

INSPECTION REPORT

CULCHETH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Culcheth

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111180

Headteacher: Mr W C Richardson

Lead inspector: Mr T Richardson

Dates of inspection: 14 – 16 March 2005

Inspection number: 266707

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Community |
| School category: | Primary |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 187 |
| School address: | Warrington Road Culcheth Warrington Cheshire |
| Postcode: | WA3 5HH |
| Telephone number: | 01925 764312 |
| Fax number: | 01925 764690 |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr K Bland |
| Date of previous inspection: | 21 st June 1999 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is an average sized community primary school for boys and girls aged four to eleven. There are 187 pupils on roll, with slightly more boys than girls. Almost every pupil is of White British origin and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. There are fewer children in the reception class than in previous years and around forty per cent of the pupils in Year 6 have entered the school other than at the usual times of admission. The number of pupils with special educational needs is just below average (34), with five pupils having statements of special educational needs. Their main needs are moderate and specific learning difficulties. The socio-economic backgrounds of the pupils are broadly average and the attainment of children on entry to the reception class is below average, particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills. The school has gained a permanent 'Eco Award' for its environmental and recycling work. It has also been successful in gaining an Achievement Award in 2002, a Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003, and an Activemark in 2004. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for just over two months.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| 16500 | Mr T Richardson | Lead inspector | Science; information and communication technology (ICT); art and design; music; special educational needs |
| 9981 | Mr S Hussain | Lay inspector | |
| 26203 | Mrs J Curd | Team inspector | Mathematics; design and technology; physical education; religious education; areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage |
| 19916 | Mrs D Kerr | Team inspector | English; geography; history |

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REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 6 |
| PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS | |
| STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS | 9 |
| Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL | 12 |
| Teaching and learning | |
| The curriculum | |
| Care, guidance and support | |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community | |
| LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT | 19 |
| PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS | 21 |
| AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE | |
| SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2 | |
| PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS | 34 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school where pupils receive a well-rounded education and achieve well. Teachers make lessons interesting so that pupils have fun and enjoy their learning. Pupils make very good gains in their personal development and behave very well. The school benefits from good leadership and management and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils are happy in school, show very good personal development and have very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils achieve well because teachers make their lessons interesting and learning is fun.
- Pupils' views are valued and acted upon and they receive very good care, support and guidance.
- There is good leadership, management and governance and a very good partnership with parents and the community.
- Handwriting and spelling are taught inconsistently and pupils do not have enough experience of British cultural diversity.
- Standards are high in art and design, and are rising in ICT.
- The school's procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement, whilst satisfactory, could be more rigorous and sharp.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has sustained its quality and has worked with success to steadily raise standards and promote higher achievement. Curriculum innovations have been introduced, and teachers are now successfully motivating pupils towards better learning. The areas for development in the last inspection have been addressed well and further improvements to buildings are continuing as planned. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2004 |
| English | C | C | D | D |
| mathematics | C | C | B | B |
| science | B | D | B | B |

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

Achievement is good. Analysis of the school's 2004 test results shows that the Year 6 pupils all achieved well in mathematics and science. In English, the grade D in the table above is misleading because the pupils achieved well compared with their own test results when they were in Year 2. Children enter the reception class with standards that are below average, particularly in their communication language and literacy skills. They achieve well and enter Year 1 meeting the goals expected for them at the end of reception in most of the areas of learning except in their communication skills, which are still below average. By

Year 2, pupils continue to achieve well and their standards in reading and writing are average and in mathematics and science are above average. The pupils currently in Year 6 show good achievement in English, mathematics and science considering the scores they attained in tests when they were in Year 2. Standards in Year 6 are average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Standards in art and design are well above average in all classes because of the emphasis on pupils adding quality of finish to their work. In ICT, standards are above average throughout the school. Recent developments to raise standards, such as helping pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills, are effective and younger pupils are doing better in English, mathematics, science and ICT than in previous years, although this improvement has yet to show in the Year 6 test results. A barrier to further improvement in English is that handwriting is not taught in a consistent way in every class and pupils could be encouraged to use much more difficult spellings.

Pupils develop very good personal qualities. Relationships in school are very good and pupils gain self-esteem, confidence and independence as well as learning to value and respect one another. As a result, the school has a happy atmosphere and behaviour is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, though aspects of their cultural development are relatively weak. Whilst multicultural awareness and tolerance are promoted well, pupils have a limited day-to-day experience of Britain's cultural diversity.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Good teaching and learning were observed in every class, with particularly good teaching in Year 6. Teachers are successful in making lessons interesting and fun. As a result, pupils are keen to learn, pay attention and concentrate well. Lessons contain a wide variety of teaching methods and these help pupils with their learning. In particular, teachers use ICT and their interactive boards well and this raises pupils' expectations for how they can improve their own ICT skills. The school's behaviour management policy is implemented very well in all classes with the result that pupils can focus on their learning and are very productive in lessons. Assessment is used very well in English and mathematics so that pupils are clear about how well they have done and know what they should learn next. Very good enrichment is provided for the curriculum through clubs, special events (such as arts week) and visits. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils' views are valued and acted upon and the school council and Eco committee make positive contributions to school improvement. There are very good links with parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The impact of the new headteacher is already evident and his vision that learning should be fun is leading to improvements in teaching and learning and the curriculum. The governors are well organized, provide good governance, and make sure all statutory requirements are met. The school runs smoothly and there is a shared commitment to improvement among all staff. Procedures for planning, monitoring and evaluating school developments are not yet sufficiently streamlined. As a result, school self-evaluation is not as sharp as it could be and often has a focus on developments being in place rather than measuring how successful they are for the pupils.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and are confident that their children work hard and do their best. The questionnaires and discussions held with pupils show that most pupils feel they find out new things in lessons, work hard, receive good help from their teachers and find other children are friendly; they feel that adults are fair and will support you when worried.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Make sure that handwriting is taught consistently, and that teachers' expectations for accurate spelling are higher, in all classes.
- Make sure that pupils have enough day-to-day experience of British cultural diversity.
- Make sure that self-evaluation, and the resultant planning for school improvement, is rigorous and efficient.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are above average and pupils in all classes show good achievement over their time in school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and all pupils are achieving well.
- Standards are high in art and design.
- Standards in mathematics, science and ICT are higher than in English.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' handwriting and spelling are too low.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading | 16.2 (14.7) | 15.8 (15.7) |
| writing | 16.2 (14.6) | 14.6 (14.6) |
| mathematics | 18.6 (16.6) | 16.2 (16.3) |

