

INSPECTION REPORT

J H GODWIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Blacon, Chester

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 110983

Headteacher: Mr M A Henderson

Lead inspector: Rachael Andrew

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th October 2004

Inspection number: 267107

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:	198
School address:	Melbourne Road Blacon Chester
Postcode:	CH1 5JG
Telephone number:	01244 390023
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Delwyn Roberts
Date of previous inspection:	June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average size community primary school situated to the west of Chester. It draws its pupils from privately owned and local authority housing estates. Within this area there is considerable deprivation and an above average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. When pupils start school, their attainments are well below average. Almost all the pupils are from white British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. There are currently 198 boys and girls aged from four to eleven on the school's roll. Pupil mobility is below average. The school has designated provision for up to 14 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in Years 3 to 6. These pupils are taught in two separate classes. There are currently five pupils in one class and two in the other class. Several pupils in the mainstream classes join the latter class for some lessons. Some of the pupils in these classes have autistic spectrum disorders or significant learning difficulties as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties. This provision is referred to as 'the unit' throughout this report. In Years 1 to 6, there are currently a total of 35 pupils (28 per cent) with special educational needs and eight pupils (four per cent) whose special educational needs are set out in written statements because of their severity. Both these percentages are well above the national averages for primary schools.

The school has received several awards, including a School Achievement Award in 2000, a Football Association Charter Mark in 2003 and Sport England Activemark Gold awards in 2002 and 2003. The school is involved in the Primary Leadership Programme, Sure Start and a family learning programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21460	Rachael Andrew	Lead inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education
9146	Mark Brennand	Lay inspector	
24895	Kathleen Hurt	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, history, religious education
23696	Johnny Morris	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology, Foundation Stage, special educational needs including the work of the unit

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

In terms of its overall effectiveness the school is satisfactory. The rising trend in results is better than that seen nationally although standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are still below average. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory except in writing and ICT where they should be better. The achievement of pupils in the unit is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the unit. There is a picture of steady progress through the school. Pupils approach their work positively and behave well. Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, weaknesses, especially in the checks the school makes on the quality of its work, are slowing improvement. Given the difficult context in which it works the school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils have positive attitudes to work and behave well and parents have confidence in the school because the headteacher and staff establish good relationships and make their expectations clear.
- A significant number of pupils of all ability do not do well enough in writing or ICT.
- The checks the school makes, especially on the quality of teaching and learning, are not rigorous or frequent enough to bring about significant improvements.
- Pupils in the unit do well because of the good provision for their individual needs.
- The school's provision for physical education is outstanding and builds teamwork and self-esteem.
- There are too many occasions when work is not pitched at the right level for groups of different ability within the class.
- Well-planned visits and activities outside normal lessons add interest and enjoyment to what is taught.
- Governance is unsatisfactory because the governing body is under-strength and relies too heavily on the headteacher.

Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory overall. Standards of work are rising and the school has maintained good standards of behaviour. Teachers' planning has improved. Insufficient improvement has been made in ICT and in checking the quality of the school's work.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Although **achievement is satisfactory overall** and in all parts of the school, standards are below average at the age of seven and eleven because of pupils' low starting points.

Standards are below average at age seven in reading, writing and mathematics and at age eleven in English and mathematics but achievement is satisfactory except in writing throughout the school. Standards in science are broadly average at eleven and achievement is good. Standards in ICT are below average throughout the school. Pupils do not do well enough in writing or ICT. Most children at the Foundation Stage in reception are unlikely to achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception, except in their personal, social and emotional development, although their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils do very well in physical education because of the outstanding provision and the quality of the teaching in a wide range of sports. Standards in religious education are below average but achievement is satisfactory.

The table below requires explanation. The results it shows include those for the pupils in Year 6 in the special unit. In 2003 there were six of them. If the results of these pupils were removed from the calculations, comparisons would be improved by one grade. The latest results in 2004 showed a sharp fall in English because pupils did badly in the writing test. There was a slight rise in

mathematics and a sharp rise in science. No comparisons can be made with all schools or similar schools because 2004 results have not yet been published.

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

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.

E indicates that standards were in the lowest five percent nationally.*

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall. Pupils' attitudes are good and pupils have a sensible approach to their work. They behave well in lessons and around the school because the school applies a clear policy consistently and relationships are supportive. Pupils in the unit often find it hard to control their feelings and behaviour all the time but this is managed well. Attendance has risen to average levels and is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the main school. Teaching is good in the unit because it responds particularly well to individual needs. Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills enables pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, to make steady progress from reception to Year 6 but pupils do not have enough opportunities to practice and improve their writing and ICT skills in any subject. Overall progress is further impeded because group tasks are not always pitched at the right level of difficulty. The co-ordinator, learning mentor and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and lower ability groups and at these times pupils get on well. The curriculum has sufficient breadth and an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. There are many good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and gain interest and enjoyment outside lessons, especially through the extensive range of sports. Pupils are well cared for. Parents have co-operated well with the school to bring about improvements in attendance.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been effective in establishing a well-ordered learning environment where pupils feel valued. Weaknesses in management, for example in checking the quality of the school's work, especially teaching and learning, are slowing improvements. Governance is unsatisfactory. The governing body is supportive and keen to become more effective but not exerting sufficient influence over the school's work.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school, especially the way it deals with their concerns. They find the headteacher and staff approachable and like the well-ordered atmosphere. Pupils are proud of their school and are particularly enthusiastic about sport.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing and in ICT.
- Make more rigorous and frequent checks on the quality of its work especially teaching and learning.
- Make better use of the information it holds about what pupils know, understand and can do to pitch work that meets the needs of different abilities within the class.
- Do all it can to bring the governing body up to full strength and improve its effectiveness.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the governors' annual report to parents includes all the information required by law.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is satisfactory in all years given pupils' low starting points although standards are below average overall. Standards in English and mathematics are below average. In science pupils do well and standards are broadly average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at eleven are rising faster than in most other schools since the last inspection so the gap is closing but pupils could do better in writing and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Weaknesses in tracking progress mean that the school does not always take prompt action to tackle underachievement.
- Children in the reception class achieve well in the personal, social and emotional area of learning so they settle quickly into school life.
- Pupils in the unit do well because teachers adapt the work carefully to suit individual needs.
- Pupils do very well in physical education because of good and often very good teaching in the wide range of sports available to them.

