

INSPECTION REPORT

**St. Werburgh's and St. Columba's Catholic Primary
School**

Chester

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111384

Headteacher: Mrs E. Aiello

Lead inspector: Mr Graham Martin

Dates of inspection: 23 – 26 May 2005

Inspection number: 267964

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 aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	279
School address:	Lightfoot Street Chester Cheshire
Postcode:	CH2 3AD
Telephone number:	01244 325528
Fax number:	01244 350540
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. Peter Sharrocks
Date of previous inspection:	19.04.1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This larger than average primary school is situated close to the centre of Chester. It serves the Catholic parishes of St. Werburgh's and St. Columba's, but some children travel to the school from other outlying areas. There are 279 pupils on roll, which is less than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are taught in twelve classes. The school has just less than ten per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average, but more than at the time of the last inspection. Most classes contain children of similar age but some classes have mixed age groups. The majority of pupils are from a White British background, though a small minority are from other ethnic backgrounds and some of these pupils have English as their additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average at about ten per cent of the school population. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is similar to the national average. Children admitted to the current Reception class came to the school from nearly twenty different pre-school settings.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21563	Graham Martin	Lead inspector	English; information and communication technology; physical education; personal, social and health education and citizenship; English as an additional language.
32661	Peter Hopkins	Lay inspector	
30205	Terry Kenna	Team inspector	Science; art and design; design and technology; music; The Foundation Stage.
23196	Sue Chesters	Team inspector	Mathematics; geography; history; special educational needs.

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school with some excellent features. The school's excellent ethos is securely based in its mission to value everyone as of infinite worth to God. The school is led very well. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and there is outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is popular with parents because it successfully provides a high standard of care for their children and helps them to become very good learners. Pupils are happy and they like the school because there are very good relationships and their views are valued. They achieve very well because they are taught very well and they have very good opportunities to learn. Standards are very good in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher's vision for the school is very good and promotes high standards of teamwork. There is very good day-to-day and financial management. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher has a very good educational vision for the school. By promoting high standards of teaching and learning, she establishes a strong role model for other leaders.
- Very good teaching results in very high standards in English, mathematics and science. The pupils' excellent behaviour and attitude to learning results in very good learning and achievement.
- The day-to-day organisation and management of the school are very efficient.
- The governors support and challenge the school very well because they have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Achievement for the children under five in the Reception classes is not as high as in the rest of the school because assessments of children's learning are not sufficiently well structured.
- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to make suggestions about how their school could be improved. There is good provision for the care of pupils, for their personal and social development and for their health education.

The school has made very good improvement since it was last inspected. Teachers' planning and assessment is now very good overall. Support staff are used well to maximise pupils' learning. The value placed on pupils' wellbeing is seen in the improvements to the school's accommodation, in the better provision for their personal, social and health education and in the interesting range of opportunities for learning beyond the national curriculum.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

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

Pupils achieve very well overall. Good achievement in the Foundation Stage leads to most children in the Reception class exceeding the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception year. Year 1 and 2 pupils achieve very well in reading and mathematics and well in writing to attain results above national averages in the national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2. Continuing very good achievement in Years 3 to 6 means that, by the end of Year 6,

standards are well above the nationally expected level in English, above the nationally expected level in science and similar to the nationally expected level in mathematics, with results in English showing that the school compares very well with similar schools. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory. Good provision for pupils with special educational needs means that they also achieve very well. By the end of their time in the school pupils are academically and socially very well prepared for their continuing education.

Pupils' behaviour is **excellent** and they have outstandingly good attitudes to their work. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. As a result, pupils are very polite and considerate of the needs of others. Pupils work hard, they are conscientious and they respond very well to the good opportunities for learning that the school provides.

Attendance is **satisfactory**. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and they arrive punctually.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Very good teaching helps pupils to become effective learners and attain well above average national standards at the end of Years 2 and 6. Good assessments help teachers to set clear targets for learning. Very good partnerships with parents and a curriculum rich with enjoyable activities help pupils to value learning and to have excellent attitudes. Pupils achieve very well because they are very well cared for, they enjoy learning and they have very good relationships with the adults in their school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

This is a very well-led and managed school. The very good educational leadership of the school by the headteacher, and the good leadership of other key staff, help the school to achieve its mission to value every child's worth. Very efficient management promotes good teamwork among the staff to enhance the quality of education. The governors, who ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements, have a very good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This helps them to provide very good levels of support and to set realistic challenges to the school's team of leaders.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very good views of the school. They know that the school works hard to provide the best it can for their children. They speak highly of the school's work to involve them in their children's learning. As a result, parents have a very effective working partnership with the school.

The pupils like their school. They know that the teachers care for them very well and will help them to do their best, so they try very hard with their work. Pupils value the very good opportunities they have to discuss their school and to make suggestions about how it could be improved.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has built the right targets into its improvement plan. To continue with this improvement effectively, the school needs to:

- Strengthen the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage provision for children under five.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children achieve **well** in the Foundation Stage and **very well** in Years 1 to 6. Overall, standards are well above national averages. The standard of reading is a strength throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve **very well**, as do pupils who are gifted and talented.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not achieve as well in the Foundation Stage as they do in Years 1 to 6.
- Pupils achieve very well in Years 1 to 6.
- Pupils make very good progress in reading.

Commentary

1. Because of their good achievement, resulting from very good teaching, the majority of children in the Foundation Stage meet, and a few exceed, the learning goals in all six of the areas of learning for children of their age. Scrutiny of last year's work, which relates to pupils who have started Year 1, indicates that the children achieve well from an average level of attainment when they enter. By the end of the Reception year, good achievement in personal and social development and in communication, language and literacy and mathematical understanding leads to good preparation for learning in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy by the start of Year 1. The children's personal and social skills develop well in the Foundation Stage so that they are very keen to learn. This is a direct result of the good encouragement they receive from adults in the school and from the very strong links that the school has with parents as partners in education. The effect this partnership has on the pupils' achievement is good.
2. On average over the past three years, Year 2 pupils have exceeded the national average in reading with little difference between the results of boys and girls. Standards in writing and mathematics are also above the national average, with both boys and girls performing better than boys and girls nationally, an improvement since the last inspection. The trend of results in Year 2 over the past five years for reading, writing and mathematics has been above the national trend of improvement. Teacher assessed results in science in Year 2 in 2004 show that pupils were above average.
3. The trend of results in national tests in Year 6 over time has also been above the national average. National test results in English in 2004 show standards well above the national average, above the national average in science and similar to the national average in mathematics. In English, results in 2004 were very good in comparison with similar schools. In all three subjects of English, mathematics and science, combined results for boys and girls have been significantly above the national average.
4. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well in reading and writing. By Year 2 pupils have good strategies for tackling unfamiliar words. This very good achievement in reading continues into Years 3 to 6 and their reading skills are well above expectations by age 11. Pupils also achieve very well in writing in Years 1 to 6, resulting in standards well above national averages. Pupils' handwriting is of a good standard with a good level of accuracy in spelling due to a coherent and well structured approach to this aspect of English.
5. In mathematics, pupils in Year 2 are currently exceeding expectations for their age and achieving very well because they are gaining a good understanding of number through discussing mental strategies. As a result they are secure in their conceptual development of number. Currently standards in Year 6 are well above expectations because a strong emphasis

on improving teaching and learning in mathematics gives pupils a secure grasp of the full range of number skills.

