

INSPECTION REPORT

SYCAMORE LANE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111193

Headteacher: Mr R Cleverly

Lead inspector: Mr F P Ravey

Dates of inspection: 9 -11 February 2004

Inspection number: 258078

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	370
School address:	Sycamore Lane Great Sankey Warrington Cheshire
Postcode:	WA5 1LA
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs G Stanley
Date of previous inspection:	14/6/1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sycamore Lane Community Primary School is much bigger than most primary schools nationally. A small number of pupils are the children of army personnel. Around 30 per cent of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the start of Reception or the end of Year 6. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds although no group has more than a very small number of pupils represented. Only one pupil is believed to have a first language other than English. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs is well below the national average but the percentage of pupils having statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. Pupils' special needs include visual impairment, difficulties with learning, language and communication, behavioural difficulties and physical disability. Pupils' entitlement to free school meals is below the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is average. In the last three years, the school has undergone much trauma as the result of the death in post of the previous headteacher.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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33226	T Sheriff	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History Religious education
31175	A Allison	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school. Overall, pupils achieve well and teaching and learning are mostly good. The school is well led. Its management is satisfactory. In the light of this and the low cost of educating pupils at the school, it provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement in mathematics and reading is good from Years 1 to 6.
- Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is good in Years 3 to 6.
- Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good.
- Teaching is most effective in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall.
- The commitment and skill of the senior leadership team are good aids to improvement.
- There are some weaknesses in teaching, particularly in parts of Years 1 and 2.
- The school does not have a systematic programme for checking the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school's programme for personal and social education is under-developed.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since its previous inspection. After a dip in pupils' performance following traumatic events at the school, improvement recently has been rapid and is reflected in pupils' achievement, especially in Years 3 to 6. In relation to issues for improvement raised at the previous inspection, the school has made good recent improvement in science and satisfactory improvement in relation to other issues raised.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils' achievement is good overall. It is better now than the satisfactory levels suggested by the comparisons with similar schools last year. Achievement in reading is good throughout the school, and is particularly strong for higher attaining pupils. In writing, achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in mathematics is good throughout the school and achievement in science is satisfactory. Standards overall are above average. At Years 2 and 6, standards in mathematics are above average; standards in English are average overall but are above average in reading; standards in science are average. In speaking and listening, standards are above average by Year 6. Standards in other subjects seen are generally average, with above average attainment seen in ICT by Year 6. In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well overall, with many reaching the expected standards in all areas of learning by the time they start Year 1. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. Work seen during the inspection shows an improvement on the levels achieved in the 2003 national test results at Year 6 and a similar level of performance to the results attained in Year 2.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils mostly behave well and have good attitudes to school. Pupils in Year 6 behave very

well, are very responsible and have very good attitudes to school. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching is most effective in Years 3 to 6 where it enables pupils to learn well and to make at least good, and sometimes very good, progress in many classes. Teaching is most consistently effective in Year 6. High expectations and rigorous teaching of subject skills characterise the best teaching. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall, helping young children to make a good start to their education. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 has a good impact upon pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics but in a few lessons, weaknesses relating to the management of pupils' behaviour and the level of challenge in the teaching mean that pupils sometimes do not achieve as well as they should.

The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities for its pupils although its provision for personal and social education lacks co-ordination and is inconsistent. It enriches the curriculum well, especially through the good provision it makes for residential educational visits. Choral and orchestral provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6 are also strong, additional features of the curriculum. All these additional aspects contribute strongly to pupils' personal and social development. The school takes good care of its pupils and provides them with good guidance and support, especially in assisting their academic progress in English and mathematics. It forges a good partnership with parents and the community. It maintains very good links with the local high school to which most of its pupils transfer.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is good, focusing the staff's efforts strongly on improvement. This is having a particularly strong and effective impact on Years 3 to 6. School management is satisfactory. Although the school has a mainly well-focused and planned approach to improvement, it does not yet systematically check the quality of teaching and learning and use the information gained to make improvements. School governance is satisfactory. The governing body is strongly committed to school improvement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents mostly have positive views about the school. They agree that their children like school and value the way in which their children are expected to work hard. They are supportive of the school's work although a small minority has a range of concerns. While inspectors agree with the largely positive views expressed by parents, they feel that a more formal system of seeking parents' views would enable all parents to feel that their views were being heard. Pupils are also positive in their views of the school. They say that they enjoy school and particularly like their teachers, the friendships they make with other pupils and the regular educational visits they have.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve teaching where it is weak.
- Implement a full and rigorous programme to check systematically the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and use the information gained to spread best practice and eradicate weaknesses.
- Implement a consistently organised programme for personal and social education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Standards are above average overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and reading from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Pupils achieve well in ICT in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Pupils of all attainments achieve well in many lessons due to strengths in the teaching.
- Standards in work seen this year in Year 6 are higher overall than those indicated by the 2003 national test results and represent a continued improvement on previous years.
- In lessons where teaching has weaknesses, pupils fail to achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.6 (16.7)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.9 (15.3)	14.6(14.4)
mathematics	16.5 (17.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.4 (26.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.3 (26.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.0 (26.3)	28.3 (28.6)

There were 63 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The tables show that standards in national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 over the past two years have been mostly a little higher than those achieved nationally. This was more pronounced last year at Year 6 than at Year 2. Standards in 2003 at Year 2 showed a slight decline from the levels of previous years whereas those at Year 6 showed a significant improvement on the previous two years. The tragic death in post of the previous headteacher had a particularly marked effect in Years 3 to 6 but the school is now moving forward again in terms of rising standards thanks to a strong and successful focus on the provision for Years 3 to 6. This strong management has resulted in effective teaching and learning, and this has led to further improvements in standards. Standards in Years 1 and 2 have not risen so noticeably although work seen during the inspection indicates a rise in standards in mathematics in these groups this year and maintenance of standards in reading and writing.
2. From work seen during the inspection, standards in reading remain above average by Year 2 while those in writing remain average. Standards in mathematics are now above average by Year 2. Standards in English are average by Year 6 but within this subject, standards in

reading and in speaking and listening are above average whilst those in writing are average. Standards in mathematics are above average by Year 6. Standards in science at Year 6 rose sharply in 2003 and inspection evidence indicates that this improvement has been maintained, with standards being broadly average. In ICT standards are average at Year 2 and above average at Year 6 while in religious education, standards are average at Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in work seen in other subjects are broadly average overall, with strengths in history in Years 3 to 6, where standards are above average.

3. Pupils start school with broadly average attainment. By Year 6, they are attaining above average standards in mathematics, reading, speaking and listening, ICT and history. Standards in writing and science are average but are improving, with some strong features in pupils' writing. Overall, pupils' progress is good.
4. Pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics throughout the school owing to good teaching and good programmes of work that include effective tailoring of national strategies to suit the pupils' needs. In reading, the school interprets the National Literacy Strategy flexibly and effectively, providing separate sessions in which pupils can receive close instruction on how best to develop their skills. In addition, pupils are taught the skills of finding and retrieving information effectively. As they progress through Years 3 to 6, pupils are encouraged to explain closely the finer points in reading texts and this aids their good achievement in developing speaking skills. The very good use made of assessment enables pupils to be grouped in classes that contain other pupils of similar attainment. This, in turn, allows teachers to focus the learning sharply and to good effect. As a result, pupils of all attainments progress well and achieve well in reading and in speaking and listening throughout Years 1 to 6.
5. In mathematics, teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and they provide work that challenges them to work productively. Very good use of assessment enables the school to place pupils in class groups with others of similar attainment, thereby helping teachers to provide a close match of work to pupils' learning needs. Much improved resources since the time of the previous inspection, especially in ICT, allow pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding well. As a result of these factors, pupils of all attainment progress well and make good achievement. In both English and mathematics, the school succeeds in enabling higher attaining pupils to achieve well. This is due to very effective use of assessment and teachers' high expectations of what these pupils should achieve. It is particularly noticeable in Years 3 to 6, and especially in Year 6.
6. In ICT, strong and effective teaching in Years 3 to 6 enables pupils of all attainments to achieve well and to attain above average standards by Year 6. The school's good investment in resources in ICT also contributes to the good progress pupils make in developing their skills. Good subject management is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement in ICT throughout the school and the strength of teaching in Years 3 to 6, and especially the very good teaching in Year 6, means that pupils' progress is best in these year groups.
7. Effective use of ICT is also a significant factor contributing to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs throughout the school. Teachers plan work carefully to match the learning targets identified in pupils' individual education plans. They then use support, where available, to ensure that pupils have ready access to advice. Often, ICT is used as a stimulus for learning that enables pupils to have a quick and visible response for their efforts. Interesting and challenging work leads to pupils learning with enthusiasm.
8. Pupils achieved at least well in around two-thirds of lessons seen during the inspection. In these lessons, work provided was challenging and interesting. As a result, pupils were keen to learn and achieved well. Particularly good progress was made in lessons in Year 6, owing to teachers' high expectations of what pupils of all attainments should achieve but equally good teaching had a similar effect in other year groups, for example in Years 2, 3 and 4. It was much more unusual to find pupils achieving less well than they should but, where this was so, it was

due either to a lack of sufficient challenge in work provided or in the teacher not managing pupils' behaviour sufficiently well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have positive attitudes to school. Overall, they behave well. The school promotes personal development effectively. Attendance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn.
- The very good, responsible behaviour and attitudes displayed by Year 6 pupils are strengths of the school.
- Behaviour is mostly good although that of some younger pupils is not always as good as it should be.
- The school promotes pupils' moral and social development well.
- Attendance is very good.

Commentary

9. Pupils enjoy school. In the questionnaires they completed, numerous pupils commented on how much they like their teachers, and activities such as playing in the band and choir and going on interesting trips. Pupils throughout the school are keen to learn. They want to do their best and are confident in talking about their work. They particularly relish lessons that have a high level of challenge. For example, in a challenging literacy lesson about myths, Year 5 pupils were keen to get on and improve their own writing of a myth and worked hard at this.

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	360	0	1
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

10. Pupils in Year 6 display particularly good behaviour and attitudes. Their high level of motivation and very mature attitude to their work helps them to make good progress. Year 6 pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and set a very good example for younger pupils. The school council is chaired very ably by a Year 6 pupil. Many other Year 6 pupils help with various tasks around the school.
11. Throughout the school, pupils mostly behave well. They are well-mannered and very polite to adults. There have been no exclusions in the current school year and only one permanent

exclusion in the last school year. The school has put in place a good behaviour policy and system of rewards. However, some younger pupils, in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, sometimes do not behave as well as they should. Sometimes in lessons or assemblies they are restless and inattentive. This restlessness often occurs when a lesson fails to interest and challenge them.

12. Pupils are mostly friendly and caring to each other, with consideration for others strongly valued by the school. However, in the parents' questionnaire, a significant minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying. In discussions, pupils admitted they sometimes "fall out" and "make up" with each other, and some younger pupils said they are sometimes upset by the behaviour of a few pupils. However, they did not express any worries about bullying. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and when they occur, the school deals with them effectively.
13. Assemblies and circle time are used well to encourage pupils to reflect on moral issues such as trust and friendship. The school is unusual in providing opportunities for residential trips for all pupils in Years 3 to 6 and this is a very successful method of promoting confidence, teamwork and other social skills. The mature and responsible attitudes of Year 6 pupils are a tribute to the school's promotion of their personal and social development throughout their school life. The school has responded well to an issue raised in the previous inspection about the lack of work done on cultural diversity. Throughout the school, pupils learn about different religions and cultures; for example they have celebrated the Chinese New Year and explored African designs in art. The school recognises that the next step it needs to take is to develop contacts with representatives of minority ethnic groups and non-Christian religions.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.5
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

14. The attendance rate is well above the national average. Reasons for this very good attendance include pupils' enjoyment of school, the good support which parents provide for attendance and the school's good procedures for monitoring attendance. Punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are strongest in Years 3 to 6 and in the Foundation Stage. They are satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2, with some strengths. Assessment is good overall, with particular strengths in English and mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is strong and promotes good achievement in many lessons, especially in Year 6.
- Effective teaching of reading and mathematics throughout the school leads to good achievement.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage enables mostly pupils to achieve well.
- Good teaching for pupils with special educational needs helps them achieve their learning targets.
- Occasionally, teaching in ICT and music is outstanding.
- Where teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory.
- Occasionally, teaching lacks focus and challenge, and as a result pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Assessment information is used effectively to match work to pupils' needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 56 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	9 (16%)	25 (45%)	17 (30%)	3 (5%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

15. Around two-thirds of lessons observed during the inspection were at least good. However, In English and mathematics, the quality of teaching was at least good in around three-quarters of lessons observed, with over a quarter judged to be very good. In Years 3 to 6, good teaching was seen in over three-quarters of lessons observed whereas in Years 1 and 2 the majority of teaching was satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, slightly more good than satisfactory teaching was seen. A small amount of outstanding teaching was observed in ICT and music.
16. Where teaching is effective, a key factor is teachers' high expectation of what pupils should achieve and the way in which they match learning tasks so that this good achievement occurs. This was seen in all year groups but particularly in Years 3 to 6. In this age group, teaching was more often inspiring, producing in pupils an eagerness to learn. The quality of learning tasks provided means that pupils work productively and that as a result they make good progress and achieve well. In Year 6, this was evident in many subjects, an example being science, where the high quality of lesson planning and teachers' expectation that pupils work hard are resulting in significant improvements in standards even though the quality of science teaching in other parts of the school is more variable.
17. The teaching of reading and mathematics is successful across the school. In reading, pupils are taught skills systematically in sessions dedicated to such work as well as in parts of literacy lessons. Teachers question sharply to make pupils think and to stretch them in their learning. In mathematics, tasks are well matched to what pupils have learned previously. This results in pupils' learning being extended effectively and in good progress. The school's practice of grouping pupils by attainment in mathematics from Year 2 onwards helps teachers to design learning tasks that focus sharply on pupils' needs. This, together with good management of pupils' behaviour and good relationships in lessons, results in pupils learning well and making good progress. This is particularly the case for higher attaining pupils. High expectation of what these pupils should achieve means that they work to their capacity and achieve well.

18. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is most effective in helping children to develop their personal and social and communication skills. All staff and helpers provide children with good examples of such skills as politeness and taking turns. There is a high expectation that children should do the same. As a result, they learn quickly. Promoting enjoyment of stories and the development of good listening skills form an effective foundation for teaching children to read. This is built upon by clearly defined strategies for developing children's early reading skills. As a result, children learn to link sounds to letters and begin to become readers.
19. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with work that closely matches the targets in their individual education plans. Information and communication technology is used effectively, both to promote independence of learning for these pupils and to provide a quick-response support for their work. Where possible, support staff or voluntary helpers also assist. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are given very good and sensitive support based upon very good relationships. An example of this was seen in Reception, where very good interaction between a child and his support assistant enabled him to achieve well in painting a model of a fire engine.
20. Outstanding teaching was observed in history and music in Years 3 to 6. It was characterised by the teacher's ability to use either a particular skill (in music) or resources (in history) to inspire pupils and create a very positive climate for learning. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson in choral singing, pupils sang in three-part harmony to a very high standard. They not only sustained this but improved it during the lesson, led by a teacher who clearly expected no less and whose rapport with the pupils ensured that this was what she received. The pupils very obviously enjoyed every minute of their performances. In a Year 4 history lesson, pupils were captivated, first by sound effects and then by the words of a visitor, who had been invited to speak about her experience of evacuation during the Second World War. The teacher's very high expectations of what pupils should achieve in the tasks that followed and her close attention to different types of learning ensured that the excellent start to the lesson was consolidated into excellent achievement.
21. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slowed and pupils lose concentration when too long a period of time is spent working with the teacher as a class group. This was more noticeable with pupils in Years 1 and 2 and was rarely seen in Years 3 to 6. It resulted in pupils losing concentration and not working as well as they should. On some other occasions, the teacher's management of pupils' behaviour in Years 1 and 2 is ineffective and a significant number of pupils either become disengaged from the lesson and do not learn or they become lethargic and make little attempt to listen. At such times, teaching is unsatisfactory. Very occasionally in the Year 3 to 6 age group, work is not well matched to pupils' learning needs. This results in too little progress and unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
22. Assessment procedures have improved very much since the last inspection when the use of assessment to match work to pupils' prior attainment, especially in science, was judged to be an area for development. Procedures are good overall. Assessment is securely established in the Foundation Stage in the autumn term, following the latest national guidance for the areas of learning. A profile of each child, based on this initial assessment, is built up over the year to enable teachers to group pupils and match work to their needs.
23. Pupils in the Year 1 to Year 6 are tested frequently in English, mathematics and science. The information gathered from the assessments is then used well, notably in English and mathematics, to group pupils by ability and plan work that best matches their needs. The statutory test results are analysed thoroughly so that staff have a clear picture of pupils' attainment and can provide for them appropriately as they progress through the school. Teachers review the progress of all pupils regularly and in this way, groups of pupils requiring additional help are targeted.
24. Within lessons, teachers mostly ensure all pupils are made aware of what they should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. In the concluding part of the lesson, teachers check on

the gains pupils have made in their learning. This information is used to inform subsequent planning well. Pupils are helped to evaluate their own learning. As they progress through the school, pupils are more and more able to assess their achievements. Knowing what they have achieved boosts their confidence and self-esteem well. Pupils in Year 6 talked proudly about their present level of attainment in mathematics and how they are working hard to attain higher standards. This is one of the reasons why a significant proportion of pupils in Year 6 attains the higher Level 5 in mathematics.

The curriculum

The school provides a **satisfactory** range of learning opportunities, with some areas of strength. Curriculum enrichment is **good**. Accommodation and learning resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in mathematics is good throughout the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school.
- Provision in ICT is good in Years 3 to 6.
- Visits to educational destinations, residential visits and visitors to school are a strong feature of the provision.
- The school makes good provision for curriculum enrichment through after-school clubs and participation in arts initiatives.
- The school's programme for personal and social education is inconsistent.
- The school's provision for gifted and talented pupils could be strengthened further.

Commentary

25. The school has worked hard since the previous inspection to strengthen curriculum provision, particularly in English, mathematics, science, ICT and the Foundation Stage. However, personal and social development is not yet planned systematically as a fundamental part of the curriculum and this reduces the effectiveness of provision for this important aspect. Although lessons generally make suitable provision for gifted and talented pupils, this is not always the case and there is scope for strengthening this area of provision in order to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met fully.
26. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are implemented well, with the school tailoring these effectively to meet pupils' learning needs. Information and communication technology is incorporated effectively into the curriculum. The basic ICT skills that are developed in lessons in the computer suite are applied well in other relevant contexts, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Good provision in mathematics enables pupils to achieve well, particularly in using and applying mathematical skills and problem solving in other subjects. Generally, the school provides well for higher attaining pupils, giving them challenging work that helps to extend their learning. This is particularly evident in reading and mathematics. Pupils who are talented musically are given good opportunities to develop their talents but the school's provision for talented pupils is not consistent throughout the arts, with no systematic identification of talents taking place across the provision.
27. Curriculum enrichment has been improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now a strong feature of the school's provision. A well-planned programme of visits to educational destinations, residential visit for older pupils and a good range of visitors to school complement lessons and provide considerable stimulus for learning. In an example of this, a visiting theatre group helped pupils to understand what life was like for ordinary people in the Second World War. In Year 3, a visit to a science museum stimulated great interest in learning about forces and the pupils' scientific understanding was greatly enhanced as a result. Teachers give freely of their time to provide a good range of after school opportunities. These provide pupils with good quality experiences that enhance classroom learning in areas such as

music, sport and ICT. The school provides weekly lessons in French for pupils in Year 6. Choral and orchestral provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is a strong feature of curriculum enrichment.

28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school works effectively to provide these pupils with a good balance of support and challenge in lessons. Work is well matched to the targets contained in pupils' individual education plans. Mostly, these targets are easy to assess and they lend themselves to close interpretation by teachers. Imaginative use is made of ICT in order to enhance the quality of work provided for pupils with special educational needs and to foster their eagerness to learn. The work provided means that pupils with special educational needs receive a broad-ranging curriculum that meets their learning needs well. Support staff and voluntary helpers are well deployed to help pupils. The school makes appropriate provision for the one pupil whose first language is not English.
29. The accommodation is of mostly of good quality although in the Foundation Stage the limited access to suitable climbing apparatus and play equipment, particularly in the outdoor area, is a weakness. The school makes good use of its two halls, for assembly and physical education. The school libraries are well stocked although one used by pupils in Years 3 to 6 is rather cramped and too small for more than small groups of pupils. It is used well to provide space for additional literacy support for groups of pupils. The school is working hard continually to improve its outdoor environment. Additional play facilities have been provided and more are planned. An outdoor theatre is also under construction. Resources for learning are at least adequate overall and in some areas they are good, for example in ICT and music. The school's computer suite is large and well equipped, providing a good setting for whole classes of pupils to develop their skills. The school has a good range and variety of musical instruments, some of which are used to supplement the woodwind instruments that form the main bulk of the school's orchestra.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good care for its pupils and effective support and guidance based on the monitoring of pupils' achievements and personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good, trusting relationships with staff.
- Health and safety procedures are good.
- Arrangements for helping new pupils settle into school are good.
- The school council is very effective.
- The school sets targets for pupils and provides good intervention strategies to raise achievement.

Commentary

30. Pupils are well cared for. Staff know pupils well and pupils are confident in turning to their teachers when they are upset or need help. The school has dealt effectively with the weaknesses in health and safety procedures noted in the last inspection. It now has an updated health and safety policy that is included in the staff handbook and co-ordinated by the headteacher. The governing body assists with regular inspections of the premises and the caretaker is vigilant about health and safety matters and keeps the school very clean. When pupils go on residential or other trips, the school conducts careful risk assessments. Child protection procedures are good and all staff are aware of what to do if they have concerns. The school has very good liaison with external agencies.
31. The school takes good care of pupils who have special educational needs. Reviews are conducted regularly and pupils are provided with well-focused targets in their individual education plans. Activities in lessons are planned well to enable pupils with special educational

needs to get the most out of their learning. Where additional support is available, it is used well. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are very well supported.

32. There is no formal monitoring of pupils' personal development but staff are sensitive to pupils' individual needs. The school ensures that all pupils feel valued, with achievements of all kinds celebrated in 'good work' assemblies. Although teachers provide good guidance through assemblies and circle time, the lack of overall co-ordination of personal, social and health education weakens this aspect of the school's provision.
33. A large majority of parents is pleased with the arrangements made by the school to help their children settle in the reception class. The gradual entry programme for the first three weeks enables children to settle in gradually, and parents value the good easy communication they have with staff. The school also has good induction arrangements with the local high school which help to ease this important transition.
34. The school council provides pupils with a very effective means of exercising initiative and experiencing democracy. At a meeting during the inspection, pupils discussed their ideas for a friendship or "buddy" bench. At every stage of the discussion pupils carefully considered the implications of their decisions and listened respectfully to each other's opinions before taking a vote. A pupil from Year 6 ably chairs the council and this reflects the strong sense of ownership that pupils feel for their council. As a result of a council decision, pupils organised a disco in order to raise money for play equipment. The idea for an outdoor theatre, which is in the process of realisation, also came from pupils.
35. Comprehensive assessment procedures, particularly for English and mathematics, ensure that pupils' learning and progress are tracked as they move through the school. The school reviews pupils' progress very carefully and also uses additional tests to pinpoint aspects of learning where help is most needed.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's **good** partnership with parents, its **good** links with the community and **very good** links with other schools support and enrich pupils' learning well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' good support for their children's learning at home, and in ensuring regular attendance, supports learning effectively.
- The Friends of Sycamore Lane provide committed and very useful support to the school, particularly through their help in the development of the grounds.
- There are no regular formal systems in place for consulting parents although most parents agree that the school is approachable and that it listens to their views.
- Very good links with the local High School support the school's work and enrich pupils' education effectively.

Commentary

36. The school has an effective partnership with parents. Parents are interested in their children's education and provide good support by regularly hearing them read and by supporting homework. The school encourages parents to support their children's learning through:
 - provision of homework books;
 - its clear homework policy, which is shared with parents;
 - regular provision of information about the curriculum;
 - holding meetings on how parents can support their children's learning when they start school;
 - an annual curriculum afternoon.

37. Parents also receive an informative prospectus, regular newsletters and an annual governors' report which is enlivened by pupils' comments. The majority of parents agree that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress. Two parents' evenings are held each year. Overall, annual reports on pupils' progress are good.
38. The Friends of Sycamore Lane give very good support to the school through their social and fund raising activities. A sub-group is helping to transform the grounds in order to provide a more interesting outdoor environment for pupils. With help from parents and the community they have formed an attractive fenced area and seating and replanted borders. A successful grant application has enabled the creation of an outdoor theatre.
39. Parents mostly agree that they feel comfortable in approaching the school and that they can easily talk to teachers when they have concerns about their children. However, there are, at present, no formal systems for consulting parents about their opinions. Although a large majority of parents express positive views about all aspects of the school's work, a small minority expressed a range of concerns. Inspectors largely agree with the positive views expressed by most parents but consider that the establishment of more formal means of consulting parents for their opinions would be a useful way of allowing all parents to feel that their views are heard.
40. A significant minority of parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concerns about bullying. Inspection findings do not support these concerns. Bullying and systematic unkindness are not tolerated by the school, which acts promptly to deal with any instances of which it is aware. In discussions, pupils did not express any concerns about bullying. However, the occasional roughness or misbehaviour of some younger pupils sometimes results in pupils being upset at playtime.
41. Very good links with the high school to which most pupils transfer, enrich pupils education well. Pupils benefit from a wide range of joint projects and visits including a joint residential visit, collaborative art work, an engineering project for Year 6 girls and an "Electricity Day". The school has worked very closely with the high school on its bid for specialist engineering status.
42. Good links with the community enrich pupils' learning. Regular outside visits support the curriculum well and pupils frequently raise money for local charities. However, at present there is limited community use of the school's facilities. Governors aim to increase community use and plans to provide a pre-school nursery in the ground are progressing well. The school also plans to hold ICT courses for adults in its new ICT suite.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Leadership is good. Management is satisfactory with developing strengths. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A clear sense of purpose and strong commitment of the headteacher to enable all pupils to achieve as highly as possible is shared effectively by the other members of the senior leadership group.
- The example set by the senior leadership group, including the headteacher, motivates both the staff team and pupils.
- Monitoring of school performance particularly in English and mathematics, enables teachers to plan tasks that meet the needs of pupils so that all achieve well.
- The annual review of staff performance, target setting and professional development is helping to raise standards.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning and this limits the rate of improvement.

Commentary

43. The headteacher is determined to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to achieve as well as possible. The other members of the senior leadership group have similar aspirations and support the headteacher well. They are strongly committed to recent national initiatives in school leadership and see these as valuable aids in helping them further to improve the school.
44. The senior leadership group sets a good example to the rest of the staff and to pupils. This good example, linked to the commitment of school staff, is one of the reasons that standards overall have risen at a similar rate to standards nationally. Standards in science by the end of Year 6 – identified as a key issue in the previous report – have risen significantly. Less important issues in the previous report have been tackled. Planning work in art and design, geography and physical education to ensure that skills are taught consistently and are matched well to prior attainment, particularly in relation to the older pupils, has been successfully addressed. In addition, the school has taken steps to reflect the cultural diversity of present day society. All this has been achieved against the background of considerable trauma following the death in post of the previous headteacher four years ago. It has taken considerable skills of leadership, both by senior staff and by governors, to keep the school on course and to now drive improvement forward successfully after a dip in standards for two years.
45. A strong feature of the school's management is the analysis of the results of national tests. In addition, the school checks on the learning of all pupils to see whether they are making the expected progress as predicted from the assessment of their previous work. This information enables the school to identify areas for the school development plan effectively. The strategies to improve standards in science, including giving more attention to pupils' enquiry and investigation skills, exemplify this. For mathematics and English the school sets targets for, and shares them with, individual pupils and this is a strong motivating factor for all pupils to work hard as discussion with pupils in Year 6 indicated.
46. Another positive feature of management is the review of teachers' performance and associated target setting linked to in-service training that is based on the school's analysis of pupils' performance in national and other tests. This contributes well to the rising standards and achievement of all pupils. However, management overall is judged to be satisfactory rather than good because there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. The senior leadership group is not informed well enough about the quality of teaching and learning in each subject. This means that the school's self evaluation, while satisfactory overall, is insufficiently informed about the overall quality of teaching and learning and the professional development needs of individual teachers. The school recognises this and monitoring of teaching and learning is a key priority in its management development strategy.
47. The school benefits from a supportive and committed governing body. In conjunction with the senior leadership group, the governing body plans the school's future soundly through its development plan. A committee structure operates successfully. The committees are well led and provide opportunities for governors to concentrate their interests in specific areas of school. The chair of the governing body is knowledgeable and has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school. The governing body ensures that all statutory duties are met. It has an increasing awareness of what is happening in school through, for example the 'adopt a class' scheme whereby individual governors make links with specific classes. This has improved governor knowledge. Subject co-ordinators regularly give presentations to governors informing them of developments in their area of the curriculum. These improve governor knowledge and increasingly allow governors the opportunity to hold the school to account.
48. Financial management is sound. The school identifies areas of priority. Approval is sought from the finance committee for major spending decisions. Administrative support is efficient

and the principles of best value are applied satisfactorily. In the light of pupils' good achievement overall, the good quality of education provided and its lower than average cost of educating pupils, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	767,819
Total expenditure	811,377
Expenditure per pupil	2,140

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	55,446
Balance carried forward to the next	11,888

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory** with some strengths.

49. Children are taught in a Reception class and in a Reception/Year 1 mixed age class. The learning environment is stimulating and meets requirements for the learning needs of this age group although there are some minor shortcomings in provision for outdoor play and in planning for structured play activities. In its drive to improve the quality of the provision, the school has taken steps to recognise the distinctive nature of this learning stage and has already identified these shortcomings as areas for development.
50. Achievement is good overall. Children come from a very wide range of pre school settings and achieve well from a broadly average starting point. The majority of children will have reached the early learning goals for this age group by the end of the reception year and achievement is particularly good in communication, language and literacy and in personal and social development. The school has worked hard to establish productive links with pre school settings and makes good use of the information it receives to build on previous learning. Teaching is good overall and is particularly good in promoting language development. Teachers and other adults work well together to support learning and provision for special educational needs is of high quality. However, in the mixed age class, the conflict between the different learning needs of the two age groups sometimes leads to insufficient focus on the needs of reception age children, particularly for structured play opportunities.
51. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator provides good leadership and strong vision for this stage of learning. She is well informed and knowledgeable about the learning needs of young children. However, there is room for more rigour in addressing some shortcomings in provision, particularly in planning for learning through structured play and for outdoor provision.
52. It is not possible to judge progress since the last inspection, due to recent changes in national requirements for this age group. Concerns about provision for physical development, particularly in relation to climbing and balancing, have been partially met. Appropriate action is planned and new apparatus has been purchased but is not yet in use. The school has been successful in maintaining appropriate learning provision for its youngest pupils.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good relationships that exist between adults and children promote positive attitudes to learning.
 - Children develop good levels of confidence, motivation and independence.
53. Teaching is good and this area of learning is promoted well as a fundamental part of provision for this age group. Teachers and other adults provide good role models and children learn quickly that they must be polite, take turns, listen to what others are saying and follow instructions. As a result, they achieve well in developing their interpersonal skills and in developing very positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate on tasks for increasing amounts of time and will often persevere with a task beyond the time expected. A group of children were so determined to finish painting their model fire engines that they remained behind when others had moved on to another activity. Their increasing independence is evident in the way they take responsibility for their own personal needs and work unaided for

quite long periods of time. They are able to take responsibility for carrying out small tasks such as giving out whiteboards or tidying up and take great pride in the trust put in them. Children generally behave well, particularly in structured situations, but behaviour can deteriorate in less directed activities and sometimes impairs the quality of their learning. Most children are on course to achieve the learning goals for this area by the end of the reception year.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication skills are promoted well in a good range of planned activities.
 - Teaching is effective in developing children's early reading skills.
 - More could be done to promote the development of writing skills.
54. Teaching in this area is good and promotes good learning and achievement. In direct teaching sessions, children experience good opportunities to develop their communication skills and many are on course to achieve the goals for learning in this area by the end of the year. Their spoken language is developing well and they communicate their ideas and needs effectively in a wide range of situations. They listen with great enjoyment to stories, such as *The Three Little Pigs*, and take great delight in joining in repetitive phrases or actions. They recognise and enjoy humour in stories and rhymes and are articulate in answering questions or expressing their own personal responses. Good teaching strategies enable children to achieve well in developing reading skills. Most can link sounds to letters, say what sounds make up their own names and recognise initial and final consonant sounds in familiar words. Most are achieving well in written communication. Most can write their own names, sometimes with correct capital and lower case letters and attempt recognisable phonetic representations of other words. Although suitable opportunities are provided for children to practise their writing skills in different contexts, more could be done to promote their early writing skills in the course of structured play activities.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory** with some strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are developing good basic skills in counting and number recognition.
 - ICT is used effectively to supplement learning.
55. Teaching in this area is satisfactory with some good features. In direct teaching sessions, most children achieve well in developing a secure understanding of numbers and shape. Teaching strategies are successful in helping children to recognise and write numerals to 10 and beyond. They count sets of objects with increasing accuracy and are beginning to understand the principle of subtraction in both practical and abstract forms. The learning is set in suitable contexts for the age group and often presented in the form of a game. During the inspection, children were learning very effectively about 'taking away' by playing a well designed number game which required them to take away spots from a snake according to the roll of a die. This helped them to achieve well in applying their learning about subtraction to a new situation. Information and communication technology is used well to consolidate number skills and shape recognition. Almost all children are on course to reach the goals for mathematical development by the end of the year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory** with some strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use computers and other equipment with skill and confidence.
 - Good opportunities are provided for children to develop basic awareness of growth and change in the world around them.
56. Teaching is satisfactory, with some good features and achievement is satisfactory overall. Most children are on course to achieve the expected goals in scientific, technological and environmental learning but no evidence was available from the inspection to indicate their achievements in historical awareness. Children are achieving particularly well in information and communication technology. Their ICT skills are developing well for their ages, through regular access to computers and listening centres in support of their learning. They are adept at selecting the programs they want to use and show very good understanding of computer technology. Science related activities, with materials such as sand and water, give children a good basic understanding of how these materials behave. Free access to equipment such as magnets, enables children to explore and ask questions about environmental phenomena and they learn effectively about the needs of living things through regular contact with the classroom gerbils and fish. Their technological skills are developed well through regular opportunities to use construction toys and in activities such as designing and making 'fire engines' using available tools and materials.

Physical development

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory** but with some shortcomings.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skills relating to holding and manipulating are developed well.
 - Children develop good co-ordination in body movement and good spatial awareness.
 - Some areas of physical development are restricted by limited access to suitable climbing apparatus and play equipment, particularly in the outdoor area.
 - Teaching occasionally makes insufficient demands on children so that they do not achieve as well as they should.
57. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory but some shortcomings arise when teaching makes insufficient demands on pupils and expectations for what they can do are not high enough. In a physical development session in the hall, many pupils did not achieve well enough because they were insufficiently motivated and the activities were not planned and organised with enough focus on the development of specific skills. Most children are on course to achieve the learning goals for this area by the end of the reception year. Children generally achieve well in developing good control and co-ordination in their movements and show good spatial awareness. During outside play sessions, they ride wheeled vehicles, run, jump and balance with great confidence and control. A small group demonstrated proudly how well they could balance, using their arms to keep steady and placing their feet with great precision as they moved along a narrow 'bridge' they had made from blocks. There are insufficient opportunities for children to explore and develop large-scale movements, such as climbing, particularly in outside sessions. Plans are already underway to improve this situation. Almost all children hold pencils and paintbrushes correctly, with good control for their ages. They manipulate tools such as scissors and glue spreaders with increasing precision and accuracy.

Creative development

58. No creative sessions were observed in full and so no judgements can be made about teaching or overall provision in this area. However, short observations of children engaged in painting models, playing with finger puppets, and the evidence from displays of children's work suggest that children achieve well in this area and provision is at least satisfactory. Children achieved particularly well in designing and making their own model fire engines. They showed good control of paint and glue in making and decorating their models and were careful to select the right colours for different parts of the model. Displays of 'Sikh' art indicate a good multicultural focus and children make satisfactory use of ICT to create images. Teachers' planning shows good provision for imaginative activities in art, music, dance and drama activities. Drawings and paintings on display show good progress towards the learning goals for this area.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory** with some strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in reading in Years 1 to 6.
- Standards in writing are improving owing to effective teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils in Year 6 achieve well in all aspects of the subject, due to effective and sometimes very effective teaching.
- Good support and good planning of work enable pupils with special educational needs to achieve well.
- Occasionally, the pace of teaching drops and pupils lose concentration.
 - Skills in handwriting are not yet developing consistently enough.
- The subject co-ordinators are driving forward improvement strongly and effectively.
 - Assessment is used very effectively to help improve standards.

Commentary

59. Standards in reading are above average by Year 2 and Year 6 and all groups of pupils achieve well. This is due to a well-planned and very sharply focused approach to the teaching of reading. The school has tailored the National Literacy Strategy successfully to suit the learning needs of its pupils by providing separate daily sessions to help pupils develop their reading skills. This is enhanced further by the sharpness of focus in such sessions. For example, the school's literacy action plan details the development of a particular type of questioning as a key objective to help raise the levels of high achievement in Year 2. Talking to pupils about stories clearly shows teachers' success in developing such skills. Similarly, older pupils in Years 3 to 6 use reading sessions well to help them develop a strong understanding of the use of different techniques by authors to create effects in stories.
60. Standards in writing are improving although they are not yet as well developed as those in reading. This is partly because the school's priority for improvement has been more closely focused on reading and has resulted in sharper teaching of the skills of reading. However, teachers' skills of matching work to pupils' learning needs in most lessons result in some good achievement, especially for higher attaining pupils. This is true throughout Years 1 to 6 but is most successful in Year 6, where high expectations of all pupils results in them working productively in lessons. Pupils in Year 6 are particularly aware of what they are to learn and of how to judge their success in learning. This awareness is also evident in other year groups in Years 3 to 6 but is particularly noticeable and effective in Year 6.
61. Pupils develop the skills of speaking and listening to an at least satisfactory level throughout the school and where they are confident in their knowledge and understanding, speech flows well and achievement is good. This was particularly noticeable when pupils in Years 2 and 6 were talking about their knowledge and understanding of reading. In Year 6, pupils show a mature grasp of spoken language and conduct conversations fluently and easily. Their attainment is above average. Good quality speaking and listening was demonstrated by pupils at a school council meeting held during the inspection.
62. Teachers plan well throughout the school to develop the learning of pupils with special educational needs. They are particularly adept at using ICT in order to provide these pupils, and lower attaining pupils, with stimulating and challenging learning activities that fit in well with the targets in pupils' individual learning plans. This is coupled with good support from voluntary helpers and teaching assistants, when available, and results in pupils achieving well. The

effective use of ICT in this way is a further example of the school's development planning translating into effective action. It is also an example of good teaching.

63. Occasionally, teaching is not quite as sharp as it should be in the use of time in lessons. This was more evident during the inspection in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 to 6 and resulted in pupils becoming a little restless, losing concentration and not achieving as well as they could. Occasionally, also, work was not as demanding for higher achieving pupils although this was an exception to usual practice. Overall, higher achieving pupils are expected to work hard and are provided with challenging tasks. As a result they make good progress, especially in Years 2 and 6. Although pupils' handwriting is usually satisfactory, and in some cases it is good, standards lack consistency, with some work being of below average quality.
64. Purposeful leadership and management of the subject are having a strong impact upon improvement. The subject co-ordinators are knowledgeable and well organised; what they have planned is clearly working in practice. They make very good use of test and other information to identify individual pupils' learning needs. Targets for learning are set for each pupil and are known by the pupils themselves. The co-ordinators have a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The use of clear targets allied to high expectations is leading to improvements, especially in writing in Years 3 to 6. Both co-ordinators recognise the need for a systematic and rigorous programme of lesson observations to check on teaching and learning so that the quality of the best teaching is spread throughout the school. Following a dip in standards around three years ago, the subject is now improving well, thanks to a sharply focused, well managed approach. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Inspection evidence shows that the school continues to improve upon past performance and that its well-planned approach gives cause for optimism that this will continue.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. The school has a well-planned approach to developing the skills of literacy in other subjects. This was seen both in literacy lessons and in work in other subjects. History provides a particularly rich vein of development for literacy, for example when pupils in Year 3 wrote notes about 'A Day in the Life of a Viking' as part of their planned work. Year 5 pupils developed their knowledge of myths and legends, using ICT as a means to stimulate writing. High expectations of pupils' ability to explain mathematical reasoning contributed both to speaking and listening and to improvement in mathematical skills in a Year 3 mathematics lesson. In Year 2, during a lesson focused on the Ten Commandments, the teacher had a high expectation that pupils should not only discuss but then write as a group certain rules that would benefit their school. These examples are an indication of the way in which the school is responding positively and effectively to recent national guidance to make literacy permeate the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above those expected nationally in Year 2 and Year 6.
- All pupils make good progress and achieve well because teaching and learning are good and teachers make effective use of very good resources.
- The analysis of national and other tests and checking on learning in lessons is used effectively to group pupils and match work well to their needs.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject that contribute to their success.
- The subject is led and managed well.
- There is insufficient checking of teaching and learning through a programme of lesson observations.

- Some marking, though satisfactory overall, does not contain sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve.

Commentary

66. Raising standards in mathematics is a priority for the school. Standards in both Year 2 and Year 6 are above average because the percentage of pupils achieving at the nationally expected levels has increased and a significant percentage of pupils achieve at a higher level. All pupils achieve well because of the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy through good teaching allied to consistently effective checking on gains made in pupils' learning and using the information to set targets for, and share these with, each pupil.
67. Teaching and learning are good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Progress is good and all pupils achieve well because of the good and sometimes very good teaching in parts of Year 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6. Teaching is good overall because teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and lessons usually move along at a good pace. Resources have improved since the previous inspection, particularly those in ICT. Teachers make good use of these, for example as observed in a very good lesson in Year 2 in which pupils used very appropriate programs to extend their knowledge and understanding of shapes.
68. Tasks are matched well to prior learning. There is good support for lower-attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs. This help is provided by teachers and, when present, by the learning support assistants, who have good relationships with the pupils and help to build up their confidence. This ensures that they achieve well. Higher-attaining pupils are provided for well because of the use of assessment to 'set' pupils in each year group and because of the demands made on them by more challenging tasks. This was shown in a very good lesson in Year 6 where pupils worked very enthusiastically to extend their knowledge and understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages firstly by mental strategies and then by the very efficient use of calculators. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary very well. All teachers make sure that pupils know what they should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson and check learning both during and at the end of lessons so that pupils are aware of the gains they have made in their learning. There is an emphasis also on pupils evaluating their own learning in lessons and this is done in a way that promotes confidence and self-esteem well, so contributing to the very positive attitudes to the subject. The difference between the best teaching and that which is satisfactory is that in the best teaching the pace is unrelenting and the level of challenge in the tasks is greater through better use of assessment to help teachers with their planning.
69. Marking of work is satisfactory overall with occasional examples of good marking with comments. However, there are examples of work being ticked as correct when it is incorrect. Also spelling of key vocabulary is not always corrected. However, target sheets in the front of the exercise books ensure that each pupil has a very good idea of what has to be achieved to reach a higher level. Older pupils in particular are well-motivated by this and work hard to achieve their targets. Parents are also kept informed of these targets so they know how well their child is progressing and so that they can help their children at home.
70. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinators have a clear vision and sense of purpose because they are committed to helping pupils achieve as highly as possible. They take the appropriate action after analysing test results. For example, the reasons for the relatively low percentage of pupils in Year 2 attaining the higher Level 3 in the national tests were identified and are being addressed. The co-ordinators and other staff, including learning support assistants, have benefited from courses that have helped to improve teaching and learning. Both co-ordinators recognise the need for a systematic and rigorous programme of lesson observations to check on teaching and learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. All pupils have good, planned opportunities to consolidate what they have learned in mathematics lessons in other subjects. For example, pupils use measuring skills in design and technology and knowledge of shapes in art and design. Pupils in Year 6 draw line graphs with correctly labelled axes to record results of investigations in science.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 6 is consistently good.
- In some classes, teaching relies too heavily on worksheets, with low levels of challenge for some pupils.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently well in some lessons throughout the school to match work to the learning needs of all pupils.
- Visits and visitors to school provide good support for learning.
- Leadership has had a good impact on provision for scientific enquiry since the last inspection.

Commentary

72. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but the quality varies throughout the school. It is consistently good in Year 6 but there are weaknesses in some lessons for the younger age groups. The good teaching in Year 6 is a significant factor in the improvement in standards since the last inspection. The high expectations and good lesson planning in this age group keep pupils on their toes and help all pupils to achieve well in relation to their prior levels of learning. In a lesson about saturated solutions, pupils were constantly made to think about the scientific implications of what they were doing and the importance of precision in their investigations. These qualities are apparent in some other classes and age groups but there are also some lessons that make too little demand on pupils' scientific thinking and as a result some groups do not achieve as well as they could. As at the time of the last inspection, the heavy reliance on worksheets in many lessons often results in tasks that do not contain sufficient intellectual challenge, particularly for pupils capable of higher achievement. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in lessons but often all pupils complete the same worksheet and assessment information is not used sufficiently well to match tasks to the learning needs of all ability groups. Some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 2 was the result of low expectations and weak pupil management. The teaching did not sufficiently motivate and engage the pupils and they did not achieve as well as they could.
73. Since the last inspection, the subject has undergone considerable development, particularly in the area of scientific enquiry. In service training and development has helped teachers to reach a better understanding of how to teach this area. Much more learning is now set in a practical context but in Years 3 and 5 there is room for further improvement in the way in which scientific enquiry skills are taught, particularly in reliable data collection, graph construction and interpretation of evidence in order to find the answers to scientific questions.
74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leaders have sufficient subject knowledge to support colleagues and the work they have done to improve the subject is having a good impact on standards. However, the subject needs more rigorous monitoring in order to set targets and identify where improvements are still needed, particularly in the levels of intellectual challenge in the tasks given to pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 3 to 6 are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teachers' have good subject knowledge and this enables them to teach with confidence.
- Brisk pace and effective use of time are strong features of much of the teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently very good.
- The leadership of the co-ordinator is very good. This is having a very positive influence on the raising of standards throughout the school.
- ICT is used effectively to support learning in other subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.

Commentary

75. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are average. No separate ICT lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2 but from observation of pupils working at computers during other lessons it is clear that they have good attitudes to work in this subject and that they work productively. Teachers provide good, planned support, sometimes directly and at other times through the use of assistants or voluntary helpers. Where the latter are used, they are deployed effectively, having a clear idea of how they are to support pupils' learning. As a result, lower attaining pupils, in particular, achieve well.
76. Standards in Years 3 to 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. Teaching is consistently good and it is very good in Year 6. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the curriculum and potentially difficult topics are taught well. Teachers move pupils' learning on well with effective links between the various elements of the lessons. Lessons are well planned and resources such as the interactive whiteboard are used effectively to enhance learning. Pupils listen attentively and work with great enthusiasm, often being reluctant to stop. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils worked collaboratively analysing data in a spreadsheet.
77. The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision for the development of ICT within the school. She is aware of the strengths and areas for development of the subject. She ensures that all children have as much access to ICT as possible. She monitors the subject effectively and has made significant improvements in recent years. A good example of this is the planned use of the ICT suite. This has enabled children to develop their ICT skills whilst providing the opportunity to apply them in other subjects. This is supported by 'in class' access to networked computers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. Information and communication technology is used effectively as a means of developing pupils' skills across the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils worked enthusiastically transferring information from a questionnaire that their grandparents had completed during the previous week, on to a database. The questionnaire was used to collect data describing their experiences as evacuees during World War 2. Pupils who have special educational needs benefit particularly from such provision, especially in literacy lessons. Effective planning and support for these pupils was observed in both Year 2 and Year 6, where work on computers was linked closely to pupils' individual learning targets, motivated them and enabled them to achieve well. In Year 5, pupils developed their skills of literacy effectively by using the Internet to help them discover further information about their work on fables.

HUMANITIES

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are developing an awareness of a good range of world faiths.
- Marking is effective in challenging pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers make good use of work in religious education to help pupils develop the skills of literacy.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development.

Commentary

79. The school follows the local agreed syllabus for religious education with effective links being made to national guidance. Standards are average at Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the last inspection with all pupils now receiving religious education. The study of faiths in other cultures has been the subject of a whole school focus. This approach has been successful in consolidating pupils' knowledge and understanding throughout the school.
80. Work set is mostly challenging. As part of this, pupils are given opportunities to discuss ideas and to develop their understanding. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils worked effectively in pairs to develop their understanding of the Ten Commandments. After this the teacher set a challenging task in which pupils had to apply this understanding to the development of rules in their own school, discussing ideas in groups. This also promoted the development of the skills of speaking and listening. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs in this lesson meant that they achieved well. The marking of pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 is helpful as it challenges their view points and gives them areas to consider in the future.
81. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the subject contributes positively to pupils' moral and social development as well as to cultural awareness. Pupils were focusing upon rules for living, sometimes using those from other faiths as starting points and applying the knowledge gained to their own lives and communities. Throughout the school, evidence of work related to other world faiths is strong and shows pupils' developing awareness of the significance of other faiths.

History and geography

82. Four lessons were observed in **history**, all in Years 3 to 6, and one in **geography**. Inspection evidence includes scrutiny of pupils' previous work on display, teachers' planning and discussions. No judgements on provision could be made in **geography** as insufficient evidence was available. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory and achievement was at the expected level. Good use was made of resources in order to help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the features of rivers. School planning indicates that the planned curriculum meets national requirements.

History

The provision for history is **good** in Years 3 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by Year 6 and pupils achieve well through Years 3 to 6.
- Lessons in Years 3 to 6 stimulate pupils' interest in events of the past.
- Excellent teaching and learning in a Year 4 class.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Skills in other curriculum areas, such as literacy and ICT, are well developed through the teaching.

Commentary

83. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 use artefacts, visitors and images on interactive whiteboards very effectively to inspire and motivate pupils. Pupils respond with knowledgeable observations and their attitude to learning is very good. For example in a Year 6 lesson, pupils commented with sensitivity on the sad expression on a variety of images of Queen Victoria following the death of her husband. Opportunities to develop skills in other areas of the curriculum are very well integrated into history lessons. In Year 6, skills of speaking and listening were very successfully developed as pupils performed a play in pairs. One child played the role of a wealthy child at school and the other a child taken from industry and starting school for the first time. The children performed for the rest of the class at the end of the lesson. The activity was very effective as it provided the opportunity for children to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the period. One child commented "You'll have to speak up I'm nearly deaf from my years working in the factory."

Example of outstanding practice

This example shows how very skilful teaching involving the use of first-hand sources of evidence can help bring the past 'to life' for pupils.

To create the mood of the period, the lesson began with the sound of an air raid siren. Pupils were asked to close their eyes and imagine the thoughts of children during the blitz. A visitor was introduced who spoke with passion about her experiences as an evacuee during the war. The teacher showed great skill and sensitivity in the way she talked with the visitor. An abundance of artefacts, including for example a suitcase used during this lady's evacuation, stimulated the children, who were desperate to find out more. They listened spellbound as she described her feelings as a little girl in Liverpool and how she felt when leaving her parents. Pupils spoke with great empathy as a discussion developed between the visitor and the class, one commenting that Liverpool was an easy target for the German airforce due to the reflection of lights on the River Mersey.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

84. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about provision in **art and design**. Evidence indicates that standards in Year 2 are similar to those expected nationally. Planning files indicate that National Curriculum requirements are met. An analysis of pupils' sketchbooks and displays of work around the school confirmed this. Sketchbooks are used effectively to foster pupils' art skills in a variety of media and allow pupils to experiment with different ideas, for example when colour mixing or using the appropriate pencils for observational drawings. To promote pupils' awareness of different painting styles, pupils look at the work of artists such as Monet, Van Gogh, Matisse and Picasso and then produce work in a similar style.
85. There are often good links between the activities in art and design lessons and work in other subjects. In one lesson, pupils in Year 4 used chalks and different papers to create a picture in conjunction with their history topic. In a very good lesson pupils in Year 2 used permanent markers and oil pastels to produce an African pattern on a piece of fabric based on ideas previously drawn in their sketchbooks. The inspiration came from a recent visitor to the school who had shown them textiles with African patterns. The high expectations of the teacher, the strategies used to assess learning and ensure pupils knew the gains they had made in their learning, and the way she encouraged pupils to evaluate and comment constructively on the work of others were strong features of the lesson.[a very complex sentence; there are six

separate ideas here] All pupils displayed a high level of interest and concentration. The classroom was a hive of activity and all pupils achieved well. Displays of artwork around the school are presented well. The art gallery corner that includes framed examples of pupils' work makes a good contribution to provision for pupils' spiritual development by providing inspiring work for others to appreciate.

86. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision in **design and technology**. Planning indicates that National Curriculum requirements are met. An analysis of pupils' books and displays of work in classrooms in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 confirmed that the principles of teaching the subject are securely in place because there was clear evidence that pupils not only design and make, but also evaluate the finished product. For example, one pupil in Year 6 wrote that the slippers she had designed and made would have been better had she sewn rather than glued on the decorations. Designs are well researched and older pupils in particular use the Internet effectively to research ideas for their designs and digital cameras to record the making process and the finished product.
87. The teaching in the one lesson seen, in Years 3 to 6, was good and provided further evidence that the principles of designing and making are securely in place. The unit of study – to design and make a musical instrument – drew on and fostered learning in music and provided a challenge that pupils clearly enjoyed. A strong feature of this lesson that enabled all pupils, including those with special educational needs to achieve well, was the way the teacher challenged pupils to reflect on the problems they were encountering and, by discussing these with other pupils, come up with possible solutions. This activity was carried very sensibly and sensitively and fostered pupils' personal and social development as well as their learning in design and technology. On the evidence available, standards are at least similar to those expected of pupils nationally.
88. Although only a few **music** lessons were observed, the quality of teaching varied greatly.

Example of outstanding practice

This example shows how high expectations and sharing a love of music promoted high standards in choral singing.

In a Year 5 and 6 lesson of nearly fifty pupils, the teacher's high degree of musical knowledge and expertise, allied to very good relationships and very high expectations, resulted in choral singing of very high quality and in pupils being inspired to improve their performance still more during the lesson. This high quality was evident across the range of songs performed in the lesson and resulted in very high achievement and in the obvious enjoyment of the pupils taking part in this experience. They clearly loved and lived every minute of what they were doing. Performance varied from the beautifully sensitive to the robust, orchestrated to a high degree of skill by the teacher in charge and well supported by another teacher.

89. In Years 1 and 2, good teaching was observed when the teacher made pupils well aware of differences in pitch and volume. Very good encouragement of pupils and interesting activities overcame some potential difficulties with pupils' behaviour. However, where teaching was unsuccessful in managing pupils' behaviour, little progress was made in developing awareness of rhythm, and teaching and learning were unsatisfactory.
90. Good specialist teaching of instrumental music to small groups of pupils was also observed. Pupils were given the benefit of good specialist knowledge. This was combined with very good relationships and as a result, pupils made good progress in the sessions observed. This was exemplified further when a large group of pupils formed a band in order to play at assembly. They produced a strong and harmonious sound. The impact of such activities on pupils' social and cultural development is good. Pupils also sang tunefully and with enthusiasm in other assemblies. Whilst no overall judgement can be made on provision, it is clear that music has a firm place in the school's curriculum and that it contributes well to pupils' social and cultural development as well as to the sense of community evident within the school.

91. Only two lessons were observed in **physical education** and so no overall judgement can be made about provision, standards achieved or quality of teaching and learning. In the work seen, in Years 3 to 6, teaching was most effective when the teacher's good control and management of pupils' behaviour led to a purposeful learning environment. This in turn enabled pupils to concentrate well in order to develop their dance skills and was further enhanced by the teacher's high expectation of pupils' performance. This resulted in good progress and good achievement in the lesson. Where teaching was slightly less effective but still satisfactory this rigour of approach was not so evident and although pupils made satisfactory progress, they could have done better.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

92. The school makes good plans to provide for pupils' social development. In many lessons, pupils are given opportunities to work together as 'learning partners' in order to develop ideas or understanding. This not only has a good effect upon subject understanding but it also helps pupils' social interaction. The ease with which pupils of all ages slipped into this way of working shows that this is a familiar part of their work. It is also a successful one. Pupils generally are also comfortable with working together in small groups in order to exchange information and ideas, for example in literacy and numeracy lessons. Good provision of after-school clubs also promotes social development effectively.
93. The school council meets regularly. It provides a good forum in which pupils can express their views and enables them to become more aware of their personal and social responsibilities. In the council meeting observed, pupils listened respectfully as others expressed their views. Issues discussed showed pupils' sensitivity to issues of personal and social welfare within school. The meeting was chaired very effectively by a pupil from Year 6.
94. At present, the school does not have a co-ordinator for personal and social education. This means that whilst pockets of good practice exist, they are not pulled together effectively to ensure consistency of practice. For example, although most classes have 'circle time', in which pupils discuss together issues that are significant to them, no formal overview is taken of provision or how it can best be developed to meet pupils' needs as they grow. The school recognises this as an area for development and has included it in its development plan. Good teaching was observed in a Year 6 circle time session when pupils were encouraged to reflect upon how to be a good friend. Pupils responded well to the good opportunities they were given to consider situations in which a good friend might be needed. Pupils spoke sensitively about friendship and what a good friend does.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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