Commentary

1. The table below shows results in Year 2 were not as good as those in most other schools. Writing was the weakest subject. Pupils did as well as those in similar schools except in writing. More recent results show a slight fall in reading and mathematics but a slight rise in writing.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.7 (13.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.9 (12.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.7 (13.6)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 23 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The table below shows that results in Year 6 were well below those found in most schools. However, six of the pupils taking the test attended the special unit. Many had learning difficulties as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties. Several had also experienced disruptions in schooling. The results in English and mathematics of those pupils not in the unit compared favourably with similar schools. Pupils of all abilities did well. Science results were not as good. The more recent 2004 results show a sharp fall in English results because pupils did badly in the writing test. Results in mathematics were better and in science much better than in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.0 (23.7)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	24.3 (23.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	25.7 (24.7)	28.6 (28.3)

3. Foundation Stage children in the reception class start their school life with attainments that are well below average overall. Although their achievements are satisfactory, few are on course to achieve the standards expected by the end of the reception year, except in personal, social and emotional development where many are on course to achieve the standards expected. They make good progress in the personal, social and emotional area of learning because of good teaching. At this early stage in the term, they move about sensibly, take turns, respond to instructions and are getting to know class routines.
4. Standards at age eleven, including the pupils in the unit, have improved faster than the national trend until 2003 when the last set of figures was published. Standards at age seven have risen at the same pace as most other schools. Pupils' achievements in infants and juniors are satisfactory except in writing and ICT where they could do better. Pupils make steady progress in reading because basic skills are taught well and teachers ensure that more complex skills are developed as pupils get older. This helps them to access information in reference books and tackle new books and unseen texts with reasonable levels of confidence. In writing pupils learn basic skills well but do not develop more complex skills fast enough because they have too few opportunities in English or in other subjects to put them into practice. Much of lesson time is taken up with teachers explaining new learning and showing pupils what to do so that independent tasks are too short. Tasks are too often undemanding and marking does not always make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. In mathematics pupils' mental skills are close to the national average because teaching has focused on this area. Work in shape, space and measures is weak but this has now been identified through looking at test results. Recent improvements to planning for science with a sharper focus on investigative work contributed to much better results last year. In ICT, although recently introduced planning gives teachers a framework for teaching skills, pupils do not spend enough time on computers to make the expected progress. Since the last inspection low standards in ICT have risen but not fast enough to close the gap between this and most other schools. In religious education, standards are below the expectations of the Cheshire Syllabus but pupils' achievements are sound.
5. The school has begun to track pupils' progress more systematically from year to year. Tracking is now firmly established in mathematics and producing useful information so that teachers have been able to identify small groups of underachievers and adapt support to meet their needs. Teachers are aware, in general terms, of those pupils who, whilst not necessarily underachieving, would benefit from extra support for English, and teaching assistants have been trained to provide this. However, those pupils who are underachieving, in writing for example, have not been identified or provided for adequately.
6. Pupils in the unit do well particularly in English, in mathematics and in their personal development. This is because they benefit considerably from the small groups, high adult-pupil ratio and good teaching that meets individual needs. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes is satisfactory.
7. Pupils do well in physical education because of good teaching and the wide range of sporting activities available to them. Excellent leadership by the co-ordinator has established outstanding provision that benefits all pupils, enables individual pupils to excel in their chosen sport and brought recognition and awards to the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Personal development, particularly pupils' moral and social development, is good. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school develops positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- The school sets high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond well.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection.
- The school provides too few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility.

Commentary

8. The school’s mission statement, that ‘Pupils will feel secure that staff are approachable when responding to their needs and that all outcomes are fair’, is one which it carries out to great effect. As a consequence teachers establish good relationships with children and this has a positive effect on both the attitudes and behaviour in the school. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. There were no exclusions in the last reporting year.
9. Comments by Year 6 pupils such as “Teachers are kind to us”, “They treat us on a level” and “The attitude of teachers is good” indicate that they appreciate the way staff relate to them. The effects can be seen from an early age with children in the reception year working well together in group activities and reacting to the presence of inspectors in a friendly and confident way. Pupils greet visitors politely and ask sensible questions. In lessons there were numerous occasions when the positive approach of the teaching staff encouraged pupils to respond well by answering questions without fear of being wrong.
10. The emphasis on creating a strong moral code has resulted in behaviour which is generally good. This is to the school’s credit because there are a number of pupils whose behaviour is challenging but effectively managed. A common theme is the way teachers set clear expectations of behaviour particularly at the beginning of lessons. By so doing pupils are sure about what is expected of them and react accordingly. As a result, in most lessons observed behaviour was good or better. At lunchtime in the dining room the atmosphere is very orderly with pupils waiting patiently to be served and sitting sensibly when eating their food. Discussions with pupils confirm that there is very little bad behaviour and they are confident that when it occurs their teachers will take the appropriate action to resolve matters.
11. Given the respect which is evident between staff and pupils, it is perhaps surprising that there are so few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. Other than recycling officers and cloakroom and library monitors there are few, if any, roles which they can fill on a regular basis. Furthermore, there is little the school does to enable pupils to influence the running of their school.
12. Attendance for the year ended 2003 was in line with the national average. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. It reflects well on the positive way in which pupils view their school and the co-operation of parents. However, not enough emphasis is placed on following up all absentees and this has resulted in too many pupils having an unauthorised absence.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.8
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	2.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory so pupils of all abilities make steady progress. Those in the unit make good progress

because of good teaching. The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy but, in spite of this, is reasonably broad. There are many good opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences and improve their skills out of normal lesson times. The school provides a good level of care that helps pupils to settle to work. Teachers keep a close eye on personal development but do not track academic progress carefully enough. Many pupils in the youngest classes get good support for reading at home that helps them to get off to a good start.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall because information is not used well enough to ensure pupils always do as well as they should.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of basic skills in reading is well established and underpins the early stages of reading well but pupils spend too little time developing their writing skills, and too many tasks are short and undemanding.
- Basic skills in mathematics are taught well and there is a good emphasis on mental skills and the language for mathematics, but insufficient attention has been given to work on shape, space and measures.
- The learning mentor and teaching assistants give helpful support, usually to lower attaining pupils but the tasks set for other pupils are not always pitched at a level that challenges them.
- There are insufficient checks on the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that teachers know what works well and what needs improving.
- Pupils do not have a clear picture of what they need to do to improve because teachers' marking and comments do not give them enough help.
- Teachers establish a calm working atmosphere in their classes and most lessons proceed with few interruptions. Even very young children in Year 1 work well in small groups without losing concentration.