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. In 2004, the Year 2 pupils did particularly well in their national tests. Their results were in the top five per cent of the nation for mathematics, and well above the national average for writing. Their results in reading tests matched the national average. When these results are taken all together, and compared with similar schools (schools with the same proportion of free school meals), Culcheth's results are above average. These results are also an improvement on previous years and reflect the work carried out by teachers to raise standards, especially in pupils' writing. This improvement is set to continue this year but has yet to show in the test results for pupils in Year 6.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 26.3 (27.2) | 26.9 (26.8) |
| mathematics | 27.9 (27.2) | 27.0 (26.8) |
| science | 29.4 (28.2) | 28.6 (28.6) |

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

2. In 2004, the Year 6 test results were above the national average in mathematics and science, but below average in English. The Year 6 pupils who took the tests show good added value over their time in Years 3 to 6 as they had low scores in English when they were in Year 2. The lower result in English is also because fewer pupils attained the higher Level 5 than in the other subjects. This is because the school's recent measures to raise standards in English through improving speaking, listening, reading and writing skills were introduced after these pupils were in Year 2. When the

Year 6 test results are combined and compared with similar schools (schools where pupils scored the same marks when they were in Year 2 as at Culcheth) then the Culcheth results are above average. These results support the parents' views that their children are doing as well as they can, and the pupils' views that they are doing their best.

3. Inspection shows that children enter the reception class with standards in all the areas of learning that are below average. Their communication, language and literacy skills are noticeably lower than all the other areas of learning. Children achieve well in the reception class, and enter Year 1 with average standards in all the areas of learning except for communication, language and literacy, where their skills are still below average. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to show good achievement so that, by Year 2, standards in English are average and standards in mathematics, science and ICT are above average. Classroom observations and the analysis of pupils' work show that pupils continue to achieve well in Years 3 to 6. By Year 6, standards are above average in mathematics, science and ICT and average in English and this performance shows good added value from when these pupils were in Year 2. The pupils currently in Year 3 are working at higher levels than in previous years and this is likely to result in an improvement in the school's test results when these pupils reach Year 6.
4. Girls and boys are doing equally as well and the school caters well for pupils of different ability and attainment. For example, higher attaining pupils and those with specific talents are encouraged to do more and extend their skills in lessons and in additional activities such as clubs and instrumental tuition. Also, pupils with special educational needs are identified and supported very well so that they show good achievement against the targets set in their individual education plans.
5. Pupils are achieving well because the headteacher has a clear vision that learning should be fun, and teachers are working hard to make their lessons interesting; as a result, the pupils are motivated to do their best and concentrate on their learning. Relationships in school are very good, and there is very good behaviour. This means that lessons are carried out in a happy atmosphere and learning is rarely interrupted by teachers having to manage poor behaviour. Recent work to help pupils improve their speaking and listening skills is already effective, but has yet to make a difference to the Year 6 English test results. Pupils in all classes and in all lessons are encouraged to think carefully and rehearse what they want to say and this is leading to them using more complex sentences and a wider vocabulary (the skills that are needed to attain the higher Level 5 in English). Teachers assess how well pupils are doing in English and mathematics. This assessment is done very well and is used very effectively to set individual targets for what each pupil should learn next. The pupils like these targets, find them challenging, and focus in lessons on trying to improve their skills and meet their targets. This is contributing to the pupils' good achievement in these subjects. However, improvement can still be made in English. Handwriting is not taught consistently in every class and some teachers use a different style on the board, in pupils' books and on displays from the one the pupils should be learning. This is confusing. In addition, teachers' expectations for spelling are low and pupils could be challenged more to use and apply their spelling skills in their independent written work.
6. Standards are above average and good achievement is evident in science in Years 1 to 6, because it is taught well and pupils are encouraged to draw their own scientific conclusions from their observations. In ICT, the provision for the subject is now very good and this is leading to pupils rapidly gaining new skills and using them in a wide range of subjects, for a wide range of purposes. As a result, standards are above average throughout the school, and still rising. Insufficient religious education was

seen to judge standards, but pupils are studying a greater range of topics than required by the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in art and design are well above average and pupils' high quality work is displayed throughout the school. This is because of the careful insistence on pupils and teachers taking time to make sure that pupils' creativity is realised in work that is finished to a high standard. In other subjects, inspectors were unable to see sufficient lessons to judge standards and achievement. However, evidence was collected that suggests that the pupils' knowledge of history and geography learnt through 'topic themes' may not be to the same depth as when the subjects were taught separately.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive attitudes and behaviour help pupils to achieve well.
- Relationships are very good and impact very well on pupils' learning.
- Pupils mature very well because of the very good provision for personal development.
- Pupils' experiences of the different cultures in British society are underdeveloped.

Commentary

7. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained good attendance and brought about good improvement to pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.3 | School data | 0.3 |
| National data | 5.1 | National data | 0.4 |

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

8. Attendance was broadly in line with the national average in the last school year (as in the table above). It has improved significantly since the start of this school year (2004/2005) and is now above average at nearly 95 per cent. A well-developed reward system has contributed to this rise in attendance. Telephone calls are made home promptly regarding any unexplained absence and this has led to a reduction in unauthorised absence to 0.2 per cent, making it currently below average.
9. Pupils show very high levels of interest and enthusiasm in lessons and other school activities. They respond very well to imaginative and fun teaching methods, for instance, it is common to hear singing at the start of mathematics lessons – capturing the interest of all pupils from the outset. Pupils concentrate very well and take pride in their achievements. Attitudes and behaviour in the Foundation Stage develop very positively.
10. Behaviour is very good in the classroom, in assembly and in the playgrounds. All pupils are aware of the school rules and there are very high expectations regarding conduct. Staff frequently praise pupils for their work and behaviour. A house points system is

very effectively used to promote good behaviour with a cup awarded each week to the house with the most points. Sanctions include 'thinking time' so that pupils can learn from their mistakes. Discussions with pupils suggest that there is hardly any bullying but when it occurs, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. There were no incidents of exclusion in the last school year.

