

INSPECTION REPORT

LACHE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lache, Chester

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 131350

Headteacher: Sue Pearson

Reporting inspector: Julian Sorsby

14042

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th April 2002

Inspection number: 208446

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hawthorn Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Reg Mayorcas

Date of previous inspection: 2nd June 1998

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14042	J. Sorsby	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9921	P. Blackshaw	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1189	S. Brown	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
6752	J. Dickins	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Equality of opportunity	
25577	W. Jefferson	Team inspector	Science Art and design Provision for pupils with special educational needs The work of the special educational needs unit	
22157	M. Roussel	Team inspector	English Design and technology Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lache Primary School was established in 1998 following the closure of two other schools on the same site. It is of average size, with 234 pupils on roll, compared to the national average of 226. There is an attached nursery with 38 children attending, 12 of whom attend full time. There is also a special unit attended by 14 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and an infant special needs assessment class attended by a further 12 pupils. Only five pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, these being mainly of Bangladeshi descent. English is spoken as an additional language by 4 pupils, only one being at an early stage of learning English. The predominant language spoken is Bangla. Lache is an area of considerable social and economic hardship and this is reflected in the home circumstances of the majority of pupils. Sixty-three per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. Forty-seven per cent have special educational needs, which is also well above average while 6 per cent have statements of special educational needs, which is also well above average. Eighteen per cent of all pupils joined or left the school during the past year at a time other than the normal joining or leaving time. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is very low for their age. As the school opened just three years ago, no pupil has spent all of their primary education years there.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many excellent features. All pupils achieve well as a consequence of very good teaching in reception to Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, while those who do not have such needs achieve very high standards compared to pupils in similar schools, well above the national average in English and science and in line with the average in mathematics. The school values pupils very highly as individuals – and they know it. They are enabled to develop academically, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally in an environment where they feel cared for and safe. Excellent leadership and management have, in a very short time, made this school a place of stability in pupils' lives and a focal point of the community. Although the school spends more than most primary school for each pupil, the very good progress pupils make, and the excellent work of the school in enriching pupils' lives means that it is providing very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those with serious behavioural difficulties, those for whom English is an additional language, more able pupils and those who are gifted and talented, to do well. This is because teaching is very good and teaching assistants are very effective, leadership and management is excellent and the curriculum is very good with an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities.
- It enriches the lives of all its pupils, enabling them to grow up as confident young citizens with ambition to do well, because they know that they are valued, secure and safe. This is the consequence of the sensitivity and sincerity of all adults who care for pupils.
- It makes excellent provision for personal, social and health education and for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What could be improved

- Aspects of the curriculum, organisation and teaching in the nursery.
- Improve the assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do in subjects other than English, by extending the good practice already established in this subject.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool in classrooms.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected just six weeks after it was formed, in June 1998. That brief report did not comment on all aspects of the school, but where judgements were made, those will be compared in the body of this report with current judgements. Where no judgement was made, no reference will be made to the previous report.

In summary, the curriculum and curriculum planning has improved considerably, as have the school's links with the community to support the teaching of the curriculum. There has been very good improvement in the assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do, and the use made of this information in teachers' planning. The school has continued to build on its good partnership with parents. The support that the school provides for its very large number of pupils with special educational needs has improved significantly as has the quality of teaching to all pupils other than in the nursery. There have been major improvements in the resources for and teaching of ICT and significant improvement in the leadership and management of the school, which are now excellent. Provision in the nursery has deteriorated.

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	2001
English	E	E	E	D
mathematics	E	E*	E	D
science	E	E	E*	E

Key

well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

Pupils achieve very much better than the above grades would imply. This is because these comparisons represent the results achieved by all the pupils in the year group and do not distinguish between those who have special educational needs, approximately half the pupils, and those that do not. Those that do not, achieve standards in English and science that are well above the national average, and average results in mathematics. They also achieve very well when compared to pupils in similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs make similarly good progress but do not achieve high standards.

At the end of Year 2, when considering all pupils who took the tests in 2001, standards in reading were well below the national average but average for pupils in similar schools. In writing and mathematics, standards were in the bottom five per cent nationally and well below the average for similar schools. Once again, this profile is deceptive as it does not distinguish between pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress, and those without special needs, who achieve relatively high standards, although not as high as at the end of Year 6. At the end of Years 2 and 6, the standards achieved in reading, writing, mathematics and science for the past four years have fluctuated, but because of the different proportion of pupils with special needs each year, this fluctuation is of little significance.

The school exceeded its targets for the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics in 2001. The school is well placed to achieve its challenging targets for 2002.

Standards observed during the inspection demonstrate that with the inclusion of all pupils in the analysis, pupils in Year 2 are on course to achieve standards that remain well below national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Given their particularly low attainment on entry to the school and to Year 1, this represents satisfactory achievement in nursery and reception and good achievement in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in Year 6 are on course to achieve below national average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement by pupils in Years 3 to 6. Underlying these anticipated results is the good progress being made by pupils with special education needs and the very good achievement and high standards of many other pupils. All these results and anticipated results are a consequence of the excellent leadership and management of the school and very good teaching.

Standards are above national expectations in art and design at the end of Year 2 and well above expectations at the end of Year 6. Standards are above expectations in music at the end of Year 6. In religious education, music at the end of Year 2, design and technology and physical education at the end of Year 6, standards are in line with expectations. In all other subjects at Years 2 and 6, standards are below expectations. Given their very low starting point, this represents good achievement by pupils overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very Good. Pupils enjoy school and respond very positively to lessons and all other activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Much behaviour is very good, and some is excellent, but a small minority of pupils do not always demonstrate self- control.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. As a consequence of the school's concern and provision for each individual pupil, they grow up to be mature young people ready for the next stage of their education.
Attendance	Satisfactory. This is the result of pupils' strong motivation and the stability pupils feel the school provides for them in their lives.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Very Good	Very 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.

Teaching in the nursery is characterised by strengths and weaknesses, and is satisfactory overall. In reception, teaching is very good.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics, literacy and numeracy is very good in Years 1 to 6. Often, teaching is excellent. All aspects of teaching in these year groups are at least good and many are very good or excellent. In particular, teachers have exceptionally high expectations of their pupils, and pupils respond to this very well. Also, teachers are highly skilled at managing pupils, although in most lessons pupil management seems deceptively easy as teachers motivate pupils to behave well and work hard. All pupils, including the high proportion with special educational needs and the few for whom English is an additional language, learn well in reception and Years 1 to 6. Particularly strong aspects are the effort they make, their high motivation and their commitment to learning.

