

INSPECTION REPORT

RIVERSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wallasey, Birkenhead

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 104996

Headteacher: Mr Gerard Lahive

Lead inspector: Mr David Carrington

Dates of inspection: 10th - 12th January 2005

Inspection number: 267568

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior and infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	255
School address:	Brighton Street Wallasey Wirral Merseyside
Postcode:	CH44 6QW
Telephone number:	(0151) 639 9787
Fax number:	(0151) 639 8517
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Allen
Date of previous inspection:	25 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Riverside Primary School is located in the centre of Wallasey, on the banks of the Mersey opposite the skyline of central Liverpool. Most of the 140 boys and 115 girls come from the area immediately around the school. The school is large for a primary school. The nursery currently has 17 boys and 9 girls.

The entitlement to free school meals is well above average and unemployment is above the local and national level. The school is part of the *Children's Fund* and *Sure Start* initiatives and is part of the local *Education Action Zone*. The school works hard to break down barriers to achievement and it is very successful in this.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average and in some classes is around 50 per cent. Most of the pupils with special educational needs are supported for moderate learning difficulties or for social, emotional and behavioural reasons. There are eight pupils with statements. A small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, though no pupils speak English as an additional language. There is out-of-school-care provision for 32 pupils and three per cent are in public care. Around a fifth of the pupils do not complete their full primary education at the school. When children start in the nursery they have very low levels of skill and knowledge, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development.

The school was awarded the *Basic Skills Quality Mark* in 2001, the *Schools Achievement Award* in 2002 and the *Activemark* in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1541 4	Mr David Carrington	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education
9188	Mrs Jane McHugh	Lay inspector	
3014 4	Mr Edgar Hastings	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs
8710	Mrs Julie Moore	Team inspector	Science Music Religious education
2242 1	Mrs Val McGrath	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
1 - 4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Riverside Primary School provides a good quality and **effective** education for its pupils. The pupils achieve well from their very low starting base and, whilst standards are below average overall at the end of Year 6, pupils make consistently good progress through the school. The school is led very well by the headteacher who has built a strong team of staff who are firmly committed to the care and welfare of every pupil. The school is very successful in overcoming the barriers to achievement that arise from the substantial personal, social and economic disadvantage experienced by many pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are strengths. The school gives **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are below average in English, particularly speaking and listening. They are average in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education by the end of Year 6. Achievement is good overall.
- Teaching and learning are of good quality, enabling pupils to build knowledge, skills and understanding at good rates.
- Assessment is well focused and enables staff to respond very effectively to pupils' many needs. The quality of care, welfare and guidance is good.
- Leadership and management is good overall, and the school is given strong and purposeful leadership by the headteacher.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The division of the school into many small teaching areas makes it difficult to promote speaking and listening effectively enough, and the need to pass through teaching areas when moving around school is disruptive to learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those in the *Willows* nurture group, is effective in helping them to settle well to learning and to achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy being in school; they behave well and develop into pleasant and polite children. Relationships are very good.
- Attendance levels are below average and many pupils are late for school in the morning. The achievement of the pupils involved is slowed because they regularly miss important work.
- The curriculum is good and the programme of out-of-school activities makes a strong contribution to pupils' education.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is more restricted than it is in most primary schools.
- The school does not present its strengths effectively enough and it has yet to develop a full partnership with parents.

The school has made **good** improvement since 1999. The programme of checking and evaluating standards and teaching has been improved well, subject leaders provide effective management, and behaviour of pupils is good. Governors have more involvement in checking the school's performance and attendance has improved a little, though it is still below average. Pupils' achievement has improved and standards have risen.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

In 2004 pupils in Year 6 attained above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics and science in their national tests. The following table shows the

results over recent years in Year 6 and indicates the better than average improvement in standards in recent years, especially in English and mathematics.

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

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

Children start school with very low levels of knowledge and skill, especially in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. Because they have so much ground to make up, standards remain well below average at the end of Year 2 and below average overall in Year 6. Currently, standards at the end of Year 6 are below average in English and average in mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. Standards in speaking and listening are weak throughout the school. However, pupils, including the higher attainers, achieve well, and they make good gains in their learning.

Attendance levels are below average and many pupils do not arrive punctually for school. This holds back the learning of the pupils involved, as they miss important parts of their work. Pupils behave well, they show very good attitudes to their work, and relationships are a particular strength. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **good** overall. The school is successful in its work to make its pupils friendly, polite and considerate children.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Key strengths are the encouragement given to pupils, the insistence on high standards of behaviour and the fairness shown to all pupils, which ensures all have the same chances of success. Many pupils lack confidence and find difficulties in working independently and in showing initiative as they learn. Whilst staff work effectively to build such skills, the programme of induction for children starting nursery is not effective enough. The teaching assistants are generally successful in their work to support their pupils and some of their work is of very good quality. There is a good system of assessment and the target setting, sharing and tracking system is developing well. The accommodation has many unsatisfactory features and these have a significant effect on pupils' achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is **good**. The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school and has a very realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has built a team of hard working and well focused staff, including the assistant headteacher, who is a good leader. Governors are supportive and involved in the work of the school and are growing in confidence to check and evaluate that it is as successful as possible.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views of the school and have very few concerns. The pupils also hold positive views and they say they enjoy being in school. The inspection team judge that the school is not as effective as it could be in sharing its strengths with others or in developing a mutually beneficial partnership with parents. However, the team agrees with the views held by parents and pupils and judges that the school effectively responds to concerns and suggestions.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To work progressively to improve the accommodation, particularly to enable a more focused development of pupils' speaking and listening skills and to avoid unnecessary disruption to learning.
- To broaden the cross-curricular links for ICT.
- To be more pro-active in communication, public relations and the development of a full partnership with parents, especially to provide effective induction into school and to improve attendance and punctuality.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are **below average** overall but achievement is **good**. Speaking and listening skills are weak and achievement in these aspects of English is held back by the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average in English, particularly speaking and listening. They are average in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education by the end of Year 6.
- The starting level of pupils is very low and they have much ground to make up when they start school. However, they achieve well and standards improve as they move through the school.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The many sub-divisions of the school make it difficult to promote speaking and listening effectively enough, and the need to pass through teaching areas when moving around school is disruptive and holds back pupils' achievement.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those in the *Willows* nurture group, is effective in helping them to achieve as successfully as the other pupils.
- The achievement of some pupils is slowed because they regularly miss important work due to their frequent absence or lateness.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is not wide-ranging enough, which affects the development of skills and knowledge.

Commentary

1. Children start in the nursery with very low levels of knowledge and skill, especially in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. The starting time of children is spread throughout the year, depending on the children's third birthday. This situation makes it difficult for the school to provide a concerted induction programme and many children start the nursery with little preparation. Accordingly, the children find it hard to settle and to make a spirited start to their learning. Provision in the nursery and reception classes is generally effective, though learning in reception is planned and guided with more skill and is, therefore, of better quality. Overall, children make good gains in their learning during the first two years of their education, with accelerated achievement in reception.
2. Pupils in the infant classes have much ground to make up, and by the end of Year 2, standards are well below average, though this marks a good improvement since the pupils started school. In reading, writing and mathematics standards are currently well below average, which was also the result in the 2004 national tests. Because the background of pupils in Year 2 in 2003-4 was substantially different from that of the pupils in the same year in 2002-3, results in the national tests were lower last year compared to one year earlier. Significantly, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs varies from year group to year group and this has a major impact on standards. For example, there are 37 pupils in the current Year 2 age group and nearly half of these have significant learning difficulties. It is, therefore, likely that standards in this class will remain at well below average levels during the current year.

Some pupils, in this and other years, also have severe personal, social and emotional needs which makes them very vulnerable children and they find learning very challenging. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs and they achieve well. Indeed, those given additional support in the *Willows* nurture group for their personal, social and emotional needs are very well provided for and their achievement is very good.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.8 (14.4)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.4 (13.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	14.8 (15.4)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 41 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards are below average in English and average in mathematics, science, ICT and religious education in Year 6 at present. Last year, Year 6 pupils attained above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics and science in their national tests. The difference in standards over these two years is also due to the substantially different educational background of the two classes.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.0 (23.6)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.0 (26.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.5 (28.7)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Within English, standards of speaking and listening are weak throughout the school. Whilst Year 6 pupils develop the mechanics of reading successfully enough to attain average standards, their further achievement is hampered by their lack of fluency in speaking and their restricted vocabulary. Many younger and older pupils accurately read words that they do not understand, for example *burrow*. The school provides some appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop improved speaking skills but the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation has a negative effect because it is difficult to provide the necessary quiet learning conditions for pupils to gain confidence and skill as they speak and to hear what is said. The regular distraction provided by adults and pupils passing through the learning bays, and the difficulty of providing enough space to teach large numbers of pupils together or for drama activities, adds to the problems staff are faced with in seeking to improve standards of speaking and listening.
- Attendance levels have been well below average for a number of years. Currently, they are at an improved, though still below average level. Some pupils regularly miss lessons and this means they do not have all the necessary learning experiences to make good strides with their learning. For some pupils this deficit is compounded because their punctuality is poor, again resulting in missed opportunities for learning.
- Despite these barriers to learning, achievement is good because the quality of education is generally consistently effective. In ICT for example, pupils have ample opportunities to develop skills and knowledge as they work in the computer suite.

Standards are broadly average in the subject, though they could be higher still if the cross-curricular use of ICT is extended. Achievement in sporting activities is generally good and standards in swimming are above average.

7. Pupils get a good deal in school. Regardless of their attainment level, whether lower, middle or higher, regardless of ethnic background, and regardless of gender, the achievement of pupils is good. Once in school, pupils want to learn, they work productively and purposefully to build skills, knowledge and understanding and the standards they reach when they leave school show a positive upward swing since their starting point. This applies as much to those pupils who only spend a short part of their primary education in the school as it does to those who join at the start and go on to the last days of Year 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Behaviour is **good** and pupils' attitudes to learning are **very good**. Attendance and punctuality to school is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well behaved, polite and are very keen to learn.
- Moral and social development is good; spiritual and cultural awareness is satisfactory.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and the majority arrive in good time although a significant minority are regularly late.

Commentary

8. In response to consistently high expectations pupils work hard and behave well in lessons and around the school; their personal development is good. They respond extremely positively to everything the school offers, and enjoy the wide range of extra curricular activities including sports activities and the out-of-school club. Pupils are eager to learn.
9. The school provides an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to assume posts of responsibility. Notable are the play leaders who proudly wear their red bibs at break and lunch time, assisting the lunchtime supervisors by organising games and activities for pupils. Holders of these posts are excellent role models for the younger pupils. Plans to form a school council are at an early stage of development.
10. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory whilst a strong emphasis is placed on promoting pupils' social and moral development, which is good. Social awareness is most apparent in the good working relationships seen across the whole school. The high expectations of behaviour ensure pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong, showing respect for others. They learn to play an active and responsible part in the life of the school and the wider community through regular fundraising for charity.
11. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with special educational needs are fully integrated and there are few incidents of racial disharmony or bullying. Parents and pupils have confidence in their teachers that problems and concerns are dealt with.
12. Attendance is below the national average, but shows good improvement since the last inspection, reflecting the teamwork between the school and other agencies. New procedures for monitoring attendance, whilst having the potential to improve statistics further, are hindered by inaccurate recording of registers and time constraints of staff. There is no system of first day of absence telephone contact with parents and carers in place, although the possibility of this is being explored. Punctuality is unsatisfactory for a large group of pupils

who are habitually late and miss an important part of their lessons, despite constant reminders from staff.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.2	School data:	1.1
National data:	5.1	National data:	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year – 2003-4.

13. Since the previous inspection there have been no permanent or fixed term exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. A significant weakness is the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are of **good** quality and assessment is **effective**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are of good quality, enabling pupils to build knowledge, skills and understanding at good rates.
- Assessment is good and enables staff to respond very effectively to pupils' many needs.
- The division of the school into many small teaching areas is disruptive of learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those in the *Willows* nurture group, is effective in helping them to achieve well.