Commentary

13. The overall quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. Teachers' planning has improved. Pupils get off to a good start with reading because they are taught letter sounds thoroughly and how to use the sounds to recognise words new to them. Systems for encouraging pupils to read at home and learn the words they meet most frequently are successful in underpinning achievement in reading. There are weaknesses in the teaching of writing. Teachers spend too much time with the whole class, teaching new skills and explaining tasks so that independent work is often short and undemanding. This is also true in other subjects so that learning is not as good as teaching. This was evident in lessons and reflected in pupils' completed work. The few checks that have been made by senior managers during lesson times have tended to compound this situation because checks have focused more on what the teacher did rather than on learning and achievement. The checking of teaching and learning has not been good enough to bring about many significant improvements although a few key skills, such as the quality of teachers' questions, have been identified and improved and there have been improvements in the teaching of mathematics.
14. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good and pupils' mental skills are close to the national average. Pupils' understanding of mathematical terms and their use of language is improving because this was identified through a check on lessons last year. Teachers know through looking at answers to tests that pupils do not do well enough in space, shape and measures and this is being tackled. Weaknesses such as these and underachievement in writing have not been picked up earlier through checking pupils' books.
15. Pupils do not always do as well as they should in lessons because tasks are not pitched at a level to challenge them. Although the quality of assessment has improved since the last inspection, teachers do not use well enough the information they have about what pupils

already know, understand and can do. Too often in subjects other than English and mathematics all pupils do the same work. Tasks are often in the form of work sheets which require too little effort to complete and give little scope for individual responses. This hinders the progress of some pupils, particularly higher attainers. The good support given by the learning mentor and teaching assistants mean that the lower attaining pupils in their charge do well. Particularly in the juniors, teachers miss opportunities to involve pupils in using computers to add interest and challenge to learning and to improve computer skills.

16. The quality of marking varies considerably from class to class. There is no whole-school policy on marking or target setting to guide teachers. Pupils do not find this helpful. When asked, they were unclear about what they needed to do to improve different aspects of their work.
17. Teachers manage pupils well and ensure that lessons proceed calmly and without interruption. Pupils respond well to their high expectations of behaviour. They develop good working habits because teachers encourage them and are quick to praise their efforts. When teachers pull lessons together at the end they occasionally mislead pupils when they say, for example, "This group has done brilliantly" when they mean they have worked quietly. As a result pupils are not always sure what in particular they have done well and what needs improving.
18. Teaching and learning are consistently good in the unit. All the staff know the pupils well and teachers plan activities that are well matched to their different needs. Support staff have a good understanding of what they have to do and do it well. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Pupils make good gains in speaking and listening and reading and writing, for example when working on past and present tenses and when writing poems in different styles. They learn well because they are praised for success and warmly encouraged when they are reluctant to have a go at something. During a mathematics lesson, all seven pupils present made good gains in accurate measurement using millimetres and decimal places. Effective links are made between different subjects of the curriculum such as aspects of personal development in a science lesson on keeping healthy, and history in a literacy lesson. In one of the classes, calming background music is used effectively to create a good atmosphere for learning. The unit teachers' assessments confirm good progress.
19. The teaching, learning and achievement of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes are satisfactory. These pupils sometimes receive good support from teaching assistants and some benefit from sessions with the special educational needs co-ordinator. At these times pupils often make good progress. However, the teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to their particular needs when planning lessons in subjects other than mathematics and English and where no additional support is available. In these situations progress is slow.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	3 (9%)	20 (61%)	10 (30%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum is reasonably broad given the appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. There are good arrangements for enriching experiences outside normal lesson times. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has placed a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy because it identified the need to raise standards.
- The provision in the unit is good in all respects and is a strength of the school.
- There are good quality visits and before- and after-school activities that add interest and enjoyment to pupils' learning.
- There are some good examples of links between subjects that add relevance and support learning well but there is no systematic planning for these. Similarly, opportunities for the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are not routinely identified in subject planning.
- Provision for physical education is outstanding and contributes strongly to very good achievement.
- The allocation of time to different subjects, and the timing of lessons, sometimes hinder effective learning.

Commentary

20. The school has treated provision for literacy and numeracy as a priority over several years because of the low standards at the time of the last inspection. This emphasis has contributed to the steady rise in standards. Effective use has been made of local authority support and training programmes to improve provision. In particular, teaching assistants have been trained to take intervention and 'booster' classes to enable those pupils needing extra support to achieve the expected standard for their age. In spite of this emphasis the curriculum as a whole has retained reasonable breadth and fulfils statutory requirements for the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and subjects in Years 1 to 6. Drawing on national guidelines, improvements have been made to planning that now provides clear guidance to teachers and a logical sequence of skills in all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education.
21. Pupils with special educational needs receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum but a well-grounded emphasis is placed on the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In the unit, the emphasis on personal development and physical education builds pupils' self-esteem and enables them to deal with their emotions and improve the control of their behaviour. There is a clear commitment to mainstream inclusion but only when the pupils are ready to learn in a larger group.
22. Pupils benefit from carefully chosen visits which broaden their experiences, engage their interest and develop their cultural understanding. For example, pupils speak with enthusiasm about their visit to Erddig, that provided an inspiring starting point for the study of Victorian life. Older pupils take part in an annual residential week at the Conway Centre, where they take part in adventurous outdoor activities. There are many other sporting and other out-of-school activities that contribute strongly to pupils' learning in physical education and to their social development. Younger pupils visit the Cheshire Show and make good use of the local area to learn about buildings.
23. Individual teachers make some effective links between subjects, especially in the infants, to add relevance to the work and make good use of time but there is no coherent planning for this throughout the school. The lack of systematic planning for the development of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy in other subjects hinders progress.
24. There is outstanding provision for physical education. The range and quality of opportunities both within and outside lessons are far greater than in most schools. It has led to the prestigious Sport England Gold Activemark and contributed strongly to very good achievement. Good quality equipment for a wide range of sports also contributes to enjoyment, the level of participation in extra-curricular activities, learning and achievement. Effective use of the large well-equipped hall with fixed gymnastic apparatus and the spacious well-maintained field with its various markings also boost learning. The school makes good use of outside expertise to widen the range of sports it offers and to ensure quality. Sporting links with the local high school which is seeking Sports' College status add to the resources available. There is a wide range of accessible teachers' resources that supports planning well.

25. The way that subjects are timetabled sometimes leads to anomalies that interfere with learning. For example, older pupils go out to games in the middle of a session earmarked for science. Some lessons are too long time to maintain concentration and others not long enough to develop pupils' skills. The school has plans to re-evaluate curriculum time allocations with an eye to balance and continuity. This is overdue.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares well for its pupils. Pastoral care, health and safety arrangements are all good. The procedures for giving advice and guidance based on the monitoring of pupils' achievement and personal development are satisfactory. The way in which the school seeks and acts upon pupils' views is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of pastoral care enables pupils to feel secure.
- Procedures help children new to the reception class settle in quickly
- The lack of opportunities for pupils to have a say in the running of their school hinders aspects of their personal development.
- The system for tracking pupils' progress and achievements is not firmly established.