The school is skilled at ensuring that the learning needs of pupils are identified and incorporated in teachers' planning which therefore meets the needs of all its pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Pupils enjoy and benefit greatly from the exemplary range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. A significant strength of the school is the care taken to ensure each pupil is provided for well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. As with all other pupils, the school takes enormous care to ensure each pupil is enabled to progress as well as every other.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Outstanding. Consistently excellent provision is one of the strongest features of the school's great success in enriching the lives of its pupils and opening their eyes to how they can succeed in their lives ahead.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school provides a place of stability in the lives of its pupils, characterised by each pupil being highly valued and very well cared for.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Very well. The school values and encourages parental participation in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher is inspirational. Supported by very competent senior colleagues, she has steered the school to great success in a very short time, enabling pupils to achieve very well, both academically and in their personal development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and contribute well to its development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school uses all available information to evaluate its successes, and to identify areas for further development.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all available resources very well to enhance pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. Best value is achieved well, in all its work.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Very good accommodation, good learning resources and a good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum all contribute well to raising pupils' standards. Teaching assistants also make a significant contribution, although there are not enough for them always to be present when needed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That teaching is good • That the school encourages pupils to work hard and do their best • That the school is well led and managed • That their children make good progress 	There were no matters raised by more than a very small number of parents as needing improvement.

The inspection team strongly supports the views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Because of the very high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, including those who attend one of the special units in the school that cater for emotional and behavioural difficulties, a clear distinction needs to be drawn between the standards pupils reach and the extent of their achievements - that is, simply stated, the amount they progress. In almost all subjects of the curriculum, pupils with special needs do not reach standards expected for their age, while those without special needs often reach standards much higher than expected. All pupils achieve equally well. This is because teaching is very good and the additional support given to pupils with special needs by the highly skilled and dedicated teaching assistants enables them to learn equally as well as all other pupils. The central theme of this school is its work to provide to meet the needs of each individual pupil. This it succeeds in doing most impressively.

2. Levels of attainment on entry to the nursery are well below those expected for children of this age in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their physical and creative development. Satisfactory provision in the nursery enables children to make steady progress, but by the time they enter reception they continue to have standards well below expectations for their age. Helped by the good provision in the reception classes, which is characterised by a strong emphasis on language and by good teaching, children achieve well during this year. Consequently, by the time they enter Year 1, almost all children reach standards below, rather than well below, expectations in each of the areas of learning except mathematical and creative development, where standards remain well below expectations.

3. Very good teaching in Years 1 to 6 helps all pupils to achieve well in English. Considering all pupils, attainment of seven-year-olds in reading and writing is well below average. By the age of eleven, pupils are achieving standards in English that are below the national average. However, pupils who do not have special educational needs reach standards well above the national average. This is as a consequence of the very good leadership and management of the school, the quality of teaching, the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and additional literacy support for individuals. Considering their very low starting point, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well.

4. In mathematics, good teaching throughout the school, the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, the regular monitoring of work and of each group of pupils as they move through the school and the use of the information collected to influence what is being taught, are together making a significant contribution to improving standards. By the time pupils reach the age of seven they are achieving well but not sufficiently to impact significantly on standards, which rise from very low to well below average. By the age of eleven, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 or above is just below average. As with English, pupils who do not have special educational needs achieve high standards and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well.

5. Teachers' assessment at the end of Year 2 and the results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001 in science indicate that pupils' standards were in the bottom five per cent nationally. Inspection evidence demonstrates standards overall to be well below average at the age of seven and below average at the age of eleven. These results mask the fact that pupils who do not have special educational needs reach standards significantly above

average and that, given their low starting point, all pupils are achieving well. Pupil achievement is the result of very good teaching and very good support from teaching assistants. Many pupils are, however, restricted in the progress they make by their limited ability to use language effectively in the context of science.

6. In art and design by the age of seven standards are above expectations and by the age of eleven they are well above expectations. All pupils achieve well. Insufficient teaching was observed to make a sound judgement on its quality, but what was seen was very good. The very good motivation of pupils is a factor contributing to the high profile of the subject in the school, the enjoyment pupils derive from it, and the standards they achieve.

7. Since formed, the school has given appropriate high priority to raising pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science. One subject that has received comparatively little attention has been design and technology. Consequently, standards are below expectations at the age of seven, with a comprehensive scheme of work needing to be developed. In Years 3 to 6 there is a scheme of work and therefore at the age of eleven, standards are in line with expectations. Insufficient teaching was observed to make a sound judgement on its quality, but what was seen was very good. No judgement can be made on the impact of the quality of teaching on standards.

8. Standards in geography and history are below expectations for pupils in Years 2 and 6 but, given their very low starting point, pupils are achieving well. In history, this is a consequence of very good teaching and good quality support for less able pupils. In geography, insufficient teaching was observed to make a sound judgement on its quality, but what was seen was good.

9. Overall, pupils' standards are below the level expected in ICT throughout the school. Given their low starting point, pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve similarly. Pupils are learning appropriate skills in the ICT suite, including work in a range of subjects, but are being given insufficient opportunities to practise their skills in their classroom work in other subjects. Ably supported by the ICT technician, teachers display growing confidence in using computers and teaching ICT, and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' own enjoyment of using computers and to their achievement. The quality of teaching of ICT is good throughout the school and this too makes a very important contribution to raising standards.

10. Music plays a central role in the life of the school. The subject is well taught, and numerous exciting and enjoyable opportunities are created for pupils to take part in producing or listening to music. Consequently, pupil motivation and enjoyment, coupled with good teaching, results in standards throughout the school being in line with national expectations.

11. Too few physical education lessons were seen to make a secure judgement on pupils' standards in this subject.

12. In religious education, very good teaching, a wide and interesting variety of approaches to the teaching of the subject and the good use of visits and visiting speakers to enhance the curriculum, all result in pupils achieving standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Over-reliance on worksheets detracts from further improvement in standards.

13. The progress made by the fifty per cent of pupils who have special educational needs and the small number for whom English is not their first language is similar to the progress of all other pupils in each subject of the curriculum. This is because of the very good support they receive in lessons from teaching assistants and teachers. Work given them is well

suited to their needs as a consequence of very good assessment and all staff knowing their pupils very well. This is a central theme of the school, with the needs of every pupil being fully accounted for and all being fully included in everything the school provides.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. There is a very happy school in which all pupils feel highly valued and fully included, and in which their confidence and self-esteem grow from year to year as they develop into mature and sensible young people ready for the next stage of their education. Pupils' attitudes have improved since the last inspection, and their good behaviour has been maintained.

15. Nearly all parents feel that behaviour in the school is good and that their children are helped to become mature and responsible. Parents say that pupils' behaviour has improved due to the very good leadership of the school and an improved learning atmosphere. They are pleased that, by consulting with them, the school is involving pupils in its behaviour management strategies. They feel that encouragement of their children to do the right thing and to support one another contributes well to their children's personal development.

