

INSPECTION REPORT

PORTLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Claughton, Birkenhead

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105037

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Walker

Lead inspector: Mr David Carrington

Dates of inspection: 13th – 15th September 2004

Inspection number: 267506

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 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 204 |
| School address: | Laird Street Claughton Birkenhead |
| Postcode: | CH41 0AB |
| Telephone number: | 0151 652 5124 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr C K Wilson |
| Date of previous inspection: | 10 th November 1997 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Portland Primary School is situated about a mile to the north west of Birkenhead town centre. The area that it serves consists mainly of older housing with shops and small industries mixed in. There are 91 boys and 113 girls in the main school with another 41 children who attend the nursery part-time. Most of the pupils live close to the school. There is considerable social and economic deprivation in the area and the school has to provide an education for a very diverse group of children. The entitlement to free school meals is well above average, a significant proportion of the pupils join or leave the school part way through their primary education and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is more than is usually found in primary schools. There are relatively few pupils with statements. A considerable number of pupils have specific support for emotional and behavioural needs, including some who are taught in the nurture group for much of the week. Few pupils are from ethnic minority families or speak English as an additional language. During the time since the previous inspection in 1997 there have been four headteachers at the school, with the most recent change in January 2004. In addition, there have been a number of changes to the staffing of the school over this period. The school is clearly very different now, compared to 1997, not least because the number of pupils at the school has fallen sharply.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---|
| 15414 | Mr David Carrington | Lead inspector | Mathematics, science and information and communication technology. |
| 9479 | Mrs Christine Field | Lay inspector | |
| 1189 | Mrs Sharon Brown | Team inspector | English, art and design, design and technology, physical education and special educational needs. |
| 19765 | Mrs Pauleen Shannon | Team inspector | Geography, history, religious education and areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. |
| 22182 | Ms Fiona Robinson | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages, music and English as an additional language. |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Portland Primary School is an improving school with a positive future. It provides an **effective** education for its pupils. Whilst standards are not as high as those found in most primary schools, the pupils learn well and build skills and knowledge effectively from a low starting point. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and the pupils work from a good curriculum. The headteacher's leadership is very good and she has made many important changes to school routines since joining in January 2004. The school gives satisfactory value for the above average amount spent on each pupil.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is good overall.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher who is very well supported by the deputy head.
- Teaching and learning are mostly of good quality.
- Pupils enjoy being at school, they have good attitudes to their studies and generally work hard.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and target setting and tracking, and the monitoring of achievement are inconsistent and not rigorous enough.
- Attendance levels are well below average.
- There is a good curriculum that ensures all subjects are studied in appropriate depth and the pupils with special educational needs are well supported and they learn well.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since 1997. The process of improvement slowed during the period when several headteachers worked in quick succession in school. It has picked up again since January 2004.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Standards vary from year to year because of the different make-up of each class. In 2003, the last year for which there are national comparisons available, the pupils in Year 6 attained average standards in mathematics and below average standards in English and science. However, their results stood up well against schools where the pupils attained at a similar level when they were in Year 2. This is summarised in the following table.

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

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

The table does not show that pupils generally make good strides in their learning as they progress through the school. Children start with low levels of skills and knowledge, but the rate of achievement is **good** and their standards rise as they grow older. In a nutshell, the trend in school is for pupils to start with low standards, attain well below average standards by the age of seven and below average standards by the age of eleven.

At present, standards are weakest in English because many children find speaking and listening very difficult when they join the school and there is a lot of ground to cover in order to raise standards to

the national average level. Standards are strongest in information and communication technology (ICT), where they are average throughout the school because teachers use computers effectively and focus carefully on the development of ICT skills. Pupils attain average standards in this subject.

Attendance levels are well below average, which slows the rate of learning for those pupils affected. Pupils are interested in their work, behaviour is satisfactory and relationships are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **good** overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3, 5 and 6. It is satisfactory in Years 1, 2 and 4. Learning follows a similar pattern. A very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was observed, largely due to weaknesses in classroom organisation. Much teaching and learning of good or very good quality was seen. Planning, and the pace of some lessons as well as the use of homework are generally satisfactory. The methods used, teachers' expectations, the work of teaching assistants and the encouragement and motivation of pupils are all good.

Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory because they are inconsistent between classes and from subject to subject. Pupils' individual targets are not promoted effectively enough and marking does not consistently indicate ways to improve their work. The school has already identified assessment as a major area for improvement and some promising changes have been made.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is **good**. The headteacher has made a determined start since January and the pace of improvement has increased. She leads the school very effectively. She has built a very good partnership with the hard working and committed deputy headteacher. Other staff give good leadership to their subjects. The governors are interested, involved and very supportive of the school. They are increasing their work to judge how effective the school is. Overall, the governors undertake their duties satisfactorily. Management is satisfactory. The procedures to check and evaluate the school's successes and areas for improvement have been boosted but they are not yet rigorous or consistent enough.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are enthusiastic in their attitudes to the school. They hold positive views and say that the school provides an effective education for their children. The pupils like their school, particularly their teachers. The inspection team agrees with the views of parents and pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and religious education, especially through the development of English skills in all subjects taught.
- Improve the systems of assessment, target setting and tracking, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure all pupils achieve consistently to best levels.
- Maintain the good efforts being made to improve attendance.

Although not a key issue, the school should work speedily to eliminate the health and safety issues identified by the inspection team and reported to the headteacher.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **below average** by the age of eleven. Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, Year 6 pupils attained average standards in mathematics and below average standards in English and science.
- The Year 6 results compared very well with schools where the pupils attained at a similar level when they were in Year 2.
- Achievement is good overall.
- This year standards are below average in mathematics, science and information and communication technology and well below average in English at the age of seven.
- Standards are currently below average in Year 6 in English, mathematics and religious education, and average in science and ICT.
- The low attendance rate of a significant number of pupils means they miss much work of critical importance and their achievement suffers because of this.
- Children's level of skill and knowledge is low when they join the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups achieve well.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not consistently challenged.

Commentary

1. There is some variation in standards from year to year, due in the main to different backgrounds to the pupils in each class. Thus, standards in Year 6 were well below average (E)¹ in English in 2001 and 2002 but below average (D) in 2003. Standards have also varied across these three years in mathematics and science. Generally, standards have been well below average (E) in the national tests at the age of seven and below average (D) at the age of eleven. Preliminary indicators suggest that standards are rather lower in Year 6 in 2004 than they were in 2003, though the school has set higher targets for the national tests in 2005 and early indications are that it is on course to meet these.
2. The school results are generally higher when compared to similar schools. In Year 6, for example, standards were above average (B) in English and science and well above average (A) in mathematics in 2003 when compared against schools where the pupils attained similar levels in their Year 2 national tests in 1999.
3. The school's 2003 results are summarised in the following tables.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| Reading | 13.9 (15.5) | 15.7 (15.8) |
| Writing | 13.4 (14.5) | 14.6 (14.4) |
| Mathematics | 14.6 (16.3) | 16.3 (16.5) |

There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

¹ The range is A* - high; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average; E* - low.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 25.8 (25.7) | 26.8 (27.0) |
| Mathematics | 27.3 (28.5) | 26.8 (26.7) |
| Science | 27.6 (29.3) | 28.6 (28.3) |