Commentary

26. Staff make sure that they get to know pupils' personal development needs well. Interviews with parents indicated that they liked the family atmosphere and that it was a significant influence on them selecting the school. The headteacher is well aware of the need to provide a welcoming environment and he makes it a priority to get to know all pupils and their families so that they receive the necessary level of pastoral support. There are a number of pupils whose behaviour presents a challenge and good records have been kept of incidents that they have been involved in whilst at school. These are shared at staff meetings so that staff know how to respond and ensure that they are aware of the reasons behind certain behaviour patterns. The quality of pastoral care has been maintained since the last inspection
27. In the absence of nursery provision, the school leases accommodation to the private Stepping Stones playgroup. This not only acts as an excellent source of recruitment but its situation in the centre of the school building and the school's links with the staff and children also ensure that by the time children start in reception, they already feel comfortable in the school. In the year prior to them starting they attend a number of events in the school including the Christmas production, a variety of assemblies and taster days. In turn the class teacher spends time in the playgroup getting to know the children. In the summer term parents are invited to attend an induction evening when the daily arrangements are explained and they have the opportunity to have their queries answered. The end result is a seamless transition and this provides a good start to their education.
28. There are no formal systems for gathering pupils' views and this means that pupils have little or no influence on the running of the school. When asked to provide examples of how they can influence and contribute ideas, pupils were at a loss.
29. Considerable work has been done to create a manageable system to follow pupils' progress from class to class. It is designed to identify those pupils who may not be achieving as well as they might so that they can be given the necessary support. Pupils who do better than expected will also be identified so that their needs, too, can be met. The system is not firmly established, though a good start has been made in mathematics. As a result, teachers do not have clear picture of achievement or what sort of progress is expected for individuals and pupils do not know what they need to do to improve. The procedures for the assessment, support and

guidance of pupils with special educational needs are good and pay full regard to the national Code of Practice. Good use is made of links with other agencies.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established **good** links with parents and the community. There are **satisfactory** links with both the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The links with parents through an open and welcoming approach support pupils' attitudes and encourage attendance. They support the progress of pupils with special educational needs well.
- The strong reputation of the school within the local community ensures that numbers rise even though there are surplus places elsewhere in the area.

Commentary

30. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good, as it was at the last inspection. The headteacher works hard to cultivate a positive and supportive partnership with parents. At the start of the new term he makes himself available in the playground to introduce himself to new parents. He also encourages parents to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity and this they do. He makes sure he is around at the beginning and end of the day to accommodate this process. Newsletters are sent out regularly which keep parents informed about what is going on and parents provide good support for outside visits and sports activities. There are good arrangements to involve the parents of pupils with special educational needs in the reviews of their progress and target setting. Through Cheshire Family Education, courses in literacy and numeracy have been held to help parents in supporting their children's learning at home. The numbers attending have been small but they are considered to be of value to those who take part.
31. The school is well thought of both within and beyond the local community. Indeed such is its reputation that a number of children attend from outside the catchment area. Further evidence of the respect which it is accorded can be seen in how it escapes the vandalism evident elsewhere in the area. The local environment is used well, for example to enhance pupils' knowledge of local culture through studies on housing. The City of Chester has a rich heritage and is used well as an excellent resource for work on the Romans and Tudor England. The school enjoys many local sports links, with Chester City FC who run an after-school football club, Chester Jets for basketball, Judo North West and Cheshire Dance. It is currently also working with Blacon High School on a bid for Sports College Status which will further strengthen sporting links and give a further boost to facilities in the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is satisfactory. The management of the school is satisfactory overall although there are significant weaknesses. Governance is unsatisfactory. There are minor breaches of statutory requirements relating to information in the governors' annual report to parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides effective leadership in establishing a happy, well-ordered and popular school and closing the gap in standards between this and most other schools.
- Governors are very supportive of the school, but rely too heavily on the headteacher in steering the school forward and evaluating its effectiveness.

- Involvement in recent training and leadership initiatives means that senior managers have a good view of what needs to be done, but the pace of action and improvement is too slow.
- The headteacher and senior managers do not check pupils' achievements and the effectiveness of teaching systematically or thoroughly enough, so that weaknesses are allowed to go on too long and the best teaching practices are not adopted by all.

Commentary

32. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership in the pastoral aspects of his role, as was reported at the time of the last inspection. He and his staff have successfully established a happy and hardworking atmosphere in circumstances that are sometimes very difficult. This is clearly valued by parents, and the school is popular. In an area where there are surplus places, the numbers on roll have risen considerably and the school is full. This positive ethos, and the way it develops pupils' growing self-esteem and confidence, have been significant factors in improving standards. These have risen at a higher rate than those in other schools nationally. The headteacher delegates well so that staff have good opportunities for professional development, often moving on to headships and other senior posts.
33. Governors are very supportive of the school and anxious to fulfil their duties as well as possible. Due to special circumstances that have led to some resignations, there are currently five vacancies on the governing body that puts a strain on its effectiveness, which is not as good as described in the last inspection report. Although governors are very committed, they do not have a clear enough view of strengths and weaknesses. Because they lack sufficient training, they rely too heavily on the headteacher in steering the school forward. This means they are unable to question and challenge him and other senior managers to check whether the school is as effective as it might be.
34. Involvement in the Primary Leadership Project and other leadership and management developments is successfully highlighting important priorities for school improvement. These are clearly identified in the school's action planning document and the accurate self-evaluations that have resulted. However, the targets for development and the criteria against which their success is judged are too vague. They are not sufficiently linked to improvements in teaching and its impact in raising standards, so developments have not been as fast or productive as they might be. This is partly due to the crucial recent changes in the staff with senior management responsibilities. The pace of improvement has necessarily slowed as they settle into their new roles. The training provided for some of these staff has been particularly effective. The mathematics co-ordinator, for example, provides good leadership for the subject. Efficient systems for recording pupils' achievements in the subject ensure that senior managers have a good overview of how well pupils are progressing. Such subject leaders know what needs to be done. They show a strong sense of urgency and purpose in their desire to adopt the best possible practices and deal with underachievement and weaknesses in teaching. The two teachers who manage the provision in the unit do so well and work effectively with their colleagues in the mainstream classes. The special educational needs co-ordinator is an effective manager. The management of the considerable paperwork related to pupils with special educational needs is meticulous and underpins provision in the main school and the unit.
35. There have been some promising, though limited, recent developments in the school's self-evaluation. Some of the issues arising from lesson observations as part of the Primary Leadership Project and linked to performance management are beginning to improve aspects of teaching. For example, a strong feature in the lessons seen during the inspection was the effective way some teachers use questions, prompting pupils to think hard and clarify their ideas whilst allowing teachers to check their understanding. This had been identified through checks on teaching in subjects like mathematics. Adopted as part of a whole-school approach, it is already having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, the systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning by senior managers, subject leaders and the headteacher in

particular are not yet sufficiently frequent or thorough. When observing lessons, they do not highlight clearly enough the good practices evident in some classes so that they can be adopted by all teachers. There is not a sharp enough focus on how well pupils are learning so that teachers are informed of the aspects of their teaching that do not work so well and need to be improved, although some useful guidance has been given from the analysis of test results. More needs to be done to ensure that those with management responsibilities in the school have accurate information about the achievements of pupils of different abilities and needs, and that they analyse it thoroughly and then take speedy action where improvements are identified.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	529,437
Total expenditure	546,595
Expenditure per pupil	2,775

