

INSPECTION REPORT

Ditton Primary School

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111183

Headteacher: Paul Berresford

Reporting inspector: Mr C A Wonfor
OIN: 17546

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th June 2002

Inspection number: 196234

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Primary |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 – 11 Years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Liverpool Road Widnes Cheshire |
| Postcode: | WA8 7HD |
| Telephone number: | 0151 424 5861 |
| Fax number: | 0151 422 0239 |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs Val Cordy |
| Date of previous inspection: | 7 July 1997 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------|--|---|
| 17546 | C A Wonfor | Registered inspector | Physical education | Characteristics; Leadership and management; Further improvements. |
| 9052 | H Barter | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils; Partnership with parents. |
| 30243 | A Heakin | Team inspector | Foundation stage Curriculum Religious education | |
| 31963 | M Padmore | Team inspector | Equal opportunities; Mathematics; Design and technology; Music. | |
| 22178 | K Robertson | Team inspector | Special educational needs; Science; Information and communication technology; Geography. | Curriculum |
| 16198 | C Etherington | Team inspector | English; History. | |
| 21501 | J Charlesworth | Team inspector | English as an additional language; Art and design. | The school's results and pupils' achievements; Teaching. |

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
Sussex
BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 7 |
| Information about the school | |
| How good the school is | |
| What the school does well | |
| What could be improved | |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection | |
| Standards | |
| Pupils' attitudes and values | |
| Teaching and learning | |
| Other aspects of the school | |
| How well the school is led and managed | |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school | |
| | |
| PART B: COMMENTARY | |
| | |
| HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? | 12 |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development | |
| | |
| HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT? | 15 |
| | |
| HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS? | 17 |
| | |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? | 19 |
| | |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS | 21 |
| | |
| HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? | 22 |
| | |
| WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? | 25 |
| | |
| PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS | 26 |
| | |
| PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES | 30 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ditton is a community primary school which is bigger than average, and caters for 360 boys and girls from four to 11 years of age. It occupies new, purpose built premises in West Widnes. The pupils are almost all white, and all have English as their first language. About average numbers are eligible for free school meals, but above average numbers, around one third of the pupils, have special educational needs. Just over one quarter of these pupils transferred in from other schools. An average percentage of pupils currently have a statement of special educational needs although this number is due to increase shortly. The attainment of the pupils joining the reception class is, typically, well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Teaching is good and pupils reach standards comparable with those in similar schools. This represents good achievement in the light of their attainment when pupils start in reception. Leadership and management are good, and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6.
- Teaching is good. It is very good in Year 6, where pupils make very rapid gains and have particularly good attitudes to their work.
- Pupils' attitudes, enthusiasm for school, moral and social development, and behaviour are very good. Their relationships are excellent.
- Staff manage pupils' challenging behaviour very well, which contributes to a calm, supportive atmosphere.
- The school has developed very good systems for evaluating its own performance and taking action to improve it.
- The school cares very well for its pupils and values them as individuals.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- The curriculum for reception children does not take enough account of national guidelines. This affects their achievement.
- Curriculum planning for several subjects of the National Curriculum is unwieldy as it is not tailored to meet the needs of the pupils.
- There is no assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in many subjects of the National Curriculum which hinders planning for raising pupils' attainment.
- Governors do not play a sufficiently active part in monitoring the school's work and assuring its quality.
- Subject leadership is under-developed in several areas of the curriculum.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection in July 1997. There has been considerable improvement in some areas. For example, teaching, and pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have all improved; the school is now situated in brand new purpose-built accommodation; schemes of work have been introduced in all subjects and this has worked well in several subjects. Nevertheless, some aspects that were identified as concerns and key issues for development have not been fully addressed. Assessment in some subjects has not been introduced, and can not, therefore, be used to guide planning and help raise pupils' attainment. The role of the subject leaders is still under-developed in several subjects, and they are not given enough opportunity to monitor standards of teaching and learning. The curriculum for reception children still does not take

enough account of national guidelines.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | |
| English | B | C | C | B |
| Mathematics | E | D | D | C |
| Science | C | B | D | C |

| Key | |
|--------------------|---|
| Well above average | A |
| Above average | B |
| Average | C |
| Below average | D |
| Well below average | E |

Childrens' achievement is satisfactory overall; nevertheless, by the time they enter Year 1, their skills are still below expectations for their age.

Until 2001, pupils did not make sufficient progress in Years 1 and 2. The national test results for 2001 show that by the end of Year 2 pupils' results were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the first unconfirmed indications from the 2002 national test results are that pupils' achievement has been good during the year, and they have done better in the tests. In particular, a greater number of pupils have reached levels above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils make good progress during Years 3 to 6 although the results achieved by 11 year olds dropped in 2001, after a gentle rise broadly in line with the national trend over the previous few years. The results fell short of the school's targets for English and mathematics. However, the first indications are that the 2002 test results for Key Stage 2 pupils have also improved, and that targets for English have been met, and exceeded for mathematics.

Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, geography, history, art and design, design and technology, music and physical education are at expected levels in both age groups. Their achievement in English, mathematics, science and ICT is good at both key stages, and in art and history is good in Years 1 and 2. Achievement is satisfactory in design and technology, geography, music and religious education, and in history and art in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and meet the targets set for them in their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and keen to learn. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Pupils learn to manage their own behaviour very well and behave with maturity and responsibility. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Pupils take responsibility well. Relationships with one another and with adults are excellent. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory. There is an above average amount of unauthorised absence, which is generally due to parents taking children on holiday in term time. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Reception | Years 1 – 2 | Years 3 – 6 |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Quality of teaching | Satisfactory | Good | Good |

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Good teaching in Years 1 to 6 ensures that pupils learn and achieve well overall, although the quality is not equally good in each class or each year group. Teaching is very good in Year 6 where pupils learn rapidly. It is satisfactory in reception and Years 4 and 5. The teaching of mathematics, including numeracy, is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The teaching of English, including literacy, is good throughout Years 1 to 6. Teaching generally meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs very well, and the needs of higher attaining pupils are being well met in most subjects and classes. Occasionally, work is not matched to these groups of pupils' needs, so they either struggle to keep up or are not challenged to the maximum. Either way, this prevents them learning as much as they could. Particular strengths in teaching include the way staff manage pupils' behaviour, their positive and encouraging relationships with them and the use of questioning and resources to help pupils learn and understand. Weaknesses in some teaching include a lack of suitable expectations of behaviour and response to instructions, and a lack of subject knowledge.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory. The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, as the schemes of work in some subjects have not been tailored to match the school's needs. The curriculum for reception children does not take enough account of national guidance so there is insufficient focus on some areas of learning, for example knowledge and understanding of the world. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Very good. Pupils are well supported and achieve well. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall. Provision is very good for social and moral development, good for cultural development, and satisfactory for spiritual development. Provision for pupils' personal development is good, but there are not enough structured opportunities for pupils to have their say and influence school life. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Very good. The school cares for its pupils very well and provides them with high levels of support and consideration. Assessment of pupils' progress is very good in English and mathematics, but under-developed in many other subjects such as art, history, geography and design and technology. |
| How well does the school work in partnership with parents | Good. The school has effective links with parents who are generally very supportive of the school and all that it does. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher sets the positive, caring atmosphere in which the pupils thrive. He is well supported by the Key Stage managers and together they have a firm focus on improving standards. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and some subjects, for example English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education, are well led. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Satisfactory. The governors are highly committed and enthusiastic, but do not have enough active involvement in monitoring standards and holding the school to account. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Very good. Much work has been done to analyse performance data, and focus support on pupils who need it. This has contributed to the considerable improvement in standards in Years 1 and 2 during this past year. |
| The strategic use of resources | Satisfactory. All monies are used appropriately and the school applies the principles of best value well. |
| The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources | Good. The school is very attractive and display is used very well to support learning. The acoustics in the hall and small size of the ICT room are both problems. Learning resources are good and staffing levels are adequate. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching is good and pupils make good progress.• Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best.• The school is helping their children to grow up mature and be responsible.• Pupils like school and behave well.• They can talk to staff easily about problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of after-school activities |

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and consider the range of activities put on outside school time to be satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Childrens' levels of attainment on entry to reception are well below those expected of this age. Children make good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills and satisfactory progress in all other areas of learning. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good because there are some weaknesses in both the teaching and curriculum. The curriculum does not take proper account of the areas of learning recommended for this age group, and in the reception-only class, there are insufficiently clear boundaries and high expectations of children to conform and develop self-control. This unfavourably impacts on their ability to socialise, concentrate and learn. Consequently, childrens' skills are still below expectations for their age at the end of their time in reception, and most children are unlikely to attain the standards expected in personal, social and emotional development, language and literacy, mathematical, physical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The achievement of pupils in Reception who have special educational needs is satisfactory, but it is sometimes limited by a lack of focus and high expectations in teaching. Overall, the provision and standards attained by pupils since the previous inspection have declined.

2. Standards attained by pupils in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 declined following the previous inspection, but are now rising due to a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching, which is now good, and on analysing pupils' skills to give them the support they need to learn more effectively. The successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has also contributed to the rise in standards throughout the school.

3. In **English**, inspection evidence demonstrates that current Year 2 pupils are achieving better than pupils in previous years. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 has been good during the past year and standards attained at the end of Year 2 have improved. Pupils' attainment is, overall, still a little below expectations for their age, particularly in reading. However, this is due to the number of pupils who have special educational needs in the group. Besides helping those with more pronounced difficulties to learn better, the focus on improving teaching and learning has also resulted in higher attaining pupils being challenged. Consequently, more are achieving at levels above those expected for their age than in previous years.

4. In Years 3 to 6 pupils achieve well and their attainment by the end of Year 6 is in line with national averages. This picture is typical of the past few years, and is due to the consistently better quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 than had previously been experienced in Key Stage 1.

5. In **mathematics**, as in English, the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are achieving higher standards overall than previous years and achievement is good in both key stages. Overall, Year 2 pupils' standards are below the national average because of the large numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and attain at the lower levels. However, there has been a significant improvement in the numbers of pupils who are attaining at levels above those expected for their age which shows that they are now being suitably challenged in their work. An improvement in the performance of the lower and middle attaining pupils in Year 6 since last year. This means that more pupils are reaching levels expected for their age than in previous years. However, there are still fewer than average

reaching levels above those expected for their age.

6. The trend over the last four years has been one of steady improvement in attainment in **science**. The drive to improve teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 has been successful, and standards attained by the current Year 2 pupils are close to the national average, with more pupils reaching levels above those expected for their age than previously. This represents good achievement, which is continued in Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment in Year 6 is in line with the national average, and early indications in this year's National Curriculum tests suggest that more pupils reached levels above those expected for their age than in previous years.

7. Standards attained by both seven and 11 year olds in **art and design** are in line with those expected nationally. Their achievement is good during Key Stage 1 and satisfactory during Key Stage 2. Pupils throughout the school clearly enjoy their work which is very well displayed and used to illustrate other subjects. Achievement is limited at Key Stage 2 by under-developed subject leadership and management. Furthermore, some aspects such as the use of sketchbooks and portfolios of work to support pupils' achievement have ceased in recent years. This indicates an apparent decline in standards since the previous inspection.

8. Standards attained in **design and technology** are in line with national expectations throughout the school, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when provision and standards were both judged to be unsatisfactory. The subject is well led and managed, and the introduction of national guidelines has made a significant contribution to the improvement. However, the lack of systematic assessment of pupils' work, and opportunities for pupils to record their work themselves prevents higher attainment.

9. By the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, standards attained in **geography** are around expectations for pupils' age, and their achievement is satisfactory. This is a deterioration since the previous inspection. Standards attained by pupils in **history** have been maintained, but pupils now achieve better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, whereas at the time of the last inspection it was the other way around. Overall, achievement in history is satisfactory. Provision in both subjects has suffered as a result of the understandable emphasis placed on English, mathematics and science. Additional factors are that assessment is not used as a basis for tracking and developing pupils' skills, and the curriculum has been taken from national guidelines without being adapted to match the school's needs.

10. Standards attained by pupils in **information and communications technology** are in line with expectations for their age throughout the school, and their achievement is good. This appears to indicate the same position as at the time of the previous inspection, but expectations of pupils' skills have increased considerably since then. Overall, the provision in all aspects and the standards pupils attain have improved, and are continuing to do so. This has been brought about by very good subject leadership embodied in a clear plan to improve the quality of teaching, learning and standards attained. The introduction of a scheme of work based on national guidelines, together with a commercial package, has also had a positive impact. Systems for monitoring pupils' progress and focusing support where needed are being introduced.

11. By the age of seven and 11, pupils attain standards in **music** that are in line with expectations, and achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection when standards attained were judged to be below national expectations. The improvement is due to good subject-leadership, the introduction of national curriculum guidelines to support planning and improved teaching, particularly of composition. However, there are no assessment procedures to track pupils' progress, which

prevents a focus on raising their attainment.

12. Standards attained by both seven and 11 year olds in **physical education** are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory during Key Stage 1 and good during Key Stage 2. Pupils at Key Stage 1 clearly enjoy their work, especially in dance and in games and gymnastics at Key Stage 2. Although this is a similar finding to the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved overall. Nevertheless, under-developed subject leadership and management does restrict pupils' achievement.

13. In **religious education**, standards attained at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection when standards attained were lower than expected, and the school did not cover the syllabus properly. Teaching and planning have also improved. Subject leadership is good and appropriate plans are in place to continue to develop provision of the subject and further raise standards of teaching and learning

14. Nearly one third of pupils have **special educational needs**. Provision for these pupils is very good and they achieve well. Work is generally matched to their needs in class, and Individual Educational Plans are developed for each pupil that set out the targets for them to achieve and ways in which teachers and assistants should support them. The school successfully includes all pupils in all activities, meeting their needs and in promoting their achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Since the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to school and to their learning have strengthened and are now very good. Pupils say that the teachers are 'very friendly and help you to learn' and that they 'would recommend' the school to their friends. They have a clear sense that they come to school to learn as well as to have fun and are proud of their new school building. These high standards have been achieved through good support and encouragement which raises pupils' self-esteem and confidence in themselves and their work. Parents are particularly pleased with the high expectations of teachers that their children will work hard and do their best and the way in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.

16. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. Attendance levels are in line with national averages although there is a slightly higher incidence of unauthorised absence, mainly because not all parents tell the school why their children were absent. The school has identified an increasing trend of term-time holidays, which disrupts pupils' education. Most pupils arrive on time for school and registrations are carried out quickly at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. This means that little learning time is wasted.

17. Pupils are highly motivated, enthusiastic and eager to contribute and participate in lessons and other activities in and around the school. This has a significant impact on the quality of their learning. Pupils settle to work quickly and purposefully. They are well focused on their tasks and can concentrate for extended periods of time, putting in maximum effort to their work. They are confident to both ask questions and volunteer information in discussions and listen well to their teachers and to other pupils. However, although the attitudes and behaviour of the youngest children are satisfactory, they are not as good as those of older pupils because teachers are not as skilled as they could be at helping pupils to learn self-discipline and independence.

18. Standards of pupils' behaviour in and around the school are very good and have been further strengthened since the last inspection. Most parents are pleased with the high

standards of discipline and feel that their children behave very well as a result. Pupils say that, although there are some upsets, most children behave well. They are happy that, when there are problems, teachers listen to their concerns and sort out their difficulties. The school functions as a welcoming, orderly community where pupils have a good sense of self-discipline. Although class rules are clearly displayed, teachers rarely have to refer to them because pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Pupils are polite and courteous to staff and adults in the school, for example, they readily hold doors open for others and smile at visitors. In class, pupils are very happy to talk about what they are doing and are willing to show their work to visitors. No oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. The school works hard to include and support all pupils, especially those with individual behaviour problems. There has only been one fixed term exclusion in the past year.

19. Pupils are making very good progress in their personal development. Relationships in the school are excellent and help pupils to feel fully included in the school community where everyone respects and values each other. Pupils themselves say that everyone is treated equally. Teachers and pupils have relaxed relationships with each other and there is a lot of good-natured humour between them. Pupils help each other and show consideration for others' feelings, values and beliefs. They co-operate well and enjoy working together in pairs and groups. Year 6 pupils say that they particularly enjoy the opportunity to be reading partners of younger pupils in Year 2.

20. Where pupils are offered the opportunity to develop their initiative and personal responsibility, they respond well; from the youngest pupils who take registers to the office to older pupils who decide how to raise funds for charity such as the 'Fifty Pence Grow'. Pupils elected as Road Safety Officers planned and delivered, with their friends, a very effective assembly which encouraged pupils to take care of themselves and others. The programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education is not yet fully developed to give all pupils opportunities for discussion and for developing personal responsibility. However, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are learning to make choices for their own lives when discussing topics such as alcohol and smoking. As one pupil said, with disgust, when he saw forty pounds worth of used cigarette ends and ash in a jam-jar, 'I could have bought eight hamsters for that!' Year 6 pupils say that they will be sorry to leave but feel that they have been well prepared for their move to secondary school and are looking forward to new opportunities. They welcomed the chance to talk to inspectors about their school and had very few criticisms. However, they do feel that they would like more opportunities to air their views in this way and to have some say in the school's decision-making processes.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. Pupils of Reception age are in two classes, one exclusively for Reception pupils, and the other for both Reception and Year 1 pupils. Teaching in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class ranged from satisfactory to good whilst teaching in the Reception-only class was generally satisfactory, or on one occasion, unsatisfactory.

22. The planning for the Reception children in the Year 1 class is organised well and the needs of these younger children who need more informal learning experiences than the rest of the class are managed well. For example, after an initial whole-class introduction and activity in literacy, the Reception children moved to model-making whilst the older pupils continued with literacy-based activities. The teacher's patient use of careful questioning allowed the children to succeed whilst also giving her the opportunity to assess how much they know and understand in order to support or extend those who need it. Good opportunities are given for children to work together in small groups, or discuss what they are learning in pairs, which supports their personal development well. Praise, encouragement

and the effective management of pupils' behaviour are used well to motivate the children and set clear expectations for them which gives them the encouragement and structure they need to learn.

23. The lack of expectation, challenge and structure in a significant proportion of lessons in the Reception-only class means that these children do not achieve as much as they could. Planning for activities does not sufficiently reflect the national guidance for the Foundation Stage curriculum, and so some areas of learning such as *Knowledge and Understanding of the World* are not properly covered. This limits the development of the children's skills, and does not prepare them properly for Year 1. Similarly, children's personal development is not well enough addressed. In particular, expectations for suitable behaviour are not made clear, and on frequent occasions, children were allowed to talk amongst themselves, fidget and move around when they should have been concentrating. A lack of clarity about the start of lessons and what exactly the children were expected to do also contributed to their restless behaviour and limited their learning.

24. Teachers in Years 1 - 6 build up very good relationships with pupils, which encourages them to listen, concentrate, learn and above all to enjoy their work. This is reflected in the pupils' excellent relationships with one-another and their positive attitudes to their work and school. As a result they achieve well. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. This is achieved by setting clear boundaries and not letting any incident "go," so that pupils understand exactly what is and is not acceptable. Individual Education Plans including targets for improving behaviour are set for pupils who have identified problems in this area, and they are followed well in the everyday lessons which helps these pupils make good progress. Quite often very little teacher input was needed. This is a measure of the staff's skills in supporting pupils over time so that they learn to conform and concentrate because they want to. Even in the weaker lessons observed, pupils remained good-natured and well behaved which meant they got as much out of the lesson that they could.

25. The most effective lessons had several characteristics in common. In particular, teachers made very good use of resources; used questioning very well to draw out and supplement pupils' knowledge and understanding; and their own knowledge and personality made the lesson exceptionally interesting and informative. For example, in an art lesson in Year 3, five tables were carefully set with enticing materials such as sequins, shells, clay and marbelling resources. The teacher gave very clear instructions for each activity, whilst also stressing the need for thought, careful design and creativity. Pupils listened very carefully to the instructions, whilst gazing at the materials with clearly joyful anticipation. All activities were equally enticing, and no pupil felt they had drawn a short straw. As soon as they were able, the pupils settled down to work extremely productively and achieved a great deal.

26. During an excellent science lesson in Year 6, the teacher asked the pupils to work in pairs to brainstorm all they knew about *light*, and then feed back their points to the whole class. Time-warnings were given so that pupils knew exactly how long they had got and were motivated to do as much as they could in the time available. During feedback, the teacher expanded upon each pupil's contribution which made sure that everyone in the class understood the point that was being made. By the end of this part of the lesson, pupils had demonstrated a great deal of knowledge and understanding about the properties of light. The teacher then set them the challenge of working out a way of seeing the *Manchester Marathon* from the back of a big crowd; this was put to them in an anecdotal form that the pupils found very amusing and motivating. After several suggestions such as *stethoscope*, *parascope*, *microscope* the pupils found the right word – *periscope*. The rest of the lesson was spent making their own periscope in pairs, using a pre-prepared template and written instructions, which, on questioning they recognised as a mathematical *net*, and *instructional* writing. In a subsequent lesson, further high quality support for the subject was given by a

teacher from the local secondary school. This is clearly a very valuable link.

27. Less effective lessons are characterised by work not being matched to pupils' needs; lack of sufficiently clear expectations in relation to following instructions, and a lack of subject knowledge which limits pupils' opportunities for learning. At times, resources such as work sheets for pupils' use were too difficult for those with more significant special educational needs. This meant that they needed a lot of the teacher's time in order to interpret and complete them and they were unable to work independently. In other, more successful lessons, a range of worksheets on the same topic were produced for different groups of pupils in the class enabling all to work independently. Occasionally, extra work is set for higher attaining pupils which is at an insufficiently high level, and so acts as a time-filling exercise rather than one which develops pupils' thinking further.

28. Teachers are not always clear enough about their expectations of pupils. For example, on one occasion, the teacher asked pupils to stop writing, but did not follow it up when several pupils continued to write whilst the teacher was talking. This meant that they were not listening to the class discussion and could not participate in the session. As a result, the pupils could not confirm what they had understood or ask questions for clarification. The opportunity was also missed for the teacher to informally assess what pupils had learned in order to plan follow-on work. Not all teachers are sufficiently confident in the subjects they are teaching. This has the effect of limiting the depth and breadth of what pupils learn because the main focus of the lesson is on completing the tasks set, rather than on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding. This was shown in a science lesson where pupils were carrying out a range of investigations into the properties of sound, with the common underlying principles that *sound is caused by vibrations; vibrations travel from one material to another*. Pupils moved around the activities, carrying out each investigation. However, they were not encouraged well enough to explain each phenomena, for example, that putting a vibrating tuning fork into water makes the water splash vigorously, in terms of *why* it happened. Instead, they stopped at describing *what* happened which did not help them learn as much as they could have done.

29. Support staff are used well to help meet the needs of the different groups of pupils. Careful thought has been put into how they are best deployed. For example, they work with small groups on particular activities in Reception and Years 1 and 2, whilst they give support to pupils with special educational needs in Years 3 to 6 and play a valuable part in this provision

30. The help pupils receive from the special needs support teachers is good. Tasks are matched to pupils' needs, and resources used are good. The pupils concentrate well and make good progress. Class teachers generally make a strong contribution to the progress pupils make within the classroom. Clear, precise explanations and carefully targeted questioning ensure good levels of understanding and potential learning difficulties are minimised.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

31. The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets statutory requirements, the school's aims and is based appropriately on all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It promotes the intellectual, physical, moral, social and personal development of all its pupils, including those with special educational needs satisfactorily.

32. The emphasis in curricular development has been upon improving provision for

English, mathematics and science, but also including information and communication technology and religious education. This decision is justified and has improved standards in these subjects, but as a result too little emphasis has been placed upon the development of other subjects particularly history and geography. In the context of rapid improvements in the curriculum over the last two years, this is understandable, but is an area, requiring improvement. Staff have worked hard to implement the guidance in the national frameworks and they have developed effective strategies for teaching the key skills of literacy and numeracy.

33. The teaching programme for children in the reception classes is unsatisfactory. Curricular planning for this age group is not sufficiently broad and lacks a structured focus on knowledge and understanding of the world, and personal, social and emotional development.

34. The school has responded to the issues from the last inspection and a framework within which teachers can plan has been established. All policies, many recently updated, are now in place and are supported by national schemes of work including those for literacy and numeracy. However, in the foundation subjects the schemes of work are still being developed and currently do not support learning in history and geography sufficiently.

35. Provision in English and mathematics has been strengthened by the introduction of the national strategies, both of which the school has implemented successfully. Staff have worked hard to implement the guidance in the frameworks and they have developed effective strategies for teaching the key skills of literacy and numeracy. This is strengthened when there are opportunities for pupils to use these skills in other subjects. For example, pupils apply their English skills well across most subjects and there is a good structured programme to develop pupils' information technology skills which supports their learning in other subjects.

36. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good including those pupils with statements of special educational needs. There are clear procedures for identifying pupils at an early stage in their education. Individual Educational Plans are written for all pupils and contain relevant short-term targets linked to appropriate strategies. Although these are usually well focussed on pupils' particular needs, a small proportion of targets are not always specific or measurable enough making future planning more difficult. Class teachers and special needs support staff work closely together and where ever possible, ensure that pupils who are withdrawn from classes for extra support are being taught the same subject at an appropriate level. Pupils with special educational needs participate fully in lessons ensuring equality of access to all subjects. Provision fully meets the requirements of the revised Code of Practice and statutory reporting requirements. All the needs of pupils with statements of special educational needs are fully met and pupils are well integrated into school life.

37. Although there is a recently updated policy for personal, social and health education, the school's planning is still in the early stages. The newly formulated schemes of work are to be introduced in September when the school is planning to extend teaching in all classes. The provision is satisfactory. At Key Stage 1, pupils are currently taught through topics and religious education. The science curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about basic life processes, including sex education and health issues, such as smoking. The school provides other valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills. For example, they show visitors around the school and on many occasions they are effectively encouraged to reflect on their learning at the end of lessons. There are limited opportunities for pupils to express their own opinions and ideas and to develop a sense of responsibility by contributing to the day to day running of their classes and the school. Procedures for formally consulting with pupils in order to give pupils a sense of being involved

in decision making, such as through a school council, are not in place.

38. The recent foot and mouth outbreak in addition to the disruption created by the rebuilding of the school have had a negative impact on the number and range of extra curricular activities offered by the school. However, the Year 2 annual residential trip has continued, whilst the Year 6 residential activity week to Staffordshire will be reintroduced in the coming year. However, a satisfactory range of visits and visitors to the school supports the curriculum. Pupils benefit from visits to local businesses, museums, towns, the local church and Liverpool Cathedral. The skills and experience of visitors such as the Fire Brigade enrich pupils' learning well.

39. Links with the local community are satisfactory. The new Key Stage 1 manager has recently established a link with a pre-school group, which will help children and their parents when children begin their school life. The school maintains particularly effective links with the local high schools. These links ease the transition of pupils when they begin secondary education and enhance curriculum provision. For example, Year 6 pupils regularly visit the neighbouring secondary schools taking advantage of the specialist facilities of one local school's Technology College status. Teachers from these schools visit Ditton to teach science and information and communication technology. This has included specialist teaching for small groups of able pupils and science lectures and demonstrations for larger groups of Year 5 and Year 6.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school continues to provide a caring, supportive and inclusive environment where pupils flourish because the staff know and value them as individuals. Parents feel that their children are safe and well cared for in a happy and friendly community.

41. The school has good systems for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare. There are appropriate procedures for child protection although no staff, other than the designated teacher, have received recent training. The school has a good commitment to those pupils who are in public care and the designated teacher is developing good procedures to track their academic progress and personal development. Staff show sensitivity to pupils in need, for example, discreetly arranging toast and milk for a mid-morning snack.

42. Since its move to new premises, the school has regularly reviewed its routines and procedures through risk assessments to ensure pupils' health and safety. It has recently received a satisfactory report on its practice following a local authority health and safety audit. The school is already taking appropriate steps to address some of its recommendations, such as monitoring the accident book. Provision for first aid is good and all staff care well for pupils who have individual medical needs, are unwell or have hurt themselves. Midday staff have received recent training in the care and management of pupils and make a good contribution to the consistency of support provided.

43. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Good links have been established with the educational welfare officer who visits regularly and follows up individual cases where necessary. Registrations are carried out efficiently and unexplained absences are followed up in due course by office staff who contact parents when requested and have a good knowledge of individual pupils who are regularly absent or late for school. The school has not yet developed any information technology systems to make the processing of regular attendance statistics more efficient.

44. The procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' good behaviour and for eliminating any oppressive behaviour are very good. This is reflected in the very good

behaviour of pupils and the orderly atmosphere in the school. The behaviour policy provides clear guidelines for promoting good behaviour and for dealing with any incidents of bullying. It clearly states the school's expectations and this helps to ensure consistency of approach in behaviour management from all staff. Pupils are involved in negotiating class rules and deciding the rewards for 'privilege time' and, as a result, are clear about what is expected of them. The school is also very effective in supporting individual pupils with significant behaviour problems and monitors them well. As a result, it is hard to identify these pupils amongst others and is an indication of the inclusive nature of the school.

45. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. As well as the statutory national tests for seven and 11 year olds, pupils take tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 in English, mathematics and science. The school, with good support from the local education authority, extensively monitors and analyses the data from testing to identify trends and variances in achievement and to make sure that no group is disadvantaged. As a result of this analysis, the school correctly identified significant underachievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2. It has made good progress in developing more rigorous tracking procedures, starting from the baseline assessments for reception children; to closely monitor pupils' progress against predicted levels in order to raise standards in English and mathematics. With the information available to them, teachers identify pupils who require additional support, such as the Early Literacy Strategy programme, and have set group targets for all pupils in English in Years 1 and 2.

46. Assessment of pupils from Years 3 to 6 is an area, which the school has rightly identified in its improvement plan, for further development. Currently, teachers closely track the progress of pupils in 'focus groups', in addition to pupils with special educational needs. They use the results of tests in English and mathematics to provide additional support through a range of strategies. For example, extra lessons are available to boost standards in Year 6., and in mathematics pupils are placed in teaching groups by their level of attainment. While procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in information technology and science are satisfactory, there is very little assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the foundation subjects of the curriculum. As a result, teachers do not sufficiently plan work for pupils of all levels of attainment and have very little detailed information to report on these subjects to parents at the end of the year. The school recognises that it now needs to revise its assessment policy to ensure that there is consistency of approach in all subjects and that assessments, such as in science, are monitored for accuracy. The school does not have up-to-date portfolios of pupils' work against which teachers can accurately assess the levels of pupils' achievement.

47. Overall, the quality of educational and personal support and guidance is good. The quality of teachers' marking varies from class to class but when used well, helps pupils to understand how well they have achieved and where they need to make improvements. Although the school's systems for monitoring personal development remains informal, teachers and staff know all the pupils very well and give good guidance and support in lessons and around the school. The system of reward, such as merit stickers, is well understood by pupils and teachers ensure that all pupils are included in the celebration of achievement over the school year. This helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and has a very positive impact on the quality of their learning and their personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The school's partnership with parents is good because it has further developed effective links with them and provides them with good quality information. Most parents have very positive views of the school and some wrote letters to the inspectors to emphasise their appreciation of the quality of education provided for their children. Parental questionnaire returns indicate that parents are more positive about the school than at the last inspection.

49. Parents are particularly pleased with the progress that their children make as a result of good quality teaching, high expectations for their children's achievement and the support that pupils receive to help them behave well and grow up. A significant number of parents were concerned about the range of activities provided outside school, which the inspection team considers to be satisfactory. A small minority of parents expressed concern about the way the school works with them and the information that they receive about how their child is getting on. The school has already identified in its development plan the need to involve more parents in their children's learning, particularly in Years 1 and 2 and, as a result, more parents are helping in school and attending courses and meetings.

50. The quality of information provided for parents is good. The prospectus gives detailed information about the school and its activities although a few required elements are missing from the governors' annual report to parents. The school has introduced very good quality newsletters each term and booklets which help parents to know what their children will be learning, how they can support them at home with regular homework activities and how they can help in school. Regular consultation evenings are held for parents to review their children's progress and achievements. These are usually well attended and the school contacts any parents who do not attend. The annual reports to parents regarding pupils' progress and attainment are quite detailed and now cover all subjects of the curriculum; an improvement since the last inspection. They clearly identify what pupils are able to do but do not consistently indicate how well pupils are achieving in relation to others of their age, particularly in the foundation subjects of the curriculum. Targets for improvement, such as, 'continue to maintain good progress', are too general and do not sufficiently help parents to focus support for their children's learning.

51. The school is aware of the need to encourage more parents to be involved in their children's learning at school and home. It holds information evenings on subjects such as national testing, sex education and secondary transfer and ensures that parents who do not attend receive notes of the meetings. The school has developed courses for parents in conjunction with Halton College and has encouraged more parents to be involved in the school, for example, by asking them to develop a story sack library or to assist with cataloguing new books. Although many parents work or do not feel confident in offering their assistance, a small number help regularly in classrooms. They support activities such as group work and one parent helps with the lunchtime cross-stitch club. Some parents helpfully support pupils' learning by contributing items for lessons, such as an extensive range of post-war artefacts, including ration books, for a history lesson. A number of midday staff and teaching assistants are also parents and support the school well in their work. The school encourages parents to help their children by regularly signing their reading record books. Parental support in this is patchy and not all parents hear their children read regularly. The school no longer has a parent, teacher and friends' association as reported at the last inspection but parents give their support to any fundraising activities organised by the school. Parents' views of the school are sought through informal discussions and at consultation meetings although there are no formal consultation processes in place, for example, through questionnaires, to regularly canvass parental opinion of the school and its work.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The school is well led by the headteacher which is an improvement on the previous inspection. He has a clear view of the school's strengths and those areas requiring further development. Together with all staff, the governing body and the support of the local education authority the school has worked hard to raise standards, at both key stages. The good management of the headteacher is well supported by the Key Stage managers and together they have a firm focus on improving standards and creating an atmosphere in which pupils enjoy coming to school and learn with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Educational inclusion and equal opportunities are given a high priority, for example meeting the wide range of pupils' abilities, including special educational needs and behavioural difficulties.

53. The headteacher and to an extent the governing body, have a realistic understanding of how the school has improved since the last inspection. It has correctly concentrated its efforts on improving pupils' standards and establishing systems that will help to sustain pupils' attainment over time. Senior managers have also realised the importance and benefits of becoming a self-evaluating school. A great deal of work has been done to analyse performance data and focus support on those pupils who need it. This success has made a considerable contribution to the improved standards in Years 1 and 2 during this past year. It has also been effective in the management of subjects such as English, mathematics, science, information and technology and religious education. The co-ordination of special educational needs is particularly good and the co-ordinator manages this area very effectively. She works closely and effectively with class teachers and support staff. Senior managers and the governing body support this co-ordination by ensuring this aspect of the school is well organised and effectively monitored. However, the management of other subjects and the Foundation Stage requires further development to improve pupils' standards.

54. Monitoring and evaluation of curriculum planning, teaching and learning in the core subjects has greatly improved since the last inspection. Monitoring is carried out by the headteacher, senior managers and some subject leaders, but does not yet involve all co-ordinators observing and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects across the school. This has resulted in inconsistencies in curricular planning, and in the quality of teaching, such as in many of the foundation subjects.

55. The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and the school. It works effectively through a number of well-organised committees, who meet regularly and provide minutes for the full governing body. Subject leaders are invited to committee meetings to talk about their subjects, but as yet governors do not visit subject leaders in school. Few governors have specific responsibilities for monitoring or evaluating the success of identified and agreed targets within the school improvement plan. Although some governors visit the school regularly, indeed some even work in the school on a voluntary basis, many do not have a clear strategic view of the school's future development. The chair of governors has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development, and has informal plans to improve the governing body's monitoring role within the school. The governing body has recently set the school's senior managers appropriate performance management targets. Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and many have attended training provided by the local education authority. They are keen to take a more active and strategic role within the school.

56. Most issues from the last inspection report have been addressed although a few still remain, such as the school improvement plan. Although, this is a well-structured and detailed plan that includes appropriate costings for school initiatives, it unfortunately only covers short term initiatives and has few medium or long-term aims. It is constructed by the headteacher and staff, but is almost in final draft before the governing body receive the plan and are asked to approve it. The governors do not have a detailed role in the creation of the school

improvement plan and are not responsible for monitoring its success on a regular basis.

57. The school has an adequate match of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. All subjects of the curriculum have a subject leader whose role is to manage the implementation of their subject, to support and advise colleagues on its planning and delivery, to keep an overview of learning resources and to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Some leaders fulfil their roles effectively, especially in the core subjects, but the school has yet to ensure that all foundation subjects are well monitored as some subject leaders do not yet have time allocated for observing teaching and learning in their subjects. Similarly, appropriate professional training has been effective in developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of key curriculum initiatives such as literacy and numeracy, resulting in the national strategies for these being well implemented. However, some leaders of foundation subjects, have had few opportunities to develop their expertise through additional training. The development of subject co-ordinators' roles to monitor standards and developments in their subjects was identified as a key issue in the last inspection report. This has not yet been fully addressed and requires attention.

58. The school made a decision to employ an extra teacher at Key Stage 2 to keep class sizes smaller and this has benefited pupils by making groups for literacy and numeracy more manageable. However, the number of learning support staff is low and some are deployed to support individual pupils with particular learning difficulties or who present challenging behaviour. Consequently, although existing support staff are well qualified, dedicated and hardworking, there are insufficient numbers to provide the regular and consistent support needed for group work in some subjects, in particular for literacy in Key Stage 1.

59. The school has good arrangements for the performance management of teachers, but only informal systems for the appraisal of other categories of staff. Mid-day supervisors and learning support assistants receive appropriate training but some would welcome more formal discussions on their professional development. Although the arrangements for the induction of new staff are informal, the induction process is satisfactory. However, arrangements for the induction and mentoring of newly qualified teachers are more effective and make good use of the training and support provided by the Local Education Authority as well as the school's own resources.

60. The school's accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection, with its move to new purpose-built premises, approximately 18 months ago. This is a significant improvement from the previous cramped buildings which were on split sites and had unsatisfactory temporary accommodation. The caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to keep the new building spotlessly clean and well maintained and there is little vandalism. Teaching and support staff make considerable efforts to display pupils' work in innovative and attractive ways in classrooms, corridors and communal areas and this really enhances the quality of the learning environment for pupils and also makes the school a pleasant working environment for staff. Pupils' achievements are also celebrated through the displays and this shows value for the contributions of pupils of all abilities and effectively communicates the school's successes to parents and other visitors to the school.

61. The accommodation also provides smaller teaching rooms for the withdrawal of groups of pupils for additional support. The large hall is used very well for physical education lessons, assemblies and dining, although the acoustics are not ideal for performing. The central library area is well used and the external play areas provide plenty of space for pupils of all ages to play safely. Although the building is new there are a few weaknesses. For example, there is a lack of specialist facilities for science, art or design and technology. The size of the computer suite makes working with large classes difficult and the poor ventilation means the room is often uncomfortable, although the school is currently seeking ways to

address this.

62. Learning resources are good overall, and have improved in several subjects since the last inspection for example, in English and literacy they are very good. The library is well organised with labelled shelves and furniture that allows it to be used for teaching small groups. It is however low on books to support teaching and learning in many subjects of the curriculum. Despite the use of the library loans service, the school's library requires further investment to develop a suitable range of resources to promote independent study and research.

63. The strategic management of school resources is effective. The governing body's finance committee clearly oversees the budget, although senior managers do not always have a clear picture of actual expenditure in each area. Specific grants, including those for special educational needs and improving standards are well used and monitored by the school secretary, headteacher and the finance committee, although the school relies on the Local Education Authority for detailed information on expenditure. The school secretary and her assistant efficiently manage day to day administration and this supports teaching and learning well. The main recommendations of the last audit report in 2000 have been acted upon. The school is making satisfactory progress applying the principles of best value. For example, when ordering resources the secretary always seeks to obtain the best value possible. However, the headteacher and governing body have yet to rigorously apply the principles of best value to matters such as development planning or the allocation of funds to large projects such as the computer suite or library.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. In order to continue with the improvements the school has already made the headteacher, governing body and staff should:

- (1) Take full account of the national guidelines for children in the Foundation Stage, thus providing them with the opportunity to achieve across all six areas of learning. (Paragraphs 1, 23, 33 and 68).
- (2) Ensure that the planning for foundation subjects is suitably tailored to meet the needs and experiences of all pupils and that these plans are manageable for teachers to implement. (Paragraphs 32, 34, 119 and 126).
- (3) Introduce appropriate assessment procedures across all subjects to ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are accurately recorded. This will aid teachers' future planning enabling them to set work that is suitably challenging for all pupils. (Paragraphs 8, 9, 11, 46, 50, 103, 109, 114, 119, 120, 126, 138 and 144).
- (4) Fully involve members of the governing body in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of school targets. (Paragraphs 55, 56 and 63).
- (5) Improve the opportunities for subject leaders to fully co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate their subjects, along similar lines to those teachers who currently lead core subjects. (Paragraphs 7, 12, 53, 54, 57, 108, 133 and 144).

65. In addition to the main areas for development outlined above, the following areas should also be considered by the school:

- ◇ Create more opportunities for pupils to express their own opinions and ideas within the schools decision making process. (Paragraphs 20 and 37).
- ◇ Ensure that learning resources, including work sheets, are appropriately matched to the needs of all pupils. (Paragraphs 27, 36 and 99).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 87 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 46 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 4 | 15 | 43 | 37 | 1 | | |

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

| | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | | 360 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | | 78 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

| | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | | 6 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | | 116 |

English as an additional language

| | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 0 |

Pupil mobility in the last school year

| | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 17 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 7 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.3 |
| National comparative data | 5.6 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.5 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2001 | 27 | 24 | 51 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 17 | 22 | 20 |
| | Girls | 15 | 22 | 19 |
| | Total | 32 | 44 | 39 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 63 (68) | 86 (86) | 76 (82) |
| | National | 84 (83) | 86 (84) | 91 (90) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 21 | 21 | 25 |
| | Girls | 22 | 19 | 21 |
| | Total | 43 | 40 | 46 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 84 (68) | 78 (84) | 90 (89) |
| | National | 85 (84) | 89 (88) | 89 (88) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2001 | 31 | 17 | 48 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 25 | 22 | 27 |
| | Girls | 12 | 8 | 13 |
| | Total | 37 | 30 | 40 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 77 (86) | 63 (66) | 83 (95) |
| | National | 75 (75) | 71 (72) | 87 (85) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 17 | 20 | 23 |
| | Girls | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| | Total | 27 | 28 | 31 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 56 (61) | 58 (54) | 65 (73) |
| | National | 72 (70) | 74 (72) | 82 (79) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 3 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 309 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 3 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | |
| Black – other | 0 | |
| Indian | 0 | |
| Pakistani | 0 | |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | |
| Chinese | 0 | |
| White | 1 | |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | |

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

| | |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 14.6 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 24.4:1 |
| Average class size | 27.4 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 5 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 142 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of education support staff | 0 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 0 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 0 |
|--------------------------------|---|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Financial year | 2001 |
|----------------|------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 686,688 |
| Total expenditure | 599,217 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1,742 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 13,664 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 101,135 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 268 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 124 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 55 | 36 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 58 | 38 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 47 | 44 | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 35 | 52 | 10 | 1 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 50 | 43 | 4 | 0 | 3 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 38 | 48 | 10 | 3 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 56 | 35 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 67 | 31 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 25 | 56 | 13 | 3 | 3 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 44 | 44 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 42 | 52 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 20 | 35 | 21 | 12 | 11 |

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

66. The provision for children in the reception year is satisfactory. Children enter the reception year in the September before their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection 33 children were of Foundation Stage age. 29 are taught in a reception class and 14 of the older, more able children are taught with 15 Year 1 pupils in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Most children have some form of pre-school education. Assessment at the start of the school year shows that attainment on entry is well below that expected of children of this age. Though children are still below national expectations when they leave the Foundation Stage, overall they make satisfactory progress in their learning, with more able children attaining the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the Foundation Stage.

67. A structured induction programme helps children settle quickly into school life. Good links are established with parents before each child starts school, and helpful information provided about topics, homework and the physical education timetable. The newly built accommodation provides a good work area and leads into the designated play area which makes supervision easy. The central toilets and washbasins allows constant supervision but it also can be a distraction. At the time of inspection there was a spare classroom and good use was made of this by teachers in the Reception and the Year 1 and 2 classes for group work and play activities.

68. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good, being satisfactory overall. The good teaching was exclusively in the joint Reception and Year 1 class. Since the last inspection the new Foundation Curriculum has been introduced but insufficient note is taken of the areas of learning. The planning for personal development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world is not well enough focused and so children do not achieve their full potential in these aspects. The lack of expectation and challenge in a significant proportion of lessons means that children in the reception class complete their set activities but are not motivated to achieve more. Children with special educational needs receive additional support and make satisfactory progress. Good use is made of initial assessment to identify children's attainment on entry. Continued assessments are carried out during the reception year but though these show progress, apart from communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, insufficient use is made of the data to plan for children's next stages of learning. The planning for the reception children in the Year 1 class is organised well and the needs of these younger children who need more informal learning experiences than the rest of the class are managed well.

Personal, social and emotional development

69. By the end of the reception year the older children will have achieved the expected standards. This shows satisfactory progress because a significant number of children have low personal skills when they arrive at the school and they all make progress. Children enjoy coming to school and the majority leave their parents or carers at the beginning of the day without any distress. For those children who are a little tearful, staff deal sensitively to their needs. Reception children in the Year 1 class behave well and are co-operative, playing and working together in small or large groups. The children in the reception class have less well-developed personal skills and though they may be playing in a group, they tend to function as individuals rather than part of a group. Insufficient emphasis is placed on teaching children to play together and be sensitive to each other's needs. Children in the reception class do not fully understand the boundaries for behaviour and are reluctant to respond to requests to tidy up or move to a different activity. Due to the relaxed seating arrangements during story-time

children were able to sit out of eyeshot and amuse themselves rather than listen to the story. This behaviour reflects the lack of expectation for children to conform or develop self-control. Children are able to manage their personal hygiene and the majority can dress and undress independently, however they have no sense of urgency and take a long time to get ready for their games lessons.

Communication, language and literacy

70. Children achieve well. A high proportion of children arrive at the school with very low communication skills. At the end of the reception year a proportion of the children are in line to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Children readily initiate conversations with adults, they are confident in asking questions and in discussing their work. Children of all abilities take part in imaginative play in the Ditton Bakery, the Jolly Roger pirate ship or the train. The classrooms are provided with listening stations and a wide range of books for children to use and as a result most children are keen to listen to stories, look at books and confidently share them with an adult. One little boy read the word 'adventure', explaining that he knew the word 'because I know everything'. The more able children enjoy the opportunity to talk with a partner about a favourite animal poem and relish filling in their own words to complete a poem. They are able to recognise and enjoy rhyming words, joining in as their teacher reads to them from the Big Book. Children in this class were motivated and felt pleased with their efforts when their poems were chosen to be in the 'Special Book'.

71. Children become familiar with their own names because name cards are used as a form of self-registration and coat pegs are labelled with children's names. Younger children form recognisable letters and many can write their own first name. They recognise letter sounds and names and underwrite simple words and short sentences. They can sequence a series of four pictures correctly. More able children can write their own simple sentences and remember to use a full stop to show the end of the sentence. These children can also identify words such as 'radish' as having two syllables that can be sounded; this helps their ability to learn to read and write. Parents support the school well in encouraging their children to read. Older and more able children recognise a good number of words on sight, using picture clues to help them recognise new words. Less able children rely on pictures and story recall when they share books with an adult. Children throughout the year group treat books with respect. Teaching is most effective when focused group activities are planned carefully to extend pupils' existing skills. When teaching for the reception class is whole class or organised into flexible individual activities, children lose concentration and interest and their progress is less evident.

Mathematical development

72. The majority of children make satisfactory progress towards the Early Learning Goals though only the higher achieving children are in line to achieve them by the end of the reception year. Teaching is satisfactory. Children in the reception class can count to a hundred in tens, and from one to ten and back down again. They can add one more to numbers under five and recognise simple repeat patterns. They develop an understanding of money recognising that ten pennies has the same value as a ten pence piece. Children know that a rectangle has 'two long sides and four corners', a square has 'four corners and four sides the same', and recognise common shapes such as circle and triangle. Opportunities are taken to reinforce counting skills for example as children bounce balls in outdoor play, however mathematical activities do not sufficiently challenge all the children and they do not achieve as well as they might.

73. Higher achieving children match shapes giving three-dimensional names and know the concept of one more and one less. They can use a pair of dice to help their counting skills as they find two numbers and total them. The management of reception children in the Year 1 class is effective as the teacher makes good use of the support staff to help children improve their counting and calculation skills. The classrooms are equipped with suitable resources and displays such as sand, water and salt. These are used effectively so children learn full, empty and half full. Children enjoy working in the Ditton Bakery where they exchange coins for goods and give change. Good opportunities are provided for small groups of children to use the computer room on a fortnightly basis. Under the careful eye of a volunteer governor they are able to use computer programs to help with their sequencing and matching skills. Children gain a deeper understanding of measurement as they work successfully with a parent volunteer weighing their ingredients before making fairy cakes. Older children have been able to use their computer skills to produce Pie charts representing their choice of favourite flowers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning though it is only the higher achieving children who are in line to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of reception. Children develop an awareness of their surroundings as they take the register to the office. Teachers take time to make the classrooms interesting with a range of children's work on display and well labelled activity areas. Children in the Reception class learn about friendship and are asked to think carefully how they would feel if they had no friends. They listen carefully as their teacher reads the story *My Friend Bear* but are slow to pay attention and once the story is finished children are prone to distraction. Much of the investigative learning is taught through 'integrated activities' where children play with construction materials, and make models and pictures. Well-prepared symbols to show which children are working in particular groups are displayed on the board. However, the activities are often too open ended. This means that when they play with building materials or small toys, children have limited sense of purpose and not motivated to complete or stay on task.