16. Parents state that pupils enjoy coming to school. However, attendance rates, which are satisfactory overall, are affected by a small number of pupils who do not attend regularly. The rate of attendance is very slightly less than the national average, due to a slightly higher than average rate of authorised absence. This detracts from these pupils' learning. Although most pupils arrive in time for registration and the start of school, there is a small number of who are regularly late. This affects not only these pupils' learning but as a result of the disruption caused, other pupils' learning too.

17. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and are enthusiastic about their work and activities. In lessons, they are very motivated to learn, listen well to their teacher and concentrate for extended periods. Pupils work hard and are keen to progress. This makes a significant contribution to their achievement. Pupils like their teachers and want to do their best for them. They are sometimes 'bursting with confidence' as they set about their work and waste no time in getting on. They are good listeners and are keen to make active contributions to discussions. They listen well to others and value their opinions. The high level of respect for each other is an important factor in the school, for example when pupils actively encourage the involvement of those from the special education unit in their lessons and play.

18. Pupils' behaviour is good. In lessons, most pupils behave very well all of the time. Around the school, they are clear about the expected standards of behaviour and move sensibly around the large building. They are friendly and polite and talk readily with visitors about their work and school life. In assemblies and in the dining hall they behave well. Lunchtimes are sociable events that contribute to pupils' social development. In the playground, their play is happy and, although some pupils are boisterous, there are few incidents of bullying or unpleasant behaviour. Despite the very good behaviour of the majority of pupils, behaviour is judged to be good overall, because of the impact of the behaviour of a small minority of pupils on the majority. A total of three boys have been excluded in the past year, two for fixed terms and one permanently. Each was for very disruptive behaviour.

19. Pupils are making very good progress in their personal development. They and staff all work together in a caring atmosphere and this encourages pupils' developing confidence and maturity. Through target setting in lessons and the support of teachers, pupils are developing a good understanding of how well they are achieving in work, attitudes and behaviour and are able to talk about what they need to do next in order to improve. Pupils

respond well to opportunities for taking responsibility such as helping in the classroom and taking registers to the office. Pupils are given a chance to be more involved in the running of the school as school councillors. They are proud of their roles and form ideas, in discussion with their friends, about improvements they would like to see. Characteristic of the inclusive nature of the school is that School Council decisions are not by vote, but by consensus. In a meeting of the council during the inspection, pupils behaved very maturely as they put forward their ideas to a local councillor about improving the cycle path facilities in the area to encourage more pupils to ride to school.

20. Pupils are enthusiastic about school life. They have very few dislikes and say that they are being prepared well for secondary school, particularly when organising themselves and ensuring that they get their homework done on time. Pupils say that the school is inclusive and that they are all treated fairly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with half the lessons observed being very good or excellent. Throughout Years 1 to 6 almost nine of every ten lessons were good or better. The quality of teaching in these year groups is a significant strength of the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and a very high thirteen per cent of lessons observed were excellent. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

22. Particular strengths of teaching that are primarily found in Reception to Year 6 are the quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy, and the calm and productive atmosphere in classrooms which itself is the consequence of very good pupil management. These factors contribute significantly to pupils' strong desire to learn and the standards they achieve. Of particular significance are teachers' expectations of pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well and have very high expectations of them. They know that the pupils can achieve well and do everything in their power to help them to do so. In reception every lesson seen was good or better and sixty per cent were very good. A further major strength of teaching is the very high quality of support provided for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This support, given by teachers and by exceptionally effective teaching assistants, makes a major contribution to their learning. Another strength of teaching that also is contributing significantly to pupils' achievements is the very effective use made of team teaching – more than one teacher teaching two or more combined classes. This is giving pupils learning opportunities that might otherwise not be available to them.

23. By contrast teaching in the nursery is satisfactory, with only twenty per cent of observed lessons being good and no very good teaching having been seen. Despite the conclusion that can be drawn from the experience of pupils as they progress through the school that children can achieve well, expectations are much lower in the nursery and consequently there is sometimes insufficient challenge in lessons. Planning is sometimes not sufficiently rigorous to carry through the learning objectives that teachers set out to achieve, and the same drive for excellence that is seen throughout the school is sometimes lacking. For example, the nursery itself is the least attractive classroom in the school with resources often being drab and areas of the room inaccessible to children because of the storage of old and disused equipment. Staff do have a secure understanding of how young children learn and the importance of play and first hand experiences, but more effort is sometimes required to provide these opportunities for children in a meaningful way from which they will learn.

24. The teaching of English and literacy is very good in Years 1 to 6. Twenty-five per cent of lessons observed were excellent. Particular strengths are teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and the imaginative lessons they prepared for

pupils. Teachers plan together in year groups ensuring that there is consistency between the lessons taught to different classes. This ensures that all pupils have the same opportunities to achieve well.

25. The quality of observed teaching in mathematics and numeracy was similarly very good in Years 1 to 6. One third of all teaching was excellent. Teachers' planning and the setting of objectives are good and they provided effective demonstrations using their good subject knowledge to inform and motivate pupils. Teachers managed pupils particularly well and the relationships in the classroom are also very good. These factors create a good environment in which learning is purposeful and pupils achieve well. Teachers provide appropriately challenging work for each pupil and pace their lessons well, according to pupils' abilities.

26. The teaching of science throughout the school is very good, but less so than English and mathematics, with no excellent teaching being seen. Teachers planned their lessons carefully and used their good subject knowledge to provide stimulating opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of the topics they study. They encouraged pupils to use their initiative when organising resources and to develop their ability to work well both independently and within groups. This enables pupils to learn, understand and use scientific experimental techniques well and to achieve well as a consequence.

27. It was not possible to make overall judgements on the quality of teaching in art and design, design and technology, physical education or geography, due to the small number of lessons seen. However, comments are made about the quality of the individual lessons seen in these subjects, later in this report.

28. The teaching of history is good throughout the school and pupils learn well. Teachers are very skilled at making history "come to life" through their teaching, and this motivates and interests pupils greatly. Very good use is made of visits to further encourage pupils, and very good links between history and other subjects of the curriculum, such as art and design, are developed.

29. Teaching and learning in ICT are good throughout the school. Teachers are growing in confidence and subject expertise. Very well supported by the ICT technician, they use learning resources well to explain and demonstrate new techniques. Lessons are a good mix of whole class teaching and practical pupil work. Teachers ensure that all pupils are engaged well in activities. ICT is used effectively in the teaching of other subjects of the curriculum in the ICT site, but not in classrooms, where pupils have insufficient opportunity to practise their skills.

30. The quality of teaching of music is consistently good or better throughout the school. Teachers are technically competent to teach the subject and make their lessons very interesting. Pupils have numerous opportunities in lessons, clubs and school activities such as assemblies to make and listen to music, and they respond very well. Their enjoyment and hard work in music lessons help them to achieve well.