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	70,642
Balance carried forward to the next	53,484

36. The school's financial planning and management systems are satisfactory. The school carries forward a high amount of unspent funds. This is largely due to funding set aside as part of plans to create single-age classes in Years 3 to 6 with space created by a new building project for children in the playgroup who are currently accommodated in two of the school's classrooms. As this project has very recently been cancelled, action is now needed to allocate these funds to boost the complement of teaching staff in these year groups.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

37. The provision in the reception class is satisfactory. It has been maintained overall since the last inspection and improved in personal, social and emotional development where it is now good. There are several good features and no significant shortcomings. Leadership is sound and the provision well managed. The organisation, planning and assessment procedures are all good and the teacher and nursery nurse work together well as a small team. The teacher is very diligent in ensuring that all of the recommended areas and activities in the Foundation Stage curriculum are covered. This provides the children with broad and relevant learning opportunities. Lessons are well structured with individual activities carefully selected and prepared to follow on from the introduction. However, some whole-class activities go on too long and the teacher tries to pack too much into some sessions. Furthermore, the wealth of information collected from detailed assessments is not always analysed correctly or used to best effect. There are good links with the independent pre-school playgroup, which operates within the school building and a good partnership with parents. This results in good preparation for the children before starting school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff successfully get the children used to school rules and routines and develop their self-confidence and awareness of others.
- The small number of children who have a low level of concentration and do not readily join in with whole-class activities are managed well.

Commentary

38. Achievement is good from a well below average starting point. Many, but not all, children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of reception. Teaching and learning are good. The day starts with a good whole-class activity including registration, the days of the week and a reminder of the simple class rules. Because the classroom is well organised and there are clear routines and expectations of behaviour in different situations, most of the children are well settled into school early in the year. However, this is not true of all the children. Some of them do not readily join in with whole-class activities, or have a tendency to call out, but they all know it is important to take turns. The teacher and nursery nurse have a good approach in that they use lots of praise for desired behaviours and try to encourage and engage those who are not complying and this is working well. For example, children clearly understood that they had to be careful when placing stones in a bowl of water without splashing. On another occasion, all of the children stopped what they were doing and went to the carpet area when asked.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are well planned and organised to promote early reading and writing skills but there is sometimes too much teacher talk.

Commentary

39. Achievement is satisfactory from a well below average starting point but few children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of reception. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children are learning the names of the characters in the reading scheme books. A range of resources, including big books, puppets and flash cards and techniques such as immediate repetition, is used well to stimulate the children's interest in hearing and reading stories and to teach them the names and sounds of letters. Some whole-class sessions go on too long and a considerable number of children have difficulty staying on task. Many of the children speak well in short phrases and complete sentences but few converse confidently and a significant number are reluctant to contribute to whole-class activities. All of the children are experimenting with mark making and the more able children write some recognisable letters and attempt, with some success, to write their own names. Because of the teacher's good role model and use of language, the children are learning how to hold a book and turn the pages correctly and acquiring related vocabulary such as 'author' and 'thinking bubble'. In one session observed, the individual activities were particularly well planned to develop what had been taught and discussed earlier.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Whole-class activities teach number skills and mathematical language quite well but these sessions tend to be too long.

Commentary

40. Achievement is satisfactory from a well below average starting point but few children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of reception. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Whole-class activities, including watching an educational video, effectively promoted basic number skills and mathematical language. Most of the children join in enthusiastically with number rhymes and, along with rest of the class, many children count to 10 or even 20. However, some are very tentative when counting alone and rely heavily on adult prompts. Similarly, most children show they have a reasonable understanding of 'longer' and 'shorter' by selecting objects but some of them have difficulty using the correct words when speaking about what they were doing. Most of the children have learnt a few basic shapes such square, circle and triangle and can name and match colours. Children playing with peg-boards showed very little understanding of the idea of making a repeating pattern.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are planned for children to gain first-hand experiences.

Commentary

41. Achievement is satisfactory from a well below average starting point but few children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of reception. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. During the inspection the teacher invited one of the children's mothers to visit with her baby boy. The children showed good understanding of the differences between the needs and behaviour of the baby and themselves. One boy said, "He needs some help". Children

showed good control in placing and sticking collage pieces onto an outline of a cake as part of a party theme following the telling of a story. Some children were very precise in sticking the pieces in neat lines. Children have made some simple models using a selection of recyclable materials. Little use of the classroom computer was seen. Although three computers were on during one session, few children chose to have a go and no encouragement by the teacher was noted. One girl used the mouse extremely carefully to move shapes around the screen.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff effectively compensate for the rather limited facilities available.
- Sometimes the teacher does not demonstrate skills and activities to help the children learn well.

Commentary

42. Achievement is satisfactory from a well below average starting point but few children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of reception. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although there is no separate outdoor play area for the reception children and there are no wheeled toys available, the staff make good use of the shared infant play area and equipment for outdoor activities throughout the year and the school field when weather permits. The children collect and put on their coats independently when getting ready to go outside. The nursery nurse effectively gave children confidence in balancing and moving along benches and wooden stumps. Children are learning how to look out for others and find a space when playing a run and stop game. They were keen to experiment with balls and hoops and some catch a ball well but not enough guidance was given at the start of the session for those who did not know what to do. Many classroom activities, such as drawing, cutting and sticking and using construction kits, successfully promote the development of the children's manipulation skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Musical activities are used to good effect in many situations such as registration, story-time and outdoor play to stimulate and involve the children.

Commentary

43. Achievement is satisfactory from a well below average starting point but few children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of reception. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many of the children enjoy nursery rhymes and action songs and many, but not all, join in enthusiastically. Children are learning how to create pictures using different materials and techniques. All have painted a picture of themselves and these include a reasonable awareness at this stage of the year of facial features and limbs. The children made pictures using triangle and square shapes and some of these are recognisable objects such as a kite, a house and a person. More able children draw good quality pictures of, for example, people, buildings and the seaside and less able children colour given outlines of animals quite well. These are on display as 'Our special pictures'. During a story-time, the teacher asked the children to pretend they were 'mum' and think about how she felt and there was a small classroom 'office area' for role-play at the time of the inspection. However, there were not enough examples of activities and language to stimulate the children's imaginations.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003 results (excluding those of pupils in the special unit) were in line with the national average and better than similar schools but results dropped sharply in 2004 because of weaknesses in writing.
- Pupils do not get enough time to put their writing skills into practice in English lessons or in other subjects and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- There are some good opportunities for speaking and listening including drama activities but these are not planned for systematically in every class.
- There is some very good teaching of reading in groups of the same ability and with the whole class using the same text but not in all classes.
- There are too few checks on teaching and learning to improve quality and effectiveness.
- Junior pupils do not use computers to advantage to draft and edit writing.
- The teaching of joined handwriting is left until late in the juniors so pupils are reluctant to change their style and few develop fluency.