There were 40 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. The school was awarded the government School Achievement Award for its work to improve standards for three years running from 2001 to 2003. Standards have risen at the same rate as that found nationally at the age of seven, but have outstripped this rate at the age of eleven, where improvement has been rapid. So far, the school has been very effective in raising standards across Years 3 to 6.
5. Children start school with low (E*) levels of skill and knowledge. This is especially marked in aspects of communication, language and literacy, which impacts significantly on their learning in later years. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and the children achieve well. However, at the end of this stage of their education, their skills and knowledge are still at a low level because there is so much ground to make up.
6. In Years 1 and 2, achievement is satisfactory. Skills and knowledge levels are increased at the expected rate, though there are some inconsistencies and some pupils find it difficult to concentrate for relatively long periods and to behave properly. This affects their learning and achievement. Standards this year are below average (D) in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and well below average in English (E) at the age of seven.
7. There is some very good teaching in Years 3 and 6, which accelerates achievement effectively. Generally, achievement is good in Years 3 to 6 and standards rise. Currently, standards are below average (D) in Year 6 in English and mathematics and well below average (E) in religious education. They are average (C) in science and ICT. It is not possible to judge standards in other subjects as there is insufficient evidence for this to be reliable. For example, the teaching of French this year started on the second day of the inspection, so only one lesson was observed. Because the focus is on conversational language, there was no written work from last year to inspect.
8. The school provides effectively for pupils with special educational needs and they achieve well. It is working to make individual education plans even more precise, but there is a need to make the review of some targets, especially for behavioural and emotional needs, more frequent to ensure achievement is maximised. The pupils in the nurture group are gaining confidence, self-esteem, and skills and knowledge at a good rate because they are supported effectively.
9. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve at similar rates, as do pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils who transfer in or out of the school at times other than at the start or end also achieve as effectively as other pupils. Boys and girls achieve equally well in lessons.
10. The low attendance rate of a significant number of pupils is holding back their achievement because they miss much work of critical importance. This is especially noticeable in English and mathematics.
11. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils from Year 1 on. These pupils make the best progress in the Year 5/6 mathematics upper set because expectations are high and the work is

very motivating. In other years and subjects the demands placed on these gifted and talented pupils are not as challenging.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are **good** overall. The school has a nurturing ethos in which pupils' individuality is recognised and celebrated. Pupils are happy to come to school. Although showing improvement, attendance is well below average despite the school's determined efforts to make improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils have good attitudes to learning; they enjoy school and try hard.
- A few pupils, particularly in the juniors, still require a lot of behavioural support.
- There are generally good relationships between pupils and with staff and these underpin the effective learning that takes place.
- Attendance overall is well below average.
- Pupils know right from wrong and become sociable, considerate young people but there is room for improvement in their cultural awareness.

Commentary

12. Children in the nursery and reception classes are settling well into the routines of the Foundation Stage. The staff are rightly placing much emphasis on fostering the children's personal and social skills as most have started school with very limited experience of sharing or playing cooperatively with others.
13. Older boys and girls generally show good attitudes to their lessons. There are good relationships between pupils and with staff and these underpin the effective learning taking place in lessons. Pupils respond best to the more stimulating lessons when their imagination is captured, most listen attentively and try to do their best. This was well exemplified in a very good mathematics lesson in Year 3 where all pupils worked purposefully and productively as they calculated different ways of using small coins to make twenty pounds in total. The enthusiasm of the teacher, who made her high expectations apparent in a very positive manner, was infectious and resulted in pupils' good personal achievement. Pupils show pride in their work and most try their level best to achieve the *Star Table* award, which they value highly.
14. The school takes a firm but fair line on matters of behaviour and discipline. A system of zones operates which are clear and visible to everyone around school. Most pupils operate in green zone, which shows that they are working well and following the code of conduct. Moves to orange and then red zone reflect a drop in the standards expected. All pupils sign up to the *Portland Promise* and most try their best to keep it. Around school are prominently displayed rules and codes that promote positive messages. For example, corridor door posters remind the pupils to be polite and courteous. Every Friday, merit assemblies are high status affairs in which good work, effort and behaviour are commended. Behaviour in class is typically settled, though occasionally one or two pupils display attention seeking behaviour and are disruptive to others. A minority show challenging behaviour that most staff do well to manage positively. Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is satisfactory for the most part but on the last day of inspection was observed to be rather boisterous. Pupils told inspectors that fighting at lunchtime is something that occurs frequently and they do not like it. They also told inspectors that instances of bullying are fairly common but that they are always sorted out by the teachers when they are brought to their attention. Parents too raised some concerns about bullying. A school council has recently been elected and council representatives were observed to do a good job in mediating problems on the playground. Nevertheless, the anti-social behaviour of a small but significant minority of pupils, particularly in the juniors, is one aspect that the school is aware requires more improvement and plans are in hand for staff to receive training to support this aspect later this term.

15. The school has a very inclusive policy of welcoming all comers and provides behavioural support for pupils whatever their background. However it will not tolerate abusive or anti-social behaviour and uses exclusion as a final resort. The incidence of exclusions was high last year due to very exceptional circumstances and was fully justified. Through early intervention, effective behaviour plans and positive strategies such as the *nurture group*, the rate of exclusion is reducing.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 216 | 14 | 0 |
| Mixed White and any other | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed White and Black Caribbean | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed White and Black African | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 8 | 0 | 0 |

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

16. Pupils' attendance is well below average for primary schools nationally, and the level of unauthorised absence is too high. Although this has improved significantly in recent months, there are still too many pupils who have unexplained absence. The school is working effectively to promote good attendance by raising its status amongst pupils and by rewarding improved attendance. Last year eight pupils achieved 100 per cent attendance and twice as many were commended for improving attendance. Punctuality is satisfactory on the whole but a few pupils are habitually late. The school has initiated the *My arriving at school on time chart* which results in rewards for a week of no *lates*, and is a positive feature. However, despite the school's good efforts some parents are not giving the school their full support in making sure their children attend regularly and on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data: | 6.5 | School data : | 3.2 |
| National data: | 5.4 | National data: | 0.5 |

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

17. A good programme of personal and social education supports pupils' personal, including moral, and social development. Topics such as challenging racism, the importance of rules and coping with peer pressure, help pupils to make good progress in their understanding of right and wrong, and of the moral dilemmas they will encounter. Circle times are used effectively for the youngest children to consider what it means to be special and how everyone is special in some way. The pupils become sociable, considerate young people ready for the next stage of their education. The representatives on the school council say that their views are listened to well. Pupils have recently been working with the Groundwork Trust to make improvements to their school grounds. Although thoughtful, as for example when praying together in assembly or when charitable fundraising endeavours are undertaken, there is room for improvement in their spiritual awareness. Pupils learn about the cultural differences in the wider world through the study of comparative religions for example in religious education lessons and through geography studies such as the work undertaken during European Week. However, there is potential for the school to promote pupils' deeper understanding of the diversity of cultures present in contemporary British society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **good** in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. It is **satisfactory** in Years 1 and 2. Learning follows a similar pattern. Assessment procedures are **unsatisfactory** because they are inconsistent between classes and from subject to subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much teaching and learning is of good or very good quality.
- The methods used, teachers' expectations, the work of teaching assistants and the encouragement and motivation of pupils are all good.
- A very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was observed, largely due to weaknesses in classroom organisation.
- Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are taught well.
- Targets for individual learning are not shared with the pupils or tracked consistently.
- Marking does not consistently indicate ways to improve pupils' work.

