

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PARKLANDS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Ellesmere Port

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111238

Headteacher: Mrs Pat Downes

Lead inspector: Mrs L J Traves

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 267474

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:	3 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	127
School address:	Parklands Little Sutton Ellesmere Port Cheshire
Postcode:	CH66 3RL
Telephone number:	0151 339 2587
Fax number:	0151 348 1738
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Archer

Date of previous inspection: September 2002

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Parklands Community Primary School is situated close to Ellesmere Port in Cheshire. The area is one of social and economic need, with high unemployment. Pupil numbers have fallen dramatically in recent years. Most of the 127 pupils live in nearby local authority housing. Almost all are white and speak English as their first language. Two pupils of other European heritage have recently joined the school and are learning English as an additional language. There are currently 24 pupils in the nursery on a part-time basis and this number will increase with the new intake in January. A significant number of these pupils leave Parklands for other schools at the beginning of the reception year. The other pupils are taught in 8 classes, 6 of which serve a single age group and 2 in which Year 5 and 6 pupils are mixed. Year 5 and 6 pupils are taught in ability groups for some mathematics and English lessons. There are an above average number of pupils who have free school meals (33 per cent) and an above average number of pupils who have special educational needs (23 per cent). These are mainly related to learning difficulties. Two children have statements. A small percentage of pupils have been identified as having particular gifts or talents. On entry to school, the majority of pupils have skills which are well below those expected for their age. The school moved into a brand new building a year ago, after the old building had been destroyed by fire. This has been built and is maintained in conjunction with a national construction company under a Public Private Partnership agreement (PPI.) The school gained an achievement award from the DfES in 2000 for improvements in test results. In 2003, it achieved a 'Healthy Schools' award and this

year it has achieved the 'Active Mark Gold' award for its commitment to developing children physically and the 'Investors in People' award for staff development. It is part of a local Education Action Zone.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
24039	Mrs L Traves	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Physical education The Foundation Stage English as an additional language
13723	Mrs J Overend	Lay inspector	
18370	Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music
32750	Mr P Jones	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Geography History
34177	Mr C Maloney	Team inspector	English Religious education Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school.** It has overcome its weaknesses and transformed most of them into strengths. This has been achieved through strong and effective teamwork and the dynamic leadership of the headteacher. Consistently good teaching and support for pupils ensure the vast majority achieve well. Standards are rising throughout the school, although there is still more to be done in English. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The highly skilled and committed leadership of the headteacher;
- The very effective teamwork which has brought about improvement and built a firm foundation for future development;
- Good teaching ensures good achievement, especially in art and design and mathematics;
- A rich and practical range of learning experiences ensures pupils are keen and interested;
- The school takes very good care of its pupils and creates an atmosphere in which they are secure and happy;
- Standards in English are not yet as high as those in science and mathematics;
- The school's partnership with parents could be further developed to help them support their children's learning;
- The skills of some subject leaders in checking on teaching and learning could be developed.

Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All of the weaknesses identified last time have been thoroughly and effectively addressed and good systems put into place to sustain improvements. The quality of teaching is vastly improved, as are the procedures for checking on how well pupils are doing; as a result, they are making faster progress and reaching higher standards. The curriculum is much richer and more interesting and effectively meets pupils' needs.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Pupils achieve well.** The table above shows that results in the national tests for 11-year-olds rose significantly in 2003. The greatest improvement was in mathematics, where results rose from being in the bottom 5 per cent in the country to above average. When compared to schools in similar circumstances, the picture was particularly rosy, with results being above and well above average. Unvalidated results for 2004 show a slight downturn in English and

mathematics; however, around half of the year group were identified as having special educational needs and have done well in relation to their abilities. In the tests for 7-year-olds, the number of pupils reaching average levels has been rising steadily. However, there was also a dip in 2004, because of the high proportion of children with special needs in the class. These pupils also did well in relation to their abilities. Inspection evidence shows that for the current Year 2 pupils standards are below average in mathematics and science; at Year 6 they are now close to it. Despite improvements in English, standards are not yet as strong. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number with English as an additional language achieve well because of the good support provided for them. Pupils with particular talents are challenged effectively to ensure they also achieve well. When pupils enter nursery, their skills are often well below those expected for children of this age. Despite achieving well, a significant number do not reach the goals by the end of the reception class in most areas of learning. However, they do very well in their personal and social development. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education have improved significantly and are now broadly as expected at both key stages. Standards in art and design are better than usually seen.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** Attendance levels are average and children are punctual. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is consistently good** and there are examples of high quality teaching in many classes. A key feature of teaching is the high expectations staff have of the pupils, which ensure they learn well. The teaching of mathematics is particularly good and is accelerating pupils' learning. Strong teaching in the Foundation Stage gets children off to a good start. Pupils with special educational needs and those with particular gifts or talents are effectively supported and challenged to ensure they progress well. The curriculum is good and is enriched very effectively through the wide range of visits, visitors and clubs. Lessons are interesting, practical and relevant, which motivates the pupils well. Effective partnerships with other schools and the community also enrich learning. Staff take very good care of the children and support them very well. Whilst the school has some effective strategies in place to support parents in helping their children to learn, it has identified the need to strengthen and develop these further.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The headteacher's leadership is very strong and purposeful; it has been a crucial factor in transforming the school. Governance is good. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, has a firm role in setting the direction of the school and uses its skills effectively in the drive for improvement. Subject leaders play an increasingly strong role in school improvement, working alongside the headteacher and local authority advisory staff in checking on teaching and learning. The skills of some, in observing teaching, need to be developed further to ensure that improvements are sustained.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils value the school highly. Parents are very confident in the school's leadership and in the teaching. Some would like more information on how well their children are doing. Pupils feel that they are valued and that their ideas are taken into account by staff.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Continue to raise standards in English;
- Develop the role and skills of some subject leaders to play a stronger part in checking on teaching and learning;
- Further develop the partnership with parents to help them to support their children's learning.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are below average overall. Pupils throughout the school achieve well from their starting points, including those with special educational needs, those with particular gifts or talents and the very small number with English as an additional language. There are clear signs that learning is accelerating, although there is still more to do in English.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen and pupils are now achieving well, although they are not as high in English as in mathematics and science, by Year 6;
- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development and do well in all other areas of learning;
- There have been significant improvements in standards in ICT and standards in art and design are better than usually seen;
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported.

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 - average point scores in 2003*

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.0 (12.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.1 (12.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.1 (14.0)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 - average point scores in 2003*

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.7 (23.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.1 (22.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.7 (26.0)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 18 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

### Commentary

1. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below that expected for pupils of this age. Their communication skills, personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world are particularly weak areas. A strong emphasis on developing their personal and social skills ensures they make very good progress in this area, which ensures a firm foundation on which to build. A very strong emphasis is placed on developing speaking and listening skills in all areas of learning, which is paying dividends. Although children achieve well overall, a significant number are

unlikely to meet the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1 in most areas of learning. They are on course to meet the expected goals in some aspects of their physical and creative development.