Commentary

44. Achievement overall is satisfactory in the infants and in the juniors. Since the last inspection, English has been the strongest subject in the school, rising steadily to achieve especially good results in 2003. In particular, higher attaining pupils did well. In 2004, however, although reading results held up, writing results fell sharply. Writing has always been weaker than reading but the discrepancies were unprecedented. School analysis revealed that many pupils had misinterpreted the purpose of the writing test and lost many marks for composition. The school felt results were not a true picture of their capabilities and fell well short of school targets, which is unusual. Nevertheless test results at seven and eleven reflect weaknesses in writing that are apparent in pupils' completed work.
45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers explain new work well and in the infant classes teach the early stages of reading thoroughly and carefully so pupils get off to a good start. Older pupils have a sound grasp of more advanced reading skills and approach new books and unseen texts with reasonable confidence. Pupils show interest in books and reading and have a choice of good quality fiction. In the infants and particularly in Year 1, pupils use computers regularly to help with reading and writing tasks. All teachers use an effective range of techniques and prompts to show pupils how to structure their writing. They consider with pupils how to make the words they choose more interesting. They question pupils well and pupils' responses indicate they have listened well, have understood and are developing good ideas for their own writing. However, too much time is often spent on the introductions, explanations, whole-class teaching and discussions so that pupils do not have enough time to practise and improve writing skills before the end of the lesson. Pupils are grouped by ability and tasks set are usually matched appropriately to their needs but teachers spend too little time working with groups and moving the learning on. Occasionally writing tasks are unchallenging. Opportunities for pupils to write at length are too few and so pupils lack fluency. Pupils are capable of better work. Marking rarely indicates what pupils need to do to improve.
46. There are considerable variations in the quality of teaching in different aspects of English in different classes but no significant overall weaknesses in any one class. This is symptomatic of weaknesses in the management of the subject in the past. Guided reading is helping the oldest pupils to develop their skills well and specific weaknesses identified through the analysis of data are being tackled. The teacher insists that pupils 'read between the lines' to get at underlying

meaning, and to justify their answers to questions by clear reference to the text. In this and some other classes, drama activities and other good opportunities for speaking and listening contribute well to pupils' preparations for writing. Carefully chosen texts in several classes engage pupils' interest. Teachers have successfully considered what will appeal to boys to help to close the gap between boys' and girls' achievements in writing. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Bherlie Doherty's *Street Child* are examples of teachers' choices that have led to good work by boys and girls alike.

47. Pupils are beginning to learn how to join their writing in the Year 4/5 class. They do this carefully and thoroughly in their handwriting books. However, handwriting styles are well established at this stage and pupils are reluctant to make the switch to a different style. As a result few pupils in the older classes adopt a cursive style and write with ease and fluency.
48. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but patchy provision indicates weaknesses in evaluating English work in the past. Over recent years, there has been little monitoring of teaching and learning as part of a system for improving teaching quality. As a result, strengths have not always been recognised and shared and weaknesses have not been identified. Data analysis has been carried out to establish where pupils have weaknesses in tests. This has resulted in a school-wide focus for teaching reading which is evident in some but not all classes. Teaching assistants have been trained to lead intervention work in literacy with lower attaining pupils. School information indicates that this aspect of the work is successful. Teaching assistants also provide vital support for pupils with special educational needs which helps pupils to make sound progress in lessons. Last year the school participated in the Primary Leadership Project that aims to raise standards through improving the quality of subject leadership. There has been a thorough evaluation of what needs to be done. The recently appointed literacy co-ordinator is well qualified to lead the school's response to this evaluation and to move the school forwards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. There is no systematic planning for developing reading and writing for different purposes in other subjects of the curriculum. Too often pupils record their ideas on work sheets. These are the same for the whole class and so are undemanding for the most able. This is unsatisfactory and slows progress. Computers are not used well enough to draft and edit writing in any subject, especially in the juniors.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen at a higher rate than the national trend since the last inspection.
- The checks on teaching, particularly its impact on pupils' learning, are not regular or thorough enough in picking out the weaknesses and eliminating them, and ensuring that all staff adopt the successful features of the best teaching.
- The school has good information about pupils' achievements and provision is improving because of the good leadership by the co-ordinator for mathematics.

Commentary

50. There has been improvement in the standards since the time of the last inspection. This has been better than the national trend of improvement. The most recent test results show that standards were well below average in Year 2 and Year 6. However, these results included several pupils with significant special needs in the special unit. Overall, standards now are below average in both Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Pupils do not

do as well in the shape, space and measures aspect of mathematics where standards are well below average. However, the school has identified this weaker aspect through recent checks on pupils' achievements, and some good lessons during the inspection show that standards are improving. Pupils now have regular practice in mental calculations at the start of lessons. As a result, their skills have improved and are now close to the expected levels.

51. Teaching is satisfactory. Good teaching was seen during the inspection, but examination of pupils' past work and their achievements show that this is not consistently so. Teachers are confident and well organised. Introductions are often a strong feature in lessons with a clear emphasis on developing basic skills. Pupils have confidence and enjoy activities because teachers are particularly good at encouraging and praising their efforts. They make sure that pupils know what is expected, so relationships and behaviour are good. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support from classroom assistants who help them strengthen their skills. Teachers work hard in steadily extending pupils' awareness and use of mathematical language. They make good use of resources like puppets that challenge younger pupils to develop quick and accurate counting skills. However, lesson introductions sometimes go on too long so that pupils become restless and inattentive. Because they have not listened carefully enough to instructions, they are unsure what to do when they start work on independent tasks. Sometimes too little time is left for them to practise the new skills they have learnt.
52. In the good lessons seen, teachers made good use of the information they have about what pupils can already do and what they find hard. Tasks were pitched at a suitable level for the different abilities in the class. Too often, however, all pupils have similar tasks or activities that do not move them on as fast as they might. This acts as a brake on pupils' achievements, particular when teachers underestimate the skills of those capable of working at higher levels. Teachers do not do enough to involve pupils in their own learning by making clear to them what they need to do next, setting clear targets and carefully marking and commenting on their written work.
53. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and her satisfactory management has some good features. New to her role, she has a good overview of pupils' achievements provided by a recently established recording system in each year group. Already, she has identified underachievement in some aspects and year groups and the school is beginning to take action to deal with it. A focus on shape, space and measures is bringing about some improvement. Lesson observations by senior managers in the past year identified teachers' use of questions as an area for improvement. Observations during the inspection show that this has also improved. Probing questions now sometimes challenge pupils to think hard, and enable teachers to check pupils' understanding of topics. These are all promising signs. However, the school has been slow in dealing with some of the issues from the last inspection. The systems for checking teaching and learning by the co-ordinator and the headteacher are neither frequent nor thorough enough. The co-ordinator has too few opportunities to see teachers teach and regular checks on pupils' work in other classes are not established. This means that improvements are much slower than they might be. More rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievements are needed to identify and adopt consistently the best features of teaching and to eliminate the weaker aspects.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. The development of mathematics skills through other subjects is not yet strong enough. There are some meaningful opportunities such as in geography where pupils convert miles into kilometres when planning a journey to Old Trafford. However, these are rare because the school does not have a clear or systematic plan that guides teachers to provide suitable opportunities in other subjects. This means that opportunities are often missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There have been recent good improvements in standards at the end of Year 6.
- The co-ordinator has successfully introduced better planning guidance and assessment arrangements, particularly with regard to investigation and experimentation.
- Teachers do not pay enough attention to the needs of pupils of different abilities.