31. The quality of teaching of religious education is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6. One excellent lesson was seen in this latter age range. Teachers have good subject knowledge and incorporate into their teaching a respect for all within the class, the school and the wider environment. Pupils respond positively to their teachers and are keen to learn. They find the activities based on the locally agreed syllabus interesting. The ethos of respect and understanding created by teachers in religious education lessons pervades the whole school and is reflected in the very positive relationships that exist.

32. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in classes and in small groups is good and this enables them to make good progress against the targets in their individual education plans. Individual needs are supported during group work and the outcomes are recorded appropriately. Learning support assistants are particularly skilled in helping pupils, and progress is best in those lessons where they are present. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive similarly good support.

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

33. The school provides a broad, rich and stimulating curriculum, which meets the needs of its pupils extremely well and meets all statutory requirements. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory overall in the Foundation Stage - the nursery and reception classes. In the main school National Curriculum and religious education requirements are fully met. The curriculum provides a very good range of opportunities for learning for all pupils, including the high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and the small minority with English as an additional language. The school successfully motivates its pupils to have very good attitudes towards work and this has a positive effect upon their learning. As a result, the pupils acquire a very good breadth and depth of knowledge across the whole curriculum and overall achieve well in their learning, given their low starting point. Religious education conforms to the locally agreed syllabus, contributing effectively to pupils' personal development. Since the previous inspection, which followed immediately after the formation of the school, much has been done to encourage a whole-school approach to the curriculum and all the key issues concerning the curriculum in the previous report have been met very effectively. The report pointed to a weakness in curriculum planning for pupils in Years 3 to 6, with a lack of common format throughout the school. There was a lack of curriculum documents to guide planning in these years, which adversely affected the breadth and balance of the curriculum and consequently the rate of progress made. These weaknesses have been thoroughly rectified. In addition, the school's links with its community have been considerably strengthened. Curricular improvements constitute a very good response.

34. Provision for the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language is very good. Although there is little specific support allocated, the teachers provide very well for these pupils through carefully matched work and very well focussed support from classroom assistants. As a result, these pupils participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum and all of the school's activities. They make the same good progress as all other pupils.

35. A strength of the school is its provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school is determined to provide an education, which meets the particular needs of each of its pupils.

36. A clear policy on inclusion is very well implemented to ensure that the needs of all pupils are being met through the curriculum. Underpinning everything that the school does and provides is a genuine belief in its pupils. This is a fully inclusive school in which everyone is valued and is encouraged to succeed. The dedication and hard work of all who work at the school creates a warm secure environment. The staff are particularly sensitive to the personal circumstances and needs of each pupil. There is a genuine belief that pupils can achieve well in their work, their relationships with others and in their personal development. No effort is spared to provide opportunities, which will enable pupils to develop into well-adjusted capable citizens. Without exception, every child is included in this process.

37. The school has adopted a clear and cohesive curriculum plan. This provides a good basis for ensuring that a balanced programme is delivered for each year group. The

curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. It is good in the reception class with rich first hand experiences and interesting opportunities for learning. It is less vibrant and exciting in the nursery and, although satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in the provision. Work is planned to the early learning goals – identified targets for children in the Foundation Stage – and is good in the reception class. Whilst it is satisfactory in the nursery, planning lacks appropriate provision for full-time children in the nursery, who often repeat activities as a result. This is a weakness. Arrangements for using the outdoor equipment to support physical development are unsatisfactory in the nursery because learning objectives are not always clear and activities are not always well planned.

38. Curriculum planning in Years 1 to 6 is very good. National guidance has been incorporated into schemes of work in subjects other than literacy, numeracy and religious education. The locally agreed syllabus provides the framework for religious education. The strategies for teaching literacy are very well embedded and contribute very effectively to pupils' learning. In mathematics, the numeracy strategy makes an effective contribution to learning. English is used well to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum and makes a positive contribution to pupils' achievement.

39. Extra-curricular provision is excellent and is a very significant strength of the school. There is a wide range of exciting activities available to all pupils at lunchtimes and after school, including choir, sporting and musical activities, drama, art and design, steel drums and computer clubs, and gymnastics for children in the reception class. The school makes excellent use of an extensive programme of visits and visitors to support the curriculum. For example, recent visits have involved Years 1 and 2 in a visit to Conwy Castle resulting in extensive artwork, such as observational drawing and model-making, written accounts exploring the roles of people who worked in the castle, contrasting the lives of the rich and poor, performing a battle in role play and exploring medieval recipes comparing the food of the rich to that of the servants. Other visits take Years 1 and 6 to Erddig – a Victorian house – as part of their study of the Victorians. Visits to museums and galleries, such as The Liverpool Gallery, Walker Gallery, Lady Lever Gallery, to churches, Chester City, Ellesmere Port Boat Museum are just a few examples of this extensive programme. In addition, pupils have good opportunities for residential experiences, including Year 2 pupils visiting Delamere. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 spend time at Beeston and Tatton Hall, on residential visits, where they are steeped in rich experiences, particularly those linked to the arts. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are presented with a variety of outdoor adventurous activities as well as drama and dance on their residential visit to Menai. Much of the work undertaken on these visits is celebrated through the excellent displays in school. The enrichment through these opportunities contributes extensively to pupils' personal development.

40. A major strength of the school is the excellent provision made for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship. The school places high priority on this aspect of pupils' development. The excellent provision makes a major contribution to the very positive attitudes shown by most pupils. The programme of work is carefully structured to ensure a sensitive but informative approach. Sex education and drug awareness are included within the school's programme for health education. Opportunities such as circle time deal with feelings, relationships and topics concerning citizenship in a sensitive and caring manner. The development of good relationships and consideration for others is deeply embedded in the life and work of the school. Pupils develop an understanding of increasingly complex issues in a secure and supportive environment within the classroom. This is extended through drama, writing and art and design. Considerable efforts are made to foster pupils' self-esteem, to enrich their experiences and to develop them as confident and caring young people. The school council has been particularly effective in developing pupils' self-image and sense of responsibility. Real issues are presented which often result in improvements within the school or wider community. For example, issues such as safer routes to school, are

considered by the school council and councillors in the community. Other issues extend to families and the wider community. A recent initiative involved children and parents learning together for an art and design project, with excellent results. Assemblies, the house system, structured dinner times and breakfast club, all contribute to developing pupils' independence and maturity.

