

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**CHESNUT LODGE SPECIAL SCHOOL**

**Ditton, Widnes**

**LEA area: HALTON**

**Unique reference number: 111514**

**Headteacher: Mrs S Lancaster**

**Lead inspector: Adrian Simm**

**Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005**

**Inspection number: 268549**

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	78
School address:	Green Lane Ditton Widnes Cheshire
Postcode:	WA8 7HF
Telephone number:	0151 424 0679
Fax number:	0151 495 2141
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of acting chair of governors:	Mrs Charlotte Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	July 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Chesnut Lodge Special School educates 49 boys and 29 girls aged 2 to 16 years, the majority of whom have physical difficulties. The number of pupils with more complex learning, medical and sensory needs has grown since the last inspection. Pupils have a broad range of attainment on entry but overall, it is below average in comparison to their chronological age. Ninety-five per cent of pupils are of white British background and those who are not, speak fluent English. All pupils from the reception class to Year 11 have statements of special educational needs (SEN). The nursery class operates as community provision and is open to children who do not have SEN. Most pupils come from Halton and travel by local authority transport. Forty-three per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is high. The school is subject to re-organisation by the local education authority although the outcome of the process is not yet known. The school gained School Achievement Award in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The school is a Full Service Extended School. It is working towards placing itself in the centre of services to the local community, as part of the Ditton Children's Centre.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21138	Adrian Simm	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Geography Modern foreign language
12536	Sylvia Bullerwell	Lay inspector	
16722	Noreen Buckingham	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology
27409	Sue Hunt	Team inspector	English History Religious education
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Science Music Physical education Special educational needs
10781	Bob Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Personal, social, health and citizenship education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall, Chesnut Lodge is a **good** school. In subjects that are the main focus of provision, pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning. Overall good leadership and management by the headteacher and her deputy have ensured that the school has improved well since the last inspection. With improved self-evaluation in place, this could be even stronger. The school provides very successfully for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils achieve very well in their personal and social development. Links with the community and other schools are very strong. This bodes well for the success of the school's new Full Service Extended School status. The school offers **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is very clear about how to develop the school as a focus of services to the local community. Very effective links with other schools, colleges and the community ensure pupils' learning is supported very well.
- Work related learning is very good.
- Staff have very good relationships with pupils. This leads to very good attitudes, behaviour, and personal and social development in pupils.
- Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are very good. As a result, Years 1 and 2 pupils achieve very well in literacy and numeracy. This is the case also in numeracy in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good throughout the school.
- Pupils' achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) has improved very well since the last inspection. This includes pupils' use of a broad range of equipment and systems to support speaking and listening.
- Systems are not sufficiently in place to ensure that self-evaluation across all areas of school life is fully effective. The role of subject co-ordinators and governors in this is not as strong as it could be.
- The amount of time that pupils are taught is low in comparison with similar schools.

Overall, the school has moved on well since the last inspection. This is clearest in pupils' achievement in ICT, mathematics in Years 10 and 11 and in the overall quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' knowledge of faiths and cultures other than their own has also improved very well. However, the monitoring role of subject co-ordinators, which was an issue at the last inspection, has not been improved. The length of the school day remains low. Leadership has improved well but self-evaluation could still be stronger.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 6	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 9	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 11	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Pupils achieve well overall throughout the school in reading, writing, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, and in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). PSHCE permeates the whole of school life. In particular, pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening, English in Years 1 and 2 and mathematics in Years 1 to 6. In religious education, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Because staff build on their good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs and are consistently improving their own teaching expertise, all pupils achieve well in the subjects that were the main

focus of the inspection. Boys and girls and pupils with differing special educational needs achieve equally well. Pupils' personal development as a result of the school's very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is **very good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **good** for all pupils regardless of age or special educational needs. Teaching is **good** because staff have good knowledge of pupils and understand their individual needs. Pupils are expected and encouraged to join in lessons and as a result, they learn well. Classroom assistants, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and the school nurse work effectively as part of class teams. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 1 and 2 because all lessons inter-link very well. This helps pupils to more fully understand what they are being taught. Staff are developing more precise ways of finding out and checking on just how well the pupils are doing in their work. Provision for care and welfare is satisfactory. Not all staff are sufficiently trained in how to deal with sudden outbursts from the small minority of pupils with more complex behaviour needs. Identified care and welfare issues about the school swimming pool and the arrival and departure of school transport were rectified during the inspection. All pupils experience a good breadth of learning opportunities within a well-designed curriculum. This includes very good links with other schools and the community. Work related learning prepares pupils very well for transition to adult life.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher is very clear about how to develop even closer links with a broad range of education, childcare, health and community providers within close proximity to the school. On balance, governance and management of the school are **satisfactory**. Staff and governors are committed to school improvement. Checking on how well the school's priorities are developing is strengthening. However, more effective systems are needed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of school life, whether a priority for development or not. Governors are insufficiently involved in self-evaluation. As a result, areas for development are not always completed successfully. For example, improving the monitoring role of subject co-ordinators remains incomplete since the last inspection. The school has not regularly used the information it has to compare its provision with similar schools. Despite these weaknesses, pupils' personal development and attendance, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning have improved well since the last inspection because of the strong teamwork generated by the head and deputy headteacher. All statutory requirements are met.

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

A high majority of parents consider the school to be effective, particularly because of the good quality of teaching and learning and the good range of activities that their children find interesting and enjoyable. Pupils really enjoy what the school provides for them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve self-evaluation, to include subject co-ordinators and governors fully in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum, care and welfare and leadership and management.
- Increase the amount of teaching that pupils receive.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

## **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Boys and girls, regardless of their differing special educational needs achieve **well**.

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

- Pupils in the nursery class make a good start to their school life in working towards the goals set for them. By the end of Year 2, there is a growing trend of children transferring to mainstream schools.
- Achievement is very good for all pupils in speaking and listening skills and personal development, which is contributed to well by PSHCE lessons. Also, in literacy skills by Year 2 and mathematics by Years 2 and 6.
- Overall, pupils' achievement shows an improving trend that is good since the last inspection. Improvement is very good in information and communication technology (ICT) by the end of Year 11. Achievement in religious education is satisfactory.
- The school sets statutory targets to improve pupils' standards and accredits their achievement in national assessments by Year 11. This process is developing well. Overall, pupils' achievement is still affected detrimentally by the low amount of teaching that pupils receive despite this being pointed out to the school at the previous two inspections.