Commentary

55. Pupils' achievements in science are satisfactory. Between 1999 and 2003 the results of national tests at the end of Year 6 improved at a slightly faster rate than they did nationally. The results in 2004 are much higher than in previous years, showing significant recent improvement. The school exceeded its targets by a considerable margin and the percentage of pupils achieving the higher than expected level was well above average. This is primarily because the school has successfully improved its arrangements for assessing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills so that it can build more effectively on earlier learning. A higher priority is now given to the key scientific elements of experimentation and investigation.
56. Teachers follow the National Curriculum programmes of study closely in their planning and pupils are all acquiring a good range of information and developing their understanding of how to carry out an investigation correctly. For example, pupils in Year 4 have learnt well this term about what makes a test fair, the importance of repeating experiments and how to draw conclusions. Pupils in Year 6 have made satisfactory gains in their study of the human heart and circulation.
57. Standards are currently below average in Year 2. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of scientific facts and understanding of scientific concepts, conventions and procedures. For example, they identify the different materials used to make different everyday objects. Pupils know about different sources of light and sound and whether push or pull forces apply in different situations.
58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching was good in all the lessons seen but in some lessons the learning was not as good. In a Year 6 lesson this was because the pupils were slow to respond to the teacher's good questions as very few had retained what they had previously learnt. In a Year 2 lesson pupils were slow to start their individual tasks because they had not fully understood the teacher's clear and stimulating explanation. Nevertheless they completed their tasks and their learning, about how the amount of water in a bottle affects the sound when it is tapped, was satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and present scientific facts and concepts accurately. For example, in a lesson in the Year 3/4 class, pupils learnt a good amount about the three types of teeth and how these differ in omnivores (including humans), carnivores and herbivores. Teachers encourage the pupils and have high expectations of behaviour but at times there is too much teacher talk and not enough opportunities for pupils to contribute. In contrast to the evidence from lessons, the examination of pupils' work throughout Years 1 to 6 shows that pupils of different abilities usually complete the same task and marking is rarely helpful. More able pupils are not always being sufficiently challenged. The presentation of work is quite good and pupils nearly always complete set tasks.
59. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent improvements have come about because the co-ordinator successfully introduced new national guidance and this has had a positive impact. She always looks at teachers' planning and occasionally pupils' work and has led considerable reviews of the subject schemes of work. She has not, however, undertaken

detailed analysis of the school's results nor has she had any opportunities to observe her colleagues in class to identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are not sufficiently well developed.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and much needed improvements have been too slow.
- Teachers do not use the available resources to best effect.

Commentary

60. At the time of the last inspection standards in ICT were judged to be a significant area for improvement. This inspection finds that standards are below average throughout the school and that pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last report has been unsatisfactory because standards are not high enough and although the provision has improved it has not done so rapidly enough. Pupils in Year 6 have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding and key ICT skills. For example, significant numbers of pupils are not comfortable with vocabulary such as 'word processing' and 'spreadsheet' and do not understand the difference between the 'shift' and 'caps lock' keys on the computer keyboard. Pupils said that they used computers infrequently and would like to do so more. Pupils' completed work showed that few pupils throughout the school are achieving standards in line with national expectations.
61. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. This is because teachers do not use the classroom computers often enough to develop the pupils' skills. Only two lessons were clearly identified on the timetables provided for the inspection and both of these were seen. A very good lesson in the Year 5/6 class featured an exciting and challenging activity that was very well presented and explained by the teacher and led to very good learning. Very good resources were used to very good effect. The pupils' completed animations showed that they had made significant gains in their knowledge and understanding and, in some cases, had worked with great skill and imagination. However, high quality work such as this is the exception rather than the rule. During a lesson in the Year 3/4 class, pupils learnt how to use text and graphics together to design a book cover. Although the teaching and learning were satisfactory overall the whole-class activity was over-long and pupils had insufficient hands-on experience. Very little use of computers or other forms of modern technology was noted during other lesson observations except in Year 1 where computers were regularly used by small groups of pupils to consolidate reading, writing and number skills.
62. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has led the introduction of a good local education authority scheme of work to help teachers with their planning. This includes a good system to assess pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills and helpful guidance on using ICT in other subjects. A good subject policy has been produced, a thorough audit of resources carried out and a start made in developing a portfolio of pupils' work covering each year group and each aspect of the subject. However, all of this has been very recent and it is too early to judge the impact of these improvements. The school does not have a computer room and this creates problems for the teachers. However, there are at least three computers in each classroom, six laptop computers shared across Years 3 to 6 and a reasonable number and range of other devices. These resources are not used to best effect. All classes will be fitted with electronic whiteboards in the near future. There is no whole-school system for saving pupils' work in individual folders on the computer and so teachers do not have an overview of standards. The co-ordinator has had no time to observe or work alongside colleagues.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects does not take place frequently enough. The lesson observed in the Year 5/6 class demonstrated extremely good links between ICT, art and design, drama and personal, social and health education. Other examples include Year 6 pupils recently using information from the BBC website to produce different charts and graphs about the Paralympics. Pupils in the unit have written interesting reviews of Clarice Cliff's pottery and some pupils in Year 2 have produced their stories on computer in English lessons. However, discussions with pupils and examination of completed work show that teachers do not make such links often enough. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to enter and modify text, to use modern technology in mathematics and science or to use CD-ROM and the Internet for research.