2. Results in the national tests for 11-year-olds improved significantly in 2003. The greatest improvement was in mathematics, where results rose from being in the bottom 5 per cent in the country in 2002 to above average. In science, results were also above average. Whilst there was also a pleasing improvement in English, this was not as strong as in mathematics and science, with results being average. When compared to schools in similar circumstances, the picture was a particularly strong one, with results being above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Unvalidated results for Year 6 pupils in 2004 show a dip in English and mathematics. However, around half of the class were identified as having special educational needs. This affected their English results more than those in the other subjects, because their learning difficulties often related to this area, and these are likely to be well below average. Assessment data shows that these pupils have done well in relation to their abilities, despite a significant percentage failing to reach average levels and fewer reaching the higher level (Level 5) than in 2003. In science, the previous year's good standards have been maintained, with results likely to be above average when compared to all schools. Overall, over the last few years, standards have risen at a faster rate than nationally.
3. In the tests for 7-year-olds, the number of pupils reaching average levels in reading, writing and mathematics has been rising slowly but steadily in recent years. This has been a slower increase overall than nationally, the main reason being that when they enter Year 1 pupils have quite a lot of ground to make up. Despite them now making good progress overall, a significant number still do not reach average levels. Nevertheless, there were notable improvements, particularly in reading and writing in 2003. As at Key Stage 2, there was also a dip in results 2004, because of the high proportion of children with special needs in the class. Also, a smaller proportion of pupils achieved the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils also did well in relation to their abilities and the school met the challenging targets it had set for them.
4. Inspection evidence shows that for the current Year 2 pupils standards in mathematics and science are below average. For the Year 6 class, standards are close to average. Although there have been improvements in English, standards throughout the school are not yet as strong. There are signs of improvement, particularly in writing and in speaking and listening, but the school recognises that there is still more to be done. An effective range of strategies has been put into place to address this and these are starting to have an impact.
5. Improvements have been brought about by stronger teaching, a better curriculum, close assessment of pupils' progress to pinpoint their next learning steps and to provide the right level of support and challenge, and the arrangement of pupils into groups of similar ability in Years 5 and 6 for mathematics and English. The strong support provided for the high number of pupils with special educational needs is also a key factor in improvement. Pupils with particular talents are also being challenged effectively to ensure they achieve well. The school is also making effective use of test data to identify gaps in teaching and learning and to remedy these. Pupils now have

good attitudes to learning and their attendance has improved; these factors are also accelerating progress.

6. Standards in ICT and religious education have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now broadly as expected at both key stages. Standards in art and design are better than those seen in most schools at both key stages.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has turned attendance round;
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well;
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is actively promoted.

## Commentary

7. Children, from the youngest upward, have good attitudes to school life and a keenness to learn. They rise to the challenge of the good teaching by working hard to succeed. Pupils report that they like their teachers and enjoy the friendships they make. The vast majority mature into thoughtful and responsible individuals who make good ambassadors for their school. A small minority of parents expressed concern about children's behaviour when completing the inspection questionnaires. However the majority of children behave well and those who have more difficulty behaving appropriately are very well managed and supported, so as not to disrupt their own learning or that of others. Early intervention to help younger children whose social skills do not develop as well as they might is very effectively carried out using Education Action Zone funding. This initiative is having a good impact and is helping these pupils feel more positive about themselves and more aware of the needs of others. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school; they model respect for others very well. Behaviour in the lunch hall and in assemblies is of a very high standard, showing that the children know what is expected of them and have respect for others. Occasionally, play around the football pitch becomes a little boisterous at times. However, this is monitored effectively to ensure that behaviour remains acceptable. Pupils understand the 'Red Card' sanction and respond well to it.
8. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Well planned assemblies give children good opportunities for reflection on their own lives and values. Religious education is used well to help children look more deeply at their lives and the lives and beliefs of others. The school encourages pupils to explore and express their feelings. They do this, for example, in 'Circle Time' and also in lessons such as in Year 5/6, where pupils have studied World War II and considered how soldiers and evacuees must have felt. The school also works hard to show the children that they are valued by seeking their views and rewarding their achievements, both academic and personal.
9. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is good and is promoted throughout the day using discussions and careful display of the school rules. The older children are very clear about the rewards and sanctions and all pupils are involved in the development of their class rules. Older pupils can express very clearly the need for self-control in certain situations. Staff are accomplished at helping children handle any conflict that arises. The children are also encouraged to think through moral issues and have the chance to respond through charity initiatives held each term, such as 'Jeans for Genes' and the NSPCC harvest appeal.
10. A good range of opportunities is provided for pupils' social development. Children are given many responsibilities, such as being toast monitors or older children being 'buddies', which most take very seriously. The school council gives pupils a taste of democracy and citizenship. Visits, visitors and out of school activities contribute well to pupils' social and cultural development. Theatre trips, for example, such as those supported by members of the community, extend their experiences. There are regular, planned visits to support pupils learning in many subject areas, which raise awareness of their historical and cultural heritage. The link with the local church has a good impact on children's personal development and understanding of local society. Pupils are made aware of other faiths in religious education and also in other subjects such as art

and music. Again visitors enrich these experiences and make them meaningful to the children.



## Attendance

11. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance, which is now broadly average, and to ensure that children are punctual. This has been achieved by careful monitoring, close liaison with support agencies, such as the educational welfare officers and school nurse, and a reward system. The school ensures parents are aware of its expectations and they have responded well to the request to let the school know on the child's first day of absence. The effects on children's progress of taking holidays in term time have been explained to parents, but some still ignore this advice.

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9	School data	1.3
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

## Exclusions

12. There were no exclusions in the current year.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good and the children are provided with a rich and practical range of learning experiences. Staff take very good care of pupils.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is good throughout the school, with some very good teaching observed. The teaching of mathematics is a strong feature and in the lessons seen, subject co-ordinators almost always taught their subjects very well. This is a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection. Pupils' work is thoroughly assessed and assessment information is used well.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong relationships underpin children's learning;
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate;
- The best lessons have sharp pace and a good level of challenge for all;
- Teachers' subject expertise is good;
- Occasionally plans are too ambitious, which leads to slower progress.

## Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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0 (0)	9 (25)	23 (63)	3 (8)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
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*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.*

13. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is consistently good. All adults have a clear idea of what they want children to achieve and a good understanding of their various abilities. As a result, the work planned challenges them appropriately. Planning is thorough in all areas of learning and tasks are very practical and 'hands on'. All staff have high expectations of the children and set very good examples for them to follow. Children are happy and secure and, as a result, learn well.
14. Throughout the school, relationships between adults and pupils are very strong; this underpins learning particularly well. Pupils respect and like their teachers and want to please them. As a result, they work hard and learn effectively. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave well, listen carefully and get down to work without fuss and they rise to this. In the best lessons, the pace is fast, pupils are stretched and challenged and they learn rapidly in response. This was seen in a very good ICT lesson in Year 3, where the teacher challenged the pupils to use all the skills they had learned previously to make their magazine covers lively and interesting. The pupils relished the challenge and achieved really good results.
15. Teachers demonstrate good subject expertise. As a result, in the vast majority of lessons they set out clearly what they want pupils to learn, which focuses their attention on the task in hand. In some lessons the scene is set very well. For example, in music in reception, the teacher introduced a large set of hand bells and encouraged the children to examine them. Their eyes were huge and you could almost feel their anticipation as they took turns to pass and hold them, trying very hard not to make a sound. Teachers' explanations are clear and often supported by well chosen resources that engage pupils' interest. A very good example of this was seen in a religious education lesson, where the teacher had brought in an exciting range of artefacts and used photographs from the Internet on the interactive whiteboard, which immediately caught their interest and deepened their understanding. Task set are interesting and practical, demanding that children use their 'thinking skills' and explore for themselves. Teachers also use questions skilfully to draw out what pupils already know, probe their understanding and push them further. In the best lessons, this information is used expertly to pitch the work at the right level for the different ability groups within the class. Occasionally, teachers do not quite get the match of work right for a few pupils. When this happens, some pupils make slower progress than they could.
16. Where teaching was more ordinary, and in the unsatisfactory lesson observed, teachers' plans were usually too ambitious. For example, in the unsatisfactory physical education lesson, the children became confused by the complexity of the instructions they were given, which slowed the pace considerably. As a result, they made too little progress. In a literacy lessons in Year 1, a significant number of pupils were finding it difficult to cope at times with a more formal learning situation. This slowed their progress. The school has identified this as an issue for immediate attention and is adapting plans and lessons accordingly to better meet the children's needs.
17. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Their learning is guided by good quality individual education plans, which set clear targets for them. Learning support staff have a strong impact on the achievement of these pupils, supporting them sensitively and enabling them to make good progress. The very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are appropriately supported by the school and the local education authority staff. Those with particular gifts or talents, for

example in mathematics, are given more challenging work by their teachers, which stretches them effectively.

18. Assessment strategies are good and, in the majority of lessons, teachers use the information gained on pupils' progress effectively to help all groups to achieve well. This is a tremendous improvement from the time of the last inspection. Pupils' work in English and mathematics is thoroughly assessed, their progress tracked and the next steps in learning clearly identified and targets set for them. Good systems are also in place in science and ICT and are helping to improve pupils' progress. The information is used well to identify those who need extra support or an extra challenge. In many of the non-core subjects, pupils' progress is evaluated against key objectives at the end of a unit of work. Consequently, teachers have an appropriate knowledge of their pupils' needs and abilities and, for the most part, plan effectively to meet these. Some of these arrangements are currently at the early stages of development. Rigorous analysis of test data is enabling staff to identify gaps in teaching and learning and to make any necessary adjustments. The assessment co-ordinator has provided very good advice, support and training to staff to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the school. Procedures are constantly evaluated and refined to ensure they fully meet the needs of the school.

### **The curriculum**

The school provides a good curriculum. Some features are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There has been strong improvement since the previous inspection;
- Pupils' learning is enriched very well by a very wide and well planned range of opportunities;
- It provides well for all pupils;
- Accommodation is very good and is used effectively to enhance learning.

### **Commentary**

19. Due to the energetic leadership of the headteacher and the efforts of all staff, the school has significantly improved the curriculum since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils' approach to learning is enthusiastic, they enjoy school and achieve well. The school has responded very well to the issues reported previously. Planning for all subjects is now thorough and provides very good guidance for teachers so that knowledge and skills are developed systematically. The strong emphasis on speaking and listening in all subjects now provides pupils with a wider knowledge of language and a greater ability to express ideas. This is reflected in the improved quality of writing seen in the school. Teachers plan exciting, more meaningful lessons by linking subjects. For example, after learning about the effect of World War II on people's lives, pupils in Years 5 and 6 tried to capture different facial expressions, such as fear or anger, in the sculptures they made from paper and plaster of Paris.
20. The school meets the legal requirements for all subjects, including the teaching of religious education. Provision for religious education and ICT is much improved. Art and design skills are taught well and pupils achieve high standards. A regular art club and sessions inspired by visiting artists do much to foster pupils' interests in this

subject. There had been a justifiable focus on literacy and numeracy in recent years. The effects of the school's efforts are beginning to show in the improving standards and pupils' achievement. Staff have maintained a good balance across other subjects by using time effectively to focus on some subjects in depth over a shorter period. For example, a design and technology topic, including planning, making and evaluating, might be concentrated into three or four days rather than spread over several weeks. In this way, pupils continue to develop skills in one subject, whilst allowing more flexible use of time for others.

21. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Practical, 'hands on' experiences are provided in all areas of learning and a good balance is achieved between activities the children choose for themselves and those more closely directed by adults. There is a strong emphasis on providing for pupils' personal and social development and their speaking and listening skills, which provide a firm foundation for learning. Effective use is made of role play, both indoors and outside to support learning in both these areas. Strong links and highly effective teamwork between nursery and reception staff ensure children build seamlessly on their skills.
22. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good. Pupils are well supported to enable them to benefit from the full range of activities open to other pupils. Teachers and support staff understand their needs well and ensure that work is provided at the appropriate level. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is effectively underpinned by good quality individual education plans. Those pupils who the school has identified as having particular gifts and talents are also effectively supported, for example by being given tasks that stretch and challenge them at the appropriate level. Firm plans are in place to develop this work further, through Excellence in Cities funding which will shortly become available.
23. A very good range of first hand experiences is planned to support pupils' learning. History and geography are made more meaningful by visits to places such as Speke Hall or the Canal Museum. The school welcomes a wealth of visitors who involve pupils in drama, theatre, music, art and dance often widening pupils' cultural as well as artistic awareness. A residential visit for Year 6 pupils provides them with opportunities for more adventurous activities, as well as promoting their personal development and relationships. Outside of lesson time there are clubs for soccer, gymnastics, tennis, French, music, drama and art at different times throughout the year.
24. The quality of accommodation is very good and greatly enhances teaching and learning. Classrooms are spacious and shared areas are used very well for group activities and extra individual teaching. The ICT suite and well appointed library areas have a particularly good impact on pupils' learning. A well qualified and committed team of teachers and teaching assistants ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively to all pupils. Resources overall are much improved since the previous inspection, especially for children in the Foundation Stage. Although the impact of the new building on pupils' attitudes and the general ethos of the school is very positive, the headteacher is not complacent and has firm plans to develop the school grounds further to provide an exciting outside learning area.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships throughout the school are very good and staff know the children very well;
- The provision for health and safety and child protection arrangements is very good;
- Arrangements for monitoring children's progress are significantly improved;
- The school consults effectively with pupils and values their views highly.