Commentary

18. The overall quality of teaching is good. The following table shows that over 97 per cent of the lessons observed were of satisfactory teaching quality, with two percent that was unsatisfactory. Generally, the scrutiny of work completed last school year showed a similar pattern of teaching through the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 47 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|----------------|-------|-----------|
| 0 (0) | 6 (13) | 27 (57) | 13 (28) | 1 (2) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. The Figures in brackets are percentages.

19. The best teaching is found in the nursery, Year 3 and Year 6. Most of the very good teaching and learning was observed in these year groups. In these classes teachers have particularly high expectations, they manage behaviour very effectively and learning is brisk and productive. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1, 2 and 4. The unsatisfactory teaching was observed in one of the mixed-age Year 1/2 classes. This was due to deficiencies in classroom organisation and the management of the pupils. Too many pupils completed insufficient work during the session.
20. Chief strengths of teaching throughout the school are the methods used, expectations of work and behaviour, the effective support provided by teaching assistants and the encouragement and motivation of pupils. Most teachers consistently deal effectively with pupils who find concentration difficult or misbehave. Occasionally, the school's policy for supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties is not implemented consistently or in a positive enough fashion. In other respects, the management of behaviour is generally good.
21. The identification of the skills, knowledge and understanding to be learned by different groups of pupils is not always precise enough in lesson planning. This is linked to the facts that targets for

individual learning are inconsistently precise enough and that they are not always tracked rigorously enough. Marking does not show pupils how to improve their work, though it is often effective in flagging the good effort given. The overall system of assessment is unsatisfactory because of these shortcomings. The creation of an assessment system that is coupled to a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process that will track each pupil's achievement and ensure that this is at the best rate possible is at a very early stage of development in many subjects. Assessment continues to be a key priority for the school and forms part of the second key issue arising from this inspection.

22. Children in the Foundation Stage are taught well. The work is tailored carefully to the needs of these children, most of whom start with low levels of skill and knowledge. Staff are especially successful in building the children's speaking and listening skills and in enhancing their personal, social and emotional development.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support by all staff. The individual education plans have been sharpened in their precision and the work provided is well matched to need. Some targets for improved behaviour allow too long before they are evaluated for success. The teaching assistants work well with their pupils and this ensures that effort is increased and achievement is good. The pupils in the nurture group are also supported effectively. This enables them to settle well to their work and to focus on the improvement of skills and knowledge. Their progress is steady and their achievement is good.
24. Generally, pupils who speak English as an additional language are carefully provided for. In some cases, specific resources are provided to enable the individual pupil to succeed. For example, the school has purchased books in the mother tongue of some pupils in order to show the value attached to the pupil's cultural and language traditions. Parents are pleased about such additional provision and say that this enables their children to assimilate quickly into a strange learning environment. The relative shortage of teaching assistants in some classes means that support for pupils who speak English as an additional language cannot always be maximised.
25. Most lessons show good learning because teaching is effective in promoting knowledge and skills. Pupils build these things well and most work hard. The pupils show developing skills of independent work and sensible collaboration with others, as seen in a good Year 3 ICT lesson where the pupils were sending emails to each other.

The Curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and is well supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits. Accommodation and resources are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils benefit from a broad, relevant and well-planned curriculum.
- The quality of pupils' personal, social and health education is good.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and they achieve well.
- The curriculum is enhanced well by extra curricular and other activities.
- Pupils are very well supported for the next stage of their education.
- Targets in individual educational plans are not assessed and revised frequently enough.

Commentary

26. The quality of the curriculum is good and its quality has been sustained since the previous inspection. It is well planned and meets statutory requirements fully. All pupils have full and equal access to the curriculum. The school provides effective personal, social and health education, including citizenship, sex and relationships education and attention to drugs misuse. Opportunities to learn French and Spanish contribute effectively to enrichment and enjoyment. Planning is good and is linked effectively to national guidance.

27. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well organised with a good range of practical activities and resources to promote children's development well in all areas of learning. The support assistant very ably supports the teacher and together they continually reinforce key skills in language, literacy and mathematics. In all areas of the curriculum children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, achieve well and enjoy their work. The strong foundations developed in literacy and numeracy skills are built on well in Years 3 to 6.
28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and pupils in public care is good. The school provides a thoughtfully considered and flexible range of support to meet the needs of various groups and individuals with good attention to inclusion. For example, the nurture group provides a secure and caring base, meeting the needs of specific pupils well and reintegrating them effectively into classes. There are good quality individual education plans with clearly defined targets. However, opportunities to review these targets are not regular enough. Budget constraints restrict the amount of time allocated to the special educational needs co-ordinator for monitoring and review.
29. Children in the Foundation Stage and those in Year 2 are well prepared for the next stage of their education. For Year 6 pupils this is very good. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have good opportunities to become familiar with the local secondary school and engage in a good number of sporting and cultural activities with other feeder schools prior to transfer.
30. Support for learning outside the school day is good. The school offers a wide range of opportunities in which a good number of pupils participate. These include sporting clubs such as football and hockey, music, writing, ICT, gymnastics and dance clubs. A wide range of educational visits is arranged to museums, farms and art galleries. Visitors come into school to support topics in history or art for example. Older pupils have the opportunity for a residential experience. A small number of children are learning to play the clarinet and trumpet with a visiting music specialist. All of these activities enrich the curriculum, promote pupils' interest and learning well and contribute effectively to their personal development.
31. Accommodation is good. It is spacious and well maintained. Good displays around the school enhance the learning environment. Resources are good overall with one or two shortage areas such as physical education and art currently being addressed. Issues identified for the Foundation Stage in the previous inspection have been addressed.

Care, guidance and support

The systems in place to ensure pupils' health, welfare and safety are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are effective procedures overall in place to ensure the health, welfare and safety of pupils, however some concerns about lunchtime arrangements were raised with the school.
- The monitoring of pupils' personal development including attendance is good but more work is needed to make the assessment of academic achievement an effective tool for targeting improvement.

Commentary

32. All pupils are well known by the staff and have good, trusting relationships with them. Pupils are treated with respect, care and patience. The school works effectively, and with success, to support a significant number of pupils who are particularly vulnerable. The work that takes place in the nurture group is very effective in this respect. Induction arrangements work well in helping the youngest children and pupils new to school settle quickly to their work. The induction process to support pupils' transition between Year 2 and 3 is successful and these children have made a good start to their junior years. *The Passport to Year 3*, that includes personal aims and aspirations alongside a list of things each child is already good at, is a very positive feature.

