies pupils sing tunefully and have a good awareness of rhythm and dynamics. When singing in two parts, they are able to maintain their parts successfully, irrespective of others. In Year 2, pupils learn how vary the sound effects they can produce with their voices. They demonstrate good progress and achievement in their singing.
- 102 Only two lessons were observed, both of which were judged to be satisfactory overall. This was because the learning objectives were too limited, and the pace of one lesson was rather slow. However, the teaching of singing is good. Planning is carefully linked to the recommended programmes of study Year 2 pupils are taught the correct way to produce sound with their voice, and their response is joyful, demonstrating good pitch and rhythm. Year 2 pupils, who are used to playing instruments, are actively involved in creating and performing music. Most can play simple rhythms on untuned percussion instruments. Pupils in Year 3 explore pitch and tempo. The introduction of 'refrain' songs produces a good response from the class. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss the difference between percussion and other instruments of the orchestra.
- 103 Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They work hard, listen carefully to information and follow instructions well. They are eager to participate and demonstrate pride in their achievements.
- 104 A significant number of pupils also play the recorder and the guitar, and there is also a choir, but due to unforeseen circumstances, it was not possible to hear them during the inspection.

- 105 Good opportunities are provided for musical appreciation and performance. No composition was observed during the inspection. Visits by professional musicians, including performances by jazz and percussion groups, enhance the music curriculum vividly. Pupils have also been introduced to Indian and Chinese music. During an arts week, which is held each year, visiting students from a local secondary school perform for the pupils.
- 106 Participation in musical concerts, such as one at the Philharmonic Hall and another at the Cathedral, and the opportunities for the choir to sing for senior citizens and participate in church services and school celebrations, enhance pupils' learning and musical skills. There are also good opportunities for pupils to appreciate music from a range of cultures, and the work of famous musicians, modern, classical and traditional.
- 107 The coordinator, who is musically talented, provides good leadership. Although there is plenty of informal assessment, there is no formal method for tracking the progress of skills development and knowledge as pupils move through the school. There is an adequate range of good quality resources. Now the school has a new computer suite, the coordinator hopes to purchase more software for use in music lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision in art and design **is good**

Main strengths and Weaknesses

- The range of activities;
- Opportunities to evaluate and work in the style of other artists;
- The very good relationships that exist between teacher and pupils have a significant impact on the quality of learning;
- No formal method of assessment to enable teachers to build on previous learning.

Commentary

- 108 By the ages of 7 and eleven, standards in art are in line with national expectations. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The weaknesses identified in that report, of too little three-dimensional artwork, insufficient knowledge of famous artists' work and the lack of choice of material restricting creativity, have all been rectified.
- 109 As only one lesson was observed during the inspection, judgements are also based on analysis of pupils' work in displays, in the portfolio of earlier work, and also on discussion with the coordinator and teachers about the most recent work.
- 110 Pupils in Year 2 record from first hand experience the textures and differences of surface textures found within the school building. They hold their wax crayons correctly, and vigorously rub grids, railings and walls. When asked about their work, they use language such as 'rough', 'smooth', and 'bumpy' to describe their investigations. Displays in classrooms show that pupils are developing an appropriate range of skills; for example, Year 3 pupils have experimented with colour mixing to produce autumn tones. Other work includes paintings in the style of Kandinsky and Monet. More recent work in Year 5 shows pupils have successfully used an object-based graphics package to produce images and visual models, There is some interesting work linked to the style of Matisse. Year 6 pupils plan, prepare and develop their ideas in their paintings of masks, which show individuality in design. Their work demonstrates satisfactory skills in colour mixing, shading and application of paint. Earlier work includes interpretations of a poem, and work reflecting different cultures such as the Aboriginal. Throughout the school, there are good examples of portraiture, resulting from the visit of a portrait artist who worked with each class in the school to develop their skills, and examples of work with clay, resulting from a similar experience for the pupils under the guidance of a

ceramic artist. These opportunities have clearly developed pupils' skills well, and indicate good achievement.

- 111 The quality of teaching in the one lesson observed was of a very good standard. The lesson was very well prepared, to enable pupils to develop new skills. The teacher's skilful questioning checked the pupils' knowledge, and ensured that terms such as 'surface' and 'texture' were fully understood, so that all pupils could take part confidently. Pupils made very good progress. The very good quality relationships in this lesson and very good pupil management had a significant impact on the quality of learning. Because pupils were challenged to find things out for themselves, they talked eagerly about what they were doing and helped each other. They achieved very well. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed this lesson, which not only increased their art skills but also their language skills and their spiritual and social development.
- 112 The coordinator provides good leadership. She ensures good quality resources are readily available and arranges for visiting specialists to enrich the curriculum and extend teachers' and pupils' skills. Another major improvement since the previous inspection has been the introduction of a scheme of work that is assisting teachers very well with their planning. As yet there is no formal system for tracking and recording pupils' progress as they move through the school.

DRAMA

Main strengths and Weaknesses

- Pupils are encouraged to participate in dramatic productions;
 - Development of language and social skills.
- 113 Pupils throughout the school participate in dramatic productions. The inspectors were shown photographs of pupils taking part in the school production of 'Christmas around the World', an undertaking that supported pupils' cultural development extremely well. Pupils have also been involved in an Easter service and also a Victorian drama, which was linked to their work in History. Also, each class takes it in turn to perform in a school assembly, to which parents are invited.
- 114 The school drama club is very well attended. This takes place after school during the Autumn Term. A visiting drama teacher has worked with pupils to increase their skills, particularly in speaking, mime and improvisation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

- 115 The school makes good provision for teaching citizenship and for personal, social and health education. It gives appropriate attention to sex education and to warning its pupils about the dangers of drugs misuse. The planned provision for pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are encouraged to share opinions during circle time and in religious education. Each class elects representatives to The School Council. The class discuss what they would like to put on the agenda and their representative reports back to them on the results. The school is taking part in healthy eating initiatives, providing fruit and water for pupils during the day.
- 116 The school enriches the pupils' curriculum through visits to places of interest such as The Botanic Gardens, Rufford Old Hall, Croxteth Park, The City Farm, and Quarry Bank Mill.

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	3
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	2
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	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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