### **Commentary**

25. The school provides a high standard of care for all pupils. Staff know the pupils and their backgrounds very well and meet their needs very effectively. Child protection arrangements are very thorough and secure. The child protection co-ordinator is very well trained and has ensured that other staff levels of awareness and expertise are high. Health and safety arrangements are also very good. Very good use is made of all available expertise and the role of the partner company in maintaining the highest standards in the building, in conjunction with the school, is exemplary. The site supervisor plays a highly effective role in this area. Good attention is paid to teaching children about safety and the school has won National Health Service awards, for example for raising pupils awareness of fire safety in their homes. Participating in the 'Healthy Schools' award is providing long-term benefits in raising awareness of the need for good habits and of health risks.
26. The school has good systems for assessment and monitoring pupils' achievements. The 'ME' books provide a good resource for monitoring pupils' personal development, which involves them closely. The progress of individuals and groups is being tracked effectively and the results used to inform lesson content and target setting. Pupils with special needs have their progress carefully monitored and they are well supported in the classroom. The school is effectively developing its provision for gifted and talented pupils and tracks their progress diligently.
27. Children's views are listened to carefully in 'Circle' or discussion time and also in assemblies. Through the work of the school council, pupils' views are gathered, discussed and acted upon very sensitively. Their good ideas for improving the school are taken very seriously and acted upon appropriately. Good induction procedures are in place to ensure children settle happily into the school and to allow good interchange of information between parents and the school.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents are satisfactory. The partnership with the community is good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents show a very high level of satisfaction with the school;
- Community links are well planned and have a good impact on learning;

- Very strong links with other schools and colleges enhance and extend learning opportunities;
- More could be done to seek parents' views and to inform them about their children's progress.

## **Commentary**

28. Parents hold the school in very high regard. They are particularly happy that their children like school, that the school is approachable and that the leadership and management are good. They are full of praise for the headteacher and the way she has transformed the school and they are extremely proud of the beautiful new building. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the behaviour of some children. However, the school has very effective procedures in place to encourage good behaviour and to prevent or eliminate bullying; it takes its role in preventing all kinds of harassment very seriously and is successful in this.
29. The school is working hard to find ways to support parents. It runs a Breakfast Club to help working parents and provides access to support agencies. Courses are run in the community 'Learning Centre', such as 'Pram to Primary School', which is run with the help of the health visitor. There are also mathematics and crafts sessions. The parents who attend these find them helpful and the school feels that they are assisting them in breaking down barriers. Foundation Stage staff have recently run a 'Play' course and were pleased by the response of the 12 parents who attended. The school has rightly identified the need to continue to build on this work and to extend and develop it further, believing that if parents have the skills to support their children's learning at home, this will improve achievement.
30. Information is sent home regularly, including homework and general day to day information. The end of year reports are adequate and contain useful graphs to show parents their children's achievement, which they find easy to understand. However, they do not consistently share helpful 'next steps' for learning, which the parents and children can work on. Targets in the reports are not always specific enough to help children move on. This area could be improved in order to help parents support their children more effectively. The school is currently working to involve parents of children with special needs more closely in designing and implementing their individual work programmes.
31. The school values parents' views and has acted upon them. For example, some parents suggested they could help with design and technology and the school welcomed them in to work alongside the children. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting asked for topic information and the school provided this straight away. However, more could be done to seek their views more regularly and systematically and to find the best way of collecting information, as response to questionnaires, for example, is often poor.
32. The school has many productive community links, which broaden learning experiences. These include those with the community nurse and the police, plus a helpful link to local businesses. The link to the local church is impacting well on children's learning, for example through regular input into assemblies. The school is outward looking and encourages the children to support charity initiatives so that they give back to the community. Links with other schools, particularly through the Education Action Zone, not only provide funding and resources but also a sharing of expertise to meet the needs of

pupils more effectively and to tackle issues such as poor attendance. Staff and pupils have benefited greatly through the sharing of expertise and best practice.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and has been a key factor in turning the school around. Governance is good; governors use their expertise well to support the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the headteacher is very strong and effective;
- Very good improvements have been brought about through very effective teamwork;
- The leadership of the deputy head has had a strong impact in key areas;
- A firm foundation has been built for future improvement, with good systems in place to help the school to evaluate its work;
- The skills of some subject co-ordinators need further development.

### **Commentary**

33. The headteacher's leadership is very good and gives a very strong steer to the work of the school. She has worked with tremendous energy and commitment to address the serious weaknesses identified at the last inspection and most of these are now strengths. She is highly respected by parents, who are full of praise for the way she has transformed the school. The very good improvement in so many areas of the school's work has been brought about by the effective teamwork and dedication of the headteacher, governing body and staff. Together they have laid a firm foundation on which the school can continue to build and sustain improvements and have put clear systems in place to check on its work. In this task, they have sought and utilised the support of others, for example from the local education authority and the Education Action Zone. This has had a strong impact on teaching, learning and the curriculum.
34. A crucial factor in improving the school has been to secure high quality teaching. The weaknesses evident at the last inspection have been addressed through good quality performance management and training, rigorous monitoring and astute appointments of new staff. The school has worked closely with local education authority advisors in developing staff skills both in teaching and in leadership and management. The impact of this work can be seen in the fact that the unsatisfactory and lacklustre teaching observed last time has been largely eliminated and teaching is now consistently good or better. This has been the key to raising standards and achievement. The school's effective staff development work has been recognised through the 'Investors in People' award. Another key area of improvement that has had a strong impact is the assessment of pupils' progress. The thorough and workable systems now in place are largely the result of good leadership from the deputy head, who chose this as his area of study for a national qualification in preparation for headship because it dovetailed exactly with the school's priorities. As a result, the school has a clear picture of each child's progress and the next learning steps are effectively identified for them. This ensures they build on their skills continuously and progressively. The curriculum has been significantly strengthened, not only through more effective planning but also



through imaginative use of extra funding and resources, for example from the Education Action Zone, to provide opportunities for enrichment, such as visits to places of interest. As a result, pupils are interested and involved in their learning. The move to the new school building has added greatly to this and has been very well managed.

35. The impact of the subject co-ordinators on school development is much stronger than was reported last time. They lead and manage their subjects well, and in some cases, very well. This has also played a key part in school improvement. For example, the very good leadership and management of ICT by the deputy head has turned the subject around completely. Co-ordinators now evaluate their areas effectively and identify clear and sensible priorities for improvement. Some have jointly and rigorously checked on teaching and learning alongside the head and local education authority advisory staff. The school has identified that the next crucial step in their development is to carry out this task under their own steam and give good quality feedback to their colleagues, in order to ensure sustained high standards and continued improvement.
36. Governors have also worked hard to increase their involvement in setting the direction for the school and monitoring its work, through the committees in place and through regular, focused school visits. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve; this helps them plan strategically for the future. There is a wide range of expertise on the governing body, including governors who have links with education, finance and personnel. All give very practical support to the school, utilising their skills to best effect. For example, governors have been trained to work with reading and mathematics groups, which has resulted in a measurable improvement in learning for some pupils. They have also been closely involved in ensuring that school meals are healthy and appetising. One of the biggest challenges to the school has been managing a tight budget, which fell into unavoidable deficit due to changes in funding arrangements linked to the new building and also as a result of difficult staffing issues. However, this situation has been skilfully managed, with the deficit on course to be wiped out by the end of the financial year and an appropriate 3 year plan has been put in place to ensure finances remain on an even keel. Day to day financial arrangements are managed efficiently and money obtained through grants, such as Education Action Zone funding, has been used effectively to tackle important issues such as attendance.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	447,693
Total expenditure	462,400
Expenditure per pupil	1,635

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	27,930
Balance carried forward to the next	-14,707

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

37. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Teaching is good. There are currently 46 children in the Foundation Stage. Of these, 24 are in the nursery on a part-time basis. When children enter the nursery their skills are well below those expected for children of this age. Children achieve well in all areas of learning and they do very well in their personal, social and emotional development, in response to teaching which is consistently good. A rich range of practical, 'hands on' experiences is provided in each area of learning, coupled with a really strong emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills. Activities are carefully planned to ensure a very good balance between those that children choose and explore for themselves and those that are directed by adults. Children's progress is monitored well and this ensures that staff know the next learning steps for each individual and plan accordingly. Good leadership and management have resulted in effective teamwork. All staff work closely together to plan and evaluate learning and ensure children build progressively on their skills. The co-ordinator has recently held training for parents on how to support children's play. This was well received and there are plans in place to extend and further develop this work. The next step in the co-ordinator's development is to regularly check on the quality of teaching in the nursery to ensure that consistency between the two classes is maintained.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The consistently high expectations of all staff and the very good examples they provide;
- Good quality planning which ensures that all opportunities are taken to develop pupils' skills through all areas of learning;
- Good opportunities for children to explore and discover for themselves and to work with others.