33. Health and safety aspects are generally well attended to, however some concerns were raised with the school regarding the open access of the school playground at lunchtimes and potentially unsafe types play of a handful of older boys in particular. The school has introduced *lunchtime contracts* between pupil, parent/carer, mid day supervisors and headteacher in an endeavour to promote more positive behaviours. Child protection procedures are well understood by all staff and a revised policy is in the process of review. Recent staff training has been delivered by the headteacher who is the named person with responsibility for this key aspect of the school's work.
34. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good, particularly the many pupils with individual education or behaviour plans. The progress of these pupils is carefully tracked with regular reviews undertaken that involve parents. In their academic development, pupils receive good advice and support, which helps most to achieve successfully. However, the systems in place to track individual achievement across all of the subjects studied is in the very early stage of development.
35. The involvement of pupils in the work and development of the school is satisfactory, and the new school council representatives and monitors are good role models for others in taking on roles of responsibility. The school is currently working towards the *Healthy Schools Award*.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a **good** partnership with parents, the community and other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication between school and home works well.
- Most parents are supportive and involved in their children's education.

Commentary

36. Parents hold positive views of the school. They like the small, family traditions of the school and are pleased their children attend.
37. Communication between school and home works well. There is a regular newsletter for parents, which contains useful news and views and meetings are organised about various aspects that are well attended. A family learning project is proving successful in helping parents to support their children's learning at home. The annual written report sent to parents is viewed positively by them, and include targets that many find helps them support their children's education.
38. The Parent-Teacher Association is a small, but active group, who work hard to help the school resource the education provided. Through well-supported social events, such as the bingo nights, bouncy castle events and discos, they raise useful sums of money that have been put towards Christmas parties, an education visit to Delamere Forest and in providing all Year 6 leavers with a personal dictionary. The school makes effective use of the local area to widen pupils' experiences and has strong links with the church and other local schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **good** and management is **satisfactory**. The school is governed **satisfactorily** with some significant contributions from individual governors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very well led by the headteacher with very good support from her deputy.
- The senior management team leads the school effectively.
- There is a clear commitment by all to providing the best for all pupils and helping them achieve well.
- Subject leaders are committed to improvement. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to influence the quality of teaching and learning and take responsibility for standards and achievement.
- New systems for checking how well the school is doing are not applied consistently and are not sufficiently rigorous.
- The school secretary makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.

Commentary

39. Leadership is good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has shown very good leadership and high expectations since joining the school in January 2004 and the pace of improvement has increased. In the two terms since her appointment the headteacher has successfully established a united and supportive staff team who are committed to making good provision for the all round development of pupils. She has the trust of the parents who see her as totally approachable and committed to the well being of their children. Parents attending the meeting with inspectors said that *The new head is brilliant, she is passionate about the school, it's not just a job with her, she really cares.*
40. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and high expectations of the pupils, who achieve well compared to similar schools. The headteacher has correctly identified a number of barriers to raising achievement, such as delay in language development and some challenging behaviour. She has worked with the staff in order to improve behaviour, reduce exclusions and improve attendance. This is setting a climate for learning in order to raise attainment and achievement. While these remain significant challenges, the improvements are helping all children to be more fully included in the life of the school.
41. The deputy headteacher has worked successfully to gain the respect of the staff and governors during the last two years. This was during a period of significant management change, whilst acting deputy head. As a newly appointed deputy headteacher, she is a very good role model in terms of her teaching and leadership skills. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well as the senior management team and are further developing the roles of other senior staff. The senior management team includes members of staff with responsibility for core subjects who also have responsibility for leading the infant and junior departments. However, this does not yet include the Foundation Stage co-ordinator. These managers are drawn into the process of strategic school management at appropriate times and according to the focus of the work. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are extending the monitoring role of subject leaders so that they can take more responsibility for the standards of teaching and learning and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' achievement in their subjects.
42. Management is satisfactory overall. The school has a detailed development plan with clear priorities. Targets have been set for different groups of pupils. However there is not a clear enough focus and there are too many targets for the school to tackle effectively at the same time. The systems for assessment, target setting and tracking pupils' performance are at early stages of development. They remain high priorities for the school. The head and deputy analyse the performance of different groups, together with two assessment co-ordinators. However, staff do not yet use this information effectively, neither as subject leaders nor within classes, to

plan sufficiently for the different groups of pupils. Consequently target setting, tracking and the monitoring of achievement, are inconsistent and not rigorous enough. Performance management is in place and takes into account the staff development needs together with pupil targets. A new change team has been established, made up of all sectors of the staff in order to implement the workforce reforms. The day-to-day administration is efficient. The school benefits from a very capable and approachable secretary. She and other administrative and premises staff help the school run smoothly.

43. Governance is satisfactory. The school has the benefit of hard working and committed governors who have the interests of all members of the school community, pupils, parents and staff at the heart of what they do. The school has undergone major changes in leadership in the last few years. The governing body have maintained the work of the school and supported staff during a difficult period. During this period of instability they made good staffing appointments. The leadership of governors is caring and enthusiastic. The chair of governors is strongly committed to the school and has a real respect for the staff and a concern for all school issues and the achievement of the pupils. He meets with the head on a regular basis and sees his role as 'supporting and encouraging and ensuring that staff and governors all work together as a team for the benefit of the children'. The governors mainly take their lead from the head's information, external data and test results. However, they are developing their involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of the school, with a number of governors helping in classes and observing teaching. There are named governors for literacy, numeracy and special needs who visit the school giving feedback informally both to the staff and the governors. To check the success of spending decision related to ICT a governor visited school, talked to pupils and observed teaching. The governors and headteacher have and put together a more systematic programme linked to the schools development cycle.
44. The budget is managed effectively and efficiently with grants for specific purposes used appropriately. The school has in place good arrangements for the day-to-day administration of the school budget through the use of a bursar appointed by the local education authority. The school has implemented the recommendations of its audit in 2003. Given the balance between strengths and weaknesses and the higher than average level of funding per pupil, the school is judged to provide satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|--|--------|
| Total income | 728 090 | Balance from previous year | 15 019 |
| Total expenditure | 696 621 | Balance carried forward to the next year | 31 469 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3 029 | | |

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

French and Spanish

45. This school year, no teaching of French or Spanish has taken place prior to the inspection. The first French lesson, for Years 5 and 6, with a specialist secondary teacher from a nearby school was provided on the second day of the inspection. This half hour session was observed. However, as the course is purely to develop conversational language, there was no work from last year for scrutiny. Spanish lessons start later in the year. It is therefore not possible to report on these subjects in full. Instead, a brief overview is given here, based on the one lesson observed, lesson planning and discussion with staff.

46. Last school year, pupils greatly benefited from the European week in the summer term, which helped to develop their awareness of modern foreign languages. Year 3 and 4 pupils experienced one term of Spanish during that term, taken by a teacher in school with a specialism in Spanish. They responded well and developed a competent understanding of common vocabulary including names, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, songs and games. The quality of planning is good and the opportunities to learn French and Spanish are helping to enrich the curriculum well. Good, clear leadership for modern languages is provided by the headteacher and the teacher with responsibility for this area. The school is well placed to develop French in the curriculum successfully.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**. Children are taught well and as a result achieve well with their learning. They work from an interesting, topic-led curriculum.