41. The school has forged very good links with the community, which further promote the development of citizenship. There are numerous examples of these links. The choir participates in music festivals and collaborative music events. The school works closely with a wide range of outside agencies, particularly, the family centre. Other links include the church, the local housing trust, Cheshire police, as well as football and basketball coaching from local professional teams. Creative art and poetry development days involve school and community. These are just a few of the many opportunities for links with the wider community. The school is a very important focal point in the Lache community. Pupils participate regularly in fund-raising and charitable events with a major focus each year, such as Barnado's or the National Children's Homes. Each year pupils prepare shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. They support Children in Need and Comic Relief, giving generously and showing concern for those less fortunate than themselves. During the inspection, children in the reception class held a non-uniform day dressing as pirates for the day to raise money for charity.

42. The school enjoys good links with its partner institutions. Year 7 pupils access the library and computer suite in school and pupils from Lache visit the local secondary school to access science, art and design and design and technology facilities. Drama and music links are strong. Links with other primary schools include sporting activities and celebrations such as those for the Millennium.

43. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All staff value each individual pupil and help them understand school rules and acceptable ways of conducting themselves. Pupils in turn know they are valued and this builds their confidence and self-esteem and consequently their personal and social development. Parents are pleased with what the school does and feel that staff establish good values for all pupils. The school council provides pupils with opportunities to contribute further to school life. For example, in the house assemblies members of the school council reported back to their house on matters that had been discussed at the school council meeting.

44. The opportunities for pupils to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to further their spiritual awareness are outstanding. Each week starts with planned assemblies based on themes that are aimed at moral and social development and also link closely to the planned work in the religious education curriculum. On the week of the inspection the theme focused on teamwork and the importance of working together as a team. The worship time is reflective and prayerful, encouraging pupils to reflect thoughtfully on matters that are important in their lives and also how to share and consider others' feelings and respect them as individuals in their own right. The school environment is rich in colour and beauty with displays, flowers, artwork and artefacts in classrooms and corridors. This rich environment is filled with brief moments of 'awe and wonder,' possibly through a lesson or in experiencing a piece of pupils' work. For example, a moment of 'Wow!' was seen in a science lesson when pupils realised that a magnet could move a paper clip upwards through a beaker of water, or when a pupil wrote, "Happiness is the feel of the tiniest creature in the palm of my hand." Pupils have opportunities to appreciate the exciting nature of the world around them as seen in the exceptionally beautiful artwork they have completed and displayed around the school. This promotes the pupils' integrity by displaying their work, showing that it is valued. Pupils' awareness of spirituality is further enhanced by visitors such as the vicar of St Mark's Church

and their visits to *the* church, Chester Cathedral and the recent visit Year 1 made to St Clare's Catholic Church. In addition there is a Sunday Club at St Mark's Church which pupils from the school attend. Music is very important to the spiritual development within the school and this is highlighted by the warm and reflective atmosphere that is experienced in assemblies when children sing and listen to the recorded music playing as they enter and leave the hall.

45. The school's approach to pupils' moral development is excellent. Moral values are seen as very important and are taught as a high priority. Teachers act as good role models and this positive approach combines with a focus on clear values to which pupils respond positively and which subsequently results in high standards of behaviour and acceptable conduct. This approach leads to pupils developing a clear awareness of the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are generally well-disciplined and, by their actions, help to create an orderly school. The school operates an assertive discipline programme as a code for structuring behaviour, thus creating attention to values such as honesty, truth, respect and self-discipline. The school sees assemblies as an important vehicle to teach moral principles to do with the school community, local community and, importantly, the family.

46. The provision for encouraging the social development of the pupils is excellent. High profile in the school is the teaching and learning in personal, social and health education and citizenship. To inform and make pupils aware of the importance of citizenship, there are displays around the school that highlight the rights of children. The school values its members and encourages pupils to integrate well both at work and at play. For example, pupils take on specific responsibilities, such as prefects, working the overhead projector and recorded music in assemblies, being members of the school houses to collect the money for breakfast club. In the classroom there are opportunities to work together in pairs or groups and pupils are encouraged to take a pride in seeing their classroom tidy and undertake various tasks such as giving resources out and putting them away at the end of the lesson. There is a structured reward system where pupils are able to gain stickers and certificates and parents are informed about good behaviour. It was noticeable in the inspection how important it was to pupils to gain praise and acknowledgement, often by applause from the teacher, teaching assistants and their own peers. For many pupils that was more important than gaining stickers and other rewards. Structured dinner-time is provided to ensure that pupils can relax and take part in social activities such as playtime or watching a television programme within a social atmosphere. There are extra-curricular clubs that pupils may join that further develop their social interactions, including ICT, cookery, drama, first aid, reading, recorders, cycling, steel drums and basket ball clubs. Pupils' awareness of people outside the school community is developed through visits outside and receiving visitors to the school. For example, visitors into the school include the police, vicar and representatives of charities, such as the National Children's Home and Royal National Institute for the Blind. Residential visits include visits by Year 2 to Delamare, Year 3 to Beeston, Year 4 to Tattenhall and Year 6 to Menai, thus gaining valuable experience of learning to live in a social environment other than their home. Other social events are the participation of the pupils in sporting activities with partner schools, community extension project and Chester music festival.

47. The provision for cultural development is also excellent. Pupils start to understand their own cultural background from nursery rhymes, poetry, stories, music and historical studies, including the Victorians and Romans, especially Roman Chester. Painting and music help them to develop a greater awareness of beautiful things, as does the beauty of the world about them. The school environment is rich in artwork and in the week of the inspection the art club exhibition was officially opened. In the entrance hall there is a very stimulating black and white display of children's art and design, depicting the ideas and meanings of the work of famous artists, crafts people and designers at different times and cultures. In addition, pupils have also had the opportunity to visit Leonardo's ten drawings

exhibition at the Lady Lever Gallery. Pupils have also visited the theatre to see The Miracle Maker and Prince of Egypt. There are opportunities within the taught religious education lessons to learn about other faiths and festivals although, at the present time there has been little opportunity to visit other places of worship. However, a pupil who is herself a member of the Muslim faith has taken a teaching role and taught other pupils about her faith, her beliefs and her home life

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The school is a very caring community with staff who, as at the last inspection, know in detail the educational, emotional and physical needs of individual pupils. Each pupil is important to the staff and pupils' understanding and knowledge of this is reflected in their enhanced confidence and self esteem. This has a very significant impact on developing the pupils as effective learners and on the standards achieved. Parents greatly appreciate this aspect of the school.

49. A wide range of professionals provide very effective support for the school and work closely with staff who welcome and value their input. As one visiting specialist said of the staff 'they are willing to listen and change, very open to people coming in, they want what is best for the children.' An example of this is the close working with social services and educational psychologists so that staff have very good knowledge of child protection procedures and related issues. Staff recognise the importance of being alert to such issues and are aware of what to do if they think a child needs protection. Pupils' standards of personal development and educational progress are very positively influenced by this co-operative working and by the attention and time staff give to listening to pupils. Documentation for child protection issues is efficiently maintained as it is for emergencies, accidents, illness and medical information.