#### **Commentary**

38. A high priority is given to this area because pupils' skills are often much lower than expected on entry to nursery. Staff ensure that opportunities for development and reinforcement are woven into all areas of learning. Children achieve very well from a low starting point and about two thirds of the current reception pupils are on course to reach the goals expected by the time they enter Year 1. All staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and provide really good examples for them to follow. Nursery pupils are already happy and secure in their surroundings. They follow the simple rules well and are aware, for example, that they need to take turns using equipment and to listen when their teachers are talking to them. Reception pupils put their hand up and wait to be asked and there are very few occasions when they forget this. Children work and play together well. In reception, they share equipment sensibly and work for a good length of time without direct supervision. For example, two girls bathed the dolls, dried

them and dressed them, negotiating well about how to go about the different tasks, such as hair washing.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A strong emphasis is given to developing children's speaking and listening skills;
- Good opportunities for role play are provided, both inside and outdoors;
- Assessment is used effectively to identify the next steps in learning for each child.

### **Commentary**

39. Teaching is good and, as a result, children achieve well. However, despite the good progress made, a significant number of pupils will still have a lot of ground to make up when they enter Year 1. Staff give a high priority to developing the spoken language skills of all pupils because they are a particularly weak area for many. Children often need great encouragement to talk. All the staff are skilled at encouraging a dialogue as they work on activities with the pupils. For example, when the nursery children were working with play dough, the teacher used questions such as 'What does it feel like?' and 'How big is your cake going to be?' very well to encourage them to explain what they were doing and to make choices. Time is given for children to answer and staff are careful not to 'take over' and speak for them. A small number are already becoming more confident in talking to a larger group, as they share their experiences of life with 'Eddie the Teddy' who they take turns to take home. However, some are very tentative and find it difficult to respond in more than one word. Good use is made of role play in both classes to develop spoken language and staff interact carefully with the children to ensure they get the most out of these activities. There are also good opportunities for children to practise their early mark making and writing skills. A small number of reception children are writing recognisable letters and some words and many make good use of the writing table in both free choice and teacher directed sessions. Opportunities are provided in the role play areas for the children to write lists and messages. Plenty of opportunities are provided for children to share books and listen to stories. They handle books carefully and enjoy them.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are provided with interesting, practical activities;
- Staff encourage pupils to explore and find out for themselves.

### **Commentary**

40. Children make good progress in this area. Effective teaching is ensuring that learning is rapid. However, despite the good progress made, a significant number will not have reached the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary. For example, in a reception lesson

children joined links together to make chains to explore practically the concepts of 'longer' and 'shorter' and 'longest' and 'shortest'. They quickly understood both the concepts and the correct use of the language to describe their chains through this practical activity. More able pupils were able to compare a larger number of chains and put them in order. Very secure knowledge of the children's abilities enabled the teacher to adjust the learning experiences as necessary. Staff in both classes provide many 'real life' opportunities for children to develop their mathematical understanding, such as weighing out ingredients for baking, counting how many children are present and therefore how many snacks are needed. Nursery children are learning to recognise the most common two-dimensional shapes and the more able can sort them by colour, for example picking out 3 green squares. The outdoor area is used well to consolidate counting skills on the marked out number line.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A rich and varied range of practical activities is provided, which encourage children to explore and investigate;
- A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' vocabulary.

### **Commentary**

41. Children have limited skills in this area on entering nursery. Good teaching and a strong curriculum ensure that all achieve well from their starting points. However, many still have ground to make up by the end of the reception year, despite the good progress made. Just over half are on course to reach the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. A particular strength is the way in which activities are set up to encourage exploration and investigation. During the inspection, water and sand trays were constantly available in each room, often filled with objects linked to the current theme. For example, in reception the water tray was filled with bubbles, sponges and soap for bathing the dolls. Children explored how the soap made a lather when mixed with water and noticed how clean water rinsed this away as they washed the dolls hair. In one lesson observed, reception pupils investigated a range of soft and hard materials and were able to sort and identify them with good support from the teacher and teaching assistant. Visits and visitors are used well to enrich pupils' experiences. There are many activities on offer for children to choose for themselves; they build with construction toys, use magnifiers, explore colours as they mix paint and use the computer, both in the classroom and in the computer suite. The outdoor area is used productively, with the activities provided mirroring and extending those indoors.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good range of activities is provided, both indoors and outside.

### **Commentary**

42. When children enter reception their large movement skills are close to average, but their manipulative skills are weaker. The wide range of activities provided for them, coupled with good teaching enables them to achieve well. The majority are on course to meet the expected goals in their large movement skills by the time they enter Year 1, although their manipulative skills are still likely to be weaker. Children have daily, well planned and organised opportunities to develop their large movement skills outdoors, through using wheeled toys and climbing equipment, for example. Regular games and gymnastics sessions are held in the hall. During the inspection, nursery children played parachute games, which developed their skills of teamwork and co-operation, as well as their co-ordination and control of their bodies. Staff place a good emphasis on developing manipulative skills through opportunities to write, colour, use tools such as scissors, thread beads and do jigsaws.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of opportunities provided for children to explore for themselves and work under the direction of adults.

### Commentary

43. Children achieve well. The majority will reach the expected levels in most aspects by the time they enter Year 1, although their manipulative skills remain weaker. Teaching is good. Plenty of good quality opportunities are provided for them to work with a range of tools, materials and media. For example, pupils mix colours to make patterns and choose from a range of everyday recycled materials to make models. Role play is a key feature and children's imaginations are developed well through the opportunities to take on roles and act out scenarios. Pupils have good opportunities to respond to music through listening, singing and playing instruments.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the ages of 7 and 11 have improved, but are not yet high enough;
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good;
- Speaking and listening skills are vastly improved;
- There are very good systems in place for monitoring pupils' progress;
- Leadership and management of the subject is good and has brought about improvements;
- Activities are not always matched effectively enough to meet the needs of all pupils.

### Commentary

44. Standards in English are below average but have improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to be well below average. There was a significant upturn in 2003, when test results for 11-year-olds reached average levels. However, there was a dip in 2004 and the as yet unvalidated data indicates that Year 2 and Year 6 results are likely to be well below average overall, when compared to all schools. The picture in relation to similar schools is likely to be stronger. The reason for the dip at both key stages lies with the high percentage of children with special educational needs in both classes. In Year 6, about half the class had particular needs related to their literacy skills. Despite the good and sometimes very good progress made from their starting points, a significant number did not achieve average levels and fewer than in 2003 reached the higher levels (Level 3 and Level 5). The relatively small number of pupils in the Year 6 class also has an impact, with one child representing about 8 per cent.

45. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in English are getting better throughout the school. Standards for the present Year 2 and Year 6 are currently below average instead of well below and there are pleasing signs that the initiatives the school has put into place to support pupils, staff training and consistently good teaching are starting to make a difference. Provision for the pupils with special educational needs is at least good, enabling them to make good and often very good progress. They receive effective support both from teachers and from trained teaching assistants to enable them to meet their targets. Good quality individual education plans underpin their learning well. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are also supported effectively.
46. Provision for the development of speaking and listening is very good. Standards are improving and, by Year 6, they are now close to average. Skills in speaking and listening are getting better due to the rich opportunities pupils have to practise them. This is a really significant improvement on the last inspection, when standards were judged to be poor. Teachers now plan more systematically for the development of speaking and listening. They use skilful questioning and create frequent opportunities for pupils to explore their ideas and share their opinions in lessons. Teachers also explain tasks very clearly to ensure understanding and often encourage pupils to discuss issues with a partner. 'Circle Time', role play, drama, visiting speakers and theatre groups are all used effectively and are having a strong impact. This is starting to rub off onto reading and writing.
47. Pupils achieve well in reading but by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards for the majority remain below average. Some pupils read confidently and fluently and are able to talk about the characters, plots and main events of a story but less able pupils have weaker phonic skills that make reading unfamiliar words difficult. By Year 6, many read with confidence, accuracy and expression and they are given good opportunities to demonstrate understanding. However, a significant number are still hesitant, due to their more limited vocabulary. Pupils use class libraries well and older pupils are able use the central non-fiction library competently for research. The school has put a range of sensible initiatives into place to support reading and uses support from the Education Action Zone and the local education authority very effectively. New reading schemes have been put into place, links with home have improved. Home/school reading record cards have been developed and the training of adults, like a school governor as 'Reading Champions' to offer targeted support, is proving particularly beneficial. Group reading sessions are also being used to good effect to develop skills. These initiatives are beginning to have an impact and the school has recognised the need to develop these to further accelerate learning.
48. Pupils are achieving well and sometimes very well in writing and although standards are below average, they are close to it by Year 6. This is a much-improved picture from the last inspection, when standards were well below average at both key stages. Developing writing is a whole school focus. Throughout the school, pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes and this is improving their skills. Assessment of pupils' progress is used well to pinpoint the next learning steps and these are discussed with pupils and targets are set as a result. Younger pupils write their own ideas and are beginning to use more interesting vocabulary. Pupils in the junior classes use grammar and spelling with increasing confidence. Weekly



spelling tests and regular handwriting practice are having a big impact on standards, which have improved. Year 6 pupils write for many different purposes, including play scripts and biographies, and are given opportunities for extended writing in stories. Their writing is often lively and thoughtful. For example, in a good piece of work on a sporting newspaper article, a pupil wrote 'In that last run of the night, with that sparkle in her eyes and that power in her run, she shot past Emma Derwin.'

49. The quality of teaching is good overall and some very good lessons were observed in Year 2 and Year 4. Good teaching is characterised by strong staff expertise, the sharing and reviewing of lesson objectives with the pupils, skilful questioning, brisk pace and high expectations. In most lessons, resources are well organised and support staff are used to good effect. Although pupils are usually effectively challenged in the shared parts of lessons, occasionally when children are working on independent tasks these are not always pitched at quite the right level. This sometimes means that children mark time, rather than progressing as rapidly as they could. In Year 1, some pupils are not yet ready to cope with the demands of a more formal curriculum. The school has recognised this and has started to adapt work to meet their needs more effectively. However, this is at the early stages and needs more work to ensure that learning is maximised for all. Where marking is good, it provides pupils with clear information on their successes and on what they need to do next to improve further. However, this could be a more consistent picture. Teaching and learning have been jointly monitored by the co-ordinator, the headteacher and local education authority advisory staff to bring about improvements. There are firm plans in place to develop monitoring further in order to sustain good practice, iron out the inconsistencies and ensure continued improvement.
50. There is good leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinator has brought about significant improvements in a short time through her hard work and commitment. She has good subject expertise, a clear view of the strengths and areas for development and gives good support and guidance to staff.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

51. The development of literacy across the curriculum has improved greatly since the last inspection and all subjects are used effectively to extend pupils' vocabulary as well as their reading and writing. A good example of this is the Year 5/6 history work on the impact of World War II on children. This topic provided an excellent opportunity for writing a letter home as an evacuee. ICT skills in word processing and the use of desktop publishing are also used increasingly well by pupils to help them present their work and the Internet is used well for research.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good, pupils achieve well and standards are beginning to improve;
- Systems for monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets are used effectively;

- Strong leadership and management has resulted in very good improvement since the previous inspection;
- There is scope for the school to extend the use of investigative mathematics into other areas of the curriculum.

## **Commentary**

52. The vigorous and effective action taken in response to the previous report has resulted in very good improvements. Pupils achieve well and sometimes very well. Standards in Year 6 have improved so that they are now close to average. Despite the low attainment recorded in the 2004 national tests for pupils in Year 2, the school's reliable data strongly suggests that standards in the current Year 2 are set to improve. Given the low base from which pupils start and the very high proportion of pupils who have significant additional learning needs, teachers do well to ensure that the majority of pupils achieve the level expected for their age. More effective use of assessment to confirm pupils' targets now means that the school is set to improve on what has already been achieved by increasing the proportion of pupils who reach higher levels of attainment.
53. The good achievement is due to the very significant improvement in teaching quality, which is now very good overall. Teachers plan their lessons very well. As a result, there is good pace to learning and lesson objectives are very clear. Activities to support pupils' learning are interesting and provide pupils with enough challenge to sustain their involvement. A good example was seen in a lesson where the teacher posed the problem 'Is it true that a person's height is the same as the distance of the person's outstretched arms?' There was a great deal of thinking and collaborative problem solving as the Year 3 pupils set about the task of finding out. All teachers promote mathematical understanding well by insisting upon the correct language being used. A strong feature of most lessons is the questioning and discussion which takes place. Teachers' expectations are high; consequently, there is a good volume of work to be seen, with a strong emphasis on number skills and investigations. Methods of calculation are taught well. Pupils also recall number facts quickly and accurately, benefiting from the very worthwhile efforts of a parent who attends the school weekly to help pupils learn their tables. However, though number skills are promoted very strongly there is less emphasis on extending investigative work throughout the school into shape, measure and data handling. Consequently, mathematical skills are not used sufficiently in other subjects. Pupils' learning is underpinned by the very good relationships that are fostered in classrooms. Teachers and assistants are very sensitive to pupils' individual needs. They manage pupils very well to establish a climate in which confidence and self-esteem can grow. Teachers assess pupils' progress well in lessons and use the information to plan the next steps in learning.
54. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and effective action have paid dividends in that teachers have greater confidence and expertise. There are strong systems in place to help track pupils' progress from year to year and to ensure they remain on course to achieve their targets. The quality of teamwork is very good and contributes significantly to the school's efforts to drive up standards.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

55. The school recognises the need to extend the use of mathematical skills across the curriculum. Some mathematics is used in design work and for recording data in science but overall the wider application of mathematical skills is not applied often enough.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement of all pupils is good, especially those of lower ability and with special educational needs;
- The quality of teaching is good, particularly for junior pupils;
- The quality of the curriculum is good, with a strong emphasis on practical science and the acquisition of investigative skills.