#### **Commentary**

1. The nursery class acts as neighbourhood provision and not just for children with special educational needs. Because of this, when they join the school, children's attainment is varied but on the whole, is below what would be expected nationally. Mainstream children attend part-time as do the younger children with special educational needs (SEN). Because the staff team gets to know all of the children and their needs closely, they achieve well in the goals expected of them. All children mix very well. The broad range of activities is carefully chosen so that all pupils, regardless of ability, work alongside each other. As a result, children's personal, social and emotional development is very good. At the end of their time in the nursery, mainstream children move to other local schools well prepared for their reception education. Those pupils with SEN who remain for their reception year, continue to do well. There is a growing trend for these children to transfer to local primary schools at the end of Year 2.
2. In nearly all subjects inspected, pupils throughout the school achieve well. This includes reading, writing, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and PSHCE. They achieve very well in speaking and listening. This is in line with the good quality of teaching. It shows a marked improvement in standards since the last inspection in mathematics and ICT by Year 11, with good progress in all other subjects. The school's approach in supporting staff in continuously building their skills and the appointment of some new staff has contributed well to the upward trend in achievement. All pupils do very well in their personal and social development, because of the very good relationships staff develop with pupils and because pupil-choice is integral in most activities at a level that staff know is right for each pupil. This means that generally, the growing number of pupils with more complex learning, medical and sensory needs also do well.
3. Consistently very good teaching in the class for pupils in Years 1 and 2 ensures that they learn and achieve very well particularly in language, literacy skills and mathematics. These particular skills are threaded throughout all subjects of the curriculum so that regardless of the lesson, pupils are learning continuously the skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and numeracy. The teacher knows the pupils so very well that all of the work is pitched at the right level regardless of their individual abilities. Also, pupils do very well in mathematics by Year 6 because what is expected of them in lessons is almost always pitched at the right level. This is particularly the case in the class for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in religious education. Their knowledge of Christianity and some other major world faiths is



developing appropriately. The subject is awaiting the appointment of a teacher to co-ordinate provision and to raise its profile again within the school.

4. Pupils' success against statutory targets set by the end of Years 6, 9 and 11 in 2004 was disappointing, particularly in science. However, in very small year groups, the achievement of one pupil makes a huge difference to the success of the year-group as a whole. In 2004, the overall level of success was hindered by factors such as individual pupil's low level of attendance, the increasing number of pupils with more complex behaviour but principally, the quality of the target setting. The school has now introduced a far more precise system for this, which should support a clearer target setting process, as information about pupils' precise levels of attainment becomes more readily available.
5. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have their levels of attainment assessed in a broad range of subjects such as English, French, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and personal development. These are accredited in nationally recognised assessments such as General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), entry level certificates, the British Association for the Advancement of Science scheme (BAYS) and Award Scheme and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards. The small cohorts mean that it is difficult to see a trend in overall improvement although what is clear is that individual pupils tend to be gaining passes in an increasing range of subjects, which is good. However, pupils still do not benefit from being taught for the same amount of time that is offered in other similar schools nationally. They are short by around ten per cent.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Also, their personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good**. Their attendance is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good relationships between pupils and staff impacts very positively on pupils' desire to learn. Pupils' high levels of speaking and listening skills contribute significantly to their very strong relationships.
- The school sets very high expectations for behaviour and provides very good support to help the pupils achieve this.
- The pupils' personal development is greatly enhanced because of the wide range of experiences offered to them. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well catered for.
- An upward trend in attendance has been achieved since September 2004.

### **Commentary**

6. The development of pupils' communication skills, including a broad range of alternative strategies for communication such as switches and voice synthesisers, feature strongly in all subject areas. This is integral to the high level of personal and social development that pupils receive. Pupils show very positive attitudes towards their learning and each other. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Overall, this leads to an environment where everyone is treated equally and with respect and pupils are successful in achieving their individual goals. A key feature of the school is the very good way staff include all pupils in its work. Those with more complex difficulties receive good support so that they are aware of the high standards of behaviour expected of them. They usually respond well. Pupils who attend local primary and secondary schools for some of their lessons benefit significantly in the relationships they form and as a result, in their personal development.
7. Pupils clearly display delight in arriving each morning. The ethos within the school is very conducive to pupils progressing very well in their personal development. Staff provide pupils with ample opportunities to understand and apply simple principles that distinguish right from

wrong. Pupils respond extremely well to these challenges. Lunchtime supervision including, for example, the art and gardening clubs, and the wealth of large and small outdoor equipment for the Foundation Stage, contribute to pupils using their time positively. They seek out and acknowledge friends who travel with them on their school transport, even if they are in a different playground because of their age difference.

8. Promotion of spiritual development is very good and is supported by the contribution from very well organised school assemblies and registration time where pupils quietly reflect on the day's events and share their achievements with others. Also, assemblies are targeted at different age groups so that the content can be very specific. An excellent assembly taken by the headteacher with pupils in Years 7 to 11 used a very 'conversational' style. Pupils were very attentive and discussed thoughtfully the challenges placed upon individuals who, for example, sail single-handed around the world or climb high mountains. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities, such as membership of the school council or ecological (ECO) committee, which contribute very well towards their social and moral development. Overall, behaviour is very good. Pupils follow instructions given to them closely. The school uses individual behaviour plans with pupils who exhibit inappropriate behaviour. These are beginning to work well although ways of measuring success are not yet consistently in place. Pupils respect each other's feelings and beliefs and tolerate each other at work and play. Provision for cultural development is very good. The school places significant emphasis on broadening pupils' awareness of other cultures through the use of good resources, displays and community links. This is particularly evident through art and design, music and dance.
9. The overall level of school attendance in 2003/2004 was affected detrimentally by a small number of pupils with serious medical difficulties who spent long periods in hospital. Since September 2004, overall attendance has improved because of local education authority support in targeting a small number of pupils whose attendance could have been better. The systems of monitoring and support, which the school now has in place, together with the positive impact means that overall, attendance is good.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/2004*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	13.6	School data :	0.7
National data:	10.7	National data:	0.4

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

As the ultimate sanction for poor behaviour, the school will exclude pupils as shown in the table below. However, the school does not have a history of exclusions because pupils' behaviour is generally very good.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	53	1
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning, curricular opportunities and the partnership with parents are **good**. The impact of links with the community and other schools are

**very good.** The standard of care are **satisfactory**, whilst the support and guidance which pupils receive are **good**.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved well since the last inspection
- The majority of lessons are good.
- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is very good and a strength of the school.
- Relationships with pupils are very good.
- Assessment of pupils' levels of attainment, knowledge and skills is good overall but more needs to be done to ensure that teachers agree on the success levels for the newly introduced small-step system.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 47 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	18 (38%)	20 (43%)	8 (17%)	1 (2%)		