75. Parent volunteers make a good contribution to this area of learning by taking small groups for sewing and baking. Children enjoy these activities. Children blossom when they explore computer programs, use the mouse confidently to locate icons and work through programs. They are keen to help each other and have good opportunities to make decisions about their work. Their personal and social interactions improve and they are happy to discuss their work. Children know that a frog develops from frogspawn. Higher achieving children identify and label parts of a flower; they grow beans in the classroom and observe the changes. Visits to a local church and to Knowsley Safari Park impact well on children's awareness of the local environment and in developing their interest and curiosity of the world around them. Reception children who are in the Year 1 class are interested as their teacher shows them a map of the locality, they see that a map of Britain is different from their world map 'because there is no America'. The majority of this group of children know their address and are interested to find their house on the local map. This lesson also gave good opportunities for children to develop a sense of time as their teacher showed them photographs of the old school on the map. Children experienced good opportunities to develop their investigative skills when they walked around the school locality recording their observations in small sketchbooks.

Physical Development

76. Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning, and a significant number are in line to achieve the Early Learning Goals. They have good opportunities for indoor and outdoor physical education. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the

school was criticised for the lack of outdoor play area for children of this age. In the hall children explore ways of moving by rolling, jumping and hopping. They learn to take turns though the less mature children find this difficult. Adults support children in deciding sequences of movement though children tend to copy each other rather than experiment. Children demonstrate their skills to the rest of the class and the majority watch with interest. In a well taught lesson the reception children in the Year 1 class responded well to the rhythm of poetry, using it as a basis for creating a simple dance sequence. Good demonstration by their teacher encouraged children to make heavy, slow, plodding movements to contrast with light, whizzing, darting movements. When children have outdoor games, they know to warm up their muscles before the main activity and can work well with partners as they bounce, throw or kick balls to each other. Children have regular opportunities to handle glue sticks, scissors, paintbrushes and to explore malleable materials. Children enjoy using junk items and sticky tape to create animal models. Despite this there is a lack of challenge and expectation overall, that means children do not extend their physical skills sufficiently.

Creative development

77. By the time they leave the reception year children have made satisfactory progress and higher achieving children are in line to attain the Early Learning Goals in creative development. Children use paint and develop their hand control as they experiment with brush strokes. They use felt and pasta to make a seaside collage. Children are given good opportunities to use primary colours when they make computer pictures of boats; they can explore shape and colour imaginatively. There are frequent opportunities for children to join in role-play, the Jolly Roger pirate ship providing good stimulation for imaginative activities. Children enjoy singing, they happily participate in clapping and singing *The Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea* and *The Big Ship Sails on The Alley, Alley Oh*. Musical instruments are on display so children can experiment with sound and the older children recognise changes in tempo and volume when using untuned instruments and their own voices. Older children draw hyacinths from observation and use paper and scissors to create and assemble a moving flower. Overall a lack of appropriate adult intervention means there are lost opportunities for children to respond more creatively or imaginatively to their surroundings.

78. Good use is made of assessments to identify children's attainment in communication, mathematical and personal development on entry to the school. There is continued assessment throughout the reception year. The school sets targets for the children which are broken down into small and achievable steps, which are reviewed half-termly. There are mid-year assessments against the original ones to judge progress. Planning for literacy and numeracy is good and based on the national strategies. Despite the assessment information, planning is insufficiently based on childrens' existing skills, matched to the requirements of the Early Learning Goals. As a result teaching in the reception class is insufficiently focused or challenging for the children.

ENGLISH

79. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in English. A significant contribution to this has been the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. This has had a positive effect on the structure of lessons following the adoption of the 'literacy hour' format, on the consistency of planning across the school, on the learning resources available and on the teaching of literacy skills through other subjects. However, opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work are often missed, for example in science and history.

80. Pupils of all abilities, including the high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, make good progress and by the end of Year 2 are attaining in line with national expectations in speaking and listening and in writing. In reading, higher attaining pupils reach an average level, but those with special needs still attain below national expectations. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and make good progress overall, leading to attainment in English being in line with national averages when compared with all schools, but above average when compared to similar schools. The school has received school achievement awards over the last two years for improved results in the national tests at the end of Year 6. After a successful intervention strategy via an action plan to address unsatisfactory performance, results at the end of Year 2 have shown a significant improvement this year.

81. In speaking and listening, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress. They start in Year 1 with lower than national average abilities in communication skills, but make good improvements through the development of skills in literacy lessons and other areas of the curriculum, such as history. For example, in a good quality lesson on holidays of the past, pupils of all abilities were able to predict whose beach bag contents they were looking at, and justify their views using evidence they had deduced from these source materials. By the end of Year 2, pupils listen carefully to the texts that they share as a class, concentrating well when listening to the teacher. They follow basic instructions, for example when a learning task is described, and work well together in pairs, listening to each other, taking turns to speak, and respecting others' views.

82. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress overall. They continue to develop their listening skills through shared reading of a range of texts, and become increasingly confident when justifying their views and answering questions. They learn to speak in formal situations and to wider audiences. For example, older pupils in Year 6 led an assembly on road safety and were confident enough to read things they had written and role-play small sketches to an audience of other pupils, staff and visitors. By the end of Year 6, all pupils listen carefully to a text being read aloud, and understand the need to speak clearly. They can justify their views, explaining clearly how they came to their conclusions, with the more able pupils using an extended vocabulary and more complex sentence structures.

83. In reading, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in the development of their individual reading skills and in their response to literature. They learn to recognise by sight those words that are most frequently used, and start to develop knowledge of letter sounds to help them to decode other words. They learn the rules of spelling, grammar and basic punctuation to support their reading and their writing. They read graded texts from a reading scheme to help them to increase their individual reading skills. Pupils who are identified as having difficulties with reading receive additional support in small groups to help them to catch up. In class groups, pupils learn to read together a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, such as stories, poems, fairy tales, information books and stories from other cultures. By the end of the key stage, most pupils can read basic texts accurately, with more able pupils starting to be more fluent and to use expression. Pupils of all abilities know that a book has a title, an author and often an illustrator. They can describe the main characters of a story and the main facts or events. They often express a preference for favourite books or parts of a text and say why they prefer these.

84. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to make good progress in reading. They continue to develop their independent reading skills in lessons, with those identified as having special educational needs or specific language difficulties receiving additional support in class or through withdrawal in small groups. Pupils respond to an increasing range of literature, including myths and legends, playscripts, humorous books by Roald Dahl, and older literature such as *Treasure Island* and *The Hobbit*, both in extract and by reading full

longer texts such as modern novels. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are fluent and confident readers of both fiction and non-fiction texts. They can read for information, using research skills such as skimming and scanning the text, and using indexes and glossaries. In responding to literature, pupils of all abilities can give their views on the main themes of the book, showing good comprehension skills. More able pupils can justify their opinions and predictions about what might happen next by referring to specific parts of the text. Pupils of all abilities show pleasure in sharing longer class novels, such as Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* and *The Suitcase Kid* by Jacqueline Wilson.

85. In writing, pupils make good progress in both key stages. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn to form individual letters correctly and practise their handwriting by learning to join letters and whole words together. They learn to spell the more frequently used words and to use basic punctuation. They have opportunities to write in a range of styles, including instructions for baking, poems, character descriptions, and information about animals, after a research task and retellings of well-known stories and fairy tales. By the end of Year 2, many pupils have neat, regular handwriting and they know that a sentence must start with a capital letter and end with a full stop or question mark and that it must 'make sense'. All pupils understand that a story has a beginning, middle and an end to structure it. More able pupils can incorporate reported speech in their writing, using speech marks appropriately and showing that they understand the difference between past and present tenses.

86. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to practise their handwriting and spelling in support of their writing. They learn to use more sophisticated punctuation marks, such as commas, apostrophes, exclamation marks, colons and semi-colons. They write in an increasing variety of styles for a range of audiences, including their own playscript, letters, shape poems, and persuasive writing for an advertisement. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can write a range of pieces of work in a neat joined hand. They know that writing is for different purposes and can use these appropriately, including skills that they will need when they transfer to secondary schools, such as note-taking, report writing and more extended pieces of writing. More able pupils write in paragraphs, using a variety of adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors to enliven their writing. Pupils designated as having special educational needs or particular difficulties with writing continue to receive additional support throughout both key stages.

87. The teaching of English and literacy is good overall but ranges from satisfactory to very good at both key stages. The strongest teaching is found in Year 2 and Year 6. Where teaching is most effective, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and expertise in the teaching of basic literacy skills is very good, teachers choose exciting texts and resources and deploy their learning support staff well to help less able pupils. A very good range of tasks ensures that pupils of all abilities are fully included in every part of the lesson and that they make very good progress through work that is challenging and well matched to their needs, building well on prior learning. Where teaching is less effective, teachers have lower levels of subject knowledge and of the teaching of basic skills, and planning does not include enough variety of work so that the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged. However, all teachers are very good role models for pupils as they develop their speaking and listening skills. They value all pupils' contributions, listening carefully when some youngsters have difficulty in expressing themselves and even accepting answers that are wrong, explaining how they could have been improved and building them into the general discussion wherever possible.

88. The curriculum for English is good, with effective planning, a good range of literature and a balance of reading, writing and speaking and listening activities. The range of learning opportunities available to pupils is extended by trips to the theatre for younger pupils to see a pantomime and older pupils to see a Shakespearean production. A poet and storyteller

regularly runs workshops with pupils, the results of which are shown to the rest of the school in assemblies. Regular trips to the local library in Year 6 have improved pupils' library and research skills and boosted their enjoyment of reading for pleasure. Some teachers plan well for the use of information and communication technology to support learning in English, but overall this is needs further development. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development through the range of texts studied and to their social and personal development through the range of opportunities that pupils are given to work independently or collaboratively in pairs or small groups. For example, Year 6 pupils go regularly to help Year 2 pupils through a shared reading programme.

89. The joint co-ordinators work very well together and give good leadership and management of the subject. Although both have only recently taken over responsibility for this subject, they are already having a positive impact on standards achieved by pupils through advice, support and training that they provide for colleagues and through good quality monitoring that includes observing the quality of teaching and learning in class. This has already identified good practice to be shared and weaknesses in planning that have already been addressed. Resources for learning are very good, and recent expenditure has been well focussed to support pupils' needs. However, the library requires further investment to increase the number and quality of books to support learning in English and other subjects. Learning support staff are dedicated and hardworking, and are well deployed in class and in supporting pupils needing early and additional literacy support. However, there are too few to allow the guided reading groups particularly in Key Stage 1 to operate successfully. Assessment has improved and is now good. The information gathered is used well to devise individual and group targets for younger pupils and those with special needs. Those in writing are particularly effective, but more use could be made of specific reading targets for all pupils. Reading records vary in quality and writing portfolios are not always fully annotated with National Curriculum levels. These are areas that should be further developed.

MATHEMATICS

90. The results of the 2001 national tests at seven show standards that are well below the national average and well below standards attained by pupils of age seven in similar schools. This shows an apparent decline since the last inspection when standards were judged to be average. However, it is clear from judgements made during this inspection that standards are now just below national averages. This increase can be largely put down to improved teaching and to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in the school. The most significant improvement has been in the percentage of pupils gaining the level higher than typically expected for their age. This is now around the national average. However the overall result is depressed by the larger than average number of pupils who fail to gain the level expected for their age.

91. The picture for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is also one of improvement. In the 2001 national tests at 11, standards were below the national averages and were judged to be in line with results attained by pupils in similar schools. A year of real improvement is evident in the performance of the lower and middle attainers and the percentage of these pupils attaining the expected level for their age is around average. The overall results are depressed in Year 6 by too few pupils gaining the higher levels. Nevertheless, this improvement at Year 2 and Year 6 is evidence of a turnaround in mathematics in the school particularly as it has been achieved against the background of high numbers of pupils with special educational needs. However the performance of girls at age 11 does not compare well to the national results. Unlike the national picture the performance of girls was below the boys' performance and teaching styles did not favour one gender or the other.

92. By the age of seven, pupils halve and double numbers sometimes with the help of a

number line. Most are secure in recognising number sequences such as odd and even. All pupils including those with special educational needs are making good progress in their work. The higher attaining pupils are confident in their knowledge of the value of hundreds, tens and units and can round large numbers up and down. Most pupils are secure in their use of mathematical vocabulary to describe addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The majority of pupils are successfully tackling simple money problems in mental mathematics sessions with higher attaining pupils solving written money problems in their books. In the mental mathematics sessions that precede the main activities of the numeracy lessons, most pupils are able to discuss their work and to describe how they reach their solutions to problems. Year 2 pupils recognise right angles in squares and in regular and irregular shapes. Teachers carefully introduce mathematical vocabulary and pupils correctly use the names for simple regular shapes. They know about ways of describing direction and are starting to use standard measures such as those for length and for mass. Year 2 pupils have the opportunity to join the school's maths club. Here they make good use of the Internet to devise their own maths games that involve a lot of number work which also reinforces their work in lessons.

93. By the age of 11 pupils make good progress in developing their use of number and their ability to use strategies to multiply and divide three and four figure numbers. Their facility to deal with mental mathematics problems is improved in games such as 'What's my Number?' during which they use a limited number of questions to discover a number thought up by the teacher. They use mathematical terminology satisfactorily to work towards a solution. Most pupils can change fractions to percentages. They successfully work with money problems, stating the problems and their solutions in sentences. This makes a good contribution to literacy. In Year 6 pupils are able to give names to regular two and three-dimensional shapes and to correctly use terminology such as vertices, edges and faces. They accurately measure angles using a protractor. Pupils develop knowledge of data handling well, recording information and using pie charts and line graphs. In one exercise all pupils produce pie charts that successfully show a typical day's activities in their class. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the higher attainers, make good progress. There is sound provision for those pupils who are middle attainers in the booster groups laid on by the school and these pupils also make good progress. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in tackling problems relating to probability. They are using formulae for example, to calculate the area of triangles. In a challenging exercise higher attainers used a line graph to track the course of a firework rocket.

94. The quality of the teaching of mathematics is good, which is a similar finding to the previous report. Subject knowledge is good and has contributed well to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers' planning is good and leads to lessons that are well structured and encourage learning that builds progressively on what has gone before. Lessons feature a good level of challenge and a good range of activities. Lessons typically begin with short sessions of mental maths that excite pupils and stimulate their interest. Teachers handle these sessions very well and pupils are kept on track and fully involved. Teachers provide work that closely matches the ability of individuals. They organise and prepare resources well to support activities. No time is lost in lessons due to missing worksheets or to handing out equipment as it is always readily to hand. Lessons end with a careful consideration of what has been learnt and this encourages pupils by reinforcing how well they have progressed during the lesson. Teaching assistants are well briefed by teachers and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. This was especially so in a Year 2 lesson where the teacher and classroom assistant worked so closely together demonstrating what pupils would have to do that they had them absolutely entranced. Special moments like this stimulate interest and involvement in mathematics and promote learning well. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are very good. In one lesson the prospect of homework on reflective symmetry was met with a gasp of delight. Pupils work well with adults and with

each other in their pairs and groups and are very keen to learn.

95. The subject is well led by two co-ordinators. They have a real enthusiasm for the subject and champion it well in the years for which they have responsibility. The school makes good use of assessment information to identify patterns of attainment in mathematics. This has been used to introduce and maintain arrangements for grouping pupils and has made a positive contribution to the improvement in standards that have been evident in the past few years. The school has not yet analysed variations in attainment relating to gender that are evident particularly in the results of its older pupils. Though the National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced there is some way to go to develop the school's numeracy policy to help teachers identify a wider range of opportunities to introduce mathematical concepts in other subjects to reinforce and extend pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding.

SCIENCE

96. The 2001 National Curriculum teacher assessments showed that, at age seven, pupils' attainments were close to the national average at the expected level but too few pupils attained higher than this. By age 11, the results of the National Curriculum tests in 2001 showed that the proportion of pupils reaching both the expected and higher levels was below the national average, but close to this level when compared with similar schools. Over the last four years there has been a general upward trend in standards despite the large numbers of pupils with special educational needs. The inspection judgement is that by the end of Year 2 standards are close to the national average with an increase in those attaining a higher level. At age 11, standards are in line with the national average. However, all pupils make good progress based on prior attainment and achieve well. Standards for the current groups of pupils in Years 2 and 6 are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection.

97. By the age of seven pupils are able to make suggestions about how to find out information and carry out tests, explaining why they consider them to be fair. They use standard measures in their tests such as grams, kilos and centimetres. Year 1 pupils have investigated forces using a wheeled toy on a ramp. Good links to literacy are made when pupils write the instructions for planting seeds. In Year 2 pupils build on their knowledge of plants, investigating the conditions necessary for growth. They list electrical appliances used at home and recognise that these use electricity as a source of light, heat, sound or movement. In small groups pupils co-operate well to construct a chart of appliances that use electricity. With the support of a parent helper, one group gather data on electrical equipment around the school and use a laptop computer to construct a block graph. They have good attitudes to their work and present it carefully.

98. By the age of 11, pupils make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of science and in improving their skills in practical science, both experiments and investigations. They make predictions; carry out fair tests and base conclusions on a sound understanding of scientific processes. They investigate whether certain substances are soluble or which changes of state are irreversible. Pupils can identify the effects of forces such as wind, up-thrust and gravity on moving objects, considering friction, push and pull as well as gravity. In Year 3 pupils investigate healthy living, maintain a food diary and learn about different food groups. In Year 4, pupils build on their knowledge of life processes by investigating habitats and the human body. Whilst studying circuits and conductors they are able to explain why some circuit's work and some do not. Year 5 pupils know that vibrations produce sound and are challenged to make observations about sound from practical experiments. During their study of space and the planets pupils are encouraged to memorise the position of the planets. There are good cross-curricular links with music when

an information technology program is used to compose 'space music' on computers. In Year 6 pupils are aware that light travels in straight lines, and know how shadows are formed. They also know that the size of the shadow increases as an object moves closer to the light source. Pupils in Year 6 make good use of their mathematical and information technology skills during science lessons, for example to produce graphs to show the results following investigations into stretching springs. Pupils have a good understanding of electricity, which helps them to explore the factors which alter the brightness of a light bulb in a simple circuit. When writing up experiments pupils make good use of the correct scientific vocabulary.

99. The quality of teaching is good overall but very good and occasionally excellent in Year 6. Teachers extend pupils' understanding well with appropriate use of the scheme of work for each age group. Good questions, instructions and explanations using appropriate scientific terms, encourage pupils to explain and clarify their thinking. This provides motivation and tests pupils' understanding so that teachers know what pupils understand. In the best lessons teachers manage time and resources very well. However, in some lessons higher achievers are insufficiently challenged as work is not well matched to their level of attainment. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning for example, pupils in Year 6 create multi-media presentations about rainbows as an illustration of their knowledge of one aspect of light. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always guide pupils in how to further improve their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and fully integrated into science lessons and as a result they make good progress. Plenary sessions are often used well to consolidate the learning that has taken place and to help prepare pupils for the next lesson.

100. Throughout the school good teaching encourages positive attitudes. Pupils' attitudes are a significant contributory factor to the improved standards. In the majority of lessons they tackle activities enthusiastically and when working in groups remain sensible and clearly focused on what they are doing. In a Year 4 lesson where pupils were investigating circuits they worked independently of the teacher, understood what was expected of them, and worked productively in collaboration with others. During the two excellent lessons on light in Year 6, pupils were totally absorbed in their tasks. They expressed wonder at the optical illusions demonstrated by the teacher from the local high school. They asked relevant questions and enjoyed acquiring new knowledge, creating a very positive ethos. In Year 2, pupils worked industriously upon a task, which was challenging, involving sorting a variety of objects into electrical groups whilst considering mains electricity versus batteries. Even in less inspiring lessons pupils behave well and listen despite the slow pace. Standards of presentation are generally high and pupils are proud of their work.

101. The curriculum is very effectively enhanced in Year 6 by links with local secondary schools. In addition to visiting a secondary school once a week for lessons, a teacher also provides a 'master class' to enhance curriculum provision. In such a lesson on the topic of light and optical illusions, the visiting teacher motivated pupils and built very effectively on their previous learning to consolidate, apply and extend their knowledge. The quality of this provision is excellent, extends pupils learning and prepares them very well for transition to the next stage in their education. In this lesson, all pupils responded very positively to the excellent teaching and made very good progress. Links with information and communication technology are well used. Although the school does not currently have their own data logging equipment, this shortfall is addressed for older pupils through the school's links with secondary schools. Opportunities to develop literacy skills are less well developed and there are too few examples of pupils undertaking sustained independent writing tasks, such as detailed reports of their investigations.

102. Educational visits and visitors to the school enhance the curriculum: for example, the electricity workshops for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. A visit from the 'Bug Man' enabled pupils

to have 'close encounters' with large insects. Pupils also have an opportunity to visit a local laboratory for the 'exploding custard' experience. The whole school were active participants in the 'Giant Jump' Guinness Book of Record attempt, and made their own seismographs to register movement.

103. The subject is very well led by the co-ordinator, with good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This knowledge is disseminated to the other teachers, improving their subject knowledge and having a positive impact in raising standards. She has used statistical data well to identify areas for improvement and has a clear picture of what pupils need to develop in science and what the school needs to do to get there. The adoption of the QCA schemes of work has ensured full coverage of the programmes of study. Planning and teaching are regularly monitored, but procedures for assessment are still in the early stages of development.

ART AND DESIGN

104. Pupils achieve well across the school and by the time they reach Year 2 and Year 6 their skills are in line with those expected of their ages, and some are more advanced. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well, and enjoy their own success.

105. Pupils use a wide range of materials to express their ideas. For example, they used tissue paper, glue, sand and natural materials such as shells and twigs to create their idea of a *sea sculpture*. Classrooms and shared areas are filled with well produced and presented art and design work, which clearly show pupils' skills. They have painted parrots and poppy field in the *Impressionists* style, using artists' work as inspiration; designed clothing using computer programs; successfully used a variety of media such as pastels, chalks and glass paint, and show their skills in colour mixing and blending in both collage and two-dimensional work. Pupils can make choices about what materials to use in their work, and explain them, for example saying that they chose a particular colour because they like it. Some pupils with more advanced skills choose to change the appearance of materials to fit in better with their ideas; one pupil explained that "scrunchy paper looks like water." They are beginning to say what they like about their friends' work, and consider whether to adapt their own to improve it.

106. By 11, pupils' skills are also at levels expected for their age, with some showing more advanced skills. Pupils with special educational needs continue to make progress in line with their peers, and often succeed better in this subject than others which is very good for their self-esteem. Pupils combine different media to create their work, such as wax and paint to depict waterfalls, clay and paint to make wall plaques and pencil and crayon for drawings. Pupils' close observational skills are good, and they are used particularly well to illustrate class topics. For example, pupils have made masks and pots in the style of ancient Greece to illustrate their history topic, and drawn delicate pictures of flowers and seeds to complement science work. Fabric work is the school's speciality, and pupils use a variety of resources to create their own contribution to a joint class effort, such as a quilt or wall hanging. The pupils are becoming reflective about their work, comparing their own with their friends', commenting on "good ideas", and using them as a basis for developments in their own work.

107. The quality of teaching is good, and ranges from satisfactory to very good. The most effective teaching sets pupils challenges, provides them with a range of resources and allows them freedom to be creative. This was well-illustrated in a lesson where five different activities were set up. The resources were laid out to look enticing, and enable the pupils to start work without delay. Each activity was carefully explained during the introduction to the lesson, with a strong emphasis on the importance of the thinking and designing phase of the work. The pupils listened with great interest and knew what to do when they began. Half an

hour later, pupils had concentrated and worked very well and a great deal of work had been completed. This was all very carefully produced, and demonstrated pupils' varied skills. For example, shell sculptures were carefully designed with the largest shells placed uppermost and centrally, with smaller shells graduating towards the outer edges of the clay plaque. Bead patterns on clay-based *Anglo-Saxon jewellery* showed clearly some pupils' skills at devising symmetrical patterns, whilst others' patterns were random. All pupils worked equally hard, however, and all were equally praised. Less effective teaching was over-directive allowing the pupils insufficient individuality and creativity. The teacher expected the work to be completed in a particular way. When pupils could not follow these instructions precisely, they felt they had done it "wrong" as the teacher made comments to this effect.

108. Overall, the provision for art and design has improved since the last inspection, although standards appear to have declined, but problems are emerging. Despite pupils' clear enjoyment of the work, the current organisation and management of the subject and its curriculum prevents a drive towards high attainment. The subject leader's role is under-developed and centres mainly on ordering resources, which are good, rather than supporting the quality of teaching and learning.

109. The curriculum has been taken directly from the national scheme of work without being tailored to suit the school. There is considerable overlap with design and technology, and staff, particularly at Key Stage 2, find it difficult to complete the work in the time available. Consequently, some parts are sometimes omitted, which means that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not systematically built up. The use of sketch-books is inconsistent, and the majority do not contain examples of techniques and ideas that pupils can look back and draw upon when creating new work. Similarly, portfolios of pupils' work are no longer kept for pupils to look back upon. Pupils' skills and knowledge are not assessed, and so staff have no consistent means of developing pupils' weaker areas. Consequently, whilst pupils' work is careful and imaginative, not enough shows evidence of the use of techniques and knowledge learned over time.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. During the inspection it was not possible to observe any full design and technology lessons, due to timetabling difficulties. From discussion with teachers and from the evidence provided in portfolios, on display in classrooms and from folders and books it is clear that the standards of attainment for all pupils including those with special educational needs are in line with national expectations. This is an improvement on the previous inspection which found standards to be below national expectations due to curricular deficiencies in the design and evaluation aspects of the subject.

111. The school has adopted nationally produced guidelines to plan and teach design technology. This has introduced more structure into projects and these now give suitable emphasis to the elements that were reported to be lacking at the time of the previous report. Despite the progress made there is still insufficient emphasis in most classes on the recording of progress through the design process by the pupils themselves. This might take the form of design booklets that systematically follow the elements of the design process such as the consideration of the design problem, the production of initial ideas following right through to evaluations of the final product.

112. Pupils in all years work with a sound range of materials and processes. Year 2 pupils work with simple ingredients to make chocolate nest cakes. They learn to use simple stitches in a textiles project to achieve a desired effect. They design and make model vehicles out of card. They develop simple paper engineering skills making Easter Cards that feature moving elements. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make purposeful use of construction kits to model their ideas though they are not expected to work with initial drawings to introduce a greater element of rigour into their designs.

113. Year 6 pupils follow the design process well in a particularly challenging project to design and make slippers. Their work features initial sketched ideas, research into existing products and involves the consideration of customer preferences. Pupils sketch and annotate their final designs well. They learn to use templates to improve the accuracy of their making. They learn the importance of using recyclable materials and some pupils use the soles of other shoes in their product. In Year 5 they learn the importance of healthy eating in a food technology project. Year 4 pupils produce good quality model chairs in a project that combines elements of art and design and technology. They select materials taking into account factors such as strength and durability, and use their models to explore considerations such as comfort and aesthetics in furniture.

114. The subject is well co-ordinated by an enthusiastic and committed teacher. She has attended a number of courses to develop her expertise in the subject. The introduction of national guidelines overseen by her has made a significant contribution in raising standards in the subject. In order to improve standards further there is a need to give pupils systematic opportunities to record their progress through all elements of the design process. Assessment procedures to track the progress of individuals are not sufficiently well developed.

GEOGRAPHY

115. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 during the week of the inspection and only two lessons were observed at Key Stage 2. However, evidence from the analysis of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions indicate that attainment at the end of both key stages is in line with national expectations and pupils' achievements, including those with special educational needs, are satisfactory. Standards have dropped since the previous inspection when they were judged to be above expectations; this is due in part to the emphasis which has been appropriately placed on the core subjects.

116. By the age of seven pupils show a sound development in the correct use of geographical terms such as hill, road and river. In Year 1 pupils use the local area to develop their understanding of place, however very little of this is recorded in their books. There is an appropriate focus on places and pupils show an awareness of places beyond their own locality. For example, pupils in Year 2 compare the fictional Isle of Struay with Widnes. In Year 2, pupils learn about their own community and develop an increasing awareness of their surroundings and compare them to those on the Isle of Struay. They learn how an island is different from the mainland. They think about the jobs people might do on the island and consider the type of transport used. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop their geographical skills whilst walking around the local area.

117. By the age of 11, pupils use primary and secondary sources to study a range of places in order to understand the features of each place and how these shape the lives of people living there. For instance, in Year 3 pupils find out about weather conditions around the world and compare climates. In a topic on water, Year 5 pupils identify where drains and guttering are on a plan of the new school building and look at average rainfall in a variety of places. In Year 6 pupils investigate rivers, develop and use appropriate vocabulary

associated with this area of geography. They make a survey of traffic on the road and look at the advantages and disadvantages of using a car. Throughout the key stage, work is neatly presented and well illustrated however, there are very few examples of extended writing, for instance, to support argument and debate.

118. From the two lessons observed in Key Stage 2 and from analysing work, displays and planning, teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. In the lessons observed, in Year 5, teaching and learning were satisfactory. In one lesson the area around the school was used appropriately to locate and mark work places on a map of the school and surrounding area. Discussion was used well to reinforce pupils' understanding of compass points and some progress was made in understanding leisure time.

119. The co-ordinator has updated the policy and introduced the scheme of work to guide planning and to ensure continuity in pupils' learning. However, teachers have not adapted these plans sufficiently to meet the interests and needs of their pupils. Effective strategies to monitor teaching, learning and standards have not yet been implemented. As yet there is no whole school method of recording pupils' attainment and progress. As such the quality of subject leadership is under-developed. However, learning resources have been improved and are satisfactory overall. Information and communication technology is employed as a research tool using both CD-ROM's and the Internet, to support learning.

HISTORY

120. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in some areas of provision in history, but there has been deterioration in other areas. For example, there has been some progress in the planning of the subject, including the introduction of a national scheme of work. In contrast, assessment of the subject across the school is now unsatisfactory, and there is no consistent school-wide system for tracking pupils' progress in the subject. Overall, standards attained and pupils' progress in history have been maintained, but pupils now make better progress in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2, whereas at the time of the last inspection this was the other way around.

121. Pupils enter Year 1 with knowledge and understanding of the world, including the historical perspective that is below what is expected nationally. They make satisfactory progress over the key stage, and their historical knowledge, understanding and skills are still slightly below the national expectations. However, pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress over the key stage, and by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6 they are attaining in line with national expectations.

122. In Years 1 and 2, teachers appropriately place an emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils enthusiastically study two topics each year that have designated historical content. In Year 1, they study different types of homes and toys. In both, they start to look at the differences between old and new and identify how things have changed. In Year 2, pupils learn about history by looking at the lives of key historical figures such as Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale and consider how hospitals have changed. By the end of the key stage, in a unit on seaside holidays of the past, pupils use different sources, such as old pictures, a video-taped programme and artefacts to compare their holidays with those in Victorian times.

123. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good progress overall and have a positive attitude to their work. They study three focussed units of history each year, each lasting approximately half a term. They develop a good range of historical knowledge from many periods of history. For example, they learn about the times of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. They study Tudor and Victorian times and compare and contrast the lives of rich and poor people in these

periods. When looking at more modern history, pupils learn about life in Britain since 1948. Teachers pose questions that develop pupils' understanding through investigation, such as 'Why were the Romans successful?' and 'Why did the Tudors explore?'. Pupils also develop historical skills such as the use of sources to gain evidence about the past. For example, in a study of the history in the local area, they learn to compare old and current street maps and photographs and interview an older member of staff about her experiences of changes. By the end of Year 6, in a study of recent history through the lives of famous people, pupils undertake independent research based on questionnaires they have devised, and incorporate evidence that they have got from the Internet. They understand that there are primary and secondary sources of evidence and can identify changes that have taken place in education, medicine and in people's everyday lives. More able pupils are starting to discuss what are the implications of these changes for individual people and for society as a whole. This is very good preparation for the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils will need as they transfer to secondary education.

124. Overall, teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, but there are examples of lessons where the quality of teaching and learning is good. It was not possible to see many lessons taught during the inspection, but analysis of pupils' work across the key stage shows that pupils produce little written work, especially in Year 1. Teachers' marking of the work is supportive and encouraging but does not indicate to pupils how work could be improved. In Year 2, pupils are more productive and teachers give pupils wider opportunities to record their work. A strength of the teaching in Year 2 is the link created between literacy and history. For example, in literacy lesson, pupils wrote about when their Granny was young and made a timeline of one of the texts that they studied. These links increase the opportunities that pupils have to learn about how events can be sequenced to put them in a historical perspective and to compare how things change over time.

125. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good overall, but ranges from satisfactory in some years to very good and excellent teaching in Year 6. In the best lessons, teachers review with pupils their previous learning so that all new learning is set in context. Resources are well used and teachers build in opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills as well as their historical knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is satisfactory, planning is less effective and there is insufficient difference in the work set for pupils of different abilities. Some opportunities to develop pupils' research skills are missed and some activities are too long to sustain pupils' interest fully.

126. There is no organisation or monitoring of curricular planning by the subject leader and it is left to individual class teachers or year-group teams to plan each unit. This results in an inconsistency of approach, with some teachers planning very effectively and including opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning, and others planning work that does not consistently develop all pupils' historical skills. Whilst pupils present their work well and illustrate their written work with high quality artwork, this is at the expense of planning opportunities for pupils to undertake extended pieces of writing about aspects of history. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural development through the range of units studied that give pupils an insight into their own cultural heritage and those of other cultures. Resources for history are satisfactory and are supplemented by loans from a local service. The history co-ordinator is developing resource boxes for each unit that pupils study. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory and the school has not yet made time available for him to monitor the quality of teaching and learning through observing lessons across the school. Assessment of history is under-developed. There are insufficient trips and visits to museums and historical places of interest that would enrich the range of learning opportunities available to pupils in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

127. Pupils' attainment at the age of seven and 11 is in line with national expectations and all pupils make good progress in their learning. At the time of the previous inspection standards achieved were satisfactory. Expectations of the subject have changed since the previous inspection and demands on pupils are now greater. Thus standards have risen in line with national expectations. The use of information and communication technology as a tool in other subjects is developing well within the school.

128. Throughout the school pupils make purposeful use of information and communication technology to support a range of work in literacy, numeracy, science, art, religious education and music. It is used particularly effectively in Years 3 and 6. In both key stages, pupils undertake appropriate tasks to develop their computer capability; they use a standard keyboard and mouse effectively, and save, retrieve and print their own work, the younger pupils with help from an adult. They use an appropriate variety of programs well to generate and communicate their ideas in text, pictures and sound and carry out research using the Internet. Older pupils confidently use a range of programs to edit text, compose layouts and design colourful and imaginative screens to improve the presentation of their work.

129. By the age of seven most pupils are familiar with computers. They look forward to their time on the computer and start to control the mouse with increasing accuracy. Pupils in Year 1 develop their skills steadily to draw and colour when using a paint program. They access the program they want and identify the tools they will need to complete a task. For example, they know how to move a car around the screen and can utilise paint, fill and rub out icons. In Year 2 pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of how the computer can handle and display data they collect, for instance when making graphs. They begin to understand that there are different sorts of questions that can be answered in different ways and use a 'decision tree' program to sort and classify fruits, confidently working out questions which only have 'yes or no' answers.

130. By the age of 11 pupils' skills in communicating and handling information are developing well. Most pupils can change colour, size and font confidently and illustrate their work in a variety of ways. Pupils have appropriate opportunities for data handling by producing pie diagrams and block graphs to record a variety of information they have collected. For example, in Year 6 pupils have produced block graphs to illustrate annual soft drink sales. Year 3 pupils combine text and graphics to present acrostic poems for Father's Day. They use a music program to compose their own music and new lyrics to "Three Blind Mice". In Year 5 pupils build upon this knowledge when composing 'Space' music and making a futuristic sound by changing instruments and tempo. Pupils in Year 4 make good quality Islamic designs using the symmetry tool in a paint program. They transfer the information they have collected about favourite foods onto spreadsheets and produce graphs to illustrate their findings. In Year 6 pupils confidently log on to the system and know how to use a search engine to locate information. They are familiar with how to enter and use a formula in a spreadsheet and can use a multimedia presentation program with assurance. For instance, when pupils were challenged to produce a presentation on shapes for a lower junior audience, they were able to use a variety of animations and sounds to enhance their work. Throughout the exercise they remained conscious of the purpose and audience for their task.

131. The quality of teaching in information technology is good and in some cases very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. It reflects the increased confidence of staff, the success of in-service training and more thorough planning. Clear expositions ensure that pupils make a prompt start to their tasks. A projector is often used to provide clear demonstrations. This captures pupils' interest and impacts well upon their understanding and confidence in how to proceed. Despite the cramped conditions in the

computer suite, most pupils work steadily without close supervision and concentrate on their work because they are clear what is expected of them. However, in some lessons where pupils were sharing a computer, time was wasted whilst they waited for their 'turn'. Teachers encourage pupils to help one another and share their expertise. In this way good use is made of pupils with advanced skills to assist others and move them on in their learning. At the same time it gives recognition to their skills and values the contribution they make. Teachers' careful interventions and response to pupils' questions draws usefully on their established knowledge and challenges them appropriately to think through their difficulties. Teachers' support and encouragement helps to motivate the pupils. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress in computer lessons, but at times there is a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils.

132. Educational visits and visitors to the school enhance the curriculum. For instance, Year 6 pupils visit a local high school for workshops in *control and monitoring*. Visits to local businesses provides an opportunity for pupils to present information about the visit in the form of a multimedia presentation.

133. Co-ordination of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator has secure subject knowledge and is actively improving teaching, learning and standards through his thorough action plan. A detailed and useful policy has been 'adopted by the local education authority as a model of excellence. The introduction of a coherent scheme of work using a national scheme of work in conjunction with a commercial package has had a significant impact on planning. This has also ensured progression in teaching and learning. Monitoring of planning and work has enabled the co-ordinator to identify and address any areas of weakness but there has been no opportunity to observe teaching and learning throughout the school. Portfolios of work samples are being collected but these are not levelled rigorously enough to monitor progress in standards. However, systems for monitoring pupils' progress are currently being developed and are being used in Years 2 and 6. Resources are good overall and include programmable toys and robots in addition to the computer suite and classroom computers. The computer suite however can become very cramped and this can have an impact on how well pupils learn.

MUSIC

134. Standards in music are in line with national expectations. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when they were judged to be below national expectations. The improvement is due to the introduction of national guidelines for music and improved teaching particularly of composition.

135. In assemblies pupils have frequent opportunities to sing to accompaniment and do so with enthusiasm. Year 1 pupils learn to keep to the tempo by clapping to regular beats such as a clock. They are beginning to recognise the effects they can create with changes in volume and they experiment with a range of sounds they make with their voices and hands. Pupils are already creating interesting patterns in sounds. They develop this in Year 2 and learn to use musical terminology such as tempo. At this age they are able to critically appraise their own and others' work and make suggestions as to how to improve their pieces.

136. By Year 3 they are working with rhythms from around the world which makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural awareness. In one lesson they learn about the different instruments used in Indian music. In this lesson Year 3 pupils demonstrate that though they are able to sing simple melodies their pitch is often limited and some pupils do not venture off the monotone. When Year 5 pupils use instruments to compose they do so well, exploring a range of simple emotions. They describe happy sounds as being generally high pitched;

upbeat and making them want to dance. For sad sounds they prescribe a slow tempo and low pitched notes, often using precise terminology. They make positive and evaluative comments about their own and others' work. When listening to music they comment well on the contribution of various instruments to the creation of mood. Year 6 pupils make good progress exploring the relationships between sounds and the ways in which they can be used to reflect ideas. In a memorable lesson they improvised rhythmic patterns that created strong images of forest and dawn sounds. Though they have limited vocabulary to describe their musical composition they talk well with the teacher and each other to create music from a verbal stimulus.

137. The quality of teaching is good and in some lessons very good. Teachers know exactly what they want to see pupils achieve. Using national guidelines as a starting point they produce good quality planning that encourages a good range of active participation in music making and appreciation from pupils of all abilities. They use questioning techniques well to bring out a good range of responses from pupils. They make pupils listen and think carefully. Pupils respond well to this and develop good listening skills that contribute well to their development as composers. In common with many schools most teachers do not have formal qualifications in music or instrumental expertise but work hard to overcome this sometimes by giving melody lines using their own voices or by careful introduction of selected recorded pieces. Lessons are challenging and stimulating and feature high levels of participation in a variety of activities. This promotes interest and learning well. Pupils enjoy learning through doing. Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of mainly percussive musical instruments that allow them to participate in music making. Behaviour is never a problem even in large spaces such as the hall. As a consequence lessons are purposeful affairs that enable good progress to be made.

138. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and committed co-ordinator. The national guidelines have been successfully introduced and this has made a significant contribution to the raising of standards in music. There is no instrumental tuition, which is unusual for a school of this type. Assessment procedures do not provide teachers with information that tracks the progress of individuals and are less than satisfactory. The teaching of music makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. Standards attained by both seven and 11 year olds in physical education are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory during Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. During the week of the inspection pupils at Key Stage 2 were observed achieving well in games, dance and gymnastic lessons. While at in Years 1 and 2 pupils achievements were satisfactory in the two games lessons observed. A group of Year 3 pupils were observed swimming and making satisfactory progress.

140. By the age of seven pupils have a secure development of hand/eye co-ordination. They throw and catch with confidence over short distances, with the more able youngsters taking consideration of other factors such as a strong wind when throwing over a greater distance. Many are able to pass a ball using a chest pass and a few use a bounce pass successfully. However, when these skills are transferred to a small game situation some pupils forget the basic techniques and start to drop the ball, suggesting these skills have not yet been fully grasped.

141. By the age of 11, in dance and gymnastics pupils have a good understanding of spatial awareness both in the hall and when performing movement sequences. Many are able to link up to three movements together including rolls and jumps. A few pupils with high levels of gymnastic skills also include well executed headstands, cartwheels and handstands into their routines. Pupils use gymnastic apparatus carefully and safely fully utilising the equipment to travel using their hands and feet. In games lessons, pupils are developing a clear understanding of how to play different games including appropriate rules. Higher attaining pupils have a clear understanding of tactics and how best these can be used to win a game, for example, striking the ball into a space during a modified game of rounders. Some pupils are developing good basic techniques in athletics such as throwing the discus, although the lack of appropriate equipment does restrict this process and can lead to inappropriate technique. In swimming, by the age of 11 many pupils swim with confidence using a variety of different strokes and many are able to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave school. However, facilities for swimming are limited as the pool used by the school is very small and does not offer a sufficient challenge to those pupils who can swim and as a result those capable of more advanced swimming are held back.

142. The standard of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall and good in Years 3 to 6. Occasionally at Key Stage 2 teaching is very good and pupils' learn with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. Unfortunately, not all teachers change for physical education lessons, indeed some do not even change their shoes. This is a shame and does not set a good example for pupils, who always change into appropriate clothing. However, some teachers do change and this aids pupils' learning very well, as they are able to demonstrate when necessary and join in, which is greatly appreciated by pupils. Lessons are very busy and purposeful and teachers ensure that the limited time available is effectively used to enhance pupils' learning. Most teachers have a sound understanding of how to teach physical education and many make suitable links to other subjects such as science. However, some lack confidence and would benefit from further training. Many teachers set homework for pupils and this is to be applauded, for example, studying how a cat moves prior to a dance lesson and then interpreting these movements into a sequence. Occasionally teachers, in both key stages, do not extend the most able youngsters in their classes and this restricts their learning. For example, older pupils are not given responsibility for leading the warm up at the start of a lesson or the cool down at the end. Most teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and that of other pupils and this helps them to improve and perfect their work.

143. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their physical education lessons and participate with enthusiasm and interest showing high levels of concentration. All pupils work very well individually, in pairs or small groups. Team games take place in a friendly and supportive environment and on many occasions during the inspection, pupils spontaneously applauded each other's achievements. Relationships with each other and with teachers are excellent. Pupils of all ages listen carefully to what teachers say and do their very best to achieve what is asked of them. Pupils' behaviour is very good throughout the school. They are entrusted with giving out and collecting appropriate equipment for lessons. They set up and put away large apparatus in the hall efficiently whilst being fully aware of appropriate health and safety implications.

144. The curriculum for physical education is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. In previous years pupils in Year 6 have attended an activity centre completing many outdoor and adventurous activities such as canoeing, climbing, abseiling and problem solving activities. The current Year 6 have been unable to complete many of these activities due to circumstances beyond the school's control, such as the foot and mouth outbreak. However, suitable plans have not been put in place to ensure similar activities can take place, such as orienteering or problem solving activities around the schools grounds. This needs to

be addressed. The subject co-ordinator is aware of his responsibility to ensure the curriculum is suitably planned and monitored, although at present this only takes place informally. At present there is no time available for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning through observing lessons across the school. Assessment of physical education is under-developed and is unsatisfactory. Individual teachers are left to plan lessons and assess pupils' progress which results in an inconsistent approach to physical education throughout the school and restricts pupils' learning. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development, while clever use of the World Cup, by some teachers, has also provided many opportunities for pupils to discover how football fans from other countries support and celebrate their own country's achievements. There is a good range of sporting extra-curricular activities available to all pupils including links with the local community. Learning resources for physical education are adequate. There is a good range of equipment for gymnastics, but resources for teaching athletics are unsatisfactory. The hall is a good size to accommodate most activities and outdoor facilities include playgrounds that are marked out for team games and a good-sized school field complete with rugby posts.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

145. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with the expectations of the Halton Locally Agreed Syllabus. All pupils in the school make satisfactory progress in improving their religious knowledge and understanding. This marks a good improvement since the last inspection when the school did not ensure coverage of the locally agreed syllabus and levels of attainment were lower than those expected nationally. Planning has improved and so has the standard of teaching in this subject.

146. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about the principles of Christianity. Year 1 pupils' listen with interest as their teacher reads the New Testament parable of The Good Samaritan and they appreciate the message of the story is to be kind to other people. They learn about Christian celebrations such as those at Christmas and Easter and know that the tradition of giving presents at Christmas reflects the Three Wise Men giving gifts to Jesus. When pupils progress to Year 2 they extend their knowledge of Christianity. They understand a cross is symbolic for Christians and the baptismal ceremony signifies a welcome to the family of God. Pupils learn about significant historical figures such as Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole whose personal qualities and Christian beliefs made an impact on so many people. Pupils' knowledge of Christian celebrations is extended to include the Christingle ceremony, and to compare the Christian festival of Christmas with the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. Pupils appreciate how special the Torah is for Jewish people, just as the Bible is for Christians. In class they handle the miniature Torah with care, respecting the fact that Jewish people do not touch the scroll because it is so special.

147. Pupils in Year 3 extend their awareness of religions other than Christianity. They know the symbolic signs associated with major world faiths and learn in more detail about Jewish and Hindu beliefs. As a result of a recent visit to a Hindu temple pupils understand the significance of the lotus flower, swastika, Brahma and Aum to Hindus. Pupils understand that these symbols may not be important for people who are not Hindu but respect the rights of Hindus to treat these symbols as special. In continuing their study of Christianity, they listen attentively to the story of Abraham and discuss the meaning of 'faith' and 'trust' appreciating that people have faith in parents, friends and God. Pupils make good use of their literacy skills to write play scripts to show the conversations between Abraham and his wife Sarah when they heard they were to become parents at a very advanced age. In Year 4 pupils learn about the range of Christmas traditions in different European countries and compare them with Britain. Their knowledge of the Easter story increases to include the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, and their understanding of Hinduism includes the belief in reincarnation and the different Hindu sects. A recent visit to the local cathedral has reinforced the idea that

church is a special place, to be respected, and pupils gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the crucifix in reminding Christians of the suffering and death of Jesus.

148. In Years 5 and 6 pupils gain a deeper knowledge of Hindu traditions and a good knowledge of Muslim beliefs. They know the Qu'ran was revealed to Mohammed and is a special book for members of the Muslim faith, and learn about the Islamic rules for daily life. Pupils gain more knowledge about Christian principles. This includes asking the question 'Who is my neighbour?' and appreciating the charity work done by Christian associations in countries such as India and Africa. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils carefully examined the work of the Tear Fund in Uganda and the importance of high profile Christians such as Cliff Richards in attracting attention and funds for particular charities. During this lesson pupils were able to improve their literacy skills as they took notes during the video footage. Year 6 pupils avidly compared the art of a sixteenth century Italian painter with that of a twentieth century Mexican artist. Pupils appreciated that though both artists were representing the story of The Good Samaritan, their interpretations of the story were coloured by their own lifestyles and experiences. As a result, in a very useful discussion about this parable, pupils concluded that we should never judge people by appearances. They expressed this idea successfully in their own artwork when they drew their own versions of the up-to-date good Samaritans. Pupils recognise that the lessons from the New Testament parables still relate to modern day life. Pupils in Year 6 are aware that people have different ways of praying, that Muslims use a prayer mat and face Mecca, that Christians kneel and join their hands. Pupils extend their knowledge of Christianity to include the range of Christian sects including the Salvation Army set up by William Booth.

149. Teaching of religious education is consistently good. This marks a significant improvement since the last inspection when a significant amount of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers' planning is linked with the locally agreed syllabus and individual lessons are conscientiously and imaginatively planned, making the subject interesting and relevant to pupils' own lives. For example a Year 3 class studying Hinduism chanted a mantra at the end of their lesson as a prayer for peace. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their work is reinforced by the use of good quality religious objects and video materials. Appropriate visits including a Hindu temple, Synagogue and Cathedral are arranged to support pupils' religious experiences. A particular strength of the teaching is that though pupils learn about other faiths, as a result of good quality, sensitive teaching pupils also learn to value and respect other peoples' beliefs even if they do not share them. Pupils enjoy their lessons and contribute thoughtfully and sensibly to discussions. The teaching of religious education, including assemblies contributes well to the very good relationships, personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision that are strengths of the school.

150. The co-ordination of religious education is good. The co-ordinator has taken over the responsibility recently, is committed to the subject and has a good overview. The priorities outlined in the subject action plan are appropriate and the school is making sure that funding is available to purchase additional high quality resources to support teaching. The monitoring of the subject is not in place but informal discussions and exchange of ideas between teachers have impacted successfully in raising the standards of teaching and learning in religious education.