### **Commentary**

56. Standards have improved since the last inspection. The unvalidated results of the 2004 science tests were above average for pupils at the ages of 7 and 11. In Year 6, the average level was attained by 95 per cent of pupils, with 50 per cent attaining the higher level (Level 5). This strong improvement is a result of actions taken to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Inspection evidence suggests that standards for the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are just below average. This is because of the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs in both groups. Pupil achievement is good for all abilities, with lower ability and special needs pupils doing particularly well, thanks to the good support and individual attention they receive from teaching and support staff.

57. Teaching, which was judged to be satisfactory at the last inspection, is now good overall, especially for junior aged pupils. Lessons are well planned and prepared and feature a variety of stimulating activities with good use of resources. Teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations in terms of standards and behaviour. Work is marked regularly and uses a combination of praise, with clear suggestions for improvement. Pupils are encouraged to articulate their observations, to hypothesise and to make predictions. There are many planned opportunities for them to practise their speaking and listening skills. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 lesson on materials pupils discussed the properties of solids, liquids and gases and displayed impressive deductive and thinking skills.
58. The curriculum, which was criticised at the last inspection for being repetitive and not allowing pupils to build well enough on their skills, has been completely transformed. There is a strong emphasis from Year 1 onwards on investigation and exploration. In a Year 2 class, for example, pupils conducted a simple experiment to explore the different sensations of their taste buds. Year 5 and 6 pupils showed good knowledge of scientific method and fair testing techniques in their experiment on water changing state. A scrutiny of work reveals that pupils grow increasingly confident and skilled in experimental science as they progress through school, as a result of the good teaching and opportunities they receive. ICT is used effectively to record and present data and for research.
59. Science is well led and managed and this has led to successful changes to the curriculum, standards, teaching and resources. The co-ordinator has been effectively supported by the headteacher and local education authority adviser in bringing about improvements. Planning and standards are regularly and rigorously scrutinised. The school has recognised the need to develop aspects of the co-ordinator's skills in monitoring teaching and learning through classroom observation, in order to sustain improvements.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection;
- Staff expertise and resources have improved and are now good;
- Very good subject leadership and management is ensuring that improvement is continuous;
- Control technology could be developed further and pupils' typing skills could be improved.

### **Commentary**

60. Standards in ICT are as expected for pupils at the end of both key stages. This is a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection, when standards were judged to be unsatisfactory. There are pleasing signs that standards are continuing to rise throughout the school because a firm foundation of skills has been built. Pupils' skills are strongest in word processing and using the computers for research. Their

skills in using computers to control objects and events are less well developed; however, the school is currently addressing this area.

61. Improvements in standards have been brought about through the strong commitment of staff and governors in developing the subject. The move to the new building has enabled a computer suite to be created and funds have been wisely invested in up to date resources and staff training. This investment is paying dividends. Very good subject leadership and management ensure that the school keeps abreast of new developments and that staff are well supported in planning and delivering the curriculum. As a result, they are confident with the equipment and the software they use and this, in turn, instils confidence in the pupils, who then learn rapidly. Recently developed assessment arrangements are already having an impact and are further accelerating progress. For example, Year 3 pupils are already displaying above average skills in some aspects.
62. Teaching in ICT is consistently good or better. Teachers use demonstrations skilfully on the interactive whiteboards to focus children's attention and to involve them closely in recapping previous learning and building new concepts on to this. Questions are used particularly well to draw information from the children and check on their understanding. In a Year 5/6 lesson, for example, the teacher was able to quickly ascertain who was confident with the spreadsheet programme and who would need extra support in fulfilling the task. High expectations of pupils concentration, collaboration and work rate ensures learning is carried out at a fast pace. Both teachers and teaching assistants support pupils effectively, knowing when to intervene and when to stand back to let pupils 'have a go' themselves.
63. An area for improvement is the speed at which pupils type in their work. Most are slow, typing with one finger, whilst searching for the keys. This means that tasks sometimes take longer than they might.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

64. Teachers plan worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use ICT in most curriculum areas. As a result, pupils practise their skills and apply them in many different situations. For example, Year 3 made good links between literacy and ICT as they wrote magazines about subjects that interested them. They used word art, text features and graphics after considering the demands of readers for a bright, lively presentation. Older pupils have used software to create repeating wallpaper patterns, linking with art and design. More extensive use could be made of ICT for investigations in mathematics.

### **HUMANITIES**

65. No lessons were seen in **geography**, therefore not enough evidence is available on which to judge provision, teaching and standards. However, a scrutiny of children's work was carried out and discussions were held with staff and pupils.
66. The issues identified at the last inspection have been effectively addressed. Pupils of all ages and abilities now study a range of topics from a detailed scheme of work, based on latest government recommendations. Teachers' planning is thorough and takes account of individual needs. Assessment of progress is also effective. Work

produced by pupils, for example that on the theme of 'Water' in Years 5 and 6, covers the subject thoroughly and there are opportunities for pupils to write and present information in a range of forms that develop knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils studying 'Jobs' in Year 3 made good use of ICT to produce probing and professional questionnaires to use for homework. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator, who also co-ordinates history. She has successfully raised the subject's profile throughout the school.

## HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is effective and stimulating and engages pupils with a variety of strategies and activities;
- Many opportunities are provided for enrichment of learning;
- The school has successfully addressed all the areas of weakness in the previous report.

### Commentary

67. Standards in history at the ages of 7 and 11 are typical of those usually seen and achievement, judged satisfactory in the last report, is now good. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and topics are studied in sufficient depth.
68. Lessons are well planned and sequenced, and teachers work hard to provide interesting and enjoyable activities that aim to develop historical knowledge and interpretative skills. Year 2 pupils have studied Ancient Egypt and have had opportunities to write, compare and sequence events. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson on evacuees in World War II, the careful and precise questioning of the teacher extended pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively. Pupils made subtle points about the experiences of the evacuees, concerning the possible positive aspects of evacuation for orphaned and deprived children. A convincing video dramatisation was followed up with a role play exercise, where the teacher played a billeting officer and the pupils groups of evacuees. Writing in response to this showed sensitivity and understanding. Good classroom management and careful attention to individual needs results in all pupils achieving well, especially those with special educational needs.
69. The subject is well led and managed by the enthusiastic co-ordinator. She has successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection concerning the lack of a scheme of work and insufficient resources. Supported by the headteacher and the local education authority adviser, she has introduced effective assessment procedures and systems for monitoring work and planning; there are firm plans in place to ensure that teaching is monitored. The number of opportunities for pupil enrichment is impressive, with all year groups now undertaking regular educational visits.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at Year 6 are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus;
- The quality of teaching is good;
- The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator;
- There are good opportunities for pupils to express their views and beliefs in writing.