*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.*

10. When the school was last inspected the quality of teaching overall was judged to be satisfactory. However, assessment did not inform planning, and the planning for lessons was inconsistent. The quality of teaching has improved well since then. It is now good overall with examples of very good lessons in all key-stages. It is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and PSHCE.
11. Teachers have very good understanding of their pupils and good knowledge of the requirements of the curriculum. Lessons are very calm because of the very good relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Teachers are effective in capturing pupils' interest, providing them with strategies for success and enabling them to feel positive about their work and what they achieve. As a result pupils do their best and pupils of all abilities are very engaged in their lessons, showing very good application. Pupils learn by looking and by doing and are prompted to think carefully and to question what they see. Questioning is rigorous and all pupils, no matter what their capabilities, are fully included in all aspects of lessons. Classroom assistants provide effective support. The teaching benefits from the good implementation of the national strategies for teaching, including numeracy and literacy. Work set matches pupils' needs. Sometimes work is marked in the presence of pupils so they know their strengths and weaknesses. For pupils in Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are very good. This is because many lessons link together so pupils build naturally their skills and understanding. For example, in a music lesson, pupils described the sounds they were making using instruments made from wood and metal. They were encouraged very successfully to bring together and use previous knowledge from sorting materials in science and understanding textures in art. Because of the teacher's insistence on using the correct vocabulary at every opportunity, pupils could name correctly instruments such as cymbals and maracas, found interesting words to describe the difference in sound made between metal and wooden instruments and sorted without difficulty, instruments into appropriate sets. Speaking and listening skills were 'stretched' to the utmost. All of this worked for pupils of differing ability because the teacher knew how far to push each pupil's learning and what they were capable of. The one unsatisfactory lesson was the complete opposite with little planned to challenge a small group of lower attaining pupils in an ASDAN course module. The

activities of collecting and delivering laundry and milk around the school were mundane and lacked specific teaching points.

12. Assessment is accurate and used effectively by teachers, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Clear guidance is now given about assessment requirements and the tracking and recording of progress made by pupils. The attainments of pupils are assessed with good use made of the National Curriculum statements of attainment, the criteria for assessment relating to the externally accredited courses that are followed and improving use of the national attainments scale designed for less able pupils. This has been introduced recently to give more precise data to track small steps in pupils' achievement. Teachers have yet to ensure that their judgements on different levels or attainment match from one teacher to another. Use is also made of standardised tests in reading and in numeracy. Clear records are kept of what each pupil knows, understands, and can do. These provide a basis for tracking the progress of individuals and placing them in ability groups in Years 7 to 11. Within subjects, teachers make continual assessments of their pupils and use these to inform their planning of lessons. They ensure that pupils who need it receive the greatest support and that all are given work that matches their competencies.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and is further enhanced by a **good** range of extra-curricular activities, which enrich pupils' learning experiences. Resources are **good** and the accommodation is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime, after school and visits, extend what pupils learn in lessons.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been well developed. Work related learning (WRL) is very good.
- Inclusion opportunities are very good.
- The curriculum is broad and relevant but taught time for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 is too short.
- There is a sufficient number of staff who contribute very well to pupils' learning and their personal and social development.

## Commentary

13. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the experiences pupils are given in lessons. Lunchtime art club, guitar club and gardening club all support the development of educational skills as well as personal and social development. At the end of the school day, pupils can stay to a 'Busy Bees' club, youth club or access a 'Crossroads' club, which takes place out of school and offers opportunities for pupils to play alongside mainstream peers. The curriculum is further enhanced by a number of performances pupils participate in at Christmas, Easter, Harvest and summer. Some older pupils have been involved in a production of Romeo and Juliet at a local theatre. Residential experiences contribute well to opportunities for pupils' personal development for those who partake. Visits to places of interest, such as art galleries and museums, and visitors into school such as, musicians, poets, dancers and artists, all serve to enrich pupils' experiences of school.
14. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 access an appropriate range of externally accredited courses. By the end of Year 11, work related learning contributes very effectively to pupils' overall achievement and to the good range of learning opportunities offered to the pupils. The Connexions service maintains strong links with pupils from Year 7 onwards so that by the time they reach Years 10 and 11 when decisions about their future need to be made, the careers officer knows them very well and ensures that they receive appropriate guidance. All of this work is very effective in strengthening pupils' self-confidence.

15. Although all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are shown on class timetables, the amount of time pupils are taught during the school day falls well short of the average found in similar schools, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 11. This was identified in the last two inspections. The school ensures that there is a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy and science, which enable pupils to develop good basic skills, and which helps them tackle work in other subjects. It is teaching and learning in other subjects that lose out.
16. Positive support for all pupils ensures that equality of access and inclusion in the curriculum both in the school and for those accessing classes in mainstream schools is very good. Some pupils attend classes in one primary school and two high schools. The integrated nursery is a very successful example of integration where nursery aged children from the local community join together with those with special educational needs. Within school, teachers ensure that those pupils using augmented communication aids are given sufficient time to respond and that their views are listened to in discussions. The school continues to look at ways of improving individual planning for those pupils with more complex behaviours.
17. Teachers and support staff work very well as teams ensuring pupils' personal and social needs are well supported so that they are engaged in learning. Provision for PSHCE is good and this has much to do with the informal way staff use every opportunity during the school day to reinforce these skills. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory overall, strengths are in the Foundation Stage both in the bright indoor environment and outdoor provision for physical development, the well-resourced multi-sensory room, improved ICT facilities and specialist accommodation for art and design and swimming. Weaknesses relate to the age and design of the building, such as the tight car park used for school transport arrivals and departures, inadequate swimming pool changing facilities and food technology provision that is in need of updating.

## Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **satisfactory**. Staff provide **good** support, advice and guidance for pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very happy at school, in part due to the very good relationships they have with adults.
- Improvements have been made in health and safety matters but results of risk assessments are not always acted on promptly.
- The school council allows all pupils to effectively contribute to school decisions.
- Good support and guidance means pupils throughout the school achieve well.

## Commentary

18. Staff get to know pupils very well as they move from the nursery through to Year 11. Strong caring relationships are very evident. These relationships reflect the provision for pupils' personal development and the school's ethos and therefore contribute to learning by promoting very positive attitudes and very good standards of behaviour.
19. At the last inspection there had been insufficient child protection training for staff and records were not stored separately or securely. This has been remedied. Procedures are fully in place although a recent change in the person designated for overseeing child protection issues means that their training has yet to be carried out. The nurse and therapists in school ensure staff receive training to care for pupils' personal and medical needs and to handle and lift pupils safely. A range of policies covering pupils' welfare are in place but do not always include written guidance for staff detailing the procedures actually used in school. For example, some staff could not remember what to do if restraint of pupils was necessary. The school still does not record in a bound book with numbered pages everyday accidents and incidents that occur.

Whilst risk assessments are now carried out for the building, off-site visits and pupils' needs, issues related to the building identified as high priority are not always resolved quickly enough. For example, not wearing outdoor shoes in the swimming pool area or improving high level risks in the swimming pool plant room, which is a work area of the caretaker. Steps were taken to address these issues quickly during the inspection, with local education authority support. Also improved immediately were systems to ensure the safe arrival and departure of pupils on the school transport.

20. The school council is well established and members are democratically elected and represent their class very well. Minutes of school council meetings show pupils meet staff each month to raise any queries or concerns. Topics discussed are very relevant to pupils needs. For example, at the moment, members are liaising with contractors to make the surface of the 'woodland path' suitable for wheelchairs. In December pupils raised a concern about difficulties getting on to the tail-lift of buses when the vehicles were parked too closely together. These concerns and other safety issues were still evident during the inspection when the school took immediate action and put an interim traffic management plan in place until the problem is resolved.
21. When pupils' statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually, each pupil is set targets by their class teacher that match their specific learning needs. These often include literacy and numeracy, as well as broader targets for their personal and social development. Whilst some targets are measurable, for example, by standardised reading or spelling tests, not all targets are sufficiently sharp. The school has worked hard to use more precise and accurate measures of progress and these are still developing. However, overall, this is an improvement since the last inspection. Records of pupils' performance show that a high proportion makes significant gains in key literacy and numeracy skills over time. The school expects pupils to gain external accreditation in a broad range of subjects and courses relevant to both higher attaining and lower attaining pupils. In a significant proportion of cases, pupils are successful and the school's target is met.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils benefit from the very good links with the community.
- Partnerships with other schools enable up to a quarter of pupils to be taught alongside mainstream pupils.
- Information for parents is good overall but there is a variation in the quality across the school.

### **Commentary**

22. The school has forged greater links with the community since the last inspection and is in the process of developing as a Full Service Extended School. This gives parents, pupils and the community access to activities such as childcare, adult and family learning, health and social care and other support services. Financial support from the local and business community is very good.
23. The school has productive partnerships with other schools, which extend pupils opportunities for personal and academic achievement, by working alongside mainstream children and pupils. This is across the age range, for example, from the mainstream nursery provision in school to a group of Year 10 and 11 pupils who are taught entry level childcare with pupils from two local high schools.
24. Since the last inspection home-school diaries have been introduced and are used very well by some staff to exchange information with parents regularly. The best ones cover homework, pupils' work and achievements and enable parents to feel involved in the daily life of the school. However not all staff use these consistently to keep parents informed. Annual written reports do

not always inform parents clearly about the progress their child has made or at what level they are achieving. However, reports for the annual review of pupils' statements of special educational needs are informative. Targets are shared with parents at the annual review meetings and parents are welcome to come into school at anytime to talk with staff but relatively few take up the opportunity.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management of the school are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is **effective**. The school is effective in overcoming current identified barriers to pupils' learning. Management and governance of the school are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision and ambition for implementing the Full Service Extended School (FSES) status. It is beginning to impact positively on standards within the school.
- The school is a very successful inclusive school where all pupils, irrespective of their particular special needs are supported effectively.
- Subject co-ordinators check on teachers' planning but have only limited opportunities to monitor and evaluate the quality of work in their subjects when taught by other staff.
- There are limited procedures to evaluate the impact of recent developments and the data collected on pupils' achievements. The governors' role in this is underdeveloped.

### Commentary

25. The headteacher is far-sighted in the vision to create a school with FSES status. This has been underway for nearly two years. Whilst the headteacher ran the scheme initially, a full time manager has now been appointed. Since the outset, many links with local community groups have been firmly established. For example, out-of-school activities, parents' and family support, a summer school for pupils, child care facilities and community use of the school swimming pool. The manager is now evaluating the success of the project in readiness to extend it beyond 2006. This project has made a good start. It has a very strong foundation upon which to build in the very effective educational links already in place with other schools, colleges and the community.
26. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are totally committed to moving the school forward to achieve high standards. Leadership is strong. However, a barrier to more effective management has been overcoming the drawbacks of the small number of staff on long-term illness. Because of this and recent retirements, the leadership team has reduced to just the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Whilst this is working appropriately in the short term, the school has not been able to attract a suitably experienced and qualified replacement for the senior management team.
27. The school is very inclusive ensuring that all pupils are treated equally. Pupils have equal access to all school activities. The number of pupils being integrated into main stream schools has grown so that now almost 20 per cent of pupils experience part time main stream education. This process is reciprocal for a small number of main stream pupils. This work is supported very positively by a number of local schools who stress the positive 'knock on effect', particularly on the attitudes and behaviour of all pupils, regardless of whether or not they are directly involved.
28. The quality of subject co-ordination is generally good. Subject leaders are mostly effective in promoting learning and higher standards in their subjects through formal and informal meetings. They are gaining in their understanding of the success of their subjects through scrutinising teachers' planning and increasingly, pupils' achievement. Although all teachers receive one half day non contact time, this has not yet been scheduled for visiting lessons throughout the school,

to see how the subjects are taught for which they have responsibility. This is an outstanding issue from the last inspection. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have carried out lesson observations but insufficient data is fed back to co-ordinators for them to make judgements about whole school standards in their subjects. As such, self-evaluation could be much stronger and contribute to more effective management of the school.

29. Performance management for teachers is fully in place and contributes well to identifying ways of strengthening provision. However, the school's improving systems for checking on pupils' achievement have not been in place long enough to add to the preciseness of this process. Classroom assistants have annual appraisal interviews with the headteacher or deputy headteacher where they discuss personal and professional developmental. As a result, three assistants are pursuing part-time foundation degree courses and one is following a course for supporting pupils who are visually impaired. This is supportive of staff development and is good practice.
30. Membership of the governing body has changed dramatically since the last inspection. Whilst the governing body has ensured that all statutory requirements are in place, and are keen to support the school with the expertise and experience they bring, systems are not in place for them to fully monitor and evaluate all aspects of school life. The local education authority has offered induction courses and training. This has been welcomed by governors and has begun to add positively to their effectiveness. Whilst the acting chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school to see how the school works, other governors are not yet as involved in such a practical way. Current governors are unclear why previous governors did not fully address all issues from the last inspection. For example, the monitoring role of subject co-ordinators and the shortage of teaching in comparison with other similar schools, which was highlighted in the last two reports. The current systems in place failed to ensure that the outcomes of risk assessments carried out in the school's swimming pool were dealt with sooner than they were. Whilst governance is satisfactory overall, the judgement is a fine balance between strengths and weaknesses.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	872,475	Balance from previous year	54,294
Total expenditure	858,059	Balance carried forward to the next	68,710
Expenditure per pupil	11,440		

31. Financial management is prudent even though the school is carrying forward a balance slightly over the recommended five per cent. This was in case the school had to fund repairs to its swimming pool, which were eventually funded by the LEA. Governors work hard in trying to get best value from the very low budget they receive. However, governors are not as clear as they could be about how the school compares with other similar schools, for example, in its income, staffing levels, taught time or attendance levels of its pupils. This detracts from being able to challenge itself to improve more. The most significant aid to raising achievement has been the increase in the quality of teaching and learning across the school and the improvements in the use of ICT and technological aids to support pupils' achievements such as in communication. Staff are working hard in coming to terms with the changing needs of pupils, such as the small but growing number of pupils with more complex medical, sensory and behaviour needs. The school is currently searching for the most appropriate trainer for ensuring that all staff are fully trained in how to deal with those pupils who have emotional outbursts.
32. Overall leadership and management has made good improvement since the last inspection. The shared commitment of staff ensures that pupils' needs are met. High morale and a very good ethos in school have been key factors in this improvement and in the raising of pupils' achievements. Leadership is stronger than management because of the areas of self-evaluation that still need implementing.





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

*Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects that reflect the standards achieved by pupils.*

Five lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.

### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good** with some very good features.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned to meet the individual needs of the children.
- Behaviour is very well managed. Children understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- There is good achievement by the children overall. It is very good in personal and social development because of very good teaching and learning in this aspect.
- Good teamwork between all members of staff, who have detailed knowledge of the children, results in staff's anticipation of their needs.
- Children with SEN are successfully encouraged to move to mainstream provision as soon as the time is right. Very strong links with other schools ensures that those mainstream children who attend the nursery part-time transfer successfully.

#### Commentary

33. Overall, there are too few children in the Foundation Stage and insufficient evidence to make a separate judgement in each area of learning. The nursery class acts as a neighbourhood nursery and, therefore, a small number of mainstream children attend the nursery each morning. They move on to other mainstream provision for their reception year. Of those children who have SEN, younger children attend part-time in the nursery and others full-time. The very small number of reception age pupils work in with the lower attaining Year 1 pupils. Although there is a broad spread of ability on entry to the nursery, overall, attainment is below expectations. It is below expectations for those who carry on into the reception year. Staff make pupils' school experience one where the children learn with enjoyment. Provision is effective and all children achieve well because learning experiences and lessons are planned carefully for all pupils regardless of ability. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Strengths in communication, literacy and numeracy have been retained. Personal development has improved well. The Foundation Stage remains a strength of the school.
34. In **personal, social and emotional development**, children settle quickly to activities as they arrive in the morning. They choose from a broad range of interesting activities such as playing in the sand tray, working on shape matching games, building a railway track or role-play in the house corner. Children work together individually or in small groups as they see fit. Staff supervise sessions carefully and ensure a constant build-up of children's understanding about what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Those children needing special chairs or standing frames are settled in by staff and then given activities to work on until everyone is ready. Throughout this 'free time' and during more focussed activities, those children who are part-time, who have SEN or are of mainstream ability interact with each other very well. When required, such as at story time, children sit in their own place and respond very well to the staff leading the session. During afternoon sessions for those with SEN, good staffing levels mean that children receive extra support. Higher attaining children are also very aware socially of their less able classmates. They offer to share their resources and understand if someone else

needs slightly more support than themselves. This was very obvious with one pupil in the art therapy session. In **communication, language and literacy**, many of the mainstream children know their colours, can select a favourite colour and discuss their immediate surroundings in terms of the colours they can see. They are well aware of simple prepositions and undertake successfully activities that expect of them, for example, to put the yellow car and green ball in the basket. Children with SEN also do well at their own level by, for example, putting the yellow ball under the box or putting the blue cup in the box. At these times, staff frequently use colours that they know the children will recognise. In more free-play situations, many children talk and discuss things with each other, such as when building their railway track or serving pretend drinks and food to each other in the home corner. Children try hard to speak clearly and many have the confidence to speak in front of the group. They enjoy looking at books. In

**mathematical development**, children are introduced to number activities well, through number rhymes, and the sequencing of numbers, through games. Every activity is well supported with language to enhance children's growing awareness of number. They clap patterns on their knees with some quite complicated ones including sequences of up to eight movements. For those pupils with SEN, this is extended in hand therapy, for example, with drip patterns, rhymes and action songs. By the end of reception, children respond with adult support to the idea of addition and subtraction, generally recognise very low value numbers and some simple two and three-dimensional shapes. In **knowledge and understanding of the world**, children have opportunities to explore and investigate objects. They have a good range of puzzles and toys to encourage the matching of shapes. They enjoy making marks with crayons, often in a vigorous way. They show interest in the computer and know how to operate simple equipment. They enjoy feeling the texture of dry and wet sand and making it into shapes. In art therapy, children investigated their immediate environment by looking through coloured acetate sheets. The expressions of amazement and the levels of concentration were striking. One pupil with speech and language difficulties smiled obviously in a sign of enthusiasm. By the end of reception, those pupils with SEN clearly show curiosity in a broad range of activities. Some pupils use a computer mouse to access picture-stories on the computer, which they recognise. No lesson was observed in **physical development**, although it is clear from other lessons and break time activities, that those children with SEN are gradually gaining confidence in their movement. There are good opportunities for outdoor play, with many large wheeled toys that help children to develop physical skills and confidence. Pupils have regular access to hydrotherapy, which they really enjoy. They show good signs of developing accuracy in holding brushes, crayons and other equipment. For example, in hand therapy lessons, pupils squeeze and relax their fingers and hands well when using wet cornflower as a stimulus. In **creative development**, children learn to sing and join in the songs and rhymes. They follow the tunes and some of the words. They paint boldly, using colour, and their paintings show that they are learning good brush control. Whilst some children know many of their colours, others struggle to differentiate one from another. However, even here, one child during the inspection recognised the colour 'red' correctly twice during the same day. This was terrific achievement and was praised by all staff.

35. Teaching and learning are good because lessons allow all children to achieve well. There are good records kept and children's achievement is monitored well in all areas. There is currently no overall co-ordinator of the Foundation Stage, but because nearly all children are currently in the nursery, the system is effective. There is good leadership and management of the nursery, which ensures that all staff have a detailed knowledge of the children's needs. Of those children who stay on into the reception year because of their SEN, there has been a steady flow back into primary schools when appropriate. This has gathered pace since September 2001.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

A separate judgement was not made on provision in French because it was not part of the main focus of the inspection and insufficient evidence was available. The school sets out to improve pupils' confidence in French and to provide sufficient vocabulary for pupils to 'get by' during visits to France. This is what is reported to parents in their children's annual progress reports regardless of their level of attainment. The degree of detail about pupils' achievement could be more specific.

#### **ENGLISH**

Nine lessons were observed covering all year groups.

Provision in English is **good**

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

- Teaching for Years 1 and 2 pupils is of high quality and promotes very good learning.
- The subject leader has no clear overview of the quality of teaching throughout the school despite this being an issue at the last inspection.
- The literacy targets in some pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are not specific enough and are of little use in monitoring or measuring pupils' progress.
- Signing and communication aids are used consistently and very effectively throughout the school to develop pupils' skills in speaking and listening, which are very good.
- Information and communication technology is used well to promote pupils' writing skills.
- Literacy is taught well through other subjects.

#### **Commentary**

36. Overall, pupils achieve well because of good teaching and learning. They achieve very well in the class for pupils in Years 1 and 2 because of the high quality of teaching. What sets this class apart from elsewhere is how well learning is matched consistently to the pupils' varying levels of ability and the very effective use of all subjects to teach language and literacy skills. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school and this is now good. The subject co-ordinator has been effective in improving aspects of the subject since the last inspection. Staff have all been trained to follow the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy, which has given a consistent structure to lessons. Checking on how well pupils are achieving has improved although target setting in IEPs is still not consistently specific enough to help monitor or measure pupils' needs as clearly as they could be. The co-ordinator now checks on the quality of teachers' planning for lessons although not on how well planning turns into practice in lessons. The headteacher has done this latter part but the results are not shared with the subject leader so as to give an overall picture. This is a weak area of self-evaluation.
37. Speaking and listening is very good throughout the school with all pupils very anxious to engage visitors in conversation. Lively and informative discussions take place in lessons. In the majority of lessons, pupils listen attentively to staff and each other. Pupils with speech and language difficulties are eager to express their views and opinions verbally. The school has taken significant steps to ensure that all pupils are given the means to communicate. It has done this well. Signing is used consistently and effectively and alternative and augmentative communication is becoming very well established. For example, non-verbal pupils are helped with their writing and to join in discussions and make choices by using electronic voice aids. This has all helped achievement in speaking and listening and writing to improve well since the last inspection. Achievement in writing is good. For example, Year 2 pupils eagerly write short, coherent sentences connected with the story plot of Cinderella. By Year 7 high attaining pupils

independently compose up to six sentences of creative writing remembering to insert full stops and capital letters. They use direct speech marks and are adept at note taking. The work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is externally accredited, either through ASDAN for the lower achieving pupils or by entry level examinations and achievement awards. The highest attaining pupils take GCSE courses, which they study for at the local secondary school. They are doing well in this; very well in speaking and listening skills.

38. Improved resources have helped raise achievement well in reading since the last inspection. Achievement is good. Foundation Stage pupils have benefited from story sacks so that by Year 2, all pupils match words and pictures appropriately and read along with adults with some accuracy. They predict the next events in a sequence. High attaining pupils are all fluent readers and by the end of Year 11, achieve national reading levels.

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

39. Throughout the school, teachers of all subjects provide opportunities to teach language and literacy. Teachers introduce and explain new key words in lessons to make sure that misunderstandings are not a barrier to learning. At appropriate times, words are written on the white boards and work sheets to serve as reminders to learners. As a result, pupils recognise subject specific words and know what they mean. For example, during a Year 2 mathematics lesson, key words such as rectangle, circle and square were used by the pupils to describe different two-dimensional shapes. In Year 6, pupils word processed letters during an ICT session with one non-verbal pupil using a voice machine to address the letter. In a Year 8 religious education lesson, literacy was reinforced through verbal response to teacher's questioning. All pupils show a very mature awareness of the 'rules' of conversation and this contributes to their very good progress in speaking and listening.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Nine lessons were observed covering all year groups.

Provision for mathematics is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 1 to 6 and pupils' achievement reflects this.
- The curriculum is well organised and adapted to meet the individual needs of the pupils.
- Mathematics is used well across the curriculum and supports pupils' speaking and listening skills very well.
- Assessment and moderation of pupils' work is not yet sufficiently consistent across the school to be used accurately as a way of checking on pupils' achievement.

### **Commentary**

40. Overall, pupils achieve well. There has been good improvement in mathematics since the last inspection, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning is good overall with very good teaching for pupils in Years 1 to 6. Where teaching is most effective pupils achieve very well because the work is matched consistently to their ability levels and the tasks are challenging. Teachers check carefully that pupils understand the meanings of words, which extends pupils' use of mathematical language. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 2 learn about three-dimensional shapes. They identify cuboid, cone, pyramid, cylinder and sphere and describe them accurately using language such as pointed top, round edges or flat sides. Others identify and record shape names independently. In the best lessons group work is very well organised. Each group has the right amount of support, tasks match individual's ability levels thus allowing higher attaining pupils to work independently for part of the time. This improves their confidence and concentration. This was evident in a class of Year 6 pupils where the higher attainers used mirrors to find lines of symmetry from a worksheet showing a wide range of shapes. Classroom

assistants have a valuable role in enabling all pupils to be included and achieve well in lessons, especially pupils who use augmented communication aids.

41. Lessons are planned from a good curriculum framework giving teachers an effective structure for helping pupils to learn and achieve well. On a day-to-day basis, teachers know their pupils very well. This helps them plan tasks which have a high degree of challenge, for example, pupils in Year 6 showing a very good understanding of the properties of different shapes and pupils in Year 9 getting the hang of repeated patterns or learning how to use a protractor for measuring angles. Resources are well prepared so that little time is wasted and pupils get on with the tasks. Pupils use their skills to solve problems, for example, work on triangular shapes leads to different types of triangle and sizes of sides and angles in Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work well towards GCSE examinations and entry level awards.
42. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has very secure subject knowledge and very good understanding of the needs of the pupils. This has been used effectively when reviewing the curriculum, which has been adapted to meet both the needs of pupils and of the National Numeracy Strategy. The school has recently introduced a more specific commercially produced assessment and recording system to monitor pupils' achievement. Staff have not been trained yet to ensure that they agree with each other over how well pupils are doing. The absence of this moderation of view leads to some inconsistency in accurately assessing pupils' progress and in identifying the next steps in learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

43. Although not specifically planned for, mathematics is used well in other subjects across the curriculum. For example, it is used in
- physical education in learning about directions, forming shapes and sequences
  - geography in making charts and graphs
  - design and technology when measuring ingredients
  - history when pupils learn about ages and dates
  - music when pupils are learning about rhythm, pattern and sequence
  - college link courses when pupils follow timetables and maps.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively. This helps pupils to develop their thinking skills as well as very effective speaking and listening skills.

### **SCIENCE**

Six lessons were observed covering all year groups.

Provision for science is **good**.

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

- Teachers present activities that are challenging, relevant and well matched to pupils' learning needs.
- There is a good system for accrediting pupils' work in Years 10 and 11. The precision in which staff check on pupils' achievement is improving but more training still needs to be done.
- Science has made good improvements since the previous inspection although the subject co-ordinator does not have the time to check on the quality of teaching and learning in those lessons taken by other staff.

#### **Commentary**

44. Teaching and learning across the school is good, and consequently pupils achieve well. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. All work in science is now underpinned by teachers' good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and prepared with clear learning objectives. Planning, support and resources take account of the diverse and

challenging learning needs so that every pupil is included. Because of this approach, most pupils gain some form of national accreditation in science by the end of Year 11. Many do so through the BAYS scheme.

45. The ethos for learning is very good and pupils enjoy their science lessons. They listen very well and make very good oral contributions. Teamwork in lessons is good, with teachers and teaching assistants working well together. Pupils are helped to keep working with timely interventions, prompts and skilful questioning. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced regularly. The time given to science is very well used, with a very clear focus on investigations. This means that pupils of all abilities are given good opportunities to learn about the theory of science and also to carry out practical activities to a conclusion. Written work is well considered, focussing on what is important. It allows pupils to display their knowledge and understanding. Effective use is made of the expertise of teachers and the available accommodation. However, staff have yet to be fully trained on the new system for assessment, which will allow the school to work out more precisely just how well pupils are achieving.
46. At the last inspection, pupils across the school made satisfactory progress. Now pupils achieve well. This is due to improvements in teaching and learning brought about by good leadership and management, which has led to the development of lessons that are very practically based. Pupils of all abilities enjoy this approach and respond very well, especially in Years 10 and 11. The co-ordinator is not yet involved in checking on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons taken by other staff. This means that a useful means of working out 'at first hand' what is going well and what could be improved is missed. This remains a weakness in self-evaluation noted at the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Three lessons were seen and inspectors noted where ICT was used in other subjects.

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The commitment of staff to improving their own skills and knowledge is good.
- Resources are good with a wide range of access devices and software to ensure that all pupils are fully included.
- Information and communication technology is taught well and used effectively to support other subjects.

### **Commentary**

47. Due to staffing illness, the headteacher is leading ICT in a temporary capacity. Since the last inspection, ICT has made very good improvement. All staff have completed their New Opportunities Funded (NOF) ICT training. This has had a beneficial effect because all staff are computer literate and have the skills and knowledge to assist and support pupils in a broad range of ways. Because of the very good relationships staff have with pupils, pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard to do their best and achieve well. Leadership and management of the subject is effective.
48. The school has developed a small computer suite, which is used well by all classes and has plenty of room for wheelchair access. However, there is no 'rise and fall' furniture, which adjusts to ensure pupils are positioned correctly to further encourage learning. There are a good number of computers in classrooms and laptops that are used well. Although they are not the newest of computers, there is a good range of programs well matched to pupils' needs. Plans are in place to move provision on still further with a cyber café and improved computer suite. A good number of pupils are very well supported through ICT aids. These enable pupils to access the curriculum and give them equality with their peers. This is proving particularly effective in

supporting the speaking and listening skills of those pupils with speech and language difficulties.

49. Teaching and learning in ICT is good. In Years 1 and 2, skills are taught during other subject lessons. Between Years 3 and 9, pupils are taught ICT in discrete lessons. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught most of their ICT at college. This system works well and ensures that pupils learn about all the necessary parts of the subject. The skills and knowledge they need are taught systematically. The best teaching ensures that pupils use computers in meaningful contexts. For example, Year 6 pupils learn to use a spreadsheet to track expenditure. They discussed why the school cook needed ICT to track her kitchen expenditure during the week. Year 10 pupils had great fun using 'morph' pictures (distorted, cartoon-like pictures) of themselves and staff. Through this they built up their skills and knowledge about digital photography and how to manipulate digital images. These interesting topics capture pupils' imaginations and ensure their motivation and enthusiasm for the subject. By Year 11, pupils successfully pursue the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) Certificate of Achievement Award, and this year, have completed the European Computer Driving License, ICT award.

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

50. Pupils gain a good understanding of the power of ICT in many aspects of life because they are given well planned opportunities to use technology in other lessons. Pupils access the Internet to find out about, for example, the Tsunami and the damage it had done across the Pacific. They were so moved by this that they raised money for the appeal fund. Word processing is used effectively to promote literacy skills and enable pupils to present their work neatly. One pupil with complex learning difficulties, uses his 'dynavox' as a word processor to input an address for an airmail letter. With support, this was downloaded onto a computer, which printed the address label for the envelope. Subject related software, linked to appropriate aids, gives pupils, with complex learning difficulties, access to similar work as their peers. When they use their speech synthesisers to communicate, many exhibit a clear sense of humour in their work.

### **HUMANITIES**

No judgements were made in geography and history because they were not part of the focus of the inspection and insufficient lessons could be observed. Teachers' planning shows that thought has been given to making the subjects relevant to the pupils. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The role of subject co-ordinators does not yet include checking on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons.

### **Religious education**

Two lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 and 3 together with scrutiny of a range of pupils' work throughout the school.

Provision is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is a good emphasis upon pupils' learning about major faiths although the good links with local Christian churches are yet to be extended to other multi faith groups.
- Checking on the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement is a weakness.

### **Commentary**

51. Lessons are based suitably on the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and a nationally agreed scheme of work. Much of their learning is associated with the celebrations and



festivals of the Christian faith and other world religions. The school has good links with churches within the Ditton area of Widnes, particularly with the local Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. However, there is very little contact with other multi faith groups or centres of worship such as mosques or synagogues. Overall, the two lessons seen were of good quality. During a Year 2 lesson, pupils were reminded of their visit to the local Roman Catholic Church of St. Raphael when they role-played a baptism. They all remembered the blessing and a lot of the words said by the priest when he baptised their class doll 'Daniel.' Buddhism was introduced during a Year 9 lesson. Good resources were used including video clips and artefacts to convey the message about the Buddhist belief of 'conquering suffering in life.' These examples and learning in assemblies point to learning being centred on the relevance of religious education to pupils' personal development and their everyday lives. Pupils respond very well in discussions with the level of mature questions they ask.

52. Since last summer there has not been a subject leader. The headteacher is overseeing the subject until a new appointment can be made. As such, development of the subject has not been a high profile. There are minimal assessment procedures in place and although all pupils produce large amounts of written work, their achievement is not monitored. Scrutiny of work indicates that teaching and achievement overall are satisfactory. The subject has maintained its satisfactory provision since the last inspection.