6. Pupils achieve very well in science by Year 2 and reach above average standards in their work. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection. They achieve very well by Year 6 and exceed expectations for their age. In information and communication technology, pupils achieve well to reach average standards by Year 2 and by Year 6.
7. Pupils with special educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and those who have special gifts and talents, achieve very well overall. They achieve well in the reception classes, but better in Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.1 (17.2)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	15.2 (15.4)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	16.7 (17.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.3 (28.2)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	27.0 (27.0)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.6 (28.7)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are **excellent**. Their behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is **excellent**. The promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **excellent**. Pupils arrive punctually and attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to school.
- Their behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary.
- The school gives pupils many excellent opportunities to develop their personal skills.
- Pupils are ready for even more opportunities to take charge of their own learning.
- The provision that the school makes for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the corresponding response of the pupils, are excellent.

Commentary

8. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. They say that they enjoy school and like their teachers very much. Pupils are polite but not afraid to ask pertinent questions. In lessons, in response to the teachers' high expectations and very good management, pupils listen to staff carefully and concentrate on the tasks that they are given. The excellent relationships between all members of the school community ensure that all are valued for their contributions. This helps to develop exemplary attitudes among the pupils to work and learning.

9. The teaching staff have a quiet and engaging manner which strongly affects pupils' behaviour in a very positive way. All staff and pupils are involved in considering, and establishing the high expectations of conduct throughout the school. This ensures that everyone understands the policy and that the high expectations are fulfilled. Hence, pupils behave outstandingly well in and around school. In lessons they respond very positively to the lively and practical activities that teachers plan. As a result, behaviour in lessons is excellent.
10. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development. It gives pupils many excellent opportunities to develop their personal skills. This underpins all of its work. As a result, pupils readily accept responsibility when asked to do so. They respect each other and the adults in the school. The essence of the school is to make learning fun. As a result, pupils show pleasure in their own and others' achievements. They know what is expected of them and they respond very well. They enjoy solving their own problems and say that they are ready to take more responsibility for their own learning.
11. The school is outstandingly successful in providing opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, all aspects of pupils' development are excellent. This is very good improvement since the last inspection. The school incorporates a strong spiritual dimension into its work. Consequently, pupils reflect on their actions and take great delight in, and appreciate, the world around them. They learn to respect each other's feelings and beliefs and are prepared to listen to other peoples' views. They learn right from wrong and are upset if their behaviour causes concern to adults or to their friends. Pupils work and play together with enjoyment. They become mature and sensible members of the community and expect their peers to do the same. The school encourages pupils to celebrate the diversity of the cultures and traditions in its midst and in the wider world. As a result, pupils learn quickly that other peoples' lifestyles are as valid as their own. This makes it a pleasure to be part of the school family.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.0	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.

12. In the last year attendance has been satisfactory and in line with the national median. Pupils' punctuality is also satisfactory.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	247	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed-White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	19	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection was very good. The curriculum is planned very well with a very good range of opportunities to learn from the community and the local environment. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory for children under five in the Foundation Stage and good overall in the school. The staff take very good care of the pupils and they make very good arrangements for their welfare. There are very good links with parents and with the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**. Assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and results in pupils learning very successfully.
- Teachers plan exciting practical activities so that pupils can become actively involved in their own learning. Pupils are eager to learn from practical opportunities.
- Assessment is good overall and teachers use the information that they gather well.
- The school has clear plans to spread the good assessment practice throughout the school and across all areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

13. The quality of teaching, throughout the school and across all subjects, is very good. This enables pupils to learn very successfully and results in very good achievement. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The very good quality teaching is exemplified by the:

- very high expectations staff have that pupils will behave well and work hard, which results in pupils working very hard and enthusiastically;
- teachers' very good planning, through which they match work very closely to the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities;
- quiet, dignified way in which teachers explain what it is that they want pupils to achieve in each lesson, which commands pupils respect and ensures that they listen to what they have to do;
- very good links teachers plan between subjects, which means pupils learn in a joined up way and make sense of what they study.

14. Teachers make learning fun for the pupils. They plan exciting activities for the pupils to do. They organise lessons so that pupils can take an active part and can take charge of their own learning. This is very successful. It was seen time and time again in lessons in many subjects. For example, in a:

- history lesson in Year 4, the teacher took on the role of a 'plague doctor' and enthralled the pupils by telling them how to make potions to save them from infection;
- Year 6 mathematics lesson, when pupils experimented to find the weight of plastic cubes by immersing them in water;
- numeracy lesson in Year 3, when pupils searched very successfully for patterns in numbers to consolidate their understanding of place value.

In all of these lessons, the pace of learning was very good and the activities very successfully challenged all pupils. The pupils said that they enjoy working out how to tackle the activities for themselves because they feel in charge of what they learn. They like these opportunities and would welcome more.

15. Overall, teachers assess pupils' learning and track their achievements well. They use the information gathered productively to monitor pupils' progress and to plan work which challenges pupils effectively. There is some very good assessment practice in place, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers involve the pupils in assessing their own work. They do this through very good marking, which acts as a dialogue between teacher and pupil. Thus, pupils know exactly what it is that they have to do to improve. They write their own return comments on how successful they think they have been. In Years 3 to 6, pupils use a 'traffic light' system to tell their teacher how well they think they have succeeded. If they are not sure, they use a red or orange crayon and, when they understand completely, they use green. In the other year groups a variety of self-assessment techniques is in place, all of which pupils use honestly and openly to show very clearly how they think that they achieve. The school has identified the need to draw these very good systems together and spread them across all subjects.
16. Very good quality teaching assistants give very good support to pupils identified with SEN. They are very well deployed and work with individuals and small groups, giving targeted support, matched very closely to the needs identified in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs). This has a very positive impact on pupils' learning and enables them to achieve very well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (7%)	17 (57%)	9 (29%)	2 (7%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum meets pupils' needs **very well**. It is broad and balanced and of very good quality. It enables all groups of pupils to achieve very well. A good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors all enrich the curriculum **well**. The **good** quality and quantity of accommodation and resources of the school meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good whole school approach to planning, evaluation, and monitoring curriculum innovation, which very effectively supports all pupils' learning.
- The wide and varied opportunities for curriculum enrichment.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social, and health education is very good.
- There is good quality accommodation and resources. However, use of the outside area for children's physical development in the Foundation Stage is limited.