11. The school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony, very well. Consequently, pupils play and work together very well. It is common to see pupils helping each other in lessons; for example, they are often asked to work in pairs and are unselfish and instinctively help their partner as well as others in the class. Children in the reception class quickly learn how to play together well and routinely meet the targets expected of them in their personal and social development by the time they enter Year 1.
12. Pupils develop a very positive awareness of themselves and their spiritual development is very good. Opportunities in assembly and in subjects such as science and history allow pupils to marvel at the beauty of nature and consider human achievement. Reflection time at the end of the school day is very effective, allowing pupils to share their thoughts and consider their achievements. Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong. There are many chances for them to consider issues such as respect, discrimination, bullying, the environment and pollution in a moral context. Consequently, pupils are used to listening to others, having their own say and deciding their own personal values.
13. Social development is very good. Pupils accept responsibility very well and know that they have an important role to play in the community. Members of the school and Eco councils and monitors take their roles very seriously. Older pupils often help younger ones, for instance, through a very effective paired reading scheme. Cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils' appreciation of their own culture is good with school trips and special events such as 'arts week' making a significant contribution. Although effective work is done in the curriculum to raise pupils' awareness and tolerance of other cultural traditions in Britain, pupils cannot recall sufficient facts or compare lifestyles and cultural values. This is because too few opportunities are on offer for pupils to experience and appreciate at first hand the rich diversity of cultures in Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching, learning and assessment are all of good quality. There is a good curriculum with very good opportunities for enrichment. The school's care, welfare, health and safety for the pupils are very good; pupils receive good support and guidance, and are involved very well in school development. There are very good links with parents, other schools and the wider community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good and is supported by good assessment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make lessons interesting and fun and pupils are motivated to learn more as a result.
- Teachers make very good use of a wide range of teaching methods, including ICT.

- Behaviour is managed very well so that pupils apply themselves very well to learning and are very productive in their lessons.
- Very good assessment in English and mathematics helps pupils with their learning.
- The quality of teaching is not consistent in all classes and assessment is not of the same high quality in all subjects.

Commentary

14. Before the inspection, a number of parents and pupils commented that teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and that learning is fun. Inspectors find this to be a key strength, and a major reason for the good achievement of the pupils. The headteacher and other key staff promote an atmosphere of enjoying learning and this is helping teachers to devise new ways of working. For example, literacy and numeracy lessons begin with pupils singing a song they have written, lessons often contain physical and mental 'brain teasers' so that pupils are alert and ready to listen, and pupils themselves take the initiative for identifying the groups and individuals that are working well and making positive contributions to the lesson. As a result, pupils want to join in the lessons and try hard to stay alert and to concentrate throughout. For example, in a lesson for Year 1, pupils worked with their 'talking partners' and individual whiteboards to add 'ing' to words. The lesson was interspersed with songs, rhythmic claps and actions that made each word meaningful as well as keeping all the pupils engaged throughout the lesson.
15. Standards are rising in ICT because teachers use computers and interactive boards very well and set high expectations for how pupils can use ICT as part of everyday classroom life. These computer skills are added to the wide repertoire of teaching methods used in lessons and also make the pupils more interested in learning. For example, in a science lesson for Year 6 pupils, the teacher tested the pupils' knowledge of forces, using the interactive board to display the answers with graphics and animation that illustrated the topic well. She also encouraged pupils to discuss their findings and report back to the class, using a dial to indicate whether pupils should use their 'whisper, talking or playground voice'. As a result, pupils worked very hard to remember all they could about forces and tried their hardest to control the volume of their voices by themselves. In a lesson in Year 3, the teacher had prepared a series of increasingly difficult tasks on the interactive board. This was effective in motivating a group of pupils to use the board to practise their alphabetical sorting skills, and was also successful in engaging a wider group of pupils when the tasks became more difficult and extended thinking was required.
16. All teachers employ the school's 'traffic light' system for rewarding good behaviour and providing sanctions to deal with poor behaviour. This system is understood very well by the pupils and they respond in lessons to their names being moved to, for example, 'amber' by working hard to avoid sanctions and to return to 'green'. Pupils who generally behave well are also motivated to extend this behaviour by their names being moved towards the 'silver' and 'gold' areas that indicate rewards for good behaviour. A very good example of this use was seen in a Year 2 lesson with the outcome that pupils moved quickly and quietly between activities and remained focussed on their learning throughout the whole lesson.
17. Teachers assess pupils' achievement very well in English and mathematics and use the information gained to set challenging targets for what each pupil should learn next. Pupils like these targets and work hard to make sure they keep making progress. Analysis of teachers' files shows that assessments are accurate, updated regularly, and also used to make sure expectations for the whole class remain high. The software installed on the school computers contains good quality assessment of what each pupil can do and is used well by teachers to direct the pupils to the areas they should learn next. However, assessment in other subjects is not yet developed to this level.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 1 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

18. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, but there are still some inconsistencies between classes. During the inspection, the best teaching was observed in Year 6, with very good lessons also seen in Years 1 and 2. Good teaching was observed in all other classes but there are variations, for example, in the emphasis teachers give to promoting spelling and teaching handwriting. In addition, there are some temporary teachers who are not yet as consistent in their practice as other staff.

The curriculum

The breadth and balance of the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 and in the Foundation Stage are good. There are very good opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovations of 'reflection time' and having three lessons each morning are effective.
- The curriculum has an interesting 'thematic' approach but has not yet been rigorously evaluated to ensure all subjects are taught to sufficient depth.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to benefit from clubs and curricular enrichment in sports and the arts.
- There is very good provision for promoting personal development and for supporting pupils with special educational needs.
- Speaking and listening and ICT skills are taught well in a range of subjects.
- The school is, rightly, continuing to improve outdoor play areas.

Commentary

19. There has been good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. The school's curriculum has an emphasis on making learning fun. This enhances pupil's enjoyment of school and promotes their very good attitudes to learning. The new timetable structure of three lessons in the morning and one in the afternoon is working well. This enables teachers to use time more effectively and pupils to gain the maximum benefit from learning. Teachers are enjoying teaching a range of subjects through a thematic and topic approach and report that pupils' interest has increased. For example, the subjects of history, geography, art and design and technology are taught together through a topic such as 'Imagined Worlds'. However, staff have not yet reviewed whether all these subjects are taught to sufficient depth and the Year 6 pupils interviewed by inspectors were more secure in the knowledge they had gained when the subjects were taught separately. Reflection time takes place for the last fifteen minutes of the day and provides a successful review of what pupils have learned, the targets they have achieved and a good opportunity for teachers and classmates to recognise who has worked hard and well during the day. Pupils go home from this happy, feeling good about themselves and well motivated to come back and learn more again tomorrow.