HUMANITIES

64. It is not possible to judge the quality of provision or standards in **geography** or **history** as no lessons were seen during the inspection. Examination of pupils' past and present work shows that pupils cover the topics outlined in the school's planning, though sometimes coverage appears to be thin. Visits to such places as Chester, Erddig and the Cheshire Show make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in history. Teachers use displayed photographs to good effect so that children are curious and eager to find out more. Younger pupils make good use of the local area in their geography work. When investigating where they live, pupils in Year 2 enjoy examining local maps and learn to find features like the street where they live. However, geographical mapping skills do not develop so well in Years 3 to 6 where heavy use of published worksheets does not give pupils enough experience of examining real maps, producing their own and learning to interpret them. Some worksheets do not challenge pupils enough, especially where they spend too much time colouring or writing simple captions and labels for printed illustrations. Written tasks in history are not always open ended so that pupils can respond more fully and, in doing so, deepen their interpretation of historical facts.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of topics when teachers make good use of stories and discussions.
- Thin coverage of topics and too heavy use of unchallenging worksheets mean that pupils have too few opportunities to reflect and make their own interpretations of the topics they study.
- Pupils achieve well when imaginative use of topics develops their understanding of moral issues.

Commentary

65. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection. These and examination of pupils' past and current work show that standards are below those outlined in the Cheshire Syllabus for teaching religious education. Whilst pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, their interpretation skills are relatively weak.
66. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there are distinct strengths and weaknesses across the school. Teachers provide good lesson introductions where dramatic storytelling followed by well-managed discussions and skilful use of questions means that pupils have a good grasp of facts and sound understanding of topics. Too often, the activities that follow add little to pupils' learning. Over-reliance on worksheets, where pupils spend too long drawing and colouring or

filling in words from a given list, do not challenge them to reflect on what they hear and to deepen their understanding by interpreting information for themselves.

67. The school has clear planning linked to the Cheshire Syllabus that teachers follow. This ensures that pupils gain insights into Christianity, Islam and other world religions. Some topics successfully boost pupils' moral development, as when they explore making the right choices, forgiveness and other personal qualities. Vibrant experiences, like exploring a Spiderman dilemma, mean that pupils think very hard and maturely about decision making. However, thin coverage of topics that concentrates on facts sometimes limits pupils' achievements. This is particularly so when learning about world faiths, as there are too few opportunities for pupils to explore what they can learn from them.
68. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has established sound planning that guides teachers and ensures all aspects are covered. However, some weaknesses noted in the last inspection still remain. There are few opportunities for the co-ordinator to check the effectiveness of teaching, learning and standards so that the school has an accurate view of strengths in the subject and the weaknesses that need improvement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

69. No lessons were observed in **art and design** and only one in **design and technology**. Little work has been retained from the previous year, so it is not possible to make overall judgements. Pupils in Year 2 have produced some careful black and white drawings of musical instruments and then gone on to design and make their own. The teacher linked this well with science so pupils could talk about how different sounds were made. They described what they liked about their models. The standard of this work was good and pupils achieved well for their age. Older pupils use sketchbooks but there was little evidence of the development of skills or experimentation with different materials. Pupils in Year 6 recall making containers with wood and woodworking tools. The use of ICT to support art and design is satisfactory. There are several examples of graphic programs being used in both key stages. Only one **music** lesson was observed. Pupils in Year 1 successfully learnt how to sustain a steady rhythm. They enjoyed the lesson and listened to their teacher carefully. Pupils in the infant assembly sang well to their teacher's guitar accompaniment but in other assemblies opportunities are missed to listen to music or to sing. There are opportunities for older pupils to learn the recorder as a club activity and a few receive tuition on brass instruments at the local high school.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **outstanding**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The co-ordinator is a physical education specialist and his leadership is excellent.
- There is a very wide range of sporting activity available to pupils, including infants.
- Teaching is good in both infants and juniors and very good in Years 5 and 6 so pupils achieve very well.
- Resources for teachers and pupils are very good.
- There are few opportunities for the subject leader to check on teaching and learning throughout the school.

Commentary

70. The subject leader has ensured that an extensive range of sports is available to the pupils inside normal lesson time and as club activities. School records show participation in, amongst others, handball, trampolining, judo, basketball, golf, Tag Rugby, Kwik Cricket, football, hockey,

athletics, gymnastics, swimming and dance. Residential visits for the oldest pupils give them opportunities to try out outdoor adventurous activities such as canoeing, abseiling and rock climbing. There have been team successes in several sports but it is the level of participation and the self-esteem and confidence this brings that is impressive. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about these opportunities and take pride in their achievements. The coaching expertise of outside agencies in the community such as Chester City Football Club and a local judo coach is used very well to supplement expertise within the school and to enhance achievement. Pupils' enthusiasm is such that they turn up at eight in the morning for the opportunity to take part in the eight-week judo course. Leadership in physical education and the school's extensive programme has contributed to the Football Association's Charter Mark and Sport England's Activemark Gold. There have been further improvements since the last inspection reported that physical education had significant strengths.

71. Teaching is good overall with some very good teaching in the oldest class. There is good attention to safe play. Skills and tactics are taught thoroughly so that pupils make good gains in learning and achieve very well. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and try hard. Very good attention is given to individual strengths and needs so that each pupil can improve. Standards overall are as expected for pupils at the beginning of Years 5 and 6 in football and hockey although there are some skilled players in both year groups. School records show that standards are above expectations in swimming. The majority of pupils exceed the 25 metre standard and go on to become competent in four strokes. The most able learn more advanced skills such as tumble turns.
72. Resources for learning are very good so that pupils have plenty of good quality equipment for the many games, gymnastics and athletics. The large school hall with fixed and moveable gymnastic equipment and the well-marked and maintained level pitches contribute to very good achievement. The subject leader has built up comprehensive resources to support teachers' planning and has been able to give support and guidance to colleagues. There have been too few opportunities to check the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, however, so that good aspects can be shared and weaknesses identified.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

73. Only one lesson was observed in this area during the inspection, although the school's provision could be clearly seen in assemblies. Those adults leading assemblies use stories effectively to explore such topics as people who help others through the jobs they do and moral issues such as heeding warnings. However, they do not always encourage pupils to think hard about what the stories mean, particularly when they tell pupils the moral without encouraging them to think and offer their own thoughts about the topic. A good session in the unit challenged pupils well and gave them a good insight and valuable strategies that help them deal with their own and others' emotions and feelings. Because the teacher encouraged and praised pupils when they explained their ideas, they were interested and hardworking in the discussion and disappointed when it ended.
74. There are often informal discussions in each class on moral and social issues. Aspects of health education, like the need for a healthy diet and exercise and the harmful effects of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, are taught through lessons in science. The school nurse delivers a more formal programme in Year 6 with parental agreement. There are good links with citizenship in some classes, particularly when pupils debate such issues as making the right decisions in religious education
75. However, the school does not have an agreed and carefully structured programme for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education, so some aspects are underdeveloped.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (Ethos)	3
Attendance	4
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	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	5
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	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).