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

There was insufficient evidence of teaching and learning to make an overall judgement about the quality of provision in music and physical education. In the two lessons seen in music, the quality of teaching and learning was high. Very good relationships ensured that pupils tried hard and behaved very well. Teachers' planning and records show that the pupils are given opportunities to experience the range of activities that are required by the National Curriculum. In the single lesson seen in physical education, the quality was high. Great care was taken with pupils who had difficulties of balance and co-ordination. Pupils improved their volleyball skills and team play. They played to the rules, worked well as individuals and in game situations. A significant feature of provision is the development of pupils' swimming skills. National Curriculum requirements are met.

Long-term planning for design and technology covers all aspects of the National Curriculum so that pupils are given a range of appropriate experiences in food technology, textiles and working with resistant materials.

### **Art and design**

Four lessons were observed covering all key stages.

Provision for art is **good**

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

- The subject is well led and managed.
- The curriculum is enhanced and pupils' learning enriched by visits and visitors and the art clubs.
- Teaching and learning are good overall resulting in good achievement.

### **Commentary**

53. In the most effective lessons the teachers' specialist subject knowledge, very good technical skills and very good relationships result in very positive learning in which pupils are keen to listen and work. In these circumstances they achieve very well. In addition very good support is given to individual pupils who, because of their particular physical difficulty, need help with

certain techniques. In these situations adults talk through procedures with pupils giving them confidence to have a go and encourage them to keep on task. Pupils in Year 2 learn the skills of cutting, scrunching, tearing and rolling paper to make a collage. They use different coloured, textured paper for a variety of effects and work together to produce a class collage. Pupils in Year 9 carefully practice their shading skills as a preliminary exercise to undertake a 'still life' drawing. Those in Year 11 work towards entry level accreditation under the very good guidance of the teacher. The very good, mature relationships between teacher and pupils are instrumental in building pupils' confidence and their willingness to try techniques and modify initial drawings in their sketchbooks.

54. The subject is well led and managed. The main strengths stem from the expertise informing teaching which in turn creates a very positive environment so that pupils enjoy a good range of exciting and creative activities. The school is currently working towards achieving the Artsmark (Bronze) award. Two art clubs are run by staff who have specialist subject knowledge and skills which enable them to provide an interesting range of activities which pupils enjoy. Visits are made to local art galleries and some further afield such as the Tate in Liverpool, which widen pupils' appreciation of both well-known and local artists. Professional artists and sculptors have worked with pupils in school, which has added another dimension to their learning. The subject's strengths have been maintained since the last inspection. What is already good provision, is strengthening further.
55. The visual impact of art across the curriculum is seen in displays of work in literature, for example, Elmer the Elephant in the nursery class, in history showing Theseus and the Minotaurs and in mathematics by way of shapes and the symmetry of butterflies. Displays of pupils' work about the North American Indians, Africa and India shows how well art supports pupils' awareness of cultural diversity. In addition pupils have produced portraits influenced by Picasso and Warhol. Pupils have opportunities to work in two and three dimensions including using air-drying clay, collages and printing.

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

Six lessons were seen covering all key stages. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.

Provision for personal, social and health education, including citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good team work enhances pupils learning.
- A good quality programme of work, which includes PSHE and citizenship and day-to-day activities, permeates the whole school.
- There is very good commitment to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the individual by all staff.

### **Commentary**

56. All staff are well aware of the importance of promoting pupils' personal development and work together to bring this about. Because they know the pupils so well, and understand their needs, they are good at doing this in lessons and in other activities across the school. Each pupil has personal targets, such as attendance, behaviour or hygiene agreed with parents, in their individual education plans and a strong emphasis is placed on helping them achieve them. Good team-work between the school, therapists and the school nurse enhances progress pupils make. Consistently good teaching and support ensure that pupils' achieve well in their personal, social and self-help skills.
57. The curriculum for personal, social and health education, including citizenship is good. The co-ordinator has spent several months working with two other special schools to ensure best

practice. The subject is taught to pupils in Years 1 to 6 in a cross-curricular way. In Years 7 to 11, it is taught as a discrete subject, including careers and work related learning. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection when PSHCE was deemed to be satisfactory. The formation of a school council is quite new and has not had enough time to impact fully. However, pupils are keen to help others, such as raise money for the Tsunami appeal. Religious education lessons enhance pupils understanding and tolerance of different faiths. Older pupils participate in Team Enterprise and hold democratic elections to vote for board members. The subject is well led and managed although the co-ordinator lacks the opportunity to check on the quality of teaching and learning in classes. Assessment procedures are being improved and when fully implemented, will be able to measure progress in smaller steps than is currently the case.

58. The school uses breaks and lunch times as learning opportunities for pupils. This enhances the progress pupils make in their social and moral development. Older pupils help younger less able pupils in their play activities. At lunch time pupils collect their own lunches, return their plates in an orderly manner, take turns and wait patiently if necessary. A significant minority of pupils use augmentative communication aids which increase their communication skills, thus enhancing their social and personal development. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff, and as a result, pupils have very good attitudes to their learning, behave very well and always try to do their best. Almost 20 per cent of pupils have opportunities to take part in integration with main stream schools and colleges. This not only benefits pupils academically and in their personal and social development, but has a beneficial effect on the pupils they mix with in main stream.

## **Work Related Learning**

There was insufficient evidence of teaching and learning to make an overall judgement about the quality of provision in work related learning. Teachers' planning shows that thought has been given to making the subject very relevant to the pupils.

59. By the end of Year 11, all pupils have good experiences of work placements and good links with colleges. This means that they have opportunities to access 'taster' courses and longer courses in subjects that interest them, such as ICT, media studies or performing arts. Some pupils access a Flexible Learning Programme at college and others have opportunities to study Childcare in a course, which is taught in school by staff from the local college.
60. The Connexions service maintains strong links with pupils from Year 7 onwards so that by the time they reach Years 10 and 11 when decisions about their future need to be made, the careers officer knows them very well and ensures that they receive appropriate guidance. This is good practice and appreciated by pupils and parents. Transition planning is successful and seen as an important element in pupils' preparation for leaving school. In addition pupils take part successfully in a 'Transition Challenge' week of activities, which develops skills significantly such as team building and self-confidence.
61. Leadership and management of work related learning are very good. The co-ordinator is always seeking ways of improving the provision. He has involved the school in becoming an Enterprise Pathfinder school, which looks at different ways of delivering enterprise education. So far pupils have participated in two work simulation exercises, which help pupils learn about, for example, business management and advertising as well as continuing to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 belong to Team Enterprise, which has involved them in learning about business methods with support from an independent business advisor. They have elected key personnel, such as a chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer and have recently managed a successful enterprise organising the making and selling of Christmas cards.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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