20. All statutory requirements for the curriculum, including religious, sex, health and drugs education, are met in full. Speaking and listening skills are promoted well throughout the day, especially through pupils having 'talking partners' in lessons. Literacy and numeracy development is addressed appropriately in subjects other than English and mathematics but more opportunities to extend pupils' writing and spelling skills could be taken. ICT is used very well by staff and pupils to support learning in all subjects and teachers make very good use of interactive boards and computers in lessons. Activities such as reflection time and circle time are appreciated by pupils as helping their personal development.
21. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Very good assessment is provided for any pupil who may be finding learning difficult and individual education plans are provided, when needed, that help teachers and pupils to focus together on how best to support a pupil's learning. Additional support is also provided and pupils benefit from small group and individual tuition. Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs follow education plans and receive the support identified in their Statement and generally show good achievement as a result.
22. Opportunities for enrichment are very good and enhance pupils' personal and social development and enjoyment of school very well. Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of lunch-time and after-school clubs including gardening, judo and choir. A good number of pupils are learning to play musical instruments and successes here are shared with parents and the whole school. Pupils enjoy the activities and opportunities to work in groups of different ages on special days such as 'arts week' and 'decoration day' in November. Pupils participate in a wide range of local and national initiatives such as writing competitions and sports tournaments.
23. Accommodation is satisfactory. It has improved greatly since the last inspection and there is now sufficient space for all classes, a well-furnished ICT suite, a small but satisfactory library and a medical room. Although the high standard of art displays, replacement windows and newly painted toilets for the older pupils improves the school's environment, much of the building renovation remains to be done. Outdoor accommodation is spacious but much of it cannot often be used because the grass is muddy and of poor quality. Fixed play equipment is satisfactory and adequately complemented by a range of smaller play resources. However, the school is steadily implementing appropriate plans to rectify these concerns. Resources overall are sufficient with significant strengths in ICT. Storage, especially for mathematics equipment, has improved greatly. Overall there is a good range and match of teachers and support assistants to the needs of the curriculum, although there is insufficient support for younger pupils at some times of the day.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides pupils with good support and guidance and involves them very well in aspects of its development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between pupils and adults contribute to the school's family ethos.
- New children settle in very quickly because induction is very good.

- The school works very effectively with the community to promote health and safety.
- Pupils feel highly valued because their views are taken seriously and acted upon.

Commentary

24. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are happy at this school because of its friendly, family atmosphere. They enjoy very trusting relationships with staff and are very confident that they can turn to adults to resolve any worries they may have, for instance, if they feel bullied.
25. New children to the school are gradually and sensitively introduced to school life. Home visits are offered to all prospective reception children. A 'teddy bears' picnic' and very well planned integration sessions give children much confidence about starting school life. Pupils transferring from other schools are inducted very well too, for instance, they are allocated with a 'buddy' to help them settle in.
26. Arrangements for child protection are very good. The designated officer is well trained, as is another member of staff. Staff receive very good guidance about the school's procedures and are vigilant at all times. General health and safety risk assessments are undertaken as required. Arrangements for first aid are very good and six staff are fully trained to administer first aid. The police, fire service, nurse and a road safety officer are very well involved in promoting health and safety in school. Also, a 'drugs education caravan' provides activities in school over a three-day period each year.
27. Staff know pupils well and give good support, advice and guidance to all pupils. Pupils' records contain much information about their academic and personal development. This enables staff to monitor progress well. Target setting is a good feature, for instance, pupils and parents are well informed about half-termly targets for mathematics, reading and writing. The school works effectively with the local education authority to support pupils with special educational needs and also employs a specialist teacher one day a week, demonstrating its commitment to inclusion.
28. There are many chances for pupils to make their views known to staff and become involved in whole school matters. The school council and Eco committee provide very good chances for pupils to develop citizenship skills and learn about democracy and decision-making. It is pleasing to see how many positive changes have arisen through these bodies, for instance, regarding school meals, adventure playgrounds and the establishment of a 'green day' each year focusing on environmental issues.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents, other schools and the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good information is sent to parents about the school and their children's progress.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the school because their views are valued very much and acted upon.
- Very good links with the community help to enrich the curriculum.
- Very effective links with other schools support learning and ease transition to secondary school very well.

Commentary

29. The school has made good improvement to links with parents and with other schools since the last inspection. Parents are very well informed about the school through a detailed prospectus, Foundation Stage booklet and computer-based information. Very helpful curriculum information is sent home each term and monthly newsletters are user friendly. Pupils' annual reports are mostly of very good quality, giving ample information on standards and progress together with 'targets for next year'.
30. Parents are warmly welcomed as partners in the education of their children. The new headteacher and staff are very approachable and they are always pleased to discuss any concerns. A questionnaire is sent to parents each year and this helps to identify issues and enables parents to influence the school. The computer-based 'message book' from parents is regularly checked. The school has taken up parents' ideas about 'healthy mid-morning snacks', school signage and computer-based information recently - illustrating how much they are valued.
31. Parents make a good contribution to the school. The parents and teachers association supports the school well by organizing many social and fundraising events. Money raised is used towards buying additional learning resources and making improvements to outdoor play areas. Many parent helpers support the school, for instance, they listen to readers, run the library and accompany swimming. Most parents support their children's learning at home well by helping with homework and listening to reading regularly.
32. The school is at the heart of the local community. An annual 'arts week' is held in school and enjoyed by the whole community, including other schools and local artists. The event provides many learning chances through art and music. Community links also include a church group represented by a lay preacher who makes a very good contribution to personal development and religious education. The preacher leads assembly frequently and does so in a fun and appealing fashion, in keeping with the school's style of teaching. The school has very close ties with sports clubs and organizations that frequently provide coaching for pupils in cricket, rugby and judo. Many local businesses support the school with generous financial and other donations. School trips support learning very well and include art galleries, theatres, museums and many other places of interest.
33. There are many chances for pupils to take part in sports tournaments and projects with other schools. Local primary schools have collaborated effectively to establish a writing

skills initiative to raise achievement in Years 5 and 6. One high school hosted a successful drama project recently with very good learning chances for Year 6 and another organized a 'science week' for very able pupils. Mechanisms for transfer are very good, especially to Culcheth High School. A locally agreed transition project in science is very effective. Year 6 pupils also have the benefit of an extended induction program spanning 3 days.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The newly appointed headteacher is already providing good leadership and governors fulfill their statutory duties well. There is good leadership from other key staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future direction of the school.
- The governing body is well organised and makes a positive contribution to the success of the school's work.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment to improvement which results in a positive climate for learning.
- Effective systems for checking the success of the school's work and determining future priorities are still being developed.
- The school's finances are managed well.