Commentary

17. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has improved and is now very well planned to ensure that pupils of all abilities are able to carry out research and use investigational skills within the subjects of the curriculum, which is very broad and well balanced. Curriculum planning for the Foundation Stage children has made good improvement and is now very good. Thorough attention is given to long and medium-term planning, and this helps to ensure a consistent approach, for instance between the different classes in the same year-group.
18. Because of the school's very careful scrutiny of its work, it is able to adopt an innovative, whole school approach to curriculum planning. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' physical, social and intellectual skills. These are very well supported by all pupils and cover a wide range, such as computer, music, art, dance and drama clubs. Sporting activities cover a wide range including boys and girls football, cross country, and netball. There are a good range of visits to

places of educational interest, which brings learning alive for the pupils. Also, the wide range of visitors stimulates their interest in music, the arts and the wider local community.

19. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good. The exceptionally positive and valuing ethos of the school and the outstanding relationships between teachers, all support staff and pupils provide extremely well for their personal development. There is a very well structured programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), taught through designated and other curriculum subjects, particularly religious education and science. This programme, combined with exceptionally high expectations by all adults, enables pupils to develop very well and underpins their generally very good attitudes and behaviour.
20. There are well established systems in place to support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) as they move through the school. Individual education programmes (IEPs) are of very good quality and match pupils' needs closely. They are shared with the pupils and their parents. All involved staff are aware of the needs of each pupil. However, systems are not robust enough to support a sudden increase in the number of pupils with special needs. Similarly, systems would not easily support an increase in the severity of diagnosed needs, particularly if combined with behavioural and emotional problems.
21. Overall the school's accommodation, grounds and resources are good. The good range and quality of resources support learning well in all areas of the curriculum. The Foundation Stage has satisfactory outdoor provision; however, the small area is insufficient to accommodate enough equipment to fully develop children's gross motor skills. Children have very limited access to an outside area where these are available.

Care, guidance and support

The provision of pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is **very good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **very good**. Pupils' involvement through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

Main strengths and Weaknesses

- Pupils receive very good guidance and support, which contributes to their personal and academic development.
- The school has a thorough approach to health and safety and care which ensures a safe environment for pupils.
- Pupils have a trusting relationship with staff, which contributes to the happy and friendly atmosphere in the school.
- The School Council provides pupils with a good opportunity to contribute to school life.

Commentary

22. A key element of the school mission statement is to recognise that every child is unique and this, together with the Christian ethos of the school, underpins school life. School assemblies focus on pupils' rights and responsibilities and pupils are made aware of the activities of children from around the world and of world issues, for example "Fair Trade". The school monitors the academic and personal development of pupils well. Records are updated termly and passed to the next teacher as pupils progress through the school. This information is included in the annual report to parents. Pupils' moral development is a key element of the "Here I am" programme and health and welfare is part of the PSHCE curriculum. Parents feel that they receive good feedback and support from staff about the personal development of their children and that they work together as a team to deal with any issues. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are regularly checked and the school uses external agencies such as medical experts to provide accurate assessments when needed.

23. The school has very clear and thorough policies for health and safety and child protection. There is a nominated child protection officer and all staff are kept informed through staff meetings. All concerns are recorded and the headteacher takes the appropriate action. The school works closely with other agencies to support both pupils and parents. The Maintenance Officer checks the school daily for health and safety issues and the health and safety governor and the teachers' health and safety representative are also involved in safety checks. There is also an annual audit carried out by the County Council. Specialist contractors properly carry out mandatory checks of fire and water equipment. Regular reports are presented to the Health and Safety Committee of the Governing Body. Teachers carry out regular risk assessments and any safety issues are built into lesson plans. They also log any health and safety concerns and report them to the Maintenance Officer.
24. Staff are well aware of any medical or dietary needs of pupils. Parents keep the school informed of any special needs and all staff are then made aware of any action to be taken. Details of necessary action are kept safely. The kitchen staff prepare any special food that is necessary and the school nurse visits the school to train staff in the use of specialised emergency equipment. Each class has ready access to equipment for the needs of asthma sufferers. The school promotes healthy eating and requests that parents do not include fizzy drinks with school lunches. At the before and after school clubs, pupils are provided with water. More healthy food is gradually being introduced into the lunchtime menu and pupils receive stickers and praise for trying healthy options. The school, in partnership with parents, has developed a project called "Safer Routes to School" which includes cycle proficiency training and three walking buses, which encourage pupils to walk to school guided by parent volunteers.
25. Pupils like coming to school and have a trusting relationship with adults. Pupils relate very well to their teachers in the classroom and are keen to take part in lessons, answer questions and carry out any tasks given to them. Pupils are friendly and talk confidently to adults. In the playground they clearly relate well to the midday supervisors and play games with them.
26. The School Council provides a good opportunity for pupils to play an increasing role in school life. Pupils are keen to be on the School Council, and every year each class elects its representatives. A teacher is given the specific role of supporting the School Council and being the link person to the staff. Each class has a book for suggestions, which form the basis for regular meetings. School Council members have promoted healthy eating by speaking to the whole school at assembly about the benefits of healthy food. They have also played a part in gaining additional playground equipment, which was supported by a grant from a national bank with locally based headquarters. The impact of the School Council can be seen in many small changes about the school and also in the opportunities it provides for the pupils' self development and confidence.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents, the community and with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides parents with a wide range of information about activities in the school and the progress of their children.
- Parents play a major part in the life of the school.
- The extensive links with the High School and other partner schools support learning and promote the smooth transfer of pupils to secondary school.

Commentary

27. Parents have a very positive view of the school and they feel that they are well informed about school activities and the progress of their children. The school has developed a comprehensive website that provides a wide range of information. It contains the School Prospectus and

Governors Report, both of which contain detailed information about school ethos and performance, policies on behaviour and attendance and details of the school community. Parents receive regular newsletters containing general information about school activities and key dates. They also receive an annual report that provides details of their child's academic and social development. The report details what has been achieved, what the next steps will be and what the key targets are. There are two parents evenings every year and these are well attended. Parents feel that school staff are very approachable and they can discuss any issues or concerns on an informal basis with the class teachers. Parents also feel that the home/school link books are of great benefit. They can make comments on homework and teachers will address any concerns. The school has arranged for courses to be provided in the school for parents. Courses on ICT and writing provide parents with information and skills to support learning at home. There have also been informal coffee meetings at which parents can discuss a range of school issues and evening meetings to help parents think about their faith and support their children in preparing for sacraments.

28. Parents play an active role in school life. Many parents help in the classroom supporting reading and project work. Others help with the school website, flowers in school and on school trips. Parents have also taken part in developing the "walking bus" and bring pupils to school every day. Some parents have given a talk to parents of children new to the school in order to support induction. There is an active PTA that raises a significant amount of money for the school by organising a range of social events.
29. The school has strong links to the Catholic High School and the cluster of feeder schools, which are providing benefits to the pupils. Pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 visit the High School in order to become familiar with their new school. Staff from the High School regularly visit the school to talk to pupils and take lessons. The schools have developed a number of transition projects in science and in mathematics that pupils begin in Year 6 and continue in the High School. This year the High School has produced a Transition Pack to aid those pupils that need extra support. The school benefits from the close partnership working within the cluster group. Teachers from the High School have provided additional support to some of the most able pupils and have helped the school by lending them science and information and communication technology equipment to develop learning. The cluster is jointly planning to bid for additional funding to support the gifted and talented pupils within the cluster. The school works hard, with some success, to meet the challenge of establishing worthwhile links with the many local providers of pre-school education.
30. Good communication keeps parents well informed about their children's progress through the termly consultation meetings, well written reports and regular availability and approachability of staff. The regular newsletters are informative about school life and the advance notice they receive of the curriculum to be provided during the term enables parents to support their children's studies. Parents appreciate this level of information and are delighted with the way they can approach staff easily and comfortably with any problems or concerns they may have.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management by the headteacher is **very good**, with key staff playing an increasingly high profile role in the school's good leadership. Governance is **good**, and governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Because the school is led and governed well, the drive for self-improvement is effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very well led by the headteacher, who has an outstanding commitment to the inclusion of all pupils and a clear vision and sense of purpose.
- The leadership team support the headteacher well, providing a good model of leadership for all staff, which helps to drive improvement forward.

- The governors know the school very well. They have a very good level of expertise and play a full part in helping to shape the direction of the school.
- A good school development plan enables all staff to identify their roles and responsibilities in the drive for improvement. The governing body is involved very closely in the process of planning and monitoring school improvement.
- The procedures for checking the performance of the school are good.
- The school's finances are well managed.

Commentary

31. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the improvement of the school, grounded securely in the high aspirations of the mission statement. She is well supported by an experienced deputy headteacher and an effective senior management team. The headteacher's commitment to maintaining a caring, inclusive school is high and is a significant feature in her overall good leadership and management of it. Under her direction, and with the able support of the senior management team, the school has responded very well to the issues highlighted in the last report. Improved accommodation has greatly improved the learning environment, the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been introduced to good effect and the overall quality of teaching has improved. The school has good systems for checking on its performance, for example through good analysis of test results, enabling the management team to have a clear view of where there are strengths and where there are areas for improvement. Strategic planning is very good and looks to the future needs of the school and the community it serves. However, the management systems for providing support for pupils with special educational needs, while currently good, are not robust enough to withstand any further significant increases in the number of pupils with such needs. The school has taken effective action to raise standards across all ages, as shown in the good results in Years 2 and 6.
32. The headteacher has delegated leadership and management responsibilities wisely so that effective teams have been formed. The senior management team is influential, not only in the day-to-day running of the school, but also in supporting school improvement and in the raising of standards. By making key appointments to strengthen the staff team and by giving clear guidance on roles and responsibilities, the leadership of the school has delegated important improvement initiatives to staff with the determination to succeed. For example, careful and effective monitoring of teaching, learning and achievement in the core subjects provided the evidence needed to show that standards could be higher. This is how the school identified the potential to raise standards in mathematics and the resulting good practice that follows is influencing the quality of teaching and learning.
33. Governance is good, with some very good features. Governors are involved actively in the life of the school and in the school improvement process. They are very well informed, they have a high level of expertise and they have an effective role in strategic planning. Consequently, they have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are able to carry out their statutory duties very well. A healthy balance is struck between supporting and challenging the school's leadership. The school improvement plan, with the full involvement of governors, is thorough and enables the school to measure accurately its progress towards improvement targets. Governors play a full and active part in checking the work of the school. There are good links between governors and subject co-ordinators, which help governors to have a clear picture of what is being done to improve each subject. The good governance of the school is largely the result of very good teamwork within the governing body. A very efficient committee structure enables the governors to manage their workload effectively and to be decisive and constructive.
34. The school is very well managed. Good improvements to the school development plan, following up issues raised from the previous inspection, show that the school has successfully addressed the principle of taking a longer-term view of its improvement. So, the school development plan shows clearly how key objectives will be addressed in the medium-term and met in the longer term. Performance management is used well to determine training needs in

line with school improvement planning. There are good opportunities for teachers to take part in training linked to school and personal priorities, helping to build up their own professional development. The headteacher, management team and subject leaders regularly scrutinise pupils' work and the work of teachers. This is taken into consideration alongside teacher and school needs, to provide direction and training to continue to raise standards.

35. The school budget is well managed and efficient systems are in place to ensure that the finances are carefully controlled and expenditure regularly reviewed. There is a very good understanding among senior staff and governors of the principles of best value, which are applied well when comparing costs for purchases and their effect on standards attained by pupils. Very good teamwork and management by two administrative staff makes a strong contribution to the school's ethos. The good work of the finance officer makes an effective contribution to the efficient management of the school. Other support staff also make a positive contribution to the effective day-to-day running of the school which mean that the leadership can be directly involved in checking the work to develop the school further. Prudent management of financial resources means that the school is able to focus its spending on key aspects of improvement. The school provides very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£547734	Balance from previous year	£19759
Total expenditure	£524706	Balance carried forward to the next	£42787
Expenditure per pupil	£1901.11		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in all the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year is **good**.

Children enter one of two Reception classes at the beginning of the school year in which they will become five, older children in one class, younger in the other. They enter the school from 20 different pre-school settings. The overall attainments of the children starting their full time education is what is usually expected for children of this age, however there is a very wide range of abilities. The overall attainment is the same as that reported previously during the last inspection. With good achievement, the majority will achieve the Early Learning Goals in most areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. There has been good improvement against the key issues identified in the Foundation Stage at the last inspection. However overall improvement is satisfactory as leadership of the Foundation Stage is not fully co-ordinated.

Both classes provide a stable and caring environment. The children are encouraged to enjoy learning and to take part in a wide range of lively, practical activities, which support their progress effectively in all areas. Attainment varies widely, a number of the younger children start school with skills, which are below the expected level in almost all areas of learning, particularly in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the Reception year, almost all children have achieved well. This is due to a very well planned curriculum and very good quality teaching. Children with special education needs are very effectively supported and have full access to the curriculum. However, in spite of the good progress made a small number of children do not attain the early learning goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception year. This is particularly evident in the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. This attainment is similar to that reported previously but reflects the change in the range of ability in the cohorts entering the school.

Both classes have their own teaching areas that are well equipped and established. They share a small outside area, the use of which is carefully planned in order to ensure a common progression of experiences across both classes. Children have regular timetabled access to a larger area where climbing activities and large wheeled toys are available.

Parents expressed their appreciation of the good links that staff in the Reception classes have built with them. They feel that these good procedures have a positive impact on the way in which their children settle in school, and they become involved in its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the Foundation Stage is not fully co-ordinated.
- Teaching is consistently very good.
- On-going assessment of children is very thorough, though informal and unstructured.
- Good classroom organisation contributes very positively to teaching and learning.
- Children are enabled to become independent very effectively.
- The strongly supportive relationships of all the staff.

Commentary

36. Changes to staffing mean that there is currently no clear leadership of the Foundation Stage. However, the very good teamwork among teachers and teaching assistants leads to satisfactory leadership and management of the Foundation Stage overall.

37. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. All teachers have a quiet and engaging manner, enabling them to form very good relationships with all the children, which in turn ensures that they want to learn. They provide a rich variety of well planned activities, which stimulate learning across all six areas of learning. Both the teachers and classroom assistants interact very effectively with the children, which promotes their learning well and contributes very positively to the good progress they are making.
38. Throughout their first term, children are assessed against the nationally recommended targets. Due to the unclear leadership structure, this assessment is insufficiently formalised in order to make it readily accessible. However, the informal assessments are used effectively by class teachers to plan, with work specifically aimed at the needs of individual children. Daily assessment then ensures that planning is constantly adapted to meet the changing needs of all the children in all areas of their development.
39. The teachers organise the classrooms effectively enabling them to meet the learning needs of all the children. In both classes, careful planning and good flexibility ensure that children are provided with a good balance of short periods of direct teaching, intensive work with the teacher or classroom assistant in small groups and opportunities to make choices from a range of activities for themselves. In both classes this approach is well matched to the children's attention span and their need to learn through practical activity. This successfully contributes to the good progress they make.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff show a consistent approach to establish consistent routines and to support children's learning.
- Good classroom organisation develops social interaction.
- Well-organised daily routines help the children to become confident and independent.

Commentary

40. In both classes, staff establish consistent routines, helping children to work in various groups, to take turns and share. As a result the children are growing in confidence and developing positive attitudes to their work. They understand classroom rules and routines and their behaviour is very good. Lining up for assembly is accomplished in a sensible and careful way.
41. Children enter the Reception classes with personal, social and emotional developments that are at the levels expected. The teacher and classroom assistants place great emphasis on further development of children's personal, social and emotional skills, by helping them to become more independent. In order to do this they design activities that support all areas of learning. There are clear routines for children to select and work in the different areas of the room or with particular pieces of equipment. Children understand and respond to these routines well. The approach taken to involving children in managing resources and equipment for themselves is good for promoting personal development and many are able to clear things away quickly and tidily when required.
42. All staff give clear ideas of what is expected of the children including the difference between right and wrong. Patient, supportive teaching, where children are encouraged to work together and collaborate in their tasks, results in happy and confident children who make good gains in their lessons.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's communication skills are being developed well.
- Great emphasis is placed on developing children's listening skills.
- Writing is made relevant and interesting.

Commentary

43. As a result of very good teaching strategies in both classes, children answer questions posed by their teachers and are eager to express their ideas in words. The majority show confidence in speaking to adults and to other children, and many initiate conversations in their play. They enjoy listening to stories and sharing a book with an adult. Most children know many letter sounds and can draw the shapes of letters.
44. Children understand that writing is used to communicate and at times they enjoy working at the writing tables, making books and lists. In one lesson observed, the teacher gave valuable support and help to a group who were writing about "*Who sank the boat?*". Many demonstrated the ability to use their knowledge of sounds to write words; many were correct, others phonetically recognisable.
45. Children are aware that books are a source of information and pleasure. They handle books with confidence, and are eager to retell the stories. Some are able to recognise familiar words.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every opportunity is taken to develop children's counting skills.
- There is good organisation of teaching and learning.
- Mathematical concepts are made relevant to children's experiences.

Commentary

46. Children are making good progress in developing their awareness and understanding of mathematics. Most can count accurately to 50, and many beyond. The teachers make very good use of number rhymes to reinforce children's counting. Children count while they sort objects as they play.
47. The teachers organise the classrooms effectively to enable them to meet the mathematical needs of all children. Planning ensures that children are provided with a balance of teaching and activities. Mathematical learning opportunities are planned into a range of activities that children choose for themselves.
48. Most children can recognise simple two-dimensional shapes. They know circle, square, triangle and rectangle. They relate addition to combining two groups of objects, and can use the appropriate language and symbols. They use appropriate vocabulary when answering questions, such as those about 'more than'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff plan a good range of interesting activities that lay a strong emphasis on practical investigation, this makes learning interesting and exciting.
- Computers are well used.

Commentary

49. Children are provided with a wealth of opportunities to learn about their world. Activities are interesting and are well planned with an emphasis on investigation. For example, during the inspection, children were following a scheme of work around the story '*Who sank the boat?*'. Many investigations were built into this topic, children took great delight in estimating which objects would float and which would sink, and were delighted as they discovered if their predictions were correct.

50. Children use the computers with confidence, using the mouse to identify and move items on the computer screen and point to illustrations. They use word processing programs to write their water poems, and illustrate them using a paint program. A wide variety of programs are used well to promote the children's understanding in this area of learning, and across all others.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Access to outdoor facilities for physical development is limited.
- There is good use of other available facilities, such as the hall.

Commentary

51. Children have limited access to the outdoor facility where climbing apparatus and wheeled vehicles are available. Teachers compensate for this by ensuring that children experience challenge in their physical development through the use of the school hall for physical education lessons.

52. Children handle equipment with care, and most are aware of the need to do things safely. Children's skills in manipulating small tools, scissors and pencils develop well because of the good opportunities they have to practise and apply them.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of experiences and materials are used to stimulate children's imagination.
- Good links are made with other areas of learning.

Commentary

53. In both classes children enjoy a good range of well-planned art and craft and role-play experiences to stimulate their imagination. They concentrate well on these, making pictures and

models with a variety of materials and paint. They are beginning to relate well to each other and share in imaginative ideas to create stories and events, this was observed as they re-enact the story of *'Who sank the boat?'* Children made models of boats as they experimented with floating and sinking. They discover how many different ways you can make sounds, they make loud and quiet sounds, and many can keep a beat.

54. Children are able to join materials together using sticky tape or glue. At times they work with intense concentration on their tasks paying attention to small details. This was seen as they fixed sails on their boats.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- From an average level on entry at age 5, pupils achieve very well in Years 1 to 6, reaching very good standards overall in reading and writing by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Teaching is very good overall. Very good lessons provide pupils with exciting opportunities to use their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers pay very good attention to developing pupils' basic skills. They place strong emphasis on the pupils using these skills in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.
- The subject leader has a very good understanding of how to maintain and improve standards and where expertise can be harnessed to improve teaching and learning.

Commentary

55. Standards in English are well above expectations in Year 2 and have improved since the last inspection report. They mirror recent well above average national test and assessment results. From an overall level of attainment that is average on entry to the reception class, pupils achieve very well in their reading and writing throughout the infant classes. This is because the teachers encourage the development of speaking and listening skills very well, which helps pupils to be good learners. This is reflected in the very good standards in reading and writing seen during the inspection. By the end of Year 2, pupils develop very good strategies in reading for tackling unfamiliar words and higher attaining pupils use the context of the story well to guess meaning. By the end of Year 6, pupils express clear preferences and justify their choice of books or authors. The effective teaching of reading by 'guiding' groups of pupils through a text (guided reading) provides pupils with a good level of challenge for the development of their reading skills and makes a strong contribution to the very good standard of reading overall.
56. Standards of reading and writing are very good. This is reflected in the national tests for Year 6 pupils, where averages show reading and writing results well above those of similar schools and the national average. Pupils' achievement in English is very good through Years 1 to 6. The standard of spelling is above average because the school emphasises the basic skills of phonics and gives regular spelling practice tests. Regular practice also promotes a good standard of handwriting. The resulting neat presentation of written work shows pupils' pride in their handwriting. Intervention strategies, including early, additional and further literacy support have a very good impact on the achievement of pupils who need extra guidance to support their learning.
57. Teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Some very good examples were seen of teachers using challenging and probing questioning to support pupils' responses and good prompting to encourage less able pupils to respond to questions. In all lessons seen, there was a strong

emphasis on promoting very good speaking and listening skills so that pupils develop effective learning skills. In the best lessons seen, links were made between the content of the literacy lesson and topics being covered in other subjects, so that the pupils' interest is sustained. A good example of this was seen when a writing activity was linked with investigation into the history of medical care in Tudor times.

58. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are met effectively through intensive, focused support. Teaching assistants play a key role in this work. As a result of the teachers' effective planning and the joint intervention of teachers and teaching assistants to support their learning, pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Teachers mark work well, showing that they are using their marking to assess pupils' learning and to identify what individual pupils need to do to improve. As a result, achievement targets reflect the learning needs of each pupil. These targets are clearly explained so that pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to achieve them. The result is that pupils make good and often very good steps in their learning by working towards the targets they have set with their teachers.
59. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They respond exceptionally well to lessons that are interesting, working diligently and producing work of a very good standard. When they see their learning as meaningful and relevant to topics they are studying in other subjects, and when stimulating and inspiring teaching enliven their learning, they produce outstanding work.
60. Very good leadership and management of the subject ensures that there has been good improvement and good capacity for continuing improvement of provision and standards. From her own evaluation, the subject leader is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and that there is a continuing need to close the small gap between standards in writing and those in reading. She recognises that improving pupils' speaking and listening skills and making writing relevant and meaningful is the key to raising standards. With this support, the teachers can identify pupils' needs and target pupils who need help to achieve their learning potential. The effective use of this programme is having a positive effect on the learning of pupils who otherwise would not make the progress they should. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, with better standards, the improvement in teaching overall and a clear focus on providing targeted support for all pupils to raise standards.

Literacy across the curriculum

61. There are good and sometimes very good opportunities for pupils to use their language and literacy skills in other lessons. There are good chances for pupils to develop their writing and drama skills in history lessons. Pupils' work shows writing in the role of historical characters, for instance, people in Tudor times concerned about the effects of the plague. They also practice different styles of writing, for instance, when writing up an experiment in a science lesson, or recording the results of research into a geography topic. Pupils often have good opportunities to use ICT in English lessons. In one very good Year 6 lesson, the teacher used dynamic ICT projected images of a concentration camp to encourage the development of speaking, listening and writing skills. In this lesson, the pupils wrote haiku poems very well to show their understanding of the emotions conveyed by the images. The activity supported their learning very well and represented a good example of the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool in other subject areas.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made rapid strides in improving standards.
- Pupils say that mathematics is exciting. Lessons are fun.
- Pupils reach well above average standards by Year 6.

Commentary

62. In the national tests of 2004 for Year 6 pupils, the school's results were average when compared with results nationally and when compared with results of similar schools. This meant pupils were not achieving as well in mathematics as they were in English or science. The school identified that a group of boys in that year group had underachieved and had not reached the expected Level 4. On reflection, it also concluded that numeracy had not received as much time or attention as literacy. This may well have accounted for the lower mathematical achievement of this particular year group. The consequent action plan addressed these issues very successfully. Very good, rapid improvement has resulted in the predicted levels for this year's test results being well above average. Very good improvement has been made in the subject since the last inspection and in particular in this academic year.

63. Pupils, throughout the school, thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons. They say that mathematics is exciting. One boy remarked that 'Miss always makes lessons fun!' This was demonstrated very well in the lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers plan lively, practical activities for pupils. They have very clear objectives of what it is that they want pupils to achieve. As a result, pupils achieve very well and respond very enthusiastically. All staff inculcate a love for the subject in the pupils.

64. By Year 6, pupils achieve very well and reach well above average standards. They do this because of the very good:

- teaching, which ensures that all pupils learn very successfully;
- assessment, which enables staff to plan work very closely matched to individual needs;
- activities planned, which enthuse and motivate pupils to learn;
- subject leader, who very carefully analyses all aspects of the subject and quickly and effectively addresses any issues arising.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Pupils use their mathematical skills to good effect across the curriculum. They use their knowledge of tallying to enhance their understanding of data when collecting for graph work in ICT. They measure, using a good range of standard units, in design and technology and science. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson, pupils used standard units of length to record the distances different sounds can travel.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is now better than at the time of the last inspection and pupils achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- The curriculum is very good.

Commentary

66. At the time of the last inspection the school was criticised because progress in years 3 to 6 was unsatisfactory. Since then there has been a greater emphasis on improving teaching and learning in these years, and pupils' achievement is now much better. This improvement has raised standards considerably. By the end of Year 2 standards are high. This achievement is sustained so that by the end of Year 6 standards are very high in comparison with national averages, with a substantial majority of pupils achieving the higher level 5 by the time they leave the school. This represents very good achievement.

67. The quality of teaching and of learning is very good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully bearing in mind the differing abilities of their pupils. There is a commendable emphasis on pupils planning and carrying out investigations. For instance in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were challenged to test pieces of chocolate in order to discover the amounts of air trapped in the bubbles - and to devise a method of recording their results. This very successful lesson resulted in all attempting to achieve their aim, but all realising that a fairer test would need to be devised. Teachers deploy resources with great care and make sure they are readily available in lessons. Teachers are very clear about precisely what it is they want their pupils to learn and challenge pupils' thinking very effectively. Thus in a very good Year 3 lesson, given a set of equipment and salt, bicarbonate of soda, flour and water, pupils used their knowledge and understanding to make predictions and test them in order to discover which would dissolve. Procedures to assess pupils' progress are developing well, and they enable teachers to modify the work in response to individual understanding and achievement.
68. The subject is very well led and managed and the curriculum is very good. The subject co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and keen to drive up standards. She has ensured that the quality of the curriculum is now very good. In planning, greater emphasis is placed on the importance of consistent investigative methods across all areas of scientific understanding. Thus pupils are enabled to progressively develop their skills and knowledge from year to year. There is a very commendable emphasis on building excitement into the curriculum and in emphasising the importance of pupils learning and using the correct subject specific vocabulary. The school is working hard developing the curriculum to improve the use of mathematics and ICT in science and a good start has been made. This was seen in the use of a digital microscope in Year 6 to make close observations of bubbles in chocolate.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**, with a **good feature** in the strength of leadership.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement since the last inspection in resources and the teachers' subject knowledge.
- Staff are enthusiastic about the teaching of information and communication technology.
- Good and sometimes very good teaching provides pupils with opportunities to use their ICT skills to develop their knowledge and understanding in other subject areas.
- The co-ordinator is keen, and provides enthusiastic and effective leadership.

Commentary

69. Standards are at the expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well to attain average standards. Pupils enjoy using the computers and they talk about their learning knowledgeably. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils learn to use different fonts, how to change the size and colour of their text and how to import graphics into a word-processed document. The older pupils show how they can use animation in presentations such as those created using 'PowerPoint' and they can add buttons to hyperlink to another web page. Pupils achieve well through Years 3 to 6 and attain average standards. Pupils have a wider range of skills than those at the time of the last inspection and the teachers are more confident in the subject.
70. The range of skills that pupils develop has improved since the last inspection as they have made use of the improved range of resources, including Internet facilities for research purposes. The provision of an ICT suite has been central to this and has resulted in pupils having better opportunities to learn new skills and to apply them in their work in ICT and in other subjects. The subject leader recognises the need to continue with improvements to resources to promote higher standards. Good improvement is also seen in the better opportunities for learning

resulting from staff training, which has increased their skills, and in the wider use of ICT in other subjects. The school now has a comprehensive set of plans for the teachers to use and statutory requirements are fully met.

71. Staff are enthusiastic about the teaching of ICT. The teachers value the training they have received to help them make good use of the resources available. As a result, pupils increasingly use computers for researching and presenting information. Teachers feel that training has developed their skills and increased their confidence to plan the use of ICT into lessons and to teach specific skills to their pupils. Teaching seen during the inspection was mostly good and sometimes very good. ICT was used well to link with other lessons, such as when pupils planned pages about Spanish artists, learning how to use hyperlinks for the school web site. Other evidence of good learning is seen in the displays that show ICT content within other topics and in the work displayed that shows how pupils have developed and used specific ICT skills. These include:

- Reception age children using a design software package to draw and write about what they would see beneath the sea.
- Year 1 and 2 pupils using a drawing program to make seaside scenes.
- Year 3 pupils analysing the frequency of vowels in words and producing graphs and pie charts of their results.
- Year 4 pupils using the symmetry tool in a drawing program to recreate pictures of Tudor houses.
- Year 5 pupils learning how to use software to design and print T-shirts and using a letter design program to cut vinyl letters for display titles.
- Year 6 pupils producing 'PowerPoint' slide presentations, producing pages for the school web site and using geometric tools in a program to design an ideal bedroom.

72. The subject is led and managed very well. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and effective in her leadership of the subject. She has identified clearly the strengths in the subject and the areas for development, such as the need to update hardware and to invest in more resources, such as interactive whiteboards and the associated training that will be needed. She sees that the staff are keen and enthusiastic and that the subject is well placed to move forwards. The school recognises that resources will need to improve still further, such as updating the operating systems on the suite of computers, to maintain and accelerate the positive start the school has made.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Teachers throughout the school are making increased use of ICT to support the pupils' learning in other subject areas. Overall, the use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has invested well in software to support learning in each of the subjects of the curriculum. Pupils have good opportunities to use the computers in the classroom to investigate topics or complete work in other subjects. For example, the pupils use the computers to draft and redraft their work in literacy lessons. In geography, younger pupils have used drawing programs to show their ideal beach scene when learning about holiday locations. Older pupils search Internet web sites for information about Spanish artists to be included on linked pages for the school web site. This was a good example of ICT being used as a teaching tool across art and design and history, but staff recognise that more needs to be done across the school to provide improved resources for the use of ICT as a way of stimulating interest and enriching learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are given good opportunities to use ICT to support their learning.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Commentary

74. Insufficient lessons were seen on which to make judgements on provision in **geography** and **history**, nor on teaching, learning and achievement. However, from the lessons seen and from looking at work on display and in pupils' books, the indications are that standards are likely to be above average throughout the school. Teachers' planning for both subjects shows very good, natural links to other curriculum areas. This enables pupils to learn in a 'joined up way'. For example, in a very good Year 1 geography lesson, pupils learned what to remember when making a journey into the countryside. Not only did they learn about different locations in the United Kingdom, they also developed a good understanding of their responsibilities as good citizens and how to treat the countryside respectfully. Pupils say that they enjoy both subjects very much. They talk intelligently about what they have learned. For example, in a very good Year 3 history lesson, pupils discussed with clarity their findings about how current medical practices differ from those in Tudor times.
75. Visits and visitors greatly enhance both the geography and the history curriculum. History visits to places of interest, such as Norton Priory, to study what life was like in Tudor Times and by following the Tower Wharf Canal Trail, help pupils to develop their sense of chronology and their understanding of how and why things change. Walking to Chester Cathedral, or coming to school with the walking bus, raises pupils' awareness of local geographical issues, such as traffic and pollution. Barnaby Bear's travels extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Both subjects very successfully support pupils' cultural and multi-cultural development. Their studies greatly enhance their understanding of, and build up their respect for, other peoples' values and ways of life.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

76. This is a church aided school and the governors are required to make separate arrangements for the inspection of religious education and worship.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

ART AND DESIGN, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY, MUSIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

One lesson was observed in art and design, one in physical education, two in music and none in design and technology.

Commentary

77. In **art and design, design technology, music and physical education**, work was sampled and discussions held with staff. However there is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements about provision in these four subjects.
78. In a good **art and design lesson** observed in Year 6 the teacher worked very effectively to develop the pupils' artistic skills and ideas. Sketches in the style of Picasso were developing very well, as pupils worked collaboratively to produce their designs using a range of materials. Pupils have worked with visiting artists to produce many displays around the school. They use a wide range of media to produce pictures, designs and collages. Three-dimensional work is being very well developed, and very good examples were seen of clay pots and tiles. Overall the standard of work displayed around the school is very high. The co-ordinator has a very clear overview of the subject, she ensures that all pupils have access to a very wide range of high quality materials, and she is instrumental in ensuring that the cultural impact on the subject is as strong as possible.

79. In **design and technology** the curriculum is planned well and ensures that the pupils plan their work, make their products and evaluate the end results. Design and technology is linked to other areas of the curriculum through a cross-curricular approach, this was seen in the Tudor style houses the pupils had made as part of a history project. Judging from the work seen, from teachers planning and from the display of pupils' work around the school, pupils have the opportunity to experience a wide range of different types of activity. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and, as a result, they try hard with their work.
80. In a very good **music** lesson observed in Year 3 pupils experimented with duration and dynamics prior to developing their own compositions depicting the painting 'The scream'. Recordings of previous compositions clearly demonstrated pupils' very good achievement over a period of time. During assemblies pupils listen to music, and tunefully join in with songs and hymns. There is a flourishing school choir, and all enjoy singing. The school has celebrated with a music week, when visiting musicians worked with the pupils on a wide range of skills. The very recently appointed co-ordinator has a very clear vision for further raising the subject's profile within the school.
81. Only one full lesson was observed in **physical education** and so it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching or pupils' attainment across the range of physical activities. Judgements are based on discussions with the subject co-ordinator and brief observations of a small sample of lessons. Teachers' planning indicates that a good range of physical activities takes place including dance and swimming. A wide range of good extra-curricular activities enriches the pupils' physical activity. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in the disciplines of dance, gymnastics, movement and competitive games. The subject co-ordinator leads the development of the subject very well. By making very good use of a comprehensive audit of the subject in an annual report he has identified a clear pathway for using his own leadership skills to improve the subject. He has made significant improvements by responding reflectively to the subject report in the previous inspection. For example, better links with the community and local sports clubs enrich the pupils' opportunities for physical education. It is a credit to the school that these well-supported links provide a rich variety of additional experiences for pupils' enjoyment and benefit.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff positively reinforce the excellent attitudes shown by pupils.
- Parents welcome and value the school's very positive approach to supporting their children's personal and social development.
- Work to raise awareness of environmental issues and living healthily helps pupils' to recognise what they need to do to be responsible members of society.
- The pupils' social awareness is developed very well through their involvement in the School Council, and through community activities such as fund-raising for local, national and international charities.

Commentary

82. The school has very clear strategies for working in partnership with parents to help pupils to develop very good social and personal skills. The very good role models provided by adults in the school, the high quality of concern and care shown to the pupils and the effective encouragement for pupils to see their school as one big family create a very positive ethos in which all pupils can see their value within society. The school gives good attention to educating pupils about personal, social and health matters. This is sometimes achieved through specific lessons with a major focus on issues such as controlling anger or keeping healthy through the well planned yet flexible scheme so that curriculum content can be matched to work in other

subjects. Within specific subjects too the content has a personal, social and health education focus of its own. In science studies of healthy food and a balanced diet, the positive features and the dangers of drugs are considered and pupils are prepared well for their developing bodies through a structured programme of sex and relationships education. Year 6 pupils know that healthy living includes exercise, not smoking and eating such items as fruit and are aware of the dangers of eating too much 'junk food'. The two lessons observed were of a good quality and enabled the pupils to consider choices about their own life styles.

83. Pupils develop mature attitudes as they progress through the school. They learn to be active and responsible members of their school family, to watch out for the needs of others and to seek ways to help those who need it. Discussions with older pupils show that they have a very real sense of their responsibilities as individuals within a larger group of people. It is clear that they are learning to have a wider sense of moral and social responsibility, as well as beginning to take responsibility for their personal needs and development. The school makes very good provision for the development of these important attributes by involving pupils in the School Council and in initiatives to help to improve their own school.
84. Pupils have good opportunities for involvement in the work of their school through the School Council. This work helps pupils to have a better appreciation of the ways in which the school can develop and what they can do to help the staff to overcome any barriers to improvement. For example, the pupils' work to help their teachers to improve the school grounds has improved lunchtime behaviour, with additional benefits from a calm start to afternoon lessons. Pupils show a developing sense of social and moral responsibility by taking an active part in fund raising for their school and for local, national and international charities.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
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	1
Attendance	4
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
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	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
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).