47. The inspection took place when nursery and reception children had only attended for a week. The focus was on how well children are helped to start school.
48. Admission arrangements are effective and help children settle well. There are very good relationships between parents and staff. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator runs a very successful parent course, which helps parents gain confidence in helping their children with their learning. The Foundation Stage also benefits from parents who give good support as class helpers. There are good transition arrangements between nursery and reception and between reception and Year 1 to help children join their new classes smoothly. The activities that are planned, cater well for the different needs of the children both in nursery and the reception class. The assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Children with special needs are identified early and they are well catered for. Staff make ongoing assessments of children's learning, which are shared with parents. Teaching is good overall. Teaching in the nursery is good and often very good. Teaching in reception is good overall and never less than satisfactory. A real strength is the teamwork between the teachers and support staff in each class, which is very good. Accommodation and resources are good and used well. Staff provide an interesting range of activities indoors and have made a start at extending learning in the outside areas. However, currently there is no large fixed equipment to further children's physical development. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good and the management satisfactory. The co-ordinator has drawn up an effective plan. This identifies the actions needed to improve outside provision and to move the nursery and reception classes towards operating as a fully integrated Foundation Stage.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning is very well focused on promoting children's confidence and independence.
- Induction arrangements are good, helping children to settle.
- The support staff are a real asset, both in nursery and reception.

Commentary

49. Teaching is very good and as a result children make very good progress with their social and behavioural skills. However by the end of their time in reception it is likely that most children will have below average levels of skill and knowledge, with many well below average because they started nursery with very limited skills.
50. Admission arrangements in nursery and reception are effective and they help children to settle well. Supportive relationships are being established so children feel confident and happy. Children enter nursery with a range of ability and experience. Organised visits for children with their parents help new children feel safe although many lack confidence and are unsure how to play together when they start. Nursery staff establish new routines in a happy and fun way and they make very good use of older nursery children to show younger children how to behave. Simple daily rhymes, such as *eyes on me*, help children to learn to listen and concentrate. The

reception staff builds on these routines. All staff are very caring and they use every opportunity to praise children. They provide many opportunities for children to learn to co-operate through playing games. Children who have particular special needs receive good support and every effort is made to ensure they are fully included in all activities. In reception, the children are beginning to take responsibility for equipment they use and are developing their concentration skills. However, many find it difficult to work independently without adult help and a few have very immature behaviour that slows down their learning. Most children's attitudes to school are good. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most children try hard to behave well although a few need a significant amount of support and encouragement to behave well and co-operate successfully with each other. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. Children respond well to the reward system. When children do not do as expected they are dealt with firmly and fairly. Nursery and reception children clearly enjoy coming to school. They are eager to start the day and learn!

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are tightly focused on developing children's skills through an interesting curriculum.
- A number of children need a more structured language programme to help combat language delays.

Commentary

51. Teaching is good and, as a result, most children make good progress and achieve well. They build skills and knowledge effectively, though many will not reach the communication, language and literacy goals by the end of reception.
52. Children start nursery with a wide range of ability in communication skills. Many have difficulty expressing their ideas and have very immature speech. A very small proportion enter with good communication skills. In the nursery, staff encourage children to listen and provide many informal opportunities to talk. Children particularly enjoy repeating rhymes that show them how to sit and listen! Reception children are encouraged to listen and the activities are organised so that children have good opportunities to talk about what they are learning. The imaginative play areas are used well to encourage talk that is meaningful and relevant. Occasionally opportunities are missed in reception to extend children's language skills as they play informally. All staff encourage less confident children to talk in sentences and more fluent communicators to extend their vocabulary. Children know that the adults are genuinely interested in what they are saying. A significant minority of nursery and reception children need a more structured language programme to help them learn to express their ideas more confidently.
53. Teachers establish good reading habits. Nursery children are taught that books are special and learn how to take care of them. They have a *cosy reading corner* which makes sharing books very inviting. Stories are told in an interesting and appealing way by nursery staff. For example, in a very well taught lesson children who find it very difficult to listen were spellbound as they shared the story *Where's Spot?* Currently, reception children recognise a few words and sounds. Good use is made of letter and word games to help children learn each letter and sound of the alphabet. Staff encourage an enjoyment of books through reading a range of good quality big books such as *Hairy Bear* and by helping children make their own books. Although there is a small reading area, few children chose to look at books during free-choice time.
54. Daily opportunities are provided for children to use pencils pens and paper and to share their ideas. Children are encouraged to record ideas from nursery onwards. While most reception children are learning to form their letters and write their name correctly, many have difficulty

recording their ideas on paper and have poor letter formation. They have yet to develop a more fluent, confident style.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are effective in developing children's skills through a practical curriculum.
- There is a good balance between structured activities and learning through play.

Commentary

55. Teaching is good and as a result most children make good progress and achieve well. There is a sustained focus on developing children's mathematical skills from nursery onwards. Many children have difficulty explaining their mathematical ideas because of their limited communication skills. By the end of their time in reception most children will not achieve the goals for mathematical development, though they are building their skills and knowledge effectively.

56. Children enter nursery with a range of mathematical ability and experience. Nursery staff take every opportunity to reinforce and extend children's mathematical skills. For example, children daily sit on brightly coloured mats of different shapes and take part in many counting activities. Number awareness is promoted through counting games and familiar number rhymes such as five little ducks with the help of attractive puppets and soft toys, which the children really enjoy. Children have daily opportunities to use sand and water. Reception staff build on children's learning well. Many children are starting to record their work and write numbers, though their confidence in doing this varies considerably. There are daily mathematical activities. Occasionally they are not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining children. For example, a lesson was satisfactory rather than good. This was because a few higher attaining children could have had more challenging activities to choose from after their focused time with the teacher. For those few children the pace was too slow. Although nursery and reception staff provide many opportunities to use mathematical language, many children have difficulty explaining what they are doing. There is a good balance between structured learning, informal exploration and recording of work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

As no lessons were observed in this area of learning, no judgements about teaching and learning, standards, and achievement are given here.

Commentary

57. Lesson planning shows that there are a wide range of planned activities in nursery and reception for children to develop their senses and understanding. Good use is made of social times in nursery for the children to learn about healthy foods. Curriculum plans show that staff provide an interesting range of experiences and visits. However, at present there are no investigation tables, with objects such as magnifying glasses, for children to handle and explore informally. Topics, such as *I am special*, *people who help us* and *colour and shape*, help children to build up their picture of the world. The wide range of visitors to school and visits all add real interest and excitement. For example visits to the Blue Planet Aquarium, the Zoo and a farm. Staff extend children's knowledge of different cultures through books and toys. Computer skills are well taught. Staff build up children's pleasure and confidence by providing daily opportunities. As a result, boys and girls have positive attitudes and enjoy choosing computer activities.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Limited judgements only about teaching and learning, standards, and achievement are given for this area of learning as only one lesson for physical development was observed.

Commentary

58. Planning shows that children have regular sessions in the hall to help them develop their physical skills and to learn to respond to music. Many nursery children have difficulty in listening to the teacher before they can join in successfully with physical activities. This was evident in a well-taught lesson where both nursery staff worked really hard to help the children use the hall safely as so many found the new experience very exciting! The nursery also has a large indoor climbing frame where the younger children really enjoy exploring their physical skills. They do this under effective supervision. The nursery and reception classes have two good sized outside areas and children have access to three-wheeled vehicles and a range of small games equipment. However both areas are not fully developed as neither have large fixed climbing frames to help children develop their physical skills and confidence. Staff in reception try and overcome this by giving children regular sessions on separate climbing equipment in the school. This is not ideal as it is located away from the reception area. Nursery and reception children are developing their manipulative skills. They are provided with regular opportunities to handle dough, scissors and small construction equipment.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

No lessons for creative development were observed during the inspection and so, no judgements about teaching and learning, standards, and achievement are made in this area of learning.

Commentary

59. In both nursery and reception classes there are daily opportunities for children to develop their creativity and skills. There is access to a good range of materials, with many planned opportunities to paint, draw and make models. Attractive displays around the school show that nursery and reception children have a good range of creative and stimulating experiences. Children have many opportunities to learn nursery rhymes, sing songs, listen to music tapes and act out simple stories. There is a good range of imaginative play experiences available, matched to each topic. Children show real pleasure and confidence when they use the home area. For example a number of reception children used their imagination well as they spontaneously turned the shop and home area into a busy fish and chip shop. There are insufficient planned language interventions by adults to further encourage the less confident children in reception to show more imagination in their play.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average by the end of Year 2 and below average by the end of Year 6.
- Learning is accelerated as a result of good teaching in Year 6.
- Presentation skills and spelling are weak.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always show pupils how they can improve their work.
- Writing at length and across the curriculum is not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

60. Standards in Year 2 are well below average and in Year 6 they are below average. Standards have improved in Year 6 this year as a result of good teaching. When compared to similar schools there has been a steady year-on-year improvement and results have been above average. From the scrutiny of pupils' past work it is clear that achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. In Year 3 to 6 the pattern of achievement is uneven being satisfactory in Years 4 and 5 but achievement in Year 6 is good, reflecting the good pace and good quality of teaching.
61. Factors affecting standards include a high level of movement in and out of the school as well as well below average levels of attendance. The school is aware of the need to raise standards in all aspects of English and has put in place strategies to support pupils, including the recent re-introduction of a reading recovery programme. Training is still being provided and it is too early to have had any impact on standards. Pupils listening skills are usually good but speaking skills have yet to improve. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
62. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are effectively supported by classroom assistants and through planning and grouping. The small minority of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English achieve as well as other pupils in their class.
63. In Years 1 and 2 teachers build soundly on pupils' positive attitudes to books developed in the Foundation Stage. The teaching of phonics is satisfactory. The range of reading is narrow and pupils are slow to offer personal opinions about reading habits and preferences. The school endeavours to promote the home/school reading partnership but only half of the parents respond. Higher attainers read fluently, mostly accurately and with reasonable expression. Lower attainers are hesitant, lacking the strategies to help them read unknown words and make sense of what they read. Reading diaries are completed but lack evaluative and diagnostic comments to help pupils improve. The reading recovery programme recently re-introduced is targeting pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 but it is too early for it to have had any impact. In Year 6 higher attainers can discuss texts with confidence and compare books they have read, giving articulate reasons for their preferences. Library provision in school is satisfactory. A good feature is the addition of an adult section for parents in an effort to promote parental involvement. A new public library is being built next to the school, which promises to be a useful addition to resources for developing reading skills.
64. In writing, standards are well below average in Year 2, but below average in Year 6. The school recognises the need to improve standards in writing, particularly the use of writing across the curriculum. Although there are examples where pupils use other subject knowledge such as history, as a basis for formal English work during the literacy hour this is not consistent throughout the school. Standards in handwriting and presentation are well below average throughout the school. A minority of pupils present work neatly in a fluent cursive style. However, too little emphasis is placed on presentation skills when marking pupils' work. In

classes where the best teaching was seen, teachers mark pupils' work consistently and insist on high standards of presentation. In these classes the standard of work reflected the expectation of the teachers. The teaching of handwriting is a weakness, reflected in most subjects across the curriculum. Pupils do not often write at length because they are not expected to do so. They do not have a wide range of strategies to help them spell unknown words. Many are not secure with basic punctuation. Grammatical errors, such as incorrect tenses, often reflect the limited speaking skills of pupils, as does the narrow range of descriptive vocabulary used by many pupils. Few pupils create complex sentences, use powerful verbs or organise their writing into paragraphs.

65. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Lessons are planned with clear objectives. In Year 6 teaching and learning are good overall but vary within Years 3 to 6 from satisfactory to good. Good lessons were characterised by teachers' secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, their good management of pupils and their high expectations of what pupils can produce. Throughout the school, teachers work effectively with learning support staff so that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Where class teachers and support staff give good support to the small minority of pupils with English and an additional language, these pupils also make good progress. The use of marking is inconsistent and is not linked closely enough with target setting and helping pupils to know what they need to do to improve. Where it is strongest, pupils' progress is better. ICT is used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning.
66. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Strengths and weaknesses in English have been clearly defined and plans for improvement initiated. Its success will require determination and full commitment of all members of staff, thorough monitoring and evaluation of the impact of changes by the subject leader and rigorous use of assessment information to adjust planning to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. The school has recently identified the need to develop English more widely across the curriculum. This is beginning to happen but, as yet is at an early stage of development and needs to be monitored and evaluated carefully if it is to have a significant impact in raising standards. In some classes, standards of writing in other subjects such as history, geography and religious education are accepted and these are too low for pupils' ages and capabilities. More opportunities are needed for pupils to use spoken language as well as reading and writing skills in a range of other subjects. An out of school writing club extends writing opportunities effectively for some pupils. The school makes good use of theatre groups and visiting authors to enrich the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6 and show a rising trend.
- Achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Mathematics is a well-led and managed subject.

Commentary

68. In 2003, results in the mathematics national tests in Year 6 were higher than they were in English, being average, rather than below average. It is likely that the results in 2004 will be lower because the proportion of pupils, especially boys, with special educational needs was significantly higher last year. The current Year 6 pupils are attaining below average standards, which is a reflection of the different proportion of pupils with special needs this year. There are a few gifted and talented mathematicians in the school and in the mixed age Year 5/6 upper set they are challenged well and are making good progress. Elsewhere in school the degree of challenge for gifted and talented pupils is less consistent.
69. Year 2 pupils are also attaining below average standards this year. Overall, achievement is good in mathematics, so pupils build knowledge, skills and understanding well from the well below average starting point in the Foundation Stage. There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of boys and girls in mathematics lessons and pupils with special educational needs are supported well. The setting system for mathematics for older pupils is working well in the matching of work to needs. However, there is not always enough support available for the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Whilst these pupils generally do as well as the others, there are times when their very early stage of English development is a barrier to learning. As in English, the repeated absence of a significant group of pupils is restricting their achievement in mathematics.
70. Mathematics is a well-taught subject. Teachers have developed a good curriculum with a close focus on basic numeracy and the teaching of this is good. There could be more emphasis on problem solving and investigation, especially in the earlier part of the school and the speed of mental calculations could be increased. Planning could be refined to include greater precision in the identification of what the different groups are to learn. However, teachers have good subject knowledge, they use interesting methods and the support staff make a successful contribution to pupils' progress. Pupils are mostly interested and well-motivated in lessons and they work hard. There are occasions when one or two pupils are not as well motivated as the others and whilst this is generally dealt with effectively, their support is not always consistent. For example, six pupils with special educational needs in a lower set Year 5 group have no additional support for four of the five days each week and this is impacting on their achievement.
71. The subject is well led and managed. The subject leader has had opportunity to monitor and evaluate provision and achievement in mathematics and has had good influence on the improvement of the subject. Assessment is satisfactory, though the target setting and tracking process is not yet rigorous or consistent enough. This is identified clearly as a priority of the school improvement plan and work is already ongoing to make the process more focused and intensive.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. There are some good links between mathematics and other subjects, such as the Year 5 science work last year that used skills of setting out information in tabular format as one of many ways of recording the results of science investigations. The links with ICT are especially strong and most lessons feature the intensive use of computers by small groups of pupils. This contributes well to their achievement.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and average at the end of Year 6.
- Achievement is good.
- The development of skills could be emphasised more.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Science is well led.
- Assessment, target setting and tracking and monitoring and evaluation are ripe for improvement.

Commentary

73. Standards in science this year are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. This situation illustrates clearly that pupils achieve well in science, for they start school with low levels of knowledge. They build steadily from this low platform as they progress through the school.
74. Teaching quality is good overall, although unsatisfactory teaching was observed in a Year 1/2 lesson, which was the result of weak classroom organisation and management of pupils. However, teachers generally prepare their lessons well, the teaching assistants give good support to their pupils and the methods used are motivating for the pupils. Expectations are generally good. The curriculum for science has merit in that it covers all four aspects and this enables pupils to build their knowledge well. The promotion of skills in science could be emphasised more than it is. Mathematical skills are generally built well, though links to ICT are not consistent, being stronger in some years than others. English skills could be the subject of more focus, especially writing, as there are not many opportunities for pupils to write at length in science. The use of too many worksheets in some parts of the school caps the development of such writing skills. The skills of problem solving, investigation and testing in science are also inconsistent in their development. Last year's work showed clearly that a practical approach was more common in some years, such as Year 6, than others.
75. In general, pupils learn well. They are interested in science and talk confidently about it. Most are able to work independently and collaboratively and they work hard. There has been some useful monitoring of science learning and achievement by the subject leader. She leads the subject effectively and has set the right priorities for the subject. Assessment, target setting and tracking and the development of the monitoring and evaluation system have rightly been identified for improvement in their rigour, regularity and consistency.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT standards are average by the age of eleven.
- Pupils achieve well and build skills and knowledge effectively.
- Teaching and learning are of good quality.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- There are good cross-curricular links.
- Resources and the accommodation have been improved substantially.

Commentary

76. ICT is a much-improved subject. The quality of resources and the accommodation has been raised considerably and their use has quite evidently increased over the last two years or so. The use of ICT in other subjects has been reviewed and many improvements made. The results of these improvements are a secure and good quality curriculum, enhanced subject knowledge of staff, and the fact that all aspects of ICT are taught confidently and regularly.
77. Whilst children start school with low levels of ICT skills and knowledge, achievement is good and pupils attain below average standards by the age of seven and average standards by the age of eleven. In some aspects of ICT, resources are still limited and this caps achievement. For example, last year's work by Year 6 to develop presentations on a number of topics used the available features of the software well and resulted in an average standard of presentation. This year, the staff anticipate that some pupils, at least, will be able to reach above average standards because new and more professional software is being obtained which is more fully featured. Pupils with gifts and talents in ICT should, therefore, be able to demonstrate their skills much more effectively.
78. Teaching and learning are good. The ICT suite is used intensively and there is a good focus on building knowledge and skills, as seen in a Year 3 lesson where the pupils were learning to send and respond to emails. Planning is thorough; pupils of different attainment levels are equally well supported and motivated because the staff use the technology, including the newly acquired interactive white board, effectively. The pupils enjoy the challenge of this teaching and learning board and are keen to demonstrate their skills to others.
79. ICT has been well led and managed for the last few years. There has recently been a change in subject leadership but the quality of these things remains good. The subject leader successfully maintains the enthusiastic, hard working approach to subject improvement that has become the tradition for the subject. She has a thorough knowledge of the quality of provision and achievement and is influential in developing good practice. Assessment has been improved, though it is not always implemented consistently in every class. There is little target setting and sharing in the subject and monitoring and evaluation is at an early stage of development. However, ICT is, overall, a subject strength of the school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. The curriculum for ICT is good and covers all strands thoroughly. The development of ICT skills in other subjects is generally good, with particular strengths in mathematics. In English and science, there is less consistency, though there is some good practice in a few classes. There is much attractive ICT work on display that is strongly linked to other subjects and topics, including geography, history and art and design. The link with design and technology is especially marked in the older years and some impressive model fairground rides have been made by pupils following their computer-based investigations into design and manufacture.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average at the end of Year 6.
- Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social education.
- There are good links with a local church.
- Many pupils struggle to use the correct subject vocabulary.
- Higher attaining pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write in depth about their learning.
- Pupils do not have opportunities to visit non-Christian places of worship.
- Monitoring and evaluation of standards and the quality of education are not rigorous enough.

Commentary

81. No judgment is made about standards and achievement overall in the infants as no work is recorded in books. In the one lesson observed standards for the Year 2 pupils were well below average. Teaching was satisfactory with attractive resources to help pupils learn about aspects of Hinduism. Good use was made of pupils' drawing skills whilst making Rangoli patterns. The school plans for the agreed syllabus appropriately. Infants are given regular opportunities to talk about and act out simple religious stories. Scrutiny and planning shows that they learn about a number of Bible stories and cover festivals such as Diwali, Harvest and Easter.
82. By Year 6 standards of attainment are well below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents satisfactory achievement, as pupils start from a low level of knowledge and experience. No overall judgment is made about the teaching of junior pupils as only two lessons were observed; both were satisfactory. In both lessons there was more emphasis on pupils' factual knowledge than on the spiritual aspect. The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' understanding of major faiths. During discussion with inspectors the pupils showed positive interest in aspects of Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity though many struggled to use the correct vocabulary and at times confused terms from different faiths. Pupils' books show that the agreed syllabus is covered adequately but in some classes it lacks depth. Not enough account is taken of pupils' different writing skills. Consequently, pupils with weaker writing skills struggle to record their work, while some higher attaining children would make even better progress if they had more challenging work.
83. Planning shows that there are regular planned opportunities for pupils to consider moral and social issues. There are good links with a local church, with regular visits from a local vicar. However, there are no opportunities to visit places of non-Christian worship. This is a missed opportunity to relate pupils' knowledge of different religions to the current experiences of people in Britain and the local area.
84. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator monitors the planning and gives support to staff through staff meetings. She does not however have regular opportunities to monitor teaching and learning on a systematic basis. The key issue from the previous inspection has been satisfactorily addressed as the locally agreed syllabus is now in place across the school.

Geography and history

85. Few lessons were seen in geography and history and there was not a great deal of past work to evaluate. For these reasons, these subjects are not reported in full here. However, pupils' work and discussion with pupils indicates that pupils make good progress over time in the two subjects, achieving well.
86. The curriculum planned covers the requirements of the national curriculum with appropriate planning for the mixed age infant classes. Good links are made between both subjects, helping make the learning interesting and relevant. Each subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural appreciation of the wider world. Particular strengths are the use of interesting resources in all lessons and good use of computers to stimulate pupils' interest. Throughout the school many pupils have weaker writing skills, which limit their ability to record their learning. While both subjects provide opportunities to use writing skills, there are specific opportunities planned in history. Appropriate use is made of pupils' numeracy skills. From discussion, Year 6 pupils are enthusiastic about both subjects. A minority of higher attaining pupils would benefit from more challenging written work.

Geography

87. The two lessons observed were well taught. Both teachers used interesting resources and had high expectations of the pupils. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 develop their geographical understanding and basic map skills through studying the features of the local area and local trips. They learn about the wider world through the travels of Barney Bear. In a well-taught lesson infants compared transport arrangements in their local area with the island of Struay. Junior pupils explore environmental issues and learn about contrasting localities through an in-depth visit of the Peak district. They build up their understanding of the impact of industry, tourism and weather through in-depth projects on Egypt, India and Europe. In a well taught lesson on the features of Alpine France, Year 5 pupils were really motivated by the teacher's highly effective use of a video and a power-point presentation to help them recall previous facts. Good links were also made the following day when the pupils began their French language sessions. In lessons and from discussion with pupils, many find difficulty expressing their ideas using correct geographical terms. A residential experience for older junior pupils provides opportunities to further develop map and orienteering skills.

History

88. No lessons were observed in the infants. Planning and scrutiny shows that infants learn about famous people such as Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes. They learn about events from history such as the fire of London. They develop an understanding of how things change over time when they learn about seaside holidays in the past. Junior pupils build up their historical skills and knowledge through in-depth topics covering different periods. Pupils clearly enjoy history and talk enthusiastically about their work when asked. They learn about their local area though an in-depth topic. Only two lessons were observed. Teaching was good in Year 6 because the teacher had high expectations and encouraged pupils to research independently. She catered well for the different needs of groups of pupils. It was satisfactory in Year 4 because despite using interesting resources, the pace was slow for some higher attaining pupils. This slowed down their progress. There are some good examples of using pupils' writing skills to record learning; however this is not systematic throughout the school. Enrichment events such as museum visits and theatre groups to school all bring the subject to life.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education

89. There were not many lessons in these four subjects available for observation during the inspection and the amount of work available from last year was limited. Thus, these subjects are treated briefly in this report.

Art and design

90. In art and design, observation of pupils' work on display indicates that the curriculum is well planned, based on national guidelines. Displays are of a good standard. Some work in art and design was better than that normally seen. Watercolours in different tones depicting scenes around the school by Year 6, for example, as well as Batik work, charcoal portraits and chairs designed for the Snow Queen. Work displayed reflects attention to different cultures, for example, Indian patterns in Year 3 linked to a geography topic, Aboriginal art and Batik patterns. Pupils are introduced to a variety of skills, materials and techniques, although three-dimensional work and the use of clay is limited. Pupils' knowledge of artists and their work is also limited. There is good use of the subject to support learning in other subjects such as history, geography and mathematics.

91. In the lesson seen in Year 3 teaching by the subject leader was of a very good standard and impacted well on standards and achievement. Clear instructions were given to pupils and the

teacher had very good subject knowledge and high expectations of behaviour and standards. Pupils were fascinated by the examples of Indian pattern in the scarves, saris and other resources provided by the teacher. In this lesson sketchbooks were used effectively to explore pattern. However, the use of sketchbooks in school is inconsistent and teachers would benefit from more guidance on their use. An after school art club enhances the curriculum in this subject. The subject is well led and managed.

Design and technology

92. Teachers' planning is based on national guidelines and all aspects of the subject are covered appropriately. Some work in design and technology was of a standard better than that normally seen. Work by Year 6 pupils based on designing fairground carousels for example, was good as were a range of slippers. Pupils plan, design and evaluate their work, although the weakest element is in the evaluation process. Limited literacy skills restrict pupils' ability to record their evaluations in detail. Leadership and management are good.

Physical education

93. In the one physical education lesson observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory although standards were below average. Clear instructions were given to pupils and emphasis was placed on safety. A number of pupils had difficulty controlling a balance on one leg, in the lesson warm up. Too much time was spent, sitting listening to the teacher talking instead of engaging in rigorous activity. There were missed opportunities to highlight the effect of exercise on the body. Extra-curricular clubs have a good impact upon standards in football and hockey. The school competes against local schools in a variety of competitions and sporting activities. The school is well supported by the local secondary school and benefits from coaching, for example Liverpool and Tranmere Rovers Football Clubs. Most pupils leaving school attain the national 25-metre standard in swimming.

Music

94. The whole school was heard singing enthusiastically in assembly and the overall standard of singing is satisfactory. Pupils sing songs such as *Kum Ba Yah* and *Who Built the Ark* with awareness of breathing, diction and dynamics. Pupils achieve well in their singing due to the very good, clear educational direction provided for the subject by the headteacher.
95. The quality of the curriculum is good and the subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Adults support pupils well in their learning. There is a good use of assessment in lessons to inform planning, though the school has identified the need to develop assessment further.
96. In the one lesson seen in Years 1 and 2, pupils were developing a good understanding of rhythm and pitch. There was a very good pace to the teaching and high expectations of behaviour. All pupils achieved well, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. They practised and refined their performance of *'I am a Music Man'* and responded very well to the skilful development of rhythm work and percussion work through the musical game *'Follow the Leader'*.
97. Concerts and performance also contribute to pupils' overall musical experience. Pupils have the opportunity to learn the clarinet and brass instruments in school. They enjoy attending the music club and performing for others.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

98. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are reported briefly here as they were only sampled during the inspection as there were few formal lessons in these areas. The school develops pupils' personal and social skills effectively on the evidence that is available. When children start school they have low levels of such skills and many have significant personal, emotional and behavioural needs. Provision in nursery and reception is good and the children grow in confidence and personal maturity, though there is still much to be accomplished as they join Year 1.
99. In the main school, there are still considerable personal and emotional needs. The school works well with external agencies to support pupils in the development of skills and also in the fostering of healthy lifestyles. There is a thorough anti-drugs and anti-smoking programme for example, that is run in conjunction with organisations such as the local health service, social services and the community policeman. The nurture group is a specific attempt by the school to improve personal and social skills. Provision here is focused on raising the self-esteem and improving the behaviour and personal and social skills of a small group of pupils from the early and middle years of main school. The group has a particular need of intensive support. This provision is of good quality and is successfully achieving its goal.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 3 |
| How inclusive the school is | 3 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 4 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 4 |
| Overall standards achieved | 5 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 3 |
| Attendance | 6 |
| Attitudes | 3 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 4 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 3 |
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| How well pupils learn | 3 |
| The quality of assessment | 5 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 3 |
| Accommodation and resources | 3 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 3 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 3 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 4 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 4 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 3 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 4 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 2 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 3 |
| The effectiveness of management | 4 |

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