50. Policies and procedures to monitor and encourage regular attendance at school are very effective, with evidence demonstrating improvement in learning and good progress made by pupils successfully supported to attend regularly. The deputy headteacher and educational welfare officer are very effective in identifying and following up poor attendance and lateness. Very good support mechanisms are in place to encourage parents to bring their children to school. The breakfast club has made a very significant impact on attendance and improving standards, with between fifty and seventy pupils coming to school early to take advantage of this excellent provision, which ensures pupils are in class for the morning literacy work.

51. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppression. This is a major strength of the school and forms the foundation for supporting improving standards. The school has achieved an impressive level of consistency amongst staff in its successful approach to behaviour and the very effective use of such techniques as circle time. Pupils know where they are and what is expected of them but at the same time there is flexibility in the procedures and practice that enables individual needs to be met.

52. Staff expectations of pupils and their behaviour is high. They apply positive strategies to create a caring atmosphere where teaching and learning can take place in a safe and happy atmosphere. Staff are sensitive and aware, quickly recognising and responding to any incidents that arise, with skilful negotiation to help pupils recognise the consequences of their actions. External agencies such as the Behavioural Support Unit provide an excellent contribution to developing effective early intervention structures and evaluative procedures with class teachers to work with pupils with special needs. This has enabled pupils to remain

in mainstream classes with a noticeable decrease in problems, particularly among older pupils, and consequently an improvement in the quality of learning.

53. Very good procedures are in place to ensure a safe working environment. All annual and fire safety checks are carried out diligently and efficiently documented, as are regular health and safety audits. Responsibilities are taken very seriously with regular daily checks to ensure safety is maintained. Three members of staff are trained in first aid and pupils are ably looked after by teaching staff and supervisors at lunchtime.

54. Procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good overall and very good for pupils with special educational needs who have individual programmes that are effectively monitored and evaluated. The school provides an excellent personal, social and health education programme but pupils' progress is not at present systematically monitored as part of the curriculum. As staff know their pupils very well, they are aware of changing patterns of behaviour and are able to relate this to learning and achievement and make changes in support or provision as appropriate. Personal as well as academic achievements are celebrated in school assemblies.

55. The school has made very good improvement in the assessment of pupils' attainment since the time of the last inspection. The system of planning and assessment procedures now covers the whole school. Initial assessments of the youngest children are undertaken early in their school career. They are used to compare the school's performance with the local authority's averages. However there is no separate assessment policy. Assessment procedures are identified in each subject policy, but this leads to inconsistencies in the quality and methodology of assessment. The school has identified assessment in the nursery as an area for development. The range of procedures for assessing pupils' performance in core curriculum subjects is very good. In addition to statutory testing at 7 and 11, pupils are tested at the age of 8, 9 and 10 in mathematics and English. A range of both local authority and commercially produced, verbal and non-verbal intelligence assessments are also made. Reading tests are regularly given to infant and junior pupils. The science co-ordinator is in the process of developing assessment, in relation to the attainment targets for that area of the curriculum. In all other subjects there is very limited assessment of pupils' progress. Assessments of pupils with special educational and behavioural needs, who make up a very large proportion of the school, are made very regularly.

56. Overall, the use that the school makes of the results of these assessment procedures is good. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Following close scrutiny of test results, target setting and monitoring of pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science are put into effect. In English, all pupils have individual targets that are set and agreed by pupils and teachers. They are reviewed regularly. Portfolios of independent written work in English are maintained and are evaluated to see how they compare with National Curriculum expectations. The local authority provides good support by screening results of national tests to provide both the areas of strength and areas of weakness related to individual questions within the tests. The overall monitoring of achievement in mathematics and science is under-developed. There is a clear marking policy and marking of pupils' work is always undertaken, but the quality of marking is variable. In a number of classes motivating reward stickers are awarded and congratulatory comments are included. In some classes only ticks are used with no rewards. Written, work-related comments for whole classes would not be efficient use of teachers' time because of the under-developed literacy skills of large numbers of pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well and use questioning and discussion effectively to assess learning during the plenary aspect of lessons. Results of assessments of pupils with special educational and behavioural needs are used very well to inform their individual targets. All pupils know and understand these targets well and those in the juniors are very positively involved in self-

assessment. All teachers use results of assessment procedures to inform their very good planning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The school has continued to build on its good partnership reported at the time of the last inspection and this is now very good. Parents have a high regard for staff and feel that their children are taught well and are expected to work hard so that they can achieve the best they can. They state that their children enjoy coming to school and that the school helps them grow in maturity and responsibility. Parents appreciate the welcome they receive in school and the approachability of staff when they have concerns. They recognise and value the support the school and visiting agencies give to their children and report noticeable improvement, for example in their behaviour, at home.

58. The school has developed a very good range of productive and consistent links with parents that make an important contribution to pupils' learning and standards of achievement. Almost all parents and pupils have signed the home / school agreement which is used effectively as a valuable working document. Parents are encouraged to come in to school to talk to staff as part of a very active and successful open door policy. This was observed on a number of occasions during the inspection as parents approached teachers with confidence in the certainty that their concerns would be dealt with. The significant numbers of parents whose children have special needs are regularly involved in discussing their children's programmes of study and in addition are offered surgeries to discuss concerns. This enables parents to make a positive contribution to improving the standards of achievement and progress made by their children.

59. The impact of the involvement of parents in school is satisfactory. A small but growing number of parents provide reading and craft support which is highly valued by the school, and some parents effectively support staff when taking pupils on residential visits. Formal and regular parental involvement in the school is limited but the school has good provision to help parents support their child's learning at home, with wide-ranging and imaginative projects. Reading clubs and the provision of maths and reading games for parents to share with their children make a useful contribution to pupils' learning and progress in literacy and numeracy. Over recent years funding has been successfully sought to support parental involvement in school and resulted in the establishment of several excellent learning projects such as Parents in Partnership and Families Learning Together, where parents learn alongside their children. At present a shared project on art and design is enjoyed by all involved, not only contributing to raising standards but enhancing good relationships for future involvement. Parents of pupils with special needs are encouraged to work closely with the school in planning work programmes and in developing skills in managing their child's behaviour. This has a significant impact on raising standards. Homework is well supported by parents.