### COMMENTARY

70. Standards of attainment are below those expected at Year 2 but in line with what is expected by Year 6. Children achieve well overall in response to good teaching. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. The curriculum is now well planned to enable pupils to both deepen their knowledge of religions and explore parallel events and feelings in their own lives. This use of pupils' experiences makes a very positive contribution to their moral and spiritual development.
71. Work seen gives clear evidence that pupils are taught to consider the ways in which having a faith affects peoples' lives. Older pupils show understanding of how moral values are embodied in religion and how they affect aspects of daily life. In a Year 3 lesson seen, pupils achieved very well in their understanding of Hinduism due to very good teaching, a brisk pace, interesting use of artefacts, excellent use of the interactive whiteboard and the dose match of activity to different ability groups. Pupils in Year 6 show good understanding of the notion of forgiveness, as shown in a letter to a man suffering from the effects of a tragedy in Northern Ireland. 'Sometimes the bravest thing is to just walk away.'
72. Resources are improving rapidly. ICT is effectively used to provide visual impact in lessons, as in the excellent use of a web site in the Year 3 lesson seen to show a virtual shrine. Visits and visitors are also very well used; a governor who is also a vicar plays an important role. Assembly themes support the subject and provide links for teachers.
73. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator provides good advice and has worked very effectively with the local authority adviser to develop a thorough assessment system to track pupils' progress. She checks on pupil progress and standards of work, and has a clear understanding of the areas for development.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

74. Insufficient evidence was collected during the inspection to make a secure judgement on the provision, standards and quality of teaching in **music**. However, teachers' planning was analysed and discussions held with both staff and pupils. In **physical education**, although two gymnastics lessons were seen, neither was at the end of the key stages, so it is not possible to judge overall standards or provision. In **design and technology**, no lessons were seen, therefore no judgement on teaching is made; however, there was enough evidence available from pupils' work to enable standards to be judged.
75. The issues raised at the last inspection in design and technology have been addressed well by the headteacher, who has responsibility for co-ordinating the subject. Standards at the ages of 7 and 11 were below those expected, achievement was unsatisfactory overall and the skills, knowledge and techniques were underdeveloped. Teaching, staff support and resources were also unsatisfactory. Although it was not possible to observe any teaching during this inspection, a detailed scrutiny of the work and documentation available in school makes it clear that there has been a good improvement in all areas and that standards are broadly typical of those seen in most schools.
76. The subject is taught alternately with art and design and there is a detailed scheme of work in place, with good links to other subjects. Pupils' work shows a good command of design principles, methods of presentation and evaluation. The quantity and quality of the work in exercise books is impressive. Teachers' marking is good, providing



praise and useful guidance. Pupils' achievement as they progress through school is good and by the time they are 11 most pupils are confident in their use of the language and conventions of the subject. The profile of design and technology within the curriculum has been considerably improved by the introduction of the termly whole school 'Design and Technology Days' and the annual 'Focus on Food Week'. Parents and carers are enthusiastic helpers. Much of the work produced is displayed around school but the co-ordinator records the work produced through photographs and samples in a useful, comprehensive portfolio.

77. By talking to teachers and pupils, it is evident that music is taught consistently and that pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school. Pupils have opportunities in lessons to compose and perform music on tuned and untuned percussion instruments. They develop a sound knowledge of music terminology and know, for example, about the range of instruments found in an orchestra. There are occasional concerts and festivals where pupils perform in public, as well as assemblies for parents. Pupils' interest in music is further developed through visits, to Chester Cathedral for example, and through visitors to school, where they can appreciate live performances.
78. The school has worked hard to develop the physical education curriculum to effectively ensure all elements are covered and that children can build progressively on their skills. Good attention is paid to teaching swimming throughout the junior classes; however, by the time they leave the school many do not reach the required standard, largely because they do not practise their skills at other times. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of sports such as gymnastics and football through after school clubs. Clubs are well attended and have a good impact on the skills of those who attend. Learning is also enriched through coaching sessions from local teams. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well. She has successfully led the school to gain the 'Active Mark Gold' award. She makes good use of her expertise by regularly teaching other classes. The lesson she taught during the inspection was good, demonstrating skill and enthusiasm, which had a good impact on learning. The other lesson seen in Year 4 was unsatisfactory because an over-ambitious plan led to children making too little progress. The co-ordinator has identified the need to regularly monitor teaching to bring about further improvements.

## Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

### MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching is good;
- Standards have improved and are now better than usually seen;
- The curriculum is planned well and teachers make good use of resources.

### COMMENTARY

79. Due to good leadership and management and consistently good teaching, pupils produce high quality work. Standards are better than seen typically at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils achieve well and standards have improved since the previous inspection. Displays show good development of skills and techniques in work which reflects many cultures. Pupils in Year 2, for example, learned about the qualities of

different fabrics. They identified those printed as opposed to woven and isolated areas of the Indian, African and Egyptian designs using 'viewfinders' before drawing them accurately in great detail. Pupils then used inks, pastels or paint to add colour, carefully matching the shades of the original patterns. Interesting techniques such as batik, using paint and wax to create pictures on fabric, are taught well. Pupils' increasing skills and creativity is clearly demonstrated in the Egyptian figures in Year 2 and the detailed birds and animals by pupils in Year 5 and 6. Good use of different resources adds interest to lessons allowing pupils to express ideas in different ways. For example, three-dimensional sculptures, weaving, collage, printing, as well as drawing and painting, all feature well in pupils' work. Lessons are often linked to other subjects to make work more meaningful. This resulted in good teaching and learning in a Year 1 lesson, when pupils used simple potato print blocks to create repeated shape patterns. This provided a practical and colourful consolidation of their learning about shape in mathematics lessons. There is an increasing use of ICT but work is mostly based on experimenting with the use of shape and colour. The wider potential of ICT in art is not yet explored. Visits to the school from local artists and occasional 'Art Days' help to nurture pupils' interest.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

80. The school has made the provision for pupils' personal and social development a strong focus and, as a result, pupils make good progress towards becoming thoughtful and mature individuals. 'Circle Time' for discussion is well established for pupils to express their thoughts and views. A 'Grumble Box' has been introduced into classrooms so children can write about their grumbles, which are then discussed in 'Circle Time' as part of the school's bullying prevention work. The very good relationships between children and staff help the children gain in confidence. Staff questioning skills are good and help children consider their answers more fully. This was seen in an infant assembly. Pupils had to consider how they might feel if they had just missed scoring a goal in football and what helpful responses a friend could make to this or to being on the losing team. The encouraging words suggested by one child were shown by the teacher to be more likely to lead to success next time than arguing or name calling. The school is working towards national 'Healthy School' status with healthy snacks being served at break time and the cook producing very high quality lunches. Appropriate provision is in place for sex and relationships education but the school is aware of the need for a more consistent approach to drugs education. Although the governors have an agreed policy about the teaching of drugs awareness, this is not yet a feature of the school's practice. This is identified as a priority by the school and firm plans are in place to develop this aspect further.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (Ethos)</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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	3
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	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
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).*