Commentary

14. The quality of teaching and learning has been improved well since the inspection in 1999 and is now much more consistent through the school. The evidence of lesson observation and the examination of pupils' previous work give firm evidence for the good quality of teaching and learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in school and over four-fifths is of good or better quality.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 57 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	6 (11%)	40 (70%)	11 (19%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. There was one additional lesson observed, but this was not judged because a non-teacher visitor to school took it. However, what was observed had no shortcomings.

15. Whilst teaching quality is generally consistent, there are a couple of variations. There is a difference in the quality of teaching and learning between the nursery and reception, with satisfactory teaching for the nursery children and good teaching in reception. The quality of teaching in these two classes, the Foundation Stage as it is

known, is good overall, with nearly a third of the lessons observed being very good. This enables the children to settle and make a successful start to their education, though this could be accelerated with better induction to the nursery and more structured intervention by adults to consolidate and extend children's experiences, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

16. The second variation concerns teaching for the *Willows* nurture group. This is of very good quality and is the prime reason why these very vulnerable children settle happily to work as part of a larger group, even though they are faced with some very difficult personal, social and emotional circumstances outside school. These pupils, who are from the infant or early junior years, are growing in confidence, self-esteem and self-assurance, though their attainment in more conventional academic work is low and progress in building skills and knowledge is slow but steady.
17. The pupils in *Willows* are part of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, though their requirements are much wider than this. The other pupils within this provision are taught well. They make good gains in learning and their work is well structured to build knowledge and skills in the necessary small steps. The teaching assistants working with pupils with special educational needs are generally successful in their support. Some provide very effectively for the pupils in their charge.
18. Teaching and learning are of good quality in the infant and junior years. It is evident that the encouragement given to pupils to work hard, the insistence on good standards of behaviour and the promotion of equal opportunities and educational inclusion are all very good. All the other aspects of teaching, such as planning, the use of resources and time, and the effectiveness of homework are good. Because they are well motivated by good quality lessons, the pupils work hard and with real sense of purpose. Not all are able to work independently or collaboratively because they depend on the adults in class to direct their learning. This is due to the lack of confidence and self-esteem shown by many pupils. However, the staff work well to wean pupils away from over-dependence and some older pupils show good responsibility for their own work. Two pupils, for example, sang in the Awards Assembly a close-harmony duet *Over the Rainbow* they had produced and practised independently.
19. The school has identified pupils who have particular gifts or talents and provides suitable experiences to extend their achievement. However, this could be better promoted in lessons. Nonetheless, teaching quality for the wider group of higher attaining pupils is good and they achieve well in lessons.
20. The layout of the school does not promote best possible learning. The school is subdivided into many small learning bases with insubstantial partitions and there is a lack of larger zones where all pupils in a year group can be taught comfortably together. Thus, noise travels far and people have to use some bases as a passageway. This interrupts learning and makes the creation of quiet learning difficult, especially for speaking and listening activities. Staff do what they can to overcome these barriers to achievement and, like the pupils, are quite resilient, but it is evident that the accommodation is unsatisfactory for key aspects of the 21st century education at Riverside Primary School.
21. The school has made good improvement to assessment since the 1999 inspection. The system is now well developed in all subjects and enables staff to track

achievement effectively. Targets are set and shared with pupils – there is a consistent posting of targets in pupils’ books for example – and marking is very helpful in identifying the next steps in learning. There is a degree of consistency in assessment that is absent in many primary schools. Pupils enjoy working towards their targets and were observed to clamour for homework in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, such was their desire to do well.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good** as is the enrichment of pupils’ learning. Accommodation, for most year groups, is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good extra curricular activities for pupils, including very good sporting opportunities.
- The inclusivity of the curriculum is very good, providing equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils.
- There is effective provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the needs of pupils well, including those with special educational and emotional needs.
- There has been good curriculum innovation, leading to good enrichment of the curriculum.
- The small, open plan teaching areas provide unsatisfactory accommodation and constrain learning, especially the development of effective speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

22. Participation in sport is very good and the school has been successful in achieving an *Activemark* in recognition of the quality of provision for physical education and sport. Achievement in swimming is very good and standards are above average. There are many opportunities for pupils of all ages to play after school sport, join coaching sessions and engage in outdoor pursuits. There is also very good participation in a wide range of other extra curricular activity, including a 2 hour after school club, choir, and art, drama and country dance clubs.
23. The school conscientiously promotes equality of opportunity for learning within and beyond the school day. This leads to very good inclusivity for boys and girls, and for pupils of all abilities. Pupils with talents in sport and the arts, or gifts in other academic areas are identified and offered opportunities to extend their attainment at joint events. These include access to sports coaching and further competition, involvement in the Wirral Choir, events that focus on problem solving offered by the *Wirral More Able Programme* and sessions with the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts.
24. There is also very good provision in the nurture group for pupils striving to overcome a range of barriers to learning. Within lessons pupils of all abilities are well supported by the very good ratio of adults to pupils, and by the good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum and needs of the pupils. The good management of support, the accurate identification of needs and targets, and the monitoring of progress assure good access to the whole curriculum for all pupils.
25. The breadth and balance within the curriculum is good. Sufficient time is allocated to every subject. Provision for personal, social and health education across the curriculum has been audited, and a national initiative for social emotional and behavioural support has been implemented. This incorporates sex, drugs and alcohol education, involving police and medical services. Teachers have embraced innovations to meet the aspirations for excellence

and enjoyment in the curriculum by implementing whole school themed days. Initially these have involved developing history topics to enhance learning in other subjects. The school is beginning to develop links between subjects but there remain missed opportunities to use ICT to promote learning across the curriculum.

26. The accommodation is satisfactory in nursery, reception and Year 6. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory where pupils are taught in cramped areas, and where disjointed areas do not allow teachers to oversee the whole class. Some classrooms are open to corridors or function as corridors. This presents a barrier to learning, particularly the development of speaking and listening, because of the disruption caused by noise and movement.
27. The preparation of pupils for transfer to infant, junior, and secondary stages is good. However, the arrangements for induction to the nursery are inadequate to provide a smooth transition from home to school.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. The school provides **good** advice and guidance to pupils and is beginning to involve them more in its work. Arrangements for induction into the nursery are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral support system for all pupils, including child protection procedures, is good.
- The support given to the most vulnerable pupils through the *Willows* nurture group is very good.
- The behaviour support system is very effective and results in good standards of conduct.
- There is no clear system of induction into the nursery.
- There is good assessment to enable each pupil to receive support and guidance appropriate to their needs.

Commentary

28. A school strength is the very good behaviour management system that is unobtrusively and consistently followed by all staff. Pupils are clearly aware of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within school and do their best to stay within them. The school receives valuable assistance from *BEST*, a multi-agency behaviour support team for pupils identified as having behavioural difficulties and at risk of exclusion. Their work is successful in achieving good behaviour from pupils. Furthermore, in conjunction with the *Community Partnership*, a reward of reduced entrance fees to the local swimming baths is to be made to those pupils who can maintain the same good standards out in the community.
29. There are sufficient staff trained in first aid and child protection procedures are good. For the most vulnerable pupils in the school, additional support is available through learning mentors and inclusion in the *Willows* nurture group. Excellent relationships between staff and the pupils with extremely complex emotional needs help them gain in confidence and raise self esteem. The support they get in this calm working atmosphere, for a specific length of time, is often just what they need to help them achieve well and successfully reintegrate into their class. The school uses external agencies effectively to help it meet pupils' particular educational needs. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well, for instance through the range of sporting activities and encouragement to maintain a healthy diet.
30. Relationships in the school are very good and pupils are confident there is an adult they could talk to if they had a problem. Year 6 children, who volunteer as play leaders, are on duty in the playground to organise games for younger children and help mediate in disputes that may occur.

31. Induction procedures to the nursery class are unsatisfactory. The lack of a system and clear information for parents, in a style that is appropriate for their needs, does little to help pupils settle quickly into new routines and have a gradual entry into full time education. There are a high proportion of pupils that transfer into the school at various times throughout the year. Induction procedures for these pupils are satisfactory but left to individual class teachers; there is no coherent system throughout the school.
32. Tracking of pupils' academic progress as they move through the school is good. Pupils receive appropriate support from staff to help them improve. Targets are placed in the front of pupil's exercise books to remind them what they have to do to improve.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **satisfactory**. The partnership with the community, and other schools and institutions is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with community groups support pupils' development well.
- Support from parents with homework is good; they have positive views of the school.
- There is good information about pupils' progress through annual progress reports but other information is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

33. Good links with the local community help pupils to appreciate and develop the skills to enable them to become good citizens. For example pupils regularly visit local care homes to entertain residents in addition to supporting charities at home and abroad. Surplus food from their Christmas parties is regularly distributed amongst the local homeless. These wide ranging links are of mutual benefit to the community and the school and contribute positively to pupils' learning.
34. Good links with the secondary schools to which the majority of pupils transfer ensure a smooth transition from Year 6, enabling pupils to settle quickly into new routines.
35. Parents and pupils share very positive views of the school and feel they have an effective partnership. They appreciate the warm, friendly atmosphere and feel welcomed whenever they cross the threshold. Whilst the inspection team agree wholeheartedly with these comments they feel the level of communication parents receive could be improved to enable parents and carers to take a more active part in the education of their children.
36. Written communications are formal and do not project a positive image for the school or always contain the information parents are entitled to know. For example the Governors Annual Report to Parents not only omits the Year 2 national assessment results, but also fails to promote sufficiently to parents and the community the many positive things happening in the school.
37. The parent workshops held are well received and significant in their contribution to the partnership. The school has already identified the need to build upon this success.
38. Helpful staff, and letters sent on an irregular basis, keeps parents informed of day-to-day matters and they feel comfortable approaching staff when there is a problem. Regular parents evenings are held each year where parents and staff can review pupils' progress. Written

reports about pupils' progress fulfil legal requirements and are good in that they portray an accurate picture of the pupils' progress and clearly identify ways in which their work can be improved.

39. The effectiveness of the partnerships between home and school and the positive support of the local community makes an effective contribution to supporting children's personal development and raising their self-esteem.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school and has a very realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- He has built a team of hard working and well focused staff, including the assistant headteacher, who is a good leader.
- The senior management team are very committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and providing for the needs of all pupils.
- Governors are supportive and involved in the work of the school and are growing in confidence to check and evaluate that it is as successful as possible.
- There are effective systems in place to ensure good financial management, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and ensuring best value principles are sustained.

Commentary

40. Since his appointment immediately prior to the previous inspection, the headteacher has striven successfully to create a positive climate and to build good teamwork amongst the staff in school. He has demonstrated very good leadership and clear vision for the way forward, and has the full confidence of staff, parents and governors. Despite the difficulties of managing without a deputy headteacher for a lengthy period, he has developed the role of the able assistant head successfully and is using her well in a senior manager capacity. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Both the headteacher and other key managers, whose roles are also being developed well, have a shared view for the future direction of the school, and know the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
41. A strength of the school is the leadership team's very high commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity through the inclusive nature of the school in catering for the large number of pupils with special educational needs and social and emotional difficulties. An especially effective feature is the use of learning mentors and the *Willows* nurture group. There is good management for the provision of pupils with special educational needs, and the coordinator for special educational needs carries out her management role successfully to meet their many needs. In particular, there is effective management of the work of the support assistants and appropriate deployment of these staff to ensure they are placed where they can be most effective. The school has established good relationships with a number of outside agencies who provide effective support services to their children. The leadership team present good role models to other staff and pupils.
42. The governors are extremely supportive of the school and also have an understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Their involvement is satisfactory and they are keen to ensure pupils get the best opportunities for learning. Governors evaluate the school's successfulness through the sharing of performance data, and in their committees. They are growing in confidence and ready to take on more responsibility.

43. Self-evaluation is used well to identify accurately areas for development, including the monitoring of performance data. Performance management targets are set and linked to these areas to successfully bring about improvement. Their success has been acknowledged through a number of awards the school has received over the last three years. There are effective systems in place to ensure that there is sound financial management, school development planning with appropriate priorities, and that teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated to bring about improvement. Overall, it is clear that the leadership team provide a secure basis for enabling pupils to achieve consistently in their learning. The staff are well trained and provided with a good programme of professional development. This reflects in the quality of teaching and ensures that pupils make consistently good progress.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	969,025	Balance from previous year	32,958
Total expenditure	950,341	Balance carried forward to the next year	18,684
Expenditure per pupil	2,961		

44. Bearing in mind pupils' low starting point, standards achieved, the quality of education and its overall effectiveness, the school provides good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the nursery and reception classes ranges from satisfactory to very good and is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children show very good behaviour and attitudes because of the supportive and positive relationships demonstrated by all staff.
- Teaching and learning in reception is consistently good or very good.
- A very stimulating and well-resourced reception curriculum contributes to very good achievement in personal, social, emotional, and mathematical development.
- Leadership and management are good, with some very good features.
- Provision in the nursery is satisfactory overall, but insufficient emphasis is placed on promoting children's talk.
- The induction arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

45. Two teachers and one teaching assistant teach a class of 34 full-time reception children, who attend from the beginning of the year in which they are five. Nursery children are admitted at any point in the year, immediately after their third birthday, and attend part-time. Currently, approximately 15 children attend each session. Whilst the full range of ability is represented in the Foundation Stage, the competencies of children on entry to nursery are very low compared to expectations for their age.
46. Assessments completed in July 2004 show reception pupils attained very low standards compared to the Wirral average in early reading, writing and communication skills, and did not achieve as well in communication, language and literacy as in other areas of learning. This reflects the high percentage of children with special educational needs in the reception year last year, and the high frequency of language delay on entry to school.
47. Information about children's progress is shared each term with parents. There are good assessment systems in reception. Assessments are used effectively to ensure teaching is matched to children's competencies. In the nursery, however, when individual children are withdrawn for assessment, engagement in daily activities is disrupted and the use of adult time is inefficient. The provision for children with special needs is good because of the good management of support, the accurate identification of needs and the monitoring of progress.
48. Accommodation is satisfactory, and resources are good. The indoor environment is good, but the potential offered by the outdoor environment has not been fully exploited. The good provision identified in the last inspection has been maintained, and there is good improvement in the stimulating and very well planned reception curriculum. Since 2003, however, much younger children have been admitted to the nursery. This presents new challenges; requiring improvements to the nursery induction arrangements and routine, in order ensure the needs of younger children are met effectively.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reception children initiate and manage their activities very well, promoting very good concentration and independence.
- Very positive relationships and a caring ethos promote very good attitudes to learning.

Commentary

49. In the nursery teaching is satisfactory. There is appropriate potential to promote more social and verbal interaction by increasing adult involvement in play. Recent initiatives, such as encouraging children to choose materials in the creative area, promote independence. The expectations set for children for using their initiative and for self-managing resources, leads to satisfactory learning and achievement in personal development. The team reassure and welcome children when they first join nursery, but for some the start is too abrupt. There is insufficient parental involvement before children start, and during sessions. This has a negative impact on the emotional development of some children.
50. Reception children demonstrate very good learning and engagement in tasks because of the good balance of adult led and child-initiated activity. This is effective in promoting good perseverance and enthusiasm. A high priority is placed on promoting social development, and clear expectations are set for good behaviour. Good use of praise and encouragement, leads to good levels of self-esteem. Very good teaching raises awareness of how to be a good friend, especially to new children. This very good teaching and achievement means most children are likely to reach the personal and social early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use of assessment leads to good levels of challenge.
- Well-managed and stimulating resources contribute to good achievement.
- There are insufficient opportunities for nursery children to engage in purposeful and extended talk.

Commentary

51. The teaching of reading is good and includes the systematic teaching of letters and sounds and the use of large books to promote an enjoyment of stories. Books are well organised, enabling children to enjoy texts which are well matched to their competencies. Children take books home and regularly read and discuss books in lessons, promoting good achievement in speaking and reading. Very good use is made of toys, puppets and models to accompany stories and stimulate interest. The teaching of writing is also good. Nursery children are given opportunities to control their mark making as they draw, paint, and handle tools. Reception children achieve well as they use their knowledge of sounds and letters to build words. This leads to good achievement in early reading and writing.
52. Reception children are encouraged to talk as they work with adults in small groups. For example, children used small dolls to tell a story, and recorded their visit to the town hall on tape. Teachers work hard to elicit responses to questions, but the majority of children experience difficulty in expressing their views. In the nursery a wider range of purposes for

talk, and more frequent opportunities for talking to adults, needs to be developed in order to help children improve their speaking and listening. Teaching, learning and achievement is satisfactory in the nursery.

53. Most children are unlikely to meet the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. Although standards in early reading and writing are below expectations for their age in the current reception class, children have progressed well, due to good teaching, and they show good achievement in lessons.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned practical activities lead to very good achievement in reception.
- In the nursery the pace of learning is slow when children are too passive.

Commentary

54. In the nursery teaching is satisfactory but sometimes the pace of learning slows, as observed in a lesson when the class took turns to name a shape. As children waited for their turn the flow of learning was interrupted. Overall, achievement is satisfactory in mathematical development in the nursery. However, throughout the Foundation Stage, teaching assistants work well and they help the children make effective use of mathematics for real purposes. For example, children talked quite confidently to the teaching assistant and counted quantities when baking, and they counted vehicles successfully when completing a traffic survey.
55. The assessments completed in July 2004 show that last year reception children attained levels well below the Wirral average. However, in the lessons observed pupils showed very good achievement due to the very good quality of teaching. Most children are able to count accurately in ones to ten. They name shapes but have not yet developed the mathematical vocabulary to describe the properties of shape. They use coins and count purchases in the shop, but are reluctant to solve simple problems. This shows that whilst approximately 80 per cent are likely to reach the early learning goals in mathematical development by the end of reception, this is below the Wirral average. Very good teaching provides practical tasks that actively engage the children. For example, they peg socks on a line, order numbers correctly, and count accurately on a number line when counting on.

Knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development

It is not possible to make judgements of provision in these areas of learning because insufficient teaching was observed.

56. In order to promote knowledge and understanding of the world, reception children make frequent visits to places of educational value. For example, they go to the library, town hall, local shops and school grounds. Visitors from the local community enrich the nursery curriculum. Children care for goldfish and plants in the classroom, and make observations. They explore materials as they make models and pictures, and play with sand and water. Outdoor resource boxes promote role-play based on the world of work, such as building and gardening. The outdoors has not yet been developed to promote learning about growth, change or habitats for living things.
57. Resources for promoting creativity, in the reception class, are very good. Children access a wide range of materials independently. They cut, stick, model, paint and construct with their own ideas in mind. Child-like outcomes are valued, leading to good levels of self-esteem. Similarly in the nursery, children are encouraged to choose the materials they need for a

purpose. There are good opportunities for children to exercise their imagination in role, puppet and small world play.

58. Children have access to an adequate outdoor learning environment and the hall for physical activity. The outdoor environment is used daily for playing with wheeled toys and a swinging bridge. The equipment needs to be extended, however, in order to provide more challenge for reception as well as nursery children. The Foundation Stage team have identified this as an aspect needing improvement.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are a particular weakness and the unsatisfactory accommodation hinders their full development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English are well below average in Year 2, and below average in Year 6.
- Weaknesses in speaking and listening skills hamper attainment, but pupils achieve well compared with their low starting point.
- Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good.
- English is well led and managed.

COMMENTARY

59. Despite their very low starting point when they enter nursery, pupils make consistently good progress and achieve well throughout their time in school. Limited vocabulary and language experience combined with a lack of confidence and self-esteem, however, do restrict their overall levels of attainment. This was clearly evident in lessons. Although many pupils are developing good reading skills their comprehension of the text is often restricted by their language limitations. They are sometimes reluctant or at times too reticent to respond to their teacher's question, and their replies often show a lack of an elaborated use of English. The design of the school building is not conducive to the free flow of language because many classes do not have discrete classrooms but a variety of little areas and alcoves. Writing is similarly affected by language limitation, but it is well presented demonstrating the level of pride pupils take in their work.
60. The comparatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs affects the overall levels of attainment at Year 2 and Year 6. Nevertheless, due to the good quality of support provided for them by teachers and learning support assistants, with work well matched to meet their specific needs, they make good progress. Their levels of attainment are often below average and sometimes well below average for their age, but the high quality of relationships ensures they are very well motivated.
61. The pupils get a good deal from their teachers in English because the quality of teaching is consistently good. All teachers have a good command of the literacy curriculum and plan carefully ensuring all elements of the strategy are included. They have high expectations of the pupils, and insist on very high standards of behaviour,

which has a positive impact on learning for everyone. Very good opportunities are provided for all the disparate groups of pupils to learn at the right level and pace. Higher attaining pupils achieve well, as do the middle and lower attaining pupils. Teachers have good assessment procedures in place for monitoring progress, and their marking is helpful to pupils to move them on to the stages in their learning. The overall good level of learning is due to the creditable quality of teaching pupils receive.

62. There is good leadership and management of the subject. The subject leader has a good overview of teachers' planning through regular monitoring, and shares the outcomes corporately. Lesson observations enable checks to be made on the quality of teaching and learning. Literacy specialists provide good support to teaching and especially to the newer teachers. Speaking and listening skills have been identified for development and they have started to receive a sharper focus during lessons. Initiatives such as bringing an author into school to develop writing skills has a number of positive benefits for children.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

63. The development of subject specific vocabulary is starting to receive greater attention in other curriculum areas, and evidence of this was seen in both science and history lessons. Writing skills were being used well to support work in history, with older pupils writing at length in a topic on the ancient Greeks. There was little evidence of the use of ICT to support the development of literacy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average in mathematics by the end of Year 6. Achievement is good overall.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and assessment is consistent and accurate.
- Leadership and management of mathematics are good.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation, below average attendance patterns and limited use of ICT to promote the development of mathematics skills all affect achievement.

Commentary

64. Whilst standards in mathematics vary from year-to-year, due to the different make-up of each class, it is evident that the school has improved the overall standards and boosted achievement well since its previous inspection in 1999. Currently, standards are well below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. Pupils generally achieve well from their low starting base in mathematical development when they join the school. The curriculum for mathematics is well structured and planned, and careful attention is given to the systematic development of skills and knowledge from class to class and stage to stage. There is good emphasis on basic numeracy, though whilst pupils' mastery of more complex and difficult arithmetic problems improves well, their mental arithmetic skills are slow and uncertain, even at the end of Year 6.
65. The good quality of mathematics teaching through the school is the chief factor in the good achievement of pupils. Lessons are interesting, motivating and frequently fun. Skills and knowledge are at the root of the work and there is a good degree of

challenge in the tasks. Higher attaining pupils achieve well. In part this is due to the good level of teachers' expectations, but it is also down to the successes of the setting system for mathematics teaching. In Year 6, for example, the school is able to set the pupils into three groups and the work in each is well tailored to needs. The range of attainment in these three sets is from well above average to very low and the small size of the lowest set is a distinct advantage in enabling pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Working in larger groups does not disadvantage the higher attaining pupils, and their confidence in mathematics increases well as they work alongside the other pupils.

66. The school has developed a good system of assessment and target setting, sharing and tracking, which works to the advantage of the pupils. Targets are mounted at the front of each pupil's book, the marking of work keeps a good track of achievement against these targets and the work provided is based firmly on the outcome of assessment for the different attainment groups. The school has achieved a good degree of consistency and accuracy in its mathematics assessment and target tracking systems.
67. Whilst perhaps not as marked as in English, the weaknesses of the accommodation do affect learning in mathematics. This is because lessons are frequently interrupted by the passage of people and pupils' concentration is affected by the noise from outside the work base. This is particularly the case for the Year 1 and 2, and one of the Year 5, classes. The pattern of attendance and punctuality also impacts on achievement in mathematics for those pupils who frequently miss lessons or parts of lessons for mathematics.
68. Mathematics is well led and managed by a committed and hard-working subject leader. She has good insights into the quality of provision and pattern of achievement and is influential in making improvements. Systems to check and evaluate mathematics subject performance are good. A significant factor in the leadership and management of mathematics is the very firm commitment to educational inclusion, which is bearing fruit in terms of the consistent quality of provision and outcome across the school. There is good potential for these qualities, and other strengths, to be maintained and areas for improvement to be boosted.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. There is appropriate development of mathematical skills and knowledge across the curriculum, though ICT is not used as effectively to support learning in mathematics as it is in most primary schools. The subject leader recognises this situation and has a well-focused plan of action to ensure mathematics is real and relevant for the pupils and that it is part of everyday work in a wide range of subjects, not least that based on the computer.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good, as is learning and pupils' achievement.

- Teachers' marking is good, giving pupils clear pointers about what needs to be done to improve the standard of their work.
- Tracking how well the pupils are doing in developing their investigative skills is an area for development.
- Too little use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning in science.

Commentary

70. Standards in Year 2 are below average. That said, pupils' achievement is good for pupils of all capabilities, including the higher attaining groups. They make good progress in lessons as they extend their knowledge and understanding about how to plan their science investigations, carry them out and record their findings.
71. Standards in Year 6 are average. Pupils' achievement is good across the board. They have a growing understanding about predicting the outcomes of their investigations as well as the importance of *fair testing*¹. A good example occurred in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were setting up an investigation to find out which surface produced least resistance to movement. Pupils debated enthusiastically about the merits or otherwise of various surfaces before setting about their planning and organising themselves in their groups. What is missing, at whole school level, is a consistent method of tracking pupils' skills as they plan, set up and record their investigations. The subject leader is aware of this and has begun to tackle the issue.
72. The curriculum is challenging, interesting and exciting and pupils have plenty of time to get to grips with their learning in science. Homework supports learning in school very successfully. Teaching is good. Staff are adept at motivating pupils so that they want to learn. Lessons get off to a brisk start so that pupils are focused on the tasks in hand and this means that no time is wasted. Good use is made of questions to probe pupils' understanding or to extend their learning. Many pupils have limited literacy skills and this can slow down their learning, especially when they are recording the outcomes of their investigations. Improving the use of ICT in science will go some way in overcoming this.
73. The subject co-ordinator has a secure grasp of the subject, which is led very well. Standards, achievement, teaching and learning are monitored successfully at every level. Gaps are speedily identified and tackled. The two main issues to be promoted next are to improve the systems for tracking pupils' investigative skills and to make sure that pupils use ICT more frequently to support their learning in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**. The cross-curricular use of ICT is too limited.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average in information and communication technology (ICT) by the end of Year 6.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Teaching and learning are of satisfactory quality.
- ICT has been improved well since the previous inspection and the new subject leader is settling well to her work.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is more restricted than it is in most primary schools.

Commentary

¹ Planning which parts of their investigation stay the same and which change so that outcomes can be measured accurately.

74. The school has worked effectively to make the necessary improvements to ICT following its previous inspection. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. However, staff are not complacent, as they know that provision in ICT still has aspects for improvement, notably the cross-curricular use of computers, in order to provide the same good quality education and good achievement found in subjects such as English, mathematics and science.
75. The curriculum for ICT is well structured to help pupils build the necessary skills and knowledge. Thus, whilst the starting level of skill is below average at the start of Year 1, it is average by the end of Year 2. The amount of ICT work has clearly increased in school, especially in the junior classes, and pupils cover all strands of ICT in the required depth. In fact, on the evidence of work in pupils' ICT books, achievement is noticeably accelerated in Year 4 and 6. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and some good support is given by teaching assistants.
76. The accommodation is not ideal for ICT, nor are the resources, though they are improved over the past. There is now a small computer suite equipped with up-to-date hardware and some good quality software. It is not, however, possible to teach some of the largest classes as a whole in the suite. There are few computers outside the suite and so this makes cross-curricular use of ICT harder to develop.
77. The new ICT subject leader is keen to move the subject further. She is confident and ambitious. The track record of improvement to ICT suggests leadership and management to have been good in the past. There is clear indication that the potential for continued improvement is assured. The starting point for the new subject leader is the enhancement of cross-curricular ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. The use of ICT across the curriculum is not as well developed as in most primary schools. Pupils' ICT work is focused on the achievements made in ICT lessons, and with the exception of history, and to a lesser extent, religious education, other subjects are not used effectively enough as a vehicle for the improvement of standards in ICT. Similarly, skills such as those of reading and writing, mathematical problem solving and the recording of the outcomes of scientific investigation are not promoted sufficiently through the use of computers. School managers understand these shortcomings, and planning is to be amended to emphasise the need for more effective use of ICT throughout the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average and achievement is good.
- The curriculum is good and staff work hard to make sure that pupils are interested in religious education.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of the main festivals and traditions of Christianity as well as those of other significant religions.
- Pupils' progress and achievements are tracked very well as they move through the school.
- Good resources are used effectively to enhance pupils' understanding.

- The subject leadership is very good.

Commentary

79. Standards are average overall, especially in Years 4 to 6. Pupils have a growing body of knowledge about the customs and beliefs of the major world religions. Many older pupils have a secure understanding of personal responsibility, the importance of rules, and the work and life of important religious figures. Younger pupils are secure about the religious aspect of the Christmas festival. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in their lessons and over longer periods of time.
80. The subject leader has worked hard to make sure that the school has a full and varied curriculum in religious education. He is successful. Pupils' past and present work demonstrates a variety of ways in which teachers follow the agreed syllabus for religious education, although in some year groups ICT is not used consistently to facilitate learning. Teaching is good. Lessons are interesting and exciting, as in a Year 4 lesson where pupils were introduced to the Buddhist faith. In this lesson video clips were interspersed with activities and input from the teacher, all of which kept pupils' interest and concentration, whilst improving their knowledge of Buddhism. New vocabulary was explained and reinforced very well during the course of the lesson, which was challenging for the pupils. The good systems for tracking how well the pupils are doing enable staff to modify their plans, should the need arise, and this is one of the strengths in the subject.
81. Aspects of religious education are picked up and developed successfully as part of assembly themes. This works well, as it reinforces what is taught and learnt in the classrooms, giving pupils the opportunity to develop their thoughts and ideas in the wider context of year group assemblies. The subject is run very effectively and the leader has worked hard to ensure the subject has a positive profile across the school.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain broadly average standards and their achievement is good.
- Literacy skills are developed through history.
- Research skills are developed through the use of ICT.
- An exciting range of curricular experiences is provided.

Commentary

82. Pupils at Year 2 and Year 6 attain standards broadly in line with those found nationally and they achieve well because of the good quality of the teaching and the stimulating curriculum provided for them. Theme days enable pupils to gain an insight into a variety of aspects of life, for example, in the times of the ancient Greeks, and the Victorians. Teachers take on significant characters through role-play to bring history alive. Year 5 learned a great deal about life in service through their teacher playing the part of an under-maid reading from her diary. Well-chosen and interesting artefacts provide an authentic look into Victorian lifestyles, and this ensures pupils' knowledge and understanding of history are developing well. Research skills are developing too through the use of a range of resources, and in ICT in particular pupils interrogate a CD ROM to carry out research into child labour, Dr Barnardo and the Factory Act.
83. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work together in small groups, and engage in discussion. This enables pupils to learn new subject specific vocabulary as well as to develop

confidence in speaking to a group. Further use of literacy skills is through letter writing in character. History supports the development of English well. There is good leadership and management by the subject leader who ensures that an exciting range of curricular experiences are provided.

Geography

84. There was not enough time available to collect sufficient evidence to form an overall judgement of provision in geography. The curriculum for geography is satisfactory and appropriate time allowance is made for the teaching the subject. Lessons are planned soundly and there are ample resources, though cross-curricular links to English, especially writing, and to ICT could be enhanced considerably. Geography is taught regularly and some effective special curriculum days are organised to support pupils' learning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The following four subjects were sampled over the two-and-a-half days of the inspection. There were comparatively few lessons available for observation in these subjects and so they are only reported briefly.

ART AND DESIGN

85. Only one art lesson was observed and therefore it is not possible to judge the quality of provision overall. A scrutiny of photographs and displays shows that pupils have a satisfactory range of opportunities to work with different media and to study the work of some famous artists. Throughout the school, there are examples of observational studies that show progression in pupils' skills. Year 2 pupils observe, paint and draw leaves and flowers, and enlarge them in the style of Georgia O'Keefe. Year 3 pupils study photographs of pairs of friends and create portraits, which communicate relationships. Their work demonstrates a good sense of proportionality in some instances. By year 6, pupils study Degas ballet dancers and the techniques used, such as incorporating shadow to create depth, form and movement. They successfully applied these methods in their observational drawings of each other as they moved in physical education lessons. In Year 4 pupils studied the art of non-western artists, as they looked at the use of pattern and journey themes in aboriginal art. The subject leader has succeeded in raising the status of the subject in the curriculum through whole school participation in the *Art Gallery* which offered pupils work for sale, and in the recent whole school art displays based on other artists' work.

Design and technology

86. There is insufficient evidence to judge overall standards of work or pupils' achievement. When designing glove puppets, Year 2 pupils demonstrated satisfactory understanding of the design process as they drew plans. These included the size, shape and features of the character they had chosen, but there were some missed opportunities to consider the materials, and methods for joining them, in their designs. Year 6 pupils showed good achievement as they designed slippers, developing a good understanding of the need to select materials to suit a given purpose. Features of good teaching in this lesson included further challenge for higher attaining pupils, and well organised resources. A scrutiny of teachers' planning and the work in pupils' assessment books shows there is satisfactory coverage of the curriculum. The subject leader has recently supplemented the guidance for teachers' planning with more detail. This helps teachers identify the required time, resources, skills, knowledge and processes for each unit of work, and has made a positive impact on teachers' confidence in teaching the subject.

MUSIC

87. Music is valued throughout the school and the pupils enjoy their musical experiences, singing, playing and listening to music. In the only lesson observed, Year 1 pupils were confident as they kept a steady beat, firstly using clapping and then moving on to their un-pitched percussion instruments. There were good links with literacy as the teacher introduced *Jack and the Beanstalk*, using phrases from the story as a focus for developing one, two and three beats. Throughout the school singing is tuneful and enthusiastic. Pupils' progress and achievements are well tracked, enabling lessons to be pitched at the right levels. The subject is led well and staff have been well trained to deliver all elements of the music curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

88. It is clear from limited evidence that there are some significant strengths in physical education. Standards in swimming are above average with very few pupils not able to swim the desirable 25-metre length by the time they leave Year 6. Similarly, the school's participation in sporting events in the region is regular and enthusiastic, and achievement in competitions and matches is good. Physical education is well led and managed by a very knowledgeable, determined and hard-working subject leader. She is influential in bringing improvement and, like several of the teaching assistants, is a good role model for pupils in her energy and effectiveness. The quality of the curriculum is good and physical education is well resourced. The accommodation, both indoors and outdoors, has weaknesses, not least the cramped spaces available for some of the games and movement activities. However, the subject is well resourced and it is clearly a popular choice amongst the pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

89. Personal, social and health education and citizenship is also reported briefly as there were no lessons in these areas during the inspection. Nonetheless, provision in these areas is something the school does well.
90. Many pupils have significant personal, social, health and emotional needs. Staff are committed to pupils' good care and well-being, and they work hard to ensure that all pupils, regardless of need and background, can settle to good patterns of learning so that their achievement is maximised. Staff know the pupils well as individuals and respond successfully to the many demands that come from the diversity of need in school.
91. The caring ethos of the school is clearly shown in the *Willows* nurture group, where each of the very vulnerable pupils are given very good opportunities to work with others, talk to adults and to explore their feelings. Their personal, social, emotional and health needs are of utmost concern and staff are very effective in helping these pupils settle to more confident learning and to take difficulties in their stride.
92. Overall, Riverside Primary School makes a difference for its pupils. It successfully creates opportunities for them to overcome some profound barriers to achievement and to make the best of the learning experiences provided.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
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	3
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	3

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