60. Overall information provided by the school for parents is good, often based on the regular and very good informal contacts made with parents on a day-to-day basis. Reception teachers are developing a very good welcome leaflet to provide helpful information for pupils starting school. A useful Home-School book helps maintain contact with parents living a distance from school. Consultation evenings are well attended and provide a very good opportunity for parents to discuss their child's annual report and progress. The reports are very positive and encouraging, in line with the strong philosophy and ethos of the school. However, they do not always focus on what the child can and cannot do and where help may be needed. Targets for improvement are not consistently included.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The leadership and the management of the school are excellent and are major contributory factors to the achievements of all pupils and the standards they reach. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

62. This is a school where inspirational leadership and management by the headteacher, coupled with very effective and meaningful delegation of authority and responsibility to her senior management colleagues has had, and continues to have, a highly motivational effect on pupils and staff alike. The headteacher leads by example. It is no accident that her office door, which is usually open, is made of opaque glass panels. She is very hard working and "one of the team" and all can see this when passing by. She sets a tone and an ethos that produce a very positive learning environment to which pupils and staff respond most wholeheartedly. For example, many teaching assistants remain in school voluntarily long after the pupils have left in order to complete work and plan for the next day. Pupils too respond very positively. The headteacher has been very successful in promoting the feeling among pupils that they have ownership of the school space. This is not somewhere pupils come to have teaching "done" to them. This is a place to which they want to come and in which they feel they are partners and at home.

63. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior managers are a very strong team. They recognise well the complementary skills each has, and use them well for the benefit of the school and pupils. For example, the deputy headteacher has become a very effective special educational needs co-ordinator in a school where the special needs of pupils are a major factor. She and the headteacher oversee a management structure that encourages involvement and development of staff. The senior management team is a very effective group, handling strategic management decisions, and acting as a focus for developments and communications with all staff. The various levels of management work very well together and jointly contribute significantly to raising pupils' standards. Senior managers feel valued – and are valued. They have the authority to make their own decisions within the overriding ethos of the school. They and the headteacher and deputy headteacher have well founded confidence in each other.

64. The school very successfully uses all available data in evaluating its own performance. Consequently, the senior staff and governors have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and take effective and prompt action to deal with areas of relative weakness. This was of particular importance during the months following the establishment of the school. The headteacher very successfully moulded the entire staff into a very strong and unified team with common aspirations for their pupils and their school. This was achieved while tackling some very difficult problems, for example, exceptionally poor behaviour particularly among the pupils attending the special unit for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Now, as documented elsewhere in this report, the school is calm and peaceful. It has become a place to which numerous teachers from other schools come to learn how to achieve such success.

65. The school is very clear about its educational priorities, and the senior management sets a very clear and appropriate educational direction. Throughout all its work, the management team clearly reflects the school's aims and values, in particular the valuing of every pupil, the inclusion of all and the enrichment of pupils' lives. The school development plan, the budget and the planning all contribute well to purposeful hard work by all, and the raising of standards. The school's educational priorities are well supported through its financial planning. The headteacher, governors and administrative staff have a good understanding of school finance, and work well together bringing their complementary skills to bear on the financial planning and management aspects of the school's work. The school effectively achieves best value in the purchase and deployment of all its resources. In this regard and in many others the school receives very good support from its administrative staff.

66. The school's performance management programme has a particularly significant impact on its work. Unlike many other schools, the headteacher's own annual performance targets are published prominently in the school development plan. Linked, as they are, to the plan's major objectives, this sets the tone for all staff to participate fully in working towards achieving their individual and shared goals.

67. The chairman and governors provide very good leadership, firmly rooted in their very good knowledge and understanding of the school. They are fully involved and carry out their responsibilities well.

68. The school development plan sets out very clearly the school's priorities for development. These are well focused on raising standards in all aspects of the school's work. Financial planning is intimately linked to the development plan and similarly targeted at raising standards. The school makes very good use of all the additional funds it receives, for example, to support pupils with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties. As exemplified in another area of spending, ICT, this investment is having a good impact on the quality and standards of pupils' work by improving teachers' skills in areas identified for development and in achieving great improvement in learning resources and accommodation for the teaching of ICT. Particularly notable is that teaching assistants have also participated in recent staff training in ICT and are confident and competent in supporting pupils' work.

69. The school is well staffed with teachers, enabling the curriculum to be taught very effectively. Staff are well qualified to manage individual subjects and to teach pupils with special educational needs. The quality of the support given to pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language by learning support assistants is very good, but there are too few assistants for there to be one in each lesson in which their presence would benefit pupils. There are very well established systems for supporting any teachers new to the school and newly qualified teachers. The quality of teaching is monitored well, particularly in English and mathematics, and this has contributed significantly to raising pupils' standards. Teachers welcome monitoring as an aid to helping them as they constantly strive to improve their work.

70. Overall, the quality of learning resources is good. For art and design and for pupils with special needs they are excellent. The quality of accommodation is very good overall. Again, for art and design and for pupils with special needs they are excellent.

71. Overall, an unusually high quality of leadership sends a powerful positive message to all in the school community while excellent management ensures the involvement of staff and pupils in striving to achieve to everyone's full potential.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72. In order to further improve the quality of education, build on the many strengths of the school and further raise standards the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Improve the quality of education in the nursery in keeping with the good practice present in the rest of the school.
(Paragraphs: 37, 55, 79, 81-85, 95-96)
- (2) Improve the assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do in subjects other than English by extending the good practice already established in this subject.
(Paragraphs: 55, 56, 112, 144, 150, 159, 165)
- (3) Increase opportunities for pupils to practise their ICT skills when learning other subjects in classrooms.
(Paragraphs: 108, 126, 143, 150, 155, 159)

Further areas identified in this report which should be considered by the school are as follows:

- Improve the quality of marking so that it better informs pupils as to how they can improve their work.
(Paragraph: 56)
- Improve the quality of annual academic reports to parents, so that they are better informed about what their children know, understand and can do and the targets to which they are striving.
(Paragraph: 60)
- Consider ways in which to increase the number of lessons in which the very good support given by learning support assistants can be made available to pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
(Paragraph: 69)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

73. The support that the school provides for its very large number of pupils with special educational needs is excellent. This is an improvement compared to the previous inspection, when some areas for development were identified.

74. The deputy headteacher is a very experienced special needs co-ordinator. She is totally committed to the care and development of every pupil in her care. She has no class responsibility and is therefore able to put all her efforts into helping pupils across the school to improve their standards of learning and personal development. She very competently teaches small groups of pupils during their timetabled literacy lessons and works closely with the equally committed team of caring teachers and support staff.

75. Teaching in specially designated units, this team is responsible for infant and junior pupils who require particular educational and behavioural support. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Excellent teamwork is a particular strength. All adults use praise and encouragement to very good effect. On a twice-daily basis the older pupils are encouraged to assess their own academic and behavioural performance. Pupils are very honest when making these self-appraisals and their confidence to speak in public is developed to great effect. Points, highly valued by the pupils, are awarded when there is agreement on all sides.

As a consequence of the very good teaching and the motivation of pupils, all who have special educational needs, including those in mainstream classes, make good progress.

76. As a consequence of the very successful, positive behaviour management system, all pupils from the units are assimilated every day into many aspects of the mainstream curriculum. They are, for example, included in foundation subject lessons, split up between the various teaching groups and play a full part in lessons. Their own teachers and support teachers regularly join colleagues from the same, mixed-year classes and share responsibility in presenting the lesson. For example, eighty lower junior pupils with five adults experienced a very good, practical art and design lesson in the school hall. Relationships between all pupils were very good. The lesson was well supported by the very good teamwork of the teachers. The curriculum that pupils' experience is broad, balanced and enriched by the many after school activities available to all pupils. This very good organisation satisfies a key issue reported at the time of the last inspection.

77. Individual education and behavioural plans for all pupils with special needs are realistic, working documents. They include clear targets that are updated on a regular basis. The triggers of behavioural problems are also identified. At the end of each term, discussion related to improvement takes place between the class teacher and the special needs co-ordinator. Targets are then set for the following term, to support further progress. Very good support is provided by a large number of individuals from agencies outside of the school. Their case conferences are very focused. Individual pupils' progress is discussed. Findings are shared with parents and carers before an action plan is agreed. Parents do not always keep their appointments. The school has successfully implemented the requirements of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs and also intends to continue to maintain individual educational and behavioural plans as part of its inclusive approach to its work.

78. The Learning Centre and two junior units are comfortable, attractive to the eye, very well resourced and spacious. Both units include quiet areas that give pupils the opportunity to reflect and become calm as and when required. They are decorated in great part to the pupils' recommendation and add significantly to the teaching environment. Finances have been purposefully used to provide excellent accommodation and learning resources.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	68
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
Number	9	24	24	11	0	0	0
Percentage	14	35	35	16	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

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)	15	234
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	147

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	139

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	21	14	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	11
	Girls	9	10	8
	Total	22	25	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	63 (63)	71 (48)	54 (70)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	10	9
	Girls	10	8	8
	Total	21	18	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60 (46)	51 (52)	49 (33)
	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 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	12	21	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	6	6
	Girls	13	11	15
	Total	17	17	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	52 (50)	52 (44)	64 (71)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	1	6	7
	Girls	12	9	14
	Total	13	15	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	39 (24)	45 (35)	64 (38)
	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	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	192
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	236.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Total number of education support staff	1.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	49
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	743 117
Total expenditure	740 954
Expenditure per pupil	2 786
Balance brought forward from previous year	42 421
Balance carried forward to next year	44 584

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	234
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.	56	37	2	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	55	41	1	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	46	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	45	6	3	2
The teaching is good.	74	26	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	35	7	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	25	1	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	39	6	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	65	31	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	37	1	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	35	6	1	1

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

79. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. It is good for children in the reception class but aspects of the nursery provision could be improved. Since the previous inspection, immediately following the establishment of the school, provision in the nursery has declined and whilst children receive a satisfactory start to their education, there are some weaknesses in the teaching and in the use made of the provision.

80. Children are admitted to the nursery in the term following their third birthday; admission is on going during the term, often in response to need. They join the reception class at the start of the school year in which they become five years old. At the time of the inspection, 25 children attended the nursery in the morning and 25 the afternoon sessions. Of these, 12 children attend full-time. There are a further 30 children in the reception class. Attainment on entry to the school is very low. In spite of the satisfactory progress overall, which is accelerated in the reception class, attainment remains very low in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world at the end of the Foundation Stage. It is also well below the expected level in personal, social and emotional development and in creative and physical development. Few children achieve any of the early learning goals by the time they start in Year 1.

81. Early identification of children having special educational needs enables support to be targeted appropriately. The satisfactory provision for these children helps them to make steady progress in their learning. Similarly, the small minority of children with English as an additional language receive effective help from support staff to enable them to make the same progress as others in the Foundation Stage. Good, and sometimes very good, teaching in the reception class is reflected in the increased pace of learning in many lessons. Although the pace of learning is slower in the nursery, nevertheless, children make steady progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and good support from other adults. The children experience a broad range of activities in the nursery but these are not always well structured or sufficiently challenging. Planning is sometimes too superficial and learning objectives are not always clear. As a result, some activities do not hold children's attention well and sometimes, when there is not well planned intervention, the quality of the learning experience deteriorates, as it did in an outdoor play session when children used the wheeled vehicles in a wild and disorganised way because rules and routines were not clearly established. In the reception class, by contrast, activities are well planned, high quality and very effectively supported.

82. The lack of specific planning for full time children in the nursery is a weakness and as a result, learning does not move on as fast as it could do for some of these children. Although teachers plan to the early learning goals, they do not plan together sufficiently in order to ensure progression and cohesion between the nursery and the reception class. The fact that the nursery is positioned at some distance from the main school, is a further hindrance to good continuity throughout the Foundation Stage.

83. Teacher expectations in the nursery are not always high enough. As a result, some potentially higher attainers do not achieve as well as they might because the tasks do not offer an appropriate level of challenge. There is over-direction by the teacher in some activities and this inhibits progress. Where tasks are interesting and challenging, the children are well motivated.

84. The brisk pace in good and very good lessons in the reception class accelerates children's learning. Assessment in the nursery is not rigorous enough and the teacher's on-going assessment is not always used effectively to determine the next steps of learning for the children. This prevents the learning moving forward well. Procedures are not consistent across the phase.

85. Whilst learning resources are satisfactory overall, they are better in the reception class than in the nursery, where some of the resources are shabby. There is also a marked contrast in the learning environments, the reception area being bright, spacious and well organised, while the nursery is dark, cluttered and in some areas disorganised. This is particularly true of one area of the nursery, out of action to children because the large space is cluttered with unused items including a piano. This restricts the indoor space available and does not foster a sense of pride or care for the environment. This aspect of the nursery provision is unsatisfactory. There is spacious and well-planned outdoors provision for the nursery. However, the use of the outdoor area is underdeveloped and at times is unsatisfactory. Older children in the Foundation Stage have limited opportunities for outdoor physical development.

Personal, social and emotional development

86. Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in the reception class. The children have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. However, skills in this area are very low when children first start school. In the nursery, the majority are still learning to share and take turns, for example, when using tools in the sand or playing in the café area. Much of the play is alongside other children rather than co-operative play. Some children tend to squeal or shout to gain resources or adult attention. Most children are friendly but a significant proportion of them have not learnt how to behave well. They are developing good relationships with the adults. Many children in the nursery and reception class are still learning to listen and carry out instructions obediently. A few children are eager to answer questions but a significant number lack the skills to engage in discussion and they remain silent at these times. They are well supported by the support staff in the nursery and reception class, who help to build children's confidence and self-esteem, and ensure that they all understand and participate in the activities. Concentration spans are very limited for the majority. Praise is used well, particularly in the reception class, to encourage and value children's contributