

INSPECTION REPORT

CRIFTINS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Duddleston Heath

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123472

Headteacher: Mrs A Leach

Lead inspector: Mrs D Bell

Dates of inspection: 7th - 9th February 2005

Inspection number: 267812

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:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	72
School address:	Criftins Duddleston Heath Ellesmere Shropshire
Post code	SY12 9LT
Telephone number:	(01691) 690 207
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev A Netherwood
Date of previous inspection:	7 th February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Criftins Church of England voluntary controlled school is much smaller than other primary schools. Its 72 pupils (37 boys and 35 girls) come from a wide mix of backgrounds, mostly within an average social and economic range, many following the tradition of their parents and grandparents by attending the school. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below the national average. The children's attainment on entry is as expected for their age and the proportions of pupils on the register for special educational needs, or who have statements for those needs, are around the national average. Most special educational needs are to do with moderate learning difficulties. There is a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language but none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is above the national average. It was particularly high in this and last year's Year 6. The school is part of an Education Action Zone and because of this it has received much curriculum support and funding. It received a Schools Achievement Award in 2001 and 2002, and gained Investor in People status in 2004. The school has had a new headteacher since the last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16413	Mrs D Bell	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Religious education French Special educational needs
9981	Mr S Hussain	Lay inspector	
30935	Mrs K McArthur	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Science Geography History Physical education English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. The headteacher's excellent leadership has fostered very effective teamwork across the whole school community. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and they behave very well. Very good teaching ensures that they all achieve as well as they can by the time they leave, whatever their capability. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- In Year 2 and Year 6, standards are well above the national expectation in English and science and above the national expectation in mathematics and all other subjects inspected.
- The headteacher's excellent leadership elicits the very best from staff, pupils, parents and governors, and co-ordinators lead and manage their subjects well.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good. It has a very positive effect on pupils' achievement and fosters in them very good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are very effectively cared for, guided and supported personally and academically. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The curriculum is very well planned and the very good range of enrichment activities contributes in very great measure to pupils' learning.
- Although best use is made of the available accommodation, the lack of a hall for physical education lessons restricts the progress pupils can make in that subject.
- Assessment procedures are very good in English, mathematics and science. Although overall good in other subjects, some procedures are not yet as manageable as they could be.
- Governors support the school well but are not yet fully involved in monitoring its work.

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is now very good and national guidance is used effectively to plan a broad, innovative and very well balanced curriculum for all age groups. The school has done all it can to improve provision in physical education, though the lack of a hall continues to restrict pupils' progress in that subject. Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the school and support it well. Classroom assistants are well deployed and assessment procedures are now at least good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, pupils achieve very well. Standards are usually as expected for children's ages when they start school although, with such small numbers, they fluctuate from year to year. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. They are on course at least to meet the goals expected nationally for the end of the Reception Year in all six areas of learning. In Year 2 in 2004, the results of the national tests were below the national average in reading but well above in writing. They matched the national average in mathematics. The reading and mathematics results were well below those of similar schools; in writing, they were above. The trend in the school's results in this age group is broadly in line with the national trend. The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2004 were as follows:

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

Key: A – very high; 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.*

The trend in the results for pupils in Year 6 is above the national trend. The value added to pupils' learning between Year 2 and Year 6 is very high. In both year groups, however, all comparisons must be treated with caution because of the small numbers and the consequent fluctuations in attainment from year to year, often as a result of the different proportions of pupils with special educational needs and high levels of mobility. Boys, girls, pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils all achieve equally well because the school tracks their progress very carefully and very successfully ensures that they are learning to the best of their capability. Challenging targets are set for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 and the school does its very best to help pupils reach them, despite the high levels of mobility.

Pupils' personal development is very good. They behave very well and have very good attitudes to school and to learning. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is very good as are curricular provision, the care, guidance and support given to pupils, and the school's partnership with parents, other schools and colleges and the community. English, science and ICT are taught very well and mathematics is taught well. Teachers regularly and meticulously assess how well pupils are doing and give them very good quality written and oral support as to what they need to do to improve. As a result, pupils understand what is expected of them and rise to the challenge of doing as well as they possibly can. The school is working hard to refine its assessment procedures further, so that they are more manageable but still provide the information needed to plan suitably challenging work for the pupils. The fast pace of lessons in the top class leads to progress accelerating rapidly as pupils concentrate and work very hard, making very good use of the time available for learning. Pupils throughout the school work equally well independently, in groups and as a whole class, spurred on by the creative way in which teachers link subjects together. This provides a real purpose for writing and for research, enhances reading, speaking and listening skills and provides good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical learning across the curriculum. The very good range of high quality enrichment opportunities further extends pupils' learning, preparing them very effectively for life beyond school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher's leadership of the school is excellent, and overall key staff lead their areas well. Governance is satisfactory. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met and they support the school well. They are knowledgeable about the issues it faces but they are not yet fully enough involved

in checking its outcomes. The management of the school, including its finances, is very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. They value highly the significant changes the headteacher has made and are very knowledgeable about the benefits gained from them. They very much appreciate the way school involves them in its life and work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Complete the refinement of assessment procedures in all subjects.
- Extend the governors' role in monitoring the work of the school.
- Keep up the pressure for a new hall.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. All groups of pupils do equally well in Year 2 and Year 6, and standards are at least above the national expectations in all subjects expected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national expectation in English and science in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Standards are above the national expectation in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and all other subjects inspected.
- Pupils use their literacy and ICT skills very effectively, and their mathematical skills well, in other subjects.
- The good provision in the Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their education.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well because their work is very well matched to their different ages and stages of learning.

Commentary

1. Because of the small numbers, attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year. The school has two intakes per year and the children's pre-school experiences are very variable. Nevertheless, for most intakes, attainment is as expected for the children's ages. Overall, they make good progress and are on course at least to meet the nationally expected goals for the end of the Reception Year in all six areas of learning (the Early Learning Goals).
2. In Year 2, standards are above the national expectation in speaking, listening, reading and writing and in science. They match the national expectation in mathematics. Overall, pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. In all age groups, national and similar schools' comparisons must be treated with caution because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group and the considerably high proportion of pupils who join the school other than at the normal entry times. These factors had a negative effect on the national test results for pupils in Year 2 in 2004. When compared with all schools, those results were below the national average in reading, well above in writing, and in line in mathematics. They were well below those of similar schools in reading and mathematics, but above in writing. Overall, however, the trend in the results at Year 2 is broadly in line with the national trend. The average points scored can be seen in the following table:

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.0 (14.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.0 (14.8)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.0 (14.4)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 7 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In Year 6, standards are well above the national expectation in all aspects of English and also in science. In mathematics, they are above the national expectation. Writing is the strongest aspect of English and reflects the emphasis the school has placed on improving writing by giving it real purpose and meaning. All pupils achieve very well by the time they leave the school. The school is successfully tackling the pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics, the cause of the results in that subject being lower than in English and science in both Year 2 and Year 6. The national test results for the 15 pupils in Year 6 in 2004 were well above the national average in English and science, and in line with the national average in mathematics. When compared with the pupils' prior attainment when they were in Year 2, the results were very high in English and science and high in mathematics. The trend in results for this age group is above the national trend. The average points score can be seen in the following table:

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.6 (26.5)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.6 (27.5)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.4 (28.5)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Boys, girls, pupils with special needs and pupils who show particularly good ability in different subjects all achieve equally well because the school plans very effectively to match their learning needs. Well-briefed support staff make a very good contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those with special educational needs, helping them to reach the targets in their individual education plans. The school uses its very good assessment and tracking systems to keep a close eye on all pupils' progress. It acts quickly to address learning difficulties as they become known, helping pupils as far as possible, to catch up with their class mates, and to give those that need it, that extra push to reach the higher standards of which they are capable. It recognises each pupil as an individual and sets targets that are securely based on the pupils' learning needs. Because pupils know what their targets are and, in the top class, are involved in assessing their work and setting the targets, they mostly work to the best of their capability. The standards seen in the work of pupils in Year 6 during the inspection were well above the national expectation in English and science and above the national expectation in mathematics.
5. The school uses its very good knowledge of the pupils' levels of capability to set challenging targets for pupils in Year 6. It works very hard to reach those targets, successfully working around the high levels of pupil movement in Years 5 and 6 in recent years. In 2004, the school met its targets for English and mathematics, at the expected level and exceeded the targets it set for the proportion of pupils expected to reach the higher level. The school adds very good value to pupils' learning between Year 2 and Year 6. The pupils' rate of progress accelerates considerably in Years 4, 5 and 6 because of the very effective teaching in the top class.
6. The very good links that the school makes between different subjects ensures that the pupils make very good use of their literacy and ICT skills, and good use of their mathematical skills, in other subjects. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are very effectively promoted at every opportunity and ICT has become a natural tool for learning in virtually all subjects. This 'joined-up' learning extends to pupils making relevant connections between for example, mathematics and geography as they recall

their geography work on co-ordinates and extend it in mathematics. Standards were found to be above the national expectation in Year 6 in all subjects for which there was sufficient evidence.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good as are relationships and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupil's very good attitudes mean they are alert, eager and interested in all activities offered by the school.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and the high quality of relationships between all members of the school community create a happy, harmonious environment for learning.
- Attendance and punctuality are good.
- The school very successfully ensures that all pupils have the same opportunities to do as well as they can and pupils take full advantage of all that is offered to them.
- Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures pupils become mature, responsible and well prepared for life in Britain today.

Commentary

7. Pupils have very good attitudes to school, to learning and to each other. From the earliest years, the school very effectively promotes their spiritual growth in a warm, caring community where everyone is valued and respected. As a result, pupils themselves feel valued and they develop good levels of self-esteem and self-discipline, supported very well by all members of the school community. Year 6 pupils' sensitive writing in response to the recent tsunami disaster showed great thoughtfulness and a genuine quest for answers. Eager to learn, pupils respond very positively to their teachers and co-operate very well with each other. The high levels of trust and respect evident amongst all members of the school community result in very good relationships throughout the school. Pupils appreciate the high levels of support they receive. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, concentrate very well and work very hard, secure in the knowledge that their ideas and efforts are appreciated. These very positive attitudes contribute in great measure to their overall very good progress.
8. Pupils have every opportunity to reflect on a range of social and moral issues, values, faiths and beliefs through their work, in discussions and during well-presented assemblies. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and of fairness, and show genuine care and concern for others, fostered through the school's high emphasis on equality of opportunity for all. The school sets out its high expectations for behaviour in a clear set of simple rules and procedures that are known and respected by all pupils and their parents. Behaviour is very good in lessons, in the playground and on trips out of school. This is because pupils enjoy school so much and greatly appreciate the wide range of meaningful learning experiences provided for them. Pupils and their parents know that bullying is not tolerated, and very confidently state that even minor

problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. Attendance and punctuality are good, and there have been no exclusions in recent years.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0.1
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.

9. Pupils willingly raise funds for a range of charities in the full realisation that there are others less fortunate than themselves. They become responsible and useful members of the school community, willingly accepting responsibilities that help the school run smoothly. The very good attendance at the wide range of after-school clubs, visits, and meetings with local schools helps them to become increasingly mature and independent. Their social development is further enhanced by a residential visit to a contrasting locality that provides additional opportunities for them to work and play together away from school. Older pupils cheerfully carry out a range of responsibilities and duties in school. The well-established School Council say they work *'to make things better'* and have, for example, successfully changed the system for ordering school meals. The 'Playground Squad' show good levels of care and concern when looking after the younger children or helping those who feel they have no-one with whom they can play.

10. The school does all it can to promote a genuine respect for the values and beliefs of others and to develop in the pupils a strong awareness of cultural diversity. Pupils learn about different ways of life by studying world faiths in religious education lessons and through their work in history, geography and the arts. For example, a visit to a Liverpool museum inspired pupils to create puppets to retell stories from the Hindu faith; visits to a mosque and a synagogue raised their awareness of different beliefs and ways of life; and a good range of visitors from different cultures has introduced them to the range and diversity of cultures in Britain today. The school also uses the wealth of local sites extremely well to promote understanding of life in different times and cultures, and some very good learning activities are based on these first-hand experiences. Pupils are very well prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities they will face in the next stage of their education, and in a wider and more diverse society than the one in which they now live.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is very good as is the quality of curricular provision, the care, welfare and guidance offered to the pupils, the school's partnership with parents and its links with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is very good as are the school's procedures for assessing pupils' progress and their use in planning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school, pupils' work is very effectively planned to meet their learning needs.
- The teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate result in high productivity in learning, especially in the top class.
- Teachers' marking is very good; assessment is thorough and constructive and all of the information is used very effectively in planning and target-setting.
- Pupils know and understand their targets and are becoming increasingly involved in assessing how effective they are in meeting them.
- Homework is used very effectively to support learning in class.

Commentary

11. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. However, when combined with the evidence from pupils' books and the very good progress that pupils make over time, it is clear that the overall quality of teaching is very good. The quality of teaching is much improved since the previous inspection and includes the very effective teaching of English, science and ICT, and the effective and improving teaching of mathematics. The very good teaching pupils receive has a major impact on the quality of their learning and overall achievement.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 15 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	5	7	3	0	0	0

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

12. A major strength in teaching is the very effective use the teachers make of their very good knowledge of the pupils, personally and academically, to set targets and plan work that meets the pupils' learning needs. Pupils matter as individuals in this school and every effort is made to build on their prior learning to ensure that they make as much progress as they can. Teachers cater equally well for pupils with special educational needs and for those who show flair in particular subjects, and for the mixed age ranges in each class. They take great care to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all parts of lessons, for example through precisely targeted questions. They are ably assisted in this by very well-briefed and very well-deployed classroom assistants who contribute very effectively to pupils' learning and overall achievement. The very good use of all resources, including, for example, computers and the interactive whiteboards in almost all lessons, further adds stimulus to learning and results in the overall very good teaching of ICT skills. Teachers are very skilled at linking subjects in meaningful ways that 'join up' learning for the pupils.
13. In the Foundation Stage, whilst overall behaviour is good, the pupils who started in January are still settling into the routines that are well established in the other age groups. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers insist on very high standards of behaviour at all times and the pupils respond with high levels of concentration. This contributes in great measure to the rate of progress the pupils are making. The pace of learning is especially good in the top class. Here, pupils produce huge amounts of work because the lively, imaginative, energetic and engaging teaching makes learning so enjoyable that they all want to participate to the full. This was very evident in English, mathematics and art and design lessons in that class, and also in a group reading session.

14. The school's involvement with the education action zone (EAZ) and the headteacher's involvement with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority have greatly benefited this area of the school's work. Assessment procedures are becoming increasingly refined and are already very good in English, mathematics and science. In these subjects, pupils' progress is meticulously tracked and swift action is taken to tackle weaknesses as they arise. The most noticeable outcome of this is the great improvement in writing and similarly good work is happening to address the issue of problem-solving in mathematics. The procedures also led to a focus on investigative work in science, which has also raised standards in that subject. There are at least good assessment procedures in other subjects but the school is working hard to refine these to make them more manageable while at the same time producing the information needed to ensure that planning matches pupils' different learning needs in all subjects.
15. Day-to-day marking is also thorough and constructive. Teachers refer to the targets that pupils are aiming to reach, noting what they have done well and what they need to do next. This very good practice was observed in English, mathematics, science and ICT and was typical of that seen in art and design. The teacher's own very good subject knowledge was evident in the very precise marking of the pupils' initial attempts at showing movement in figure drawing, which included targets for the next stage of their work. This led to some very well planned work that addressed pupils' individual weaknesses and enabled them to make very good progress in the lesson. A major strength in this aspect of the school's work is that the pupils know what their targets are and what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils in the top class are also involved in assessing their own learning and agreeing their targets with the teacher. Building on the success of this good practice which was piloted for the first time this year, the school is about to extend it to the other two classes.
16. Homework is used very effectively to consolidate and extend learning. It is regular, of good quality and quantity and includes work across a range of subjects, including preparing for new themes and topics. The majority of parents are satisfied with the homework given and readily assist their children with it. The school is careful to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to do their homework. For example, where it involves using computers or the Internet, provision is made in school at lunchtime or after school for those pupils who do not have such access at home.

The curriculum

Statutory requirements are met and the curriculum is broad and very well balanced. There is a very good range of enrichment opportunities. Resources are good but the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The creative, innovative approach to curricular planning is very carefully monitored thereby ensuring that statutory requirements are met.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is very high on the school's agenda and results in the full inclusion of all pupils in all that the school offers.
- The provision for special education needs is very good as is the provision for the most able pupils in the school.
- A very wide range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment opportunities considerably enhances pupils' learning.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life beyond school.

- Resources are good overall but the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

17. There have been very good improvements in curricular provision since the previous inspection. A broad and very well balanced curriculum very successfully promotes the pupils' personal and academic development and all subjects are now given adequate time on the timetable. The school very carefully monitors curricular provision through its use of a computer-based program by which it checks overall coverage and depth of coverage in each subject. It has very successfully adapted local and national guidance to meet its needs. Its innovative approach to linking subjects and promoting literacy and ICT skills in all aspects of its work contributes in great measure to the pupils' overall very good achievement. This has made learning exciting for the pupils and it has brought meaning and purpose to their writing, successfully raising standards in English in recent years. This year it is tackling the weaknesses it identified in mathematics with the same rigour and this is beginning to reap the reward of improved progress in mathematics.
18. The full inclusion of all pupils in all activities underpins the school's very strong approach to ensuring equality of opportunity. All policies make appropriate references to inclusion. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Statutory requirements are very well met. Targets are reviewed formally at least twice a year and the school's very effective assessment systems ensure that the pupils' day-to-day learning is rigorously tracked and relevant adjustments made to the targets to ensure the pupils' best progress. Similarly, very good provision is made for the most able pupils and a good range of very well planned additional learning opportunities further extend their learning. The school's rigorous use of all assessment information ensures that the curriculum is kept under constant review to meet its changing needs as it changes its organisation from year to year to take account of the fluctuations in pupil numbers. A very comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education very effectively covers all aspects of personal development. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life beyond school.
19. A very good range of activities outside of the normal school day very considerably enriches curricular provision. It is also enhanced by the teaching of French in Class 2 and Class 3, and by guitar and percussion lessons for those pupils who wish to have them. A wide range of very well attended extra-curricular clubs and activities are supported with input from parents and staff. During the inspection, over half of the pupils in the school were involved in cooking, art, cross-stitch, cross-country and construction activities. The activities change each half-term to give pupils the widest possible opportunities and to ensure that there is something for everyone in this small school. Visits and visitors further enrich the curriculum as the school takes every opportunity to provide the pupils with high quality expertise and experiences. For example, there have been health weeks, arts weeks, visits from theatre groups and musicians, and visits to different museums and places of worship. A residential visit to Barmouth to study a contrasting locality is combined with outdoor pursuits activities, enhancing curricular provision in geography and physical education provision alongside the pupils' personal development. Alongside their very good involvement in school, pupils also take part in a good range of sporting and arts activities with other schools.
20. Resources are good overall, except for large play equipment for children in the Foundation Stage, where they are satisfactory. All resources are used very effectively to promote learning and personal development. The school is kept very clean and overall it is well maintained. Classroom accommodation is satisfactory and teachers make best use of the space available to them. The small library is well stocked and a further range of library books is kept within each class, successfully promoting reading and research skills. Displays are attractive. They considerably enhance the learning environment and show the pupils how much their work is valued, and pupils are proud to point out their work. However, the lack of a hall continues to restrict pupils' progress in physical education. The school continues to do its very best to give pupils full access to a broad and balanced physical education programme by using the

facilities at a local high school, and its own outdoor areas. However, a considerable amount of teaching time is lost during the coach transfer to and from the high school, the equipment there is not the right size, and weather often restricts the use of the outdoors. All of this means that although pupils do cover the full range of physical education activities over time, they do not have frequent and regular access to all of those activities to ensure that they make the best progress of which they are capable. The school has worked very hard to procure funding for a hall and has recently secured a lottery grant to enable this to happen.

Care, guidance and support

The academic and pastoral care, guidance and support offered to pupils are very good and the school involves pupils very effectively in all aspects of its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The open, trusting relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.
- Pupils are introduced to school life very well.
- Positive and healthy lifestyles are very effectively promoted in a very good health education programme.
- Staff give pupils very good advice and support academically and personally. They highly value the pupils' opinions and their involvement in the life of the school.
- The school council provides very good chances to develop citizenship skills.

Commentary

21. The staff at this school treasure their pupils and value and respect them as individuals. This gives the pupils the confidence to raise any concerns or worries they may have, and to be fully and effectively involved in resolving them. The headteacher is an excellent role model for this and promotes the family ethos particularly well. Children new to the school are introduced to its routines and procedures gradually and sensitively. Their induction is very effectively supported by very positive links with pre-school groups and nurseries. Pre-school integration sessions are very well planned to ensure that new children settle in quickly. Pupils transferring from other schools are also helped to settle in quickly, for example by allocating a 'buddy' to ensure that they know what to do and what is expected of them. The '*Playground Squad*' is very supportive of new pupils, ensuring that they have someone to play with and are fully involved in all that is going on. This caring attitude is fostered very effectively by the school's strong emphasis on including all pupils in everything it has to offer.
22. The arrangements for child protection are very good. The designated officer is appropriately trained and staff are very well informed about the school's policy and procedures. General health and safety risk assessments are undertaken as required. Fire drills are carried out regularly and the arrangements for first aid are very good. The school promotes healthy eating and regular exercise very well. It also works very closely with the community in this regard. For example, the school nurse is very effectively involved in the school's programmes for sex and relationships and drugs education. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 also attend a very good safety and drugs education event led by the community at a local RAF base.
23. Staff know their pupils very well and give them very good support, advice and guidance through their very perceptive monitoring of each pupil's personal and academic progress. The information gained from such monitoring is used very effectively to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are fully met. School records

are very detailed and enable teachers to track pupils' progress very effectively. Outside agencies are involved when necessary, for example to support pupils with special educational needs. The school does its best to follow any programmes through, for example physiotherapy, in between visits from specialist staff, thus providing continuity and enhancing the pupils' chances of making the best possible progress.

24. There are many opportunities for pupils to make their views known to staff and become involved in the school. Through the School Council, pupils learn the process of decision-making and democracy and have a real influence on the quality of their educational provision. They were instrumental in having lunchtime arrangements changed, and in establishing the 'Playground Squad'. There has been very good improvement in this aspect of the school's work since the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents, other schools and the wider community. It involves them very well in all of its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very good opportunities to express their views to the school.
- The information given to parents about their children's achievement and progress is very good.
- Parents make a very good contribution to the school and to their children's learning.
- Very good links with the community help to enrich the curriculum.
- Very good links with secondary schools prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

Commentary

25. There has been very good improvement in the partnership with parents since the previous inspection. The school welcomes parents as partners in the education of their children. The headteacher and staff are very approachable and parents report that they always make time to discuss any concerns. A questionnaire is sent to parents regularly and this helps to identify issues and enables parents to influence the school. The school has made several changes to the information provided for parents following their suggestions and is well aware of their concerns about the inadequacy of the accommodation for physical education.
26. Parents are kept very well informed about the school through an attractive prospectus. Newsletters are sent home regularly and include much information about forthcoming work in the curriculum, events and dates to remember. Three consultation evenings each year allow parents to discuss their children's work and progress with teachers. Pupils' annual reports provide a very helpful and informative picture of how well the pupils are doing, together with targets that show clearly the next steps they need to take to improve their learning and personal development. The views of the parents of pupils with special educational needs are regularly sought and the parents are very effectively involved in reviews of the pupils' targets.
27. The parent-teacher association supports the school very well by organising many social and fundraising events. The group makes regular contributions towards learning resources such as library books and ICT equipment. Many parent-helpers also give

their time generously to the school, helping with lunchtime and after-school clubs. Parents support their children's learning at home very well by listening to reading and helping with homework.

28. The school's very good links with the local church support religious education and personal development very well. Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of visitors from the community. These include storytellers, dance groups, musicians and members of different cultures and faith communities. Visits out of school are very well planned to enrich topic work. They include art galleries, museums, theatres, castles and a cathedral, as well as visits to places such as the Jewish Museum and a mosque which give pupils very good opportunities to learn first-hand about different cultures and beliefs. The school puts much back into the community by raising money for local, national and international charities and good causes, and by participating in an appropriate range of community events.
29. The school makes very good use of the sport and dance facilities at the local high school as it does its very best to compensate for the lack of appropriate space for physical education in its own accommodation. Pupils also take part in various events organised by several local secondary schools, for example an annual athletics competition and various locally-agreed transition projects. Such links instil good levels of confidence in the pupils as they prepare for the transition to Year 7.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and co-ordinators lead and manage their subjects well. Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's excellent leadership has fostered a very strong commitment to school improvement throughout the whole school community.
- English, science and ICT are led and managed very effectively and overall, other subjects, including mathematics are led and managed well.
- Governors have a good understanding of the issues facing the school and support the headteacher and staff well. However, they do not yet monitor its work well enough.
- Very good systems are in place to monitor the performance of staff and pupils, and very effective actions are taken to address any gaps in learning or provision.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.
- Finances are very well managed to gain best value from all spending.

Commentary

30. The headteacher's infectious enthusiasm, dedication and very strong drive to ensure the best for every pupil in the school has led to the very good improvement seen since the last inspection. This was openly acknowledged during this inspection by staff, governors and parents. A very good class teacher, she leads by example and supports and encourages all staff to look at ways of improving their practice. This is a reflective school where rigorous self-evaluation is part and parcel of everyday life and the information gained from it is used very effectively to improve the quality of education for all pupils.

31. Overall, subject co-ordinators lead and manage their subjects well, although the leadership and management of English, science and ICT are very good. Teaching and learning are regularly checked in English and mathematics through the direct observation of lessons and through activities such as analysing pupils' work and talking to pupils. Other subjects have their turn clearly identified in the school development plan, beginning with science and ICT and moving forward later this year and beyond to include all other subjects. This is an effective and manageable way of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in a small school. Co-ordinators also track very carefully that their subjects are being given adequate time and that all aspects are being taught in sufficient depth to enable the pupils to learn well. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The school adheres closely to the requirements of the statutory Code of Practice and provision is very effectively monitored by the co-ordinator and the headteacher. The school also has a co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils, another well-led and managed aspect of its work. The co-ordinator is supporting the staff well in identifying and providing suitable work for these pupils.
32. The governing body was reconstituted with several new members last September. Established governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas in which further development is needed, and all statutory requirements are met. New governors are quickly establishing their roles and are eager to participate in training to help them become effective. All governors support the school well. However, there has been little monitoring of the school's work in the past, with governors mostly accepting, without much question or challenge, what the headteacher presents to them. This is slowly changing and governors are very committed to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities well. Nevertheless, they still have some way to go to be real 'critical friends' of the school, a role the headteacher is extremely keen to help them develop.
33. The headteacher has ensured that the overall management of the school is very good. Day-to-day administration procedures are managed very efficiently and effectively by the school secretary and a range of very effective systems help to keep a close eye on the school's overall performance. Areas that need further development are picked up quickly and form the basis of some very good strategic planning that is very clearly articulated in the school improvement plan. The performance management objectives for all staff relate clearly to the school development plan priorities and provide a whole-school approach to further improvement.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	234,429	Balance from previous year	15,329
Total expenditure	227,659	Balance carried forward to the next	22,099
Expenditure per pupil	3,076		

34. As a result of additional funding from the Education Action Zone (EAZ) and the small schools' allowance, the expenditure per pupil is slightly higher than is found in most schools. The funding gained from EAZ involvement has been used very effectively to enhance provision for all pupils in this small school. Savings over several years meant that last year, the school had a considerable surplus in its budget. The headteacher, rightly very conscious of using the budget to benefit pupils currently in the school, has used this wisely to retain teaching assistants following the end of EAZ funding and to

improve and update further the resources for ICT. These decisions have had a very positive impact on pupils' learning and overall achievement. As a result, the school provides very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Reception children enter the school in September and January, according to when their birthday falls, and they are taught with Year 1 children. Although, with the small numbers, attainment on entry fluctuates in some years, overall it is as expected for the children's age. Most have previously attended nursery or playgroups but a small minority have no pre-school experience. The school rightly emphasises activities that help the children settle quickly and learn to co-operate. Good teaching ensures they achieve well in all areas of learning. Very good organisation and planning ensures full coverage of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The children experience a very good curriculum, and are very well cared for and supported. The great majority are well on course to meet the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning, and to exceed the standards in physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Currently, no Reception children are identified as having special educational needs. Overall, the Foundation Stage is well led and managed and the mixed ages are managed very well.

Practical activities, play and learning experiences are successfully linked across all areas of learning. Very good induction procedures, including a series of visits prior to starting school, ensure parents are well informed and their children enter full-time school happily. The 'open door' policy provides a meeting point for staff and parents on a daily basis. The teacher uses his very good understanding of how young children learn and develop to provide practical investigative activities in all areas of learning. Children's progress is carefully assessed, monitored and reviewed in order to plan the next steps in learning. Very well used resources, including the 'interactive whiteboard' and the classroom assistants, make a strong contribution to children's learning. There is still no outdoor learning area for the Reception class. The playground is used whenever possible, but there is no challenging climbing equipment or outdoor apparatus, and the range of wheeled toys is minimal. Nevertheless, there has been good improvement in the quality of provision since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and the children achieve well.
- The children behave well and all relationships are very good.
- A strong emphasis on personal and social development ensures the children quickly learn to co-operate and share.

Commentary

35. The classroom is secure and welcoming to children and their parents. Together with the teacher's calm, pleasant manner, this creates a happy environment in which the children flourish. They feel valued as young learners, which raises their self-esteem and develops their confidence well. The good partnership between the teacher and

classroom assistants shows the children how they should behave towards others. Those who have had little experience out of the home take a little time to settle into school routines. However, the children behave well and form very good relationships with adults and other children. The teacher frequently instigates class discussions about being kind and helpful, and gives the children many opportunities to become independent by selecting their own activities. Most children share equipment willingly and are developing a sense of responsibility for their possessions. They tidy the classroom very well after activities and happily wait their turn to ride a bike or use the interactive whiteboard. The children are on course to meet the early learning goal in this area of learning by the end of their time in Reception class.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Well planned learning activities enable the children to achieve well.
- Children recognise many letter sounds.

Commentary

36. Good teaching and very well planned activities focus on developing the skills necessary for reading and writing. The writing area is a popular choice, and the children enjoy using colourful pens to practise drawing and writing letters and numbers on whiteboards. The attractive book area is furnished with comfortable seats and a plentiful supply of suitable books, inviting the children to share their favourite books. Short focused teaching sessions each day help children to learn letters and sounds, ready to begin reading. More able children write short sentences that show they understand how to build letters into words. Labels and signs around the classroom help the children learn that print has meaning. Some children, especially those who only started in January, still lack confidence and are reluctant to speak in class or group sessions, and many speak quietly in short, simple sentences. The majority listen well and this helps them to understand their tasks. They are on course to meet the expected goals by the end of their Reception Year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good displays help children recognise numbers and shapes.
- Children learn through practical investigations.
- Good teaching and good resources help the children make good progress.

Commentary

37. Colourful displays of numbers and shapes fill the classroom walls. Children have quickly learned the names of several basic shapes. The youngest know the properties of squares and circles, and more able pupils recognise cones. They enjoy learning

new mathematical vocabulary and most learned the words 'cube' and 'cuboid' through frequent repetition in the lesson. They enjoyed singing a shape song, and trying to say 'sphere'. The teacher followed this activity up well by providing a good variety of apparatus for the children to build into 3D models of cubes and cuboids. The children used the interactive whiteboard well to combine and count shapes. Children who recently started school have quickly learned to count from 1 to 5 and back and others go to 10, 20 and beyond. They compare sizes, using terms such as 'bigger' or 'smaller' accurately, and spot the missing digits in a line of numbers. More able children are just beginning to combine two amounts in early addition work. Teaching and learning are good; the children achieve well and are on course to meet the goals expected for the end of the Reception Year.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

This area was sampled. No direct teaching was observed therefore no overall judgement is made about provision.

38. No direct teaching was observed in this area of learning. However, discussions with the children and a short observation of them at work showed clearly that they achieve very well because very well planned practical activities build and extend their knowledge of the world around them. An integral part of their learning experience is the very effective use of ICT, and their activities are often digitally photographed so that they can be examined and discussed to reinforce their knowledge and understanding. The children loved looking at the pictures of their models of cubes and the Victorian cart, shown on the interactive whiteboard. They use the mouse on the class computers competently to draw with the 'Paint' program. The keyboards have lower case letters but only a few children are familiar with them as yet. The children learn about life in the past by playing in role in the Victorian kitchen, supported well with books, pictures and materials from Victorian times. Children showed good recall of which material made the best window from their investigations of paper, wood and plastics. They are well on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and the children achieve well.
- Activities are varied and well planned.
- There is no equipment to provide opportunities for challenging play.

Commentary

39. Good teaching across a broad range of physical activities ensures children achieve well. They use tools, pencils, the computer mouse and scissors with increasing control. They persevered well when manipulating small equipment into mathematical shapes. Movements are well co-ordinated and controlled, and they run, skip and jump well during outdoor play. However, there is no hall or large apparatus for challenging play and regular lessons, and this limits the range of physical activities that the

children experience. At afternoon playtime, the children use skipping ropes, footballs and bikes well, but the range of wheeled toys is minimal. However, the children's physical development is good and they are on course to exceed the goals expected at the end of the Reception Year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well.
- They express their ideas confidently, using a varied range of materials and media.
- The role-play area is well equipped to encourage imaginative play.

Commentary

40. Good teaching and planning provide a wide variety, of imaginative experiences. The children painted pictures of characters from their favourite book, using colours boldly. After studying their faces in a mirror for a self-portrait, they chose carefully from pens, pencils and paint. A few children n who had only recently started school lacked confidence with the materials, but were guided well by the classroom assistant. The children enjoy singing, and know the words of the '*Shape Song*'. They successfully learned a song for assembly, but were a little shy when singing in front of the school. The role-play area is a popular choice of activity and the children enjoyed acting out life in Victorian times.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (FRENCH)

English

English was inspected in full and French was sampled. No overall judgement is made about provision in French, a language that pupils have only recently begun to learn to speak. They do not read or write in French.

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and standards are well above the national expectation by Year 6.
- The quality of writing and handwriting is consistently very good in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are considerably enhanced by their learning to speak French.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall and pupils of all levels of capability are very well catered for in the teachers' very good planning.
- Marking is perceptive, analytical and evaluative and constantly pushes pupils towards ever-higher achievement.
- The subject is very well led and managed and literacy skills are very effectively promoted in all subjects.

Commentary

41. Standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing are above the national expectation in Year 2 and well above in Year 6. Pupils throughout the school follow the good example set by the staff and speak clearly, quickly developing a good range of vocabulary. They express their ideas and opinions very effectively in discussion and in writing. They listen carefully to others before doing so, showing very good levels of respect for other people's viewpoints, just as the teachers do for theirs. The very good opportunities provided for pupils to engage in role play, discussion and debate further promotes their speaking and listening skills as do the short French sessions in Classes 2 and 3. Pupils have a good range of French vocabulary relating to personal details, number and days of the week. Already in Year 2, they solve simple number problems, recognise their names when spelt in French and respond accurately to questions as the register is taken in French. While conducting most of these sessions in French, the teachers move skilfully between English and French, checking that pupils understand the meanings of words in both languages. In Year 2 and Year 6, the pupils' very good listening skills serve them well as they learn to enunciate vowels and consonants accurately in both languages.
42. In English, the quality of writing is above the national expectation in Year 2. Pupils spell frequently-used words consistently well and make good attempts at other words that they want to use. They construct sentences well and sequence them logically, and grammar and punctuation are good. However, few pupils attempt to join up their writing and they are not often enough encouraged to write at length. Nevertheless, good quality teaching ensures that they pick up the literacy skills they need to achieve at least well in other subjects as well as in English. Pupils' progress in writing accelerates in Years 3 to 6 as they are presented with more and more stimuli from other subjects and are encouraged to write about visits and visitors. The Class 2 visit to Chester is a prime example of the pupils' very good ability to express themselves well. Using verbs such as 'amazed' and 'gasped', they demonstrated very effectively the awe and wonder they felt on seeing such a huge building for the first time. By Year 6, this is a natural process for the pupils and the quality of their writing and handwriting, including grammar, spelling and punctuation, is well above the national expectation for pupils' ages.
43. Pupils in Year 6 have a very good understanding of how to adapt their writing to suit different purposes and audiences, fired by the very good range of stimuli presented to them in very creative, imaginative approaches to teaching. In prose and poetry, for example, the teacher, through perceptive marking and clear guidance, insists that they find ways of improving their writing. As a result, they become increasingly better at grabbing and sustaining the reader's attention through the evocative use of an imaginative range of vocabulary. Assessment information is used very effectively in planning and target-setting. Pupils in Class 3 are very effectively involved in monitoring their progress and setting their own targets and this very good practice is about to be extended to the rest of the school. Pupils read widely and with very good levels of understanding by Year 6. The daily reading sessions with the teacher checks their comprehension skills very effectively and contributes in great measure to their very good achievement in the other aspects of English. Teachers use the support assistants very effectively to help pupils with special educational needs. The targets in these pupils' individual education plans are used very effectively in planning thus ensuring that these pupils too achieve as well as they can. Stimulating extension work for pupils who are more able, gifted and talented successfully takes these pupils to the higher levels of which they are capable. The very good use of ICT for drafting, editing, word processing and research further consolidates pupils' literacy skills.
44. English is very well led and managed. The curriculum is very well planned and teaching and learning are regularly monitored. The very effective teamwork amongst the staff ensures that the agreed procedures are very successfully implemented throughout the school. There has been very good improvement in English since the previous inspection. The teaching of French is very well organised and introduces pupils effectively to speaking the language.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

45. The very effective planning that takes place throughout the school ensures that pupils' language and literacy skills are very effectively fostered in all subjects. The levels of empathy shown in some of the pupils' writing in history and religious education, the different ways in which the pupils record their work in science, and the very clear labelling of designs and the evaluations of artefacts are just some of the many ways in which this happens. The very good teaching of all aspects of literacy in and through other subjects also very effectively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good as is the pupils' overall achievement.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour contribute to their achievement.
- There is a very good emphasis on learning through practical activity.
- Assessment is used very effectively to check pupils' progress and help them improve.

Commentary

46. Pupils reach standards that match the national expectations in Year 2. By Year 6, standards are above the national expectation. Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6. The very good attitudes and behaviour seen throughout the school ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils willingly persevere with mathematical activities and enjoy their investigations. They are eager learners because lessons are well planned and relevant, and practical activities are well matched to their level of capability, allowing them to build up their knowledge and understanding in small progressive steps.
47. None of the pupils currently in Year 3 attained the higher level at the end of Year 2. The year group had a considerable proportion of pupils with special educational needs and several had started school other than at the normal times. All of the pupils have made good progress in Year 3 are now working well within Level 3. They add and subtract multiples of 10 from two-digit numbers well. Less able pupils find quick calculation difficult because they are still not fully sure of which number combinations add up to ten and this slows them down. More able pupils calculate fractions of whole numbers competently, working out, for example, half of 24 or a third of 18. By Year 4, many pupils present and collate data entered in columns and cells using computer-generated spreadsheets. More able pupils in Year 6 multiply whole numbers and decimals by 10, 100 and 1000, showing a good understanding of place value. When introducing pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 to co-ordinates, the teacher reminded them of their previous work in geography and asked them to locate the school on an Ordnance Survey map. They then used their knowledge of co-ordinates to play a game of 'Battleships', making learning purposeful and fun. Year 6 pupils moved on further with a new computer program in which they transformed and rotated geometric shapes through up to 360°. Their thrilled reactions showed a real excitement in learning and made a strong contribution to their spiritual development. The school is successfully tackling the pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics, the cause of the results in that subject being lower than in English and science in both Year 2 and Year 6.
48. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and very good for older pupils. Staff have good subject knowledge. They use this well in all areas of the mathematics curriculum to provide a broad range of activities that are well matched to the different abilities and ages of their pupils. Lessons are introduced as challenges to stimulate pupils' interest and make their tasks purposeful. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 became very involved by their task of counting how many triangles were concealed within a larger triangle, and produced a variety of answers. The teachers' very good use of all available resources makes learning active and

practical. The interactive whiteboards are used effectively as teaching and learning aids. Occasionally, however, time is not managed carefully and the opportunity to recap on what has been learned in the lesson is lost, or pupils become a little restless when they have a long wait before beginning their tasks. The way pupils respond to teachers' high expectations for presentation with neat and legible work is further evidence of their very good attitudes to learning. Pupils use their literacy skills well and write clear answers to problems. Older pupils' very good reading skills help them to read and interpret questions and instructions accurately. They use mathematical vocabulary correctly, but some find it difficult to spell mathematical terms accurately. Teachers' marking gives pupils good guidance for improving their work. Pupils complete their homework on time, and it is used well as a way of extending and reinforcing their knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

49. The leadership and management of mathematics are good. The knowledgeable co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and pupils' books. As a result, the school has identified for itself the relative weakness in the pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in different situations to solve problems. This is keeping standards in mathematics lower than those in English and science. The very good assessment system comprehensively tracks pupils' progress and sets targets. A strong feature is the involvement of older pupils in assessing their own work, helping them grow in independence and responsibility. Overall, there has been good improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

50. Pupils make good use of their mathematical skills in other subjects to present information in charts, tables and graphs. They measure and calculate before cutting out material in design and technology and use their knowledge of co-ordinates to locate sites on an Ordnance Survey map in geography. Pupils' mathematical learning is further reinforced by the good use of ICT, for example in rotational symmetry, and when pupils draw, rotate and transform geometric shapes or create and interpret spreadsheets, charts and graphs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and as a result, pupils achieve very well.
- Standards are well above the national expectation in Year 6.
- The very good curriculum strongly emphasises learning through practical investigation.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The information gained from the very good assessment procedures is used very effectively to help pupils improve their work and to plan further work.

Commentary

51. Standards in Year 2 are above the national expectation for that age group and the pupils achieve well. By Year 6, standards are well above the national expectations and their achievement is very good. This is due to consistently strong teaching that ensures pupils learn scientific concepts and acquire knowledge through very well planned investigational activities. Pupils' learning is aided by their very good attitudes

to learning. The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievement and sets challenging targets to improve their performance. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve as well as others throughout the school because their work is carefully planned with their individual learning needs kept closely in mind.

52. Teachers have very good knowledge of all aspects of science. This is evident in the very well planned and meaningful lessons based on practical investigations. This practice begins as soon as pupils start school, and Reception children enjoyed finding out if wood, paper or clear plastic made the best window material. Scientific investigations are made more relevant through meaningful links to other subjects, including history, religious education and design technology. After their visit to Chester Cathedral, for example, pupils in Year 2 worked on electrical circuits, and were challenged to build a circuit for a burglar alarm or to light up the stained glass windows in their model cathedral. They have good knowledge of why the circuit must be complete in order to work, and showed great perseverance when manipulating wires and buzzers, batteries and bulbs. Older pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of scientific vocabulary in their reports, and use their literacy skills well as they write them. They respond eagerly to the high levels of challenge set by their teacher and make very good use of all resources in their investigations, including the electronic microscope. The very wide range of methods used to present results includes clear spreadsheets and graphs produced by the computer, showing some very good use of their ICT skills.
53. The marking of pupils' work is very thorough. Pupils are clearly shown what to do to improve. Interactive comments encourage them to respond to the teachers' marking. Assessment is used very well to monitor pupils' progress, set individual targets, provide support and plan the next steps in learning. Pupils are actively involved in assessing the quality of their own work and record their progress carefully. This makes a strong contribution to their growing sense of personal responsibility and maturity, and they clearly enjoy their science lessons. They work carefully and co-operatively in lessons, share resources well and willingly help each other. Pupils' work shows an excitement in their discoveries and this contributes very effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
54. The leadership and management of science are very good. Enthusiastic leadership and clear vision have led to very good improvement in science since the previous inspection. This, together with the teachers' very good knowledge of science, has led to strong curriculum development, in particular the very strong basis of practical investigations, carefully matched to the age and capability of the pupils in the mixed age classes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils achieve very well.
- The subject is very effectively taught, led and managed and a very well planned curriculum ensures equality of access and opportunity for all pupils.
- Teachers and pupils use ICT very effectively as a learning tool.
- Assessment is used well to plan work that matches pupils' ages and stages of learning.

Commentary

55. There has been very good improvement in ICT provision since the previous inspection. The use of ICT is now an integral part of the everyday life of the school. This is because the curriculum is very effectively planned and monitored, the quality of teaching is very good and the subject is very well led and managed. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards very effectively in whole-class sessions and pupils follow their very good example by using them equally well to demonstrate their work and evaluate their learning. A particularly good example was the way in which pupils in Year 6, spurred on by the teacher's very effective questioning, considerably improved their writing about Macbeth's and Banquo's experiences on the moors.
56. Throughout the school, pupils achieve very well. From the youngest age, pupils of all capability acquire good ICT skills. They quickly get to know their way around the keyboard and, throughout the school, they use a good range of keystrokes as they draft and edit their writing, changing font styles and sizes and presenting written work in different ways. They very confidently access a wide range of programs via CD-ROM and the Internet that considerably enhance their learning in other subjects. By Year 6, pupils produce very effective slide presentations using a range of media, including importing text, pictures and sound. Their good desktop publishing skills are evident in the leaflets they produced to encourage healthy lifestyles and persuade people to visit their local area. Using control technology, younger pupils program a floor robot and older pupils make traffic lights work, and produce creative symmetrical patterns involving rotational symmetry.
57. Pupils' work is regularly and effectively assessed and a close check is kept on whether they are all making as much progress as they can. The school takes very great care to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities in ICT. Homework often involves research or other work involving the use of computers and the Internet and provision is made for the few who do not have such access at home to complete such work at lunchtime or after school. Additionally, ICT is used very effectively to help pupils with special educational needs make better progress, and extension work using computers takes learning to a much higher level for pupils who are identified as gifted or talented.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

58. This is a particularly strong feature of the school's work. The very well planned ICT curriculum feeds very effectively into the whole school curriculum and both are rigorously checked to ensure that all aspects of ICT are covered properly. During the inspection, pupils were observed using ICT in almost every subject and the portfolios of their work showed clearly that this is normal practice throughout the school. Teachers very effectively promote the pupils' progress in ICT alongside their learning in other subjects. Through its very effective use in subjects such as history, geography, religious education, art and design and literacy, ICT also makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

HUMANITIES

History, geography and religious education were sampled.

59. **History** and **geography** were sampled. One history lesson was observed but no geography lessons were seen. However, discussions with pupils and an analysis of the work in their books and folders show clearly that standards in both subjects are above the national expectations in Year 6 and pupils achieve well.

60. Both subjects are well led and managed and effective planning ensures the National Curriculum programmes of study are fully covered. The co-ordinators have some release time for development and review when their subjects feature in the school development plan and have used this effectively to monitor their subjects. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. In the top class in particular, the information gained from them leads to planning that is skilfully adapted to meet pupils' different ages and stages of learning. Both subjects are well resourced and learning is enhanced by a range of good displays. The strong links with literacy, art and design and religious education make learning meaningful for the pupils. For example, pupils in Year 2 made good comparisons between the life of a Roman soldier and their own lives in vivid art and written work. Very good links are also made between geography and mathematics as pupils in Year 6 increase their understanding of how to read co-ordinates.
61. Homework is used well. In geography, for example, Year 2 pupils gained a good understanding of how man can affect the environment through a well planned homework activity where they gathered first-hand information by studying the view from their window at home. Pupils use their literacy and ICT skills very effectively to further their learning in both subjects. For example, alongside using other sources, Year 6 pupils made good use of the Internet to research World War II and to analyse and compare information on Churchill and Hitler. They differentiate well between sources that are factual and those that are based on opinion. In geography, they compare and contrast very effectively the local town, Ellesmere, with Barmouth in Wales, producing clear, persuasive tourist brochures for each town. History and geography make a very good contribution to pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers make particularly good use of the wealth of local sites to develop pupils' knowledge and appreciation of where they live, the different cultures that influence life in Britain today, and different places and cultures in other parts of the world. The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour make a very good contribution to their ability to learn.
62. Pupils' work in **religious education** shows very good progress from, in Years 1 and 2, knowing significant stories from the Bible and other major religions, exploring the special-ness of self and others, considering who their neighbour might be and learning the meanings of signs and symbols in Christianity. By Year 6, their work shows considerable depth of thought as they compare the similarities and differences in the major world religions and explore the concept of a supreme being. Their writing shows their developing maturity as they ask questions such as why God would allow major disasters like the tsunami, and then try to find answers for themselves. This exploration is taken further as they articulate their thoughts about God, having made 'God's eyes' as part of art and design and design and technology work. The very good links made between religious education, personal development, literacy, art and design, history and geography give the pupils many valuable opportunities to explore spirituality and the meaning of life. They do so in an atmosphere of mutual respect for the ideas, opinions and beliefs that differ from their own. The subject makes a very good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by visits to different places of worship where they learn at first hand about different practices in different religions and the effect they have on the lives of their followers. They also benefit from the local vicar's close involvement with the school and her contribution to the teaching of religious education. The subject is well led and managed. The implementation of the locally-agreed syllabus is monitored well and although there has been no formal monitoring of teaching and learning, the co-ordinator keeps a close eye on pupils' learning in all three classes.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology, music and physical education were sampled. Art and design was inspected in full.

63. No **design and technology** lessons were observed but one **music** lesson was and another was sampled as pupils prepared to take part in an inter-schools performance. The design and technology work on display, and the sampled music sessions show that by Year 6, standards are at least in line with the national expectation in both subjects and, overall, all pupils achieve well.
64. The quality of leadership and management is very good in design and technology and satisfactory in music. The co-ordinator for design and technology has made very effective use of the expertise gained from attending a course to organise a good range of resources and to support staff in their teaching of the subject. In music, the school has recently implemented a new scheme that ensures full coverage of all aspects of that subject. At present there is no monitoring of teaching and learning in either subject, but time has been set aside for this to happen at a later date. Nevertheless, there has been good improvement in both subjects since the previous inspection.
65. Imaginative teaching in design and technology and the very good use of literacy skills place pupils firmly in the role of designer. For example, the designs for their moving toys show that they take great care to consider the age of the child for whom they are making the toy, the materials they will need to use, the time it is likely to take to produce the toy and the quality and cost of the finished product. Their evaluations are very effectively focused on whether the criteria were met and how well. The work seen covered cam mechanisms, money containers, and large papier-mâché puppets. The puppets were used very effectively in a performance, with music composed by the pupils, of a Hindu tale. The good links made between design and technology, religious education, literacy and music greatly enhanced pupils' learning.
66. In music, pupils learn the correct musical vocabulary from an early age. For example, pupils in Year 1 name instruments accurately, know how to play them and demonstrate very good standards of self-discipline as they wait their turn to play. By Year 6, pupils play instruments confidently, interpreting mood and atmosphere well. The quality of singing, as heard in assembly and hymn practice, is satisfactory. The music curriculum is enriched and enhanced by the provision of peripatetic guitar and percussion lessons and by visits to concerts and participation in musical events with other schools.
67. Only one **physical education** lesson (gymnastics) was observed. This took place at a local high school and in it, pupils in Year 6 demonstrated skills that are above average. This represents good achievement in this aspect of physical education. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator uses her specialist knowledge very effectively and transmits her enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. She provides a very good role model of challenging and stimulating teaching and has been innovative in seeking ways to overcome the lack of facilities in the school. Teachers' planning is supported by a good policy and careful risk assessments are made for each activity.
68. The accommodation severely limits the range of physical experiences that can be offered to pupils on a regular basis. There is no hall to enable regular and frequent access to physical education, the playground is small and uneven, and the field is often too wet to use. The school makes every effort to compensate for its lack of facilities by taking pupils to a local high school for dance or gymnastic lessons each week but this has its drawbacks. For example, the length of time spent on the coach cuts teaching time considerably and the high school's equipment is designed for secondary age pupils. Parents expressed great concern about the lack of facilities and

time for physical education and the fact that the school has to pay for the transport to take the pupils to the high school for what is a statutory National Curriculum subject. They support the school very well by helping to provide a very good range of after-school sports clubs for pupils of all ages, for example, tag rugby and cross-country running. The clubs are very well attended, showing the pupils' very good attitudes to learning and their desire to do well. Swimming lessons take place at a local swimming pool. The great majority of pupils leave the school able to swim the required 25 metres, and many reach much higher standards. Playtimes are used as extra physical education times, with a selection of equipment for playground games but the lack of storage space limits the amount of equipment the school can have. Good links with local primary schools provide further opportunities for sports, matches and tournaments.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 6 and pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching is good and work is very well matched to the pupils' levels of artistic capability.
- The subject is well led and managed

Commentary

69. Pupils successfully learn the basic skills of drawing from observation and understanding and interpreting the work of famous artists, for example, Lowry. They develop a good understanding of the type and uses of art in other cultures through the very good links teachers make between art and design and subjects such as religious education, history and geography. Art and design makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. From an early age, pupils learn to use the correct artistic vocabulary. For example, pupils in Year 1 readily talked about 'portraits' and 'self-portraits' as they discussed and evaluated their work with the teacher. Whilst overall teaching is good, the very good teaching observed in Year 6 helped pupils successfully to recognise the importance of seeing and using shape to prepare outlines for detailed drawing work. The very precise planning of different drawing activities for different groups of pupils helped the pupils to improve their artistic skills considerably as, using pastels, they drew Lowry-style figures onto a prepared background. The teacher's own very good subject knowledge contributed greatly to the pupils' knowledge, understanding and very good achievement in the lesson. As a result, pupils of all ages and levels of artistic capability were fully included.

70. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator provides good levels of support for colleagues and good assessment procedures ensure that pupils' learning and progress are systematically tracked throughout the school. Standards, teaching and learning have not yet been formally monitored but time has been planned for this to happen within the current school development plan. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

PSHCE was sampled.

71. The school very effectively promotes PSHCE development in all aspects of its work. This contributes in great measure to the pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and their very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All pupils feel very valued and involved in the life of the school, not least through the School Council and

the 'Playground Squad' scheme. Their awareness of healthy and safe lifestyles is very effectively promoted through themes that are covered in assemblies, specific PSHCE lessons, discussions and work across several subjects. Because of the school's very caring and supportive ethos, the pupils become caring, mature, responsible young people, very well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life beyond school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2

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

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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