Commentary

34. The school is undergoing a period of change in its leadership. The headteacher, previously the school's deputy headteacher, has been in post for less than a term and is supported by two temporary assistant headteachers pending the appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher in the summer term. In the short time that they have been working together, the senior management team have established a successful working partnership committed to school improvement. The headteacher has a firmly held educational philosophy that learning should be fun, and should enable all children to achieve their full potential. Staff with school and curriculum responsibilities share his vision and work hard to make lessons lively and interesting. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties or particular needs, are fully included in the school's work. They enjoy school and thrive in the very positive climate for learning that staff have established, based on mutual trust and respect.
35. The school benefits from an experienced and committed governing body. Governors meet regularly and ensure they have a working knowledge of the school through a well-organised system of committees, and through some formal links with individual subject leaders and the special needs co-ordinator. They carry out their legal responsibilities well and have clear aims and policies that guide the school's work. Recently their knowledge of the school has been improved by the better quality information they are now being given on pupils' performance and how the school compares with others nationally.
36. The headteacher is working hard to develop a culture of self-evaluation and improvement, building on initiatives he introduced whilst deputy headteacher. Effective analysis of assessment results in English and mathematics provides information that is used well by staff to modify curriculum provision, monitor pupil progress and set targets for learning. Recently, rigorous monitoring of teaching has enabled the headteacher to identify areas of strength and weakness to help teachers improve, and its impact can already be seen in the good and very good teaching. At present, the school's ongoing development is not securely underpinned by a well-structured school improvement planning cycle of review and development focused on raising standards

and achievement. The school improvement plan lasts only until the end of the academic year, and a new plan is currently in draft form. A number of initiatives, such as the thematic approach to learning, have been introduced but have not yet been evaluated with sufficient rigour to establish their impact on learning. There is now scope for streamlining planning and evaluation procedures to ensure that future school improvements are systematically based on accurate knowledge of how well previous initiatives have helped to raise the pupils' achievements.

37. The school is managed well. The school secretary and finance officer carry out their duties efficiently and ensure the school runs smoothly. Teaching staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and there are appropriate systems in place for appraisal, training and support.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 525,433 |
| Total expenditure | 518,088 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,565 |

| Balances (£) | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Balance from previous year | 20,847 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 28,192 |

38. The school's finances are well managed. Careful monitoring of performance data has ensured that spending is targeted on areas that require improvement in English and mathematics, and standards are improving in ICT as a result of the recent investment in up-to-date hardware and software. There are appropriate plans in place to improve outside play areas and relevant funds are being carried forward to sustain this work. The school is now very well placed to build on its present success and move forward.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

39. There are currently seventeen children in the school's reception class. This is much lower than in previous years due to a fall in the local birth rate. Children come from a range of pre-schools and nurseries, and few come with established friendships. Staff have effective links with these providers and visit many of their new pupils before they come to the school. Children visit the school for three half days in the summer term before they start, culminating in a much enjoyed teddy bears' picnic, and are helped to settle in school by attending for half days for the first two weeks of the autumn term. Children are taught in a large classroom with direct access into their own enclosed playground with concrete area, wooden walkway, swings and a slide. Although this play area is spacious, much of it often cannot be used as it is muddy with poor quality grass. Appropriate plans to renew the surface of the playground and provide more space for the slide are in hand.
40. Provision in the reception class is good and has improved well since the last inspection. Children enjoy coming to school and have fun in the imaginative activities which staff plan and provide for them. Overall, attainment on entry is below average for all the areas of learning. This is mainly because there is a low number of high attaining children in the class. Children show good achievement in all the areas of learning except communication, language and literacy, where achievement is satisfactory. They make particularly good gains in developing their personal and social skills and expanding their knowledge and understanding of the world. By the time children leave the reception class, standards in all areas of learning are average except in communication, language and literacy, where they remain just below average.
41. The provision for personal and social development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development is reported in detail below. Other areas of learning were sampled because not enough lessons could be seen to judge teaching. There are good opportunities for children to develop their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. Photographs show that children participate well in a wide range of activities including cooking, walks around the school in all the seasons, growing beans and 'worm searches'. Children have celebrated Chinese New Year and Hanukah and have cooked with a range of fruit and vegetables. In **creative development**, children learn creative skills well through using a wide range of materials in various ways, such as making a wooden house for the third little pig to live in. They also engage in imaginative play but this is often limited by their below average communication skills. Children improve their **physical development** through appropriate indoor and outdoor activities. Although children cannot often use the whole of their playground there is always sufficient space for them to run, climb and play. They enjoy this and develop skills well. They use a range of smaller equipment appropriately, such as hoops which they throw over large wooden upright pencils. Staff also join in and develop these games well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for personal and social development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy school and develop good attitudes to learning because they are motivated by the teacher's imaginative and well-planned activities.
- Children show good behaviour and are eager to help each other.
- The reception class is a happy place for children to be.
- Children enjoy taking responsibility and successfully gain confidence and self-esteem.
- The organisation of some parts of the classroom restricts children's independence.

Commentary

42. Children show good achievement because this area of learning is taught well. They behave well and are eager to help each other, for example, when one child accidentally spilt some soil another readily offered help and went to fetch the dustpan and brush to sweep up. Children enjoy school and are eager to come even when they are ill. They are well motivated to learn through the interesting and fun activities which are well planned for them. Adults also work together well and set a good example. As a result there are good relationships and children feel happy and secure at school. Snack time each day is a pleasant and relaxed social occasion in which children successfully develop confidence, self-esteem and independence. Children take it in turns to pass the fruit around and each child is encouraged to say 'thank you'. They then wait to eat until all are served and the 'fruit monitor' says when they can begin. However, some aspects of the classroom, for example, the storage of aprons too high for children to reach, do not aid children's independence.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide a good range of activities to help children develop their speaking, reading and writing skills.
- There are occasions when expectations are low and this limits children's achievements in speaking and writing.

Commentary

43. Children achieve satisfactorily. The quality of teaching and learning is also satisfactory. The teacher chooses imaginative activities and these clearly delight the children and successfully motivate them to speak. For example, when 'Red Riding Hood's Grandma' visited the class the children eagerly discussed, albeit in broken sentences, who the visitor really was and were anxious to ask her about the wolf and what it was like in his stomach! Children are clearly used to being with their 'talking partners' to discuss various things, however in the sessions observed they said very little to each other and staff accepted single word answers rather than encouraging the extension of these. Listening is generally of a satisfactory standard. However children lose concentration when too much is presented at once, for example, when the classroom assistant presented a puppet of a wolf they became distracted from concentrating on a big book together. The use of writing is incorporated into topics well, for example, making posters about the big bad wolf. However the teaching of letter formation and the examples of writing displayed around the room are inconsistent. As a result, children are unsure how to form letters correctly and mistakes are not always corrected appropriately. Children enjoy reading and develop an appropriate interest and enthusiasm for books and stories.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because lessons are well focussed, planned and prepared.
- Good use of resources such as puppets and digital photographs enhances children's motivation and promotes very good attitudes to learning.
- Worksheets are not always used well or marked in a helpful way.

Commentary

44. Children are taught well, and this results in their good achievement. Lessons are well planned and teachers help the children to stay focussed on their mathematical activities. Good resources are also used. For example, in a lesson on time, 'Maurice the mathematical monkey' and all his family (various monkeys that the children had brought in to help them) were used well to recap times on 'paper plate' clocks. Children were keen to correct Maurice's mistakes and loved matching times to digital photographs of themselves at school. Evidence also shows that some tasks are varied effectively and matched well to children's skills and understanding, for example, introducing higher attaining children to subtraction before others, which successfully helps them to make further progress. A study of children's work shows that task sheets are not always used well. Some are incomplete and the teacher's comments are not written clearly and do not always indicate how children can improve their work.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in speaking and listening are above average.
- Handwriting and spelling are not taught as thoroughly as other aspects of English.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Procedures for marking and assessment give pupils a clear idea of how they can improve.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.

Commentary

45. Pupils' 2004 test results in English were just above average at Year 2 and slightly below average at Year 6. Pupils in Year 2 did better at writing than reading, and their writing results were well above average. In Year 6, standards were below average because fewer pupils attained the higher Level 5 than was the case nationally. However, analysis of the pupils' test results shows that they achieved well over their time in Years 3 to 6 and have made significant improvements on their test results in English from Year 2. Inspection shows that standards this year are average overall and all pupils are achieving well. A significant proportion of pupils enter Year 1 each year with language skills that are below average, so reaching average standards by the end of Year 2 is a good achievement. In addition, the pupils currently in Year 6 are showing good 'added value' over the test results they scored when they were in Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and often receive support in small groups

from the teacher or from skilled classroom assistants, whilst higher attaining pupils are well catered for with tasks that provide additional challenge.

46. Standards in speaking and listening are now above average throughout the school. There has been a recent school focus on developing these skills and pupils are given regular opportunities in lessons to discuss their ideas in pairs and small groups before reporting back to the class or writing them down. This was a very successful feature of a lesson observed in Year 2 when pupils discussed their ideas about pattern in a poem before reporting back to the class. As a result, pupils of all abilities are confident to ask and answer questions and speak out to the class, or to the school in assemblies.
47. Pupils achieve well in reading and develop a good enjoyment of books as a result. Pupils heard reading in Year 6 were confident to read expressively to the group, and identify between them the 'wow' words used by the author to give dramatic effect and capture the reader's interest. Teachers use a wide range of strategies for teaching and practising reading. Most use the regular guided reading sessions very effectively to engage pupils in a wide range of reading activities and to teach reading skills systematically. Pupils read to adults at school and take books home regularly, and some younger pupils read to older 'reading buddies' at lunch times. Phonics are well taught from the start. Almost all pupils heard reading made good use of their knowledge of phonics to help them read new words.
48. The school has worked hard recently to improve pupils' achievement in writing and had a good measure of success in Year 2 national assessments last year. Teachers make good use of national guidance to ensure pupils have a wide range of writing opportunities. Pupils' work is assessed regularly so that teachers and pupils know where improvements are needed and additional support has been given to groups that are not doing as well as they should. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils can adapt their style of writing well for different purposes and present it in a lively, thoughtful way. Spelling is taught regularly from the start and pupils work hard to learn their spelling words. However, standards of spelling are lower than they should be because not enough emphasis is placed on the importance of pupils using more challenging spellings in their independent writing and too few pupils use dictionaries to check their own work. There are some inconsistencies in the way handwriting is taught and modelled by teachers, which affects standards of writing and presentation in the younger classes. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils write in a fluent, joined style but there is room to improve handwriting and presentation further by agreeing a common approach and spending more time on regular practice in Years 1 and 2.
49. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers establish a positive learning environment in their classrooms based on mutual respect and high expectations of behaviour. They use a wide variety of methods to make learning interesting. Younger pupils clap, sing and chant to help them with spelling and rhymes and teachers make good use of role play throughout the school to foster pupils' imagination and develop their speaking and listening skills. Pupils' behaviour is usually very good, and pupils' positive attitudes to learning are a feature of the very productive lessons. In general, the subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development through the opportunities presented for collaborative work.
50. Teachers make very good use of assessment to set targets for learning for groups and individuals, and regular feedback through marking ensures pupils know how they can improve. Teachers who have electronic boards use them effectively as a teaching tool and pupils use word processing programs confidently to present some of their work.

Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and receive effective small group teaching in most lessons to help them achieve as well as their classmates.

51. There has been good improvement in the subject since the previous inspection. Aspects of English have been a focus for school improvement and as a result teaching has improved and pupils make better progress overall. The subject is being soundly managed during the absence of the subject co-ordinator, and the headteacher makes good use of information gained from assessment to identify groups of pupils who would benefit from additional teaching and classroom support.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Pupils use their language and literacy skills appropriately in other subjects. In many lessons pupils are given opportunities to discuss their work or present their ideas to the rest of the class. The thematic approach to topic work is presenting pupils with additional writing opportunities but these are not always exploited to ensure pupils write in sufficient depth in subjects other than English.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and enjoy learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and lessons are well planned, focussed and prepared.
- Assessment is very good and used very well to set challenging targets for what pupils should do to improve.
- There are some occasions when activities are not matched to all learning needs.
- Pupils benefit from having their own set of mathematical equipment.

Commentary

53. The 2004 test results show that the pupils in Year 2 were in the top five per cent in the country in their mathematical ability. The pupils in Year 6 had test results that were above average. Inspection shows that the previous Year 2 pupils are continuing to build effectively on their skills now they are in Year 3, and that standards in mathematics are above average throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations and, as a result, pupils do well. Pupils enter Year 1 with average standards, achieve well over time, and generally leave school with above average attainment. By Year 6, pupils have secure mathematical knowledge, a good range of problem-solving strategies and a very good attitude towards the subject. Girls and boys attain equally high standards. They enjoy their learning and are keen to learn more, and to use and apply what they already know.
54. Overall teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned, prepared and focussed. For example, pupils in a Year 4 lesson achieved well in learning about 'Carroll diagrams' because the teacher recapped on their previous learning, had well prepared visual aids and examples and kept the whole class well focussed on reaching

an achievable target. Pupils with special educational needs were well integrated and supported and also achieved well in the lesson. All Year 6 pupils, including higher and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, benefit from the small group booster lessons which are held for twelve weeks in the spring. They are divided into three groups according to their ability and are taught by the class teacher, headteacher and teaching assistant. Through these sessions, pupils make rapid progress in number skills, self-esteem and attitudes to learning and are well prepared for the national tests in the summer. Although teachers' marking of work varies in quality between classes it is exemplary in Year 6, where it serves as an additional dialogue between pupil and teacher, and where pupils amend their work on the basis of their teacher's comments. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills very well and, as a result, the pupils all have relevant targets for what they should learn next. This helps pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and they enjoy the challenge of working to reach their latest target. Despite these successes, inspection shows that teachers do not always vary the work sufficiently to match all the learning needs in the class. For example, although most pupils eagerly worked at a high level in a Year 5 lesson, some did not understand and were not given appropriate support or alternative work to do.

55. There is good leadership and management of the subject and the provision shows good improvement since the last inspection. The coordinator is very knowledgeable and a very skilled teacher. She and the headteacher have rigorously monitored some lessons, pupils' work and test results. This has been used successfully to improve teaching, planning and resources. There is now an increased focus on investigation in mathematics which is improving standards further and contributing to pupils' interest and enjoyment of the subject. There are adequate class resources which are attractive and well organised. Individual mathematical packs are provided for all pupils, containing a whiteboard, pen and other mathematical equipment. These help to maintain a good pace to lessons and contribute to pupils' independence and very good personal development.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. Mathematics is included well in subjects such as science and ICT. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils timed balloons sliding along strings to two decimal places and all knew what the 'mean' was and how to find it. Links with other subjects, however, have yet to be developed to this extent.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils explain their scientific thinking well.
- Pupils are insufficiently aware of what they should learn next.

Commentary

57. Good improvement has taken place since the last inspection. The quality of the provision has improved and the subject is now taught consistently well throughout the school. Teachers have successfully included a greater emphasis on pupils' learning through practical activities and experiments and, as a result, standards have risen and all pupils are achieving well.
58. Teachers' assessments of the Year 2 pupils in 2004 showed that standards were average, and the 2004 test results for the Year 6 pupils were above average. Inspection shows that children enter Year 1 with average knowledge and understanding of the world. The pupils in Year 2 are doing well, and analysis of their books shows that almost all of them are already working at Level 2 (the level expected by the end of Year 2). They know, for example, that 'metal' connections are needed to complete electrical circuits and make relevant conclusions from their experiments such as, 'If you cool steam it turns to water. This is called a reversible change.' Most of the Year 6 pupils are already working at Level 4 (The level expected by the end of Year 6) and are learning to apply their scientific knowledge to predict events at the higher Level 5. For example, they were observed discussing and predicting, with accuracy, the effect of the forces involved in the propulsion of a balloon across the room.
59. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership for her colleagues and is successfully helping them to gain scientific knowledge and to enthuse the pupils towards learning. Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting, and pupils are motivated to do more as a result. For example, in a Year 1 lesson on the five senses, the teacher set the challenge of helping a 'bear' find a telephone and some oranges in a dark cave. The pupils were engrossed in discussion and came up with a wide range of ideas. The teacher then led them, with skilful questions, and an experiment to see if they were right, to realise that the senses of touch and smell could be used. A key factor in the quality of teaching and learning is the way that teachers encourage the pupils to use headings in their books so that they make sure they record their predictions, methods and conclusions to their investigations. As a result, pupils' work is set out methodically and clearly, which aids their understanding and revision. Teachers also encourage the pupils to think carefully about their conclusions and, as a result,

pupils are able to explain their findings, and teachers are able to check their understanding. This also means that pupils are able to see the links between their knowledge and other subjects and consider, for example, how a school pond would help them learn more about habitats and environmental matters.

60. Teachers carry out useful checks at the end of each topic of what pupils have learnt, and use this information appropriately to plan future lessons. Whilst this assessment is effective, it is not as rigorous as in mathematics and English and pupils could be clearer about the National Curriculum level they have attained and what their target should be for future learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well; standards are above average and still rising.
- Teachers act as very good role models for how to use ICT.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and cooperate very well together in their learning.

Commentary

61. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The provision of computer equipment and software has been updated, the school has kept pace with the changes in technology, teachers' computer skills have increased significantly and standards are continuing to rise. Pupils in Year 6 are confident in their use of computers with the majority of them already showing computer skills that are at least at Level 4 in the National Curriculum. A large proportion of the Year 6 pupils are working within the higher Level 5 and adapting their multi-media presentations to suit their audience as well as considering how to use, for example, spreadsheets in situations beyond school. These above average skills are due to the high expectations set by teachers and the very good way in which teachers use ICT for everyday tasks in their classrooms. For example, interactive boards are used for a wide range of purposes and pupils benefit from the way teachers use ICT to support their lessons and bring in additional high quality teaching materials from appropriate Internet sites. In addition, the school's website contains information about the topics being studied in class and the homework being set. As a result, those families with computers at home reinforce the 'everyday' use of ICT and pupils quickly realise the level of skills they need to aspire to. The outcome of this is that younger pupils are learning new skills quickly. Pupils in Year 3, for example, are already compiling multi-media presentations and adding sound and animation effects to their text and graphics. This is 'narrowing the gap' between them and their peers in Year 6 and is likely to lead to standards being even higher in future years.
62. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This is largely due to the very good leadership provided by the subject co-ordinator in helping teachers to improve their own skills and making sure that they use ICT consistently for routine tasks in school. As a result, teachers are confident to use their interactive boards and are also knowledgeable when teaching pupils skills in the ICT suite. Lessons have a brisk pace and pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn as much as they can. A key feature in these lessons is the way that pupils co-operate with one another and help each other

with their learning. For example, they take turns in the ICT suite and actively help one another to remember the sequence and commands to be used. They also delight in seeing what others have done and this, coupled with the positive praise and comments from teachers, leads the pupils to be proud of their new skills.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. ICT is used very well to support other subjects. For example, pupils learn new computer skills through searching the Internet for information about Romans to support their history project. In subjects such as music, the interactive board is used to demonstrate the appearance and sounds made by, for example, traditional Indonesian instruments.

HUMANITIES

Inspectors were unable to observe sufficient lessons in religious education to judge the quality of provision. History and geography were also sampled.

64. In **religious education**, the school's curriculum is broader than required by the locally agreed syllabus. The work in books and discussions with pupils show that they are developing a satisfactory knowledge, awareness and respect for Christianity and other world faiths. However, this is sometimes at the expense of accuracy and depth of knowledge. The subject co-ordinator has a good knowledge of the subject but the knowledge of some other staff is more limited. As a result, the information given in lessons is sometimes inaccurate and incorrect work in books is sometimes ticked. Good use is made of videos, such as one showing pupils around a mosque in London, and there are appropriate links with local Christian churches.
65. In **history and geography**, the school has recently changed its approach to teaching the subjects, so that they are now taught in a combined 'topic' rather than as separate subjects. This change is proving beneficial in making learning more relevant and enabling pupils to make links between their learning. However, discussions with pupils in Year 6 indicate that they are not yet studying the subjects to the depth they did previously. The school has rightly identified that this approach will require careful evaluation shortly. In both subjects, pupils talk knowledgeably about the work they have done in previous years. They talk animatedly about their work on the Victorians and can discuss Victorian social conditions with some enthusiasm but have very little recall of the work done this year on The Sixties. Similarly, they demonstrate a very sketchy understanding of their recent work on erosion in geography.
66. Teachers, however, have clearly been successful in making learning fun. Pupils enjoy learning through visits to places of interest and particularly enjoy activities such as spending a day in role as Victorian schoolchildren. Teachers make use of a wide range of resources such as artefacts, videos and the Internet to support historical and geographical research. In the one geography lesson seen, excellent use was made of the interactive board to help Year 1 pupils find out what 'Barnaby Bear' discovered on his visit to India.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The provision for art and design, physical education and design and technology was sampled. Music was inspected in full and is reported below.

67. In **art and design**, pupils' work displayed around the school shows that standards are well above average for all classes. Also, the questionnaires received from pupils show that art lessons and art clubs are very popular and that the subject plays an important role in the life of the school. In the one lesson seen, pupils in Year 6 were meticulously preparing Islamic style mosaic geometric patterns and patiently making sure that their original designs were being realised to the full. Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis on taking time to produce work of quality. This philosophy is followed very well in all classes and enables pupils to realise their creative intent and be proud of their success. This is due to the subject co-ordinator's emphasis on teaching artistic skills and insistence that 'Art takes time'. As a result, the work displayed shows clear evidence that pupils are given the time and have the patience to finish their work to a high standard.
68. **Design and technology** is now included within the 'topic' themes in each class. Photographs, work in books and models on display show that pupils are designing,

making and evaluating the items specified in teachers' plans. Year 4 pupils have linked work in science, history and English in researching, designing and making items which can be lit electrically. Pupils in Year 5 proudly showed the musical instruments they are designing and making. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrated how levers raised and lowered bridges on the shelters they had made. Old plastic drinks containers had been cleverly transformed into African masks and pupils from different year groups have worked together to make animals out of chicken wire and paper mache. The annual 'decoration day' at the end of November provides a further greatly enjoyed opportunity for pupils of different year groups to design, make and display Christmas decorations together.

69. In **physical education**, pupils have good opportunities to improve their physical development and skills. The school has been awarded the Government's Active Mark at gold level in recognition of its 'commitment to promoting benefits of physical activity and school sport' throughout the school. Teachers' plans show the curriculum is broad and balanced. In Year 3, pupils go swimming each week. Photographs show pupils enjoying PE lessons and Year 2 pupils keenly demonstrating their physical skills as part of staff training. The good range of sports clubs held at lunch time and after school includes judo, running and football. These are well attended. Pupils take part in inter-school and other local competitions such as fun runs, matches and swimming galas. Opportunities for physical development at play and lunch times are varied and well organised. Classes take turns to use the fixed play equipment, small equipment such as balls and ropes and the area designated for football.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The specialist teacher is enthusiastic and inspirational.
- Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Lessons could be better organised so that pupils learn more.

Commentary

70. Standards in performance, composition, listening and appraisal of music are average throughout the school. The provision is led well and has been maintained satisfactorily since the last inspection. The subject is taught by a specialist teacher who works in school for one day each week so that every class has one lesson. This teacher also leads a whole school singing session on that day. Her leadership of this session is inspirational and the pupils improve the quality of their singing to reach average standards with Year 6, for example, singing a basic harmony and holding a syncopated rhythm pattern. This is in contrast to the singing in assembly on other days, which lacks lustre and tone. The main impact of this singing session is on the personal development of the pupils as they all gain very good benefit from sharing the emotional aspects of the songs and in the huge sense of fun that is generated. This has an almost 'spiritual' quality of taking pupils 'outside themselves' so that the whole experience is greater than the sum of its parts. Teachers join in this session with gusto and their example also helps the pupils to lift their own performance.
71. The specialist teacher provides good teaching in the lessons for each class, and pupils generally learn well. Pupils are keen to join in their lessons and are motivated by the teacher's dynamic and lively approach coupled with her obvious knowledge of the subject. However, in some lessons the distribution of instruments and rehearsal of groups takes a long time, so the opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their playing are reduced. As a result, pupils

enjoy working and learning in the lessons, but are not always developing new skills as quickly as they could. This leads to satisfactory achievement over time in all classes. The school enables pupils to have individual and small group tuition on a suitable range of instruments, such as cello and guitar, and this provision is very good and well liked by the pupils. The school also makes sure that pupils have equal opportunities of access to this additional provision. Over each year, pupils benefit from the good opportunities to take part in musical events, listen to professional musicians and to sing and play to others. This keeps their motivation high and is successful in developing their cultural awareness of the importance of music in their lives.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area of the curriculum was sampled.

72. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities such as 'reflection time' and 'circle time' to reflect on their learning, behaviour, actions and the actions of others. Assemblies are well delivered and focus on how well pupils are valued and the contribution they can all make to school life. Discussions with pupils show they enjoy the opportunities provided to extend their personal and social development and inspectors judge the personal and social development and citizenship of the pupils to be very good. Healthy living is promoted very well through the physical education curriculum, the many opportunities for sports and the way pupils select 'healthy' school meals in advance.

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 | 3 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 3 |
| Overall standards achieved | 3 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos) | 2 |
| Attendance | 3 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 3 |
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| How well pupils learn | 3 |
| The quality of assessment | 3 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 2 |
| Accommodation and resources | 4 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 2 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 3 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 2 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 2 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 3 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 3 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 3 |
| The effectiveness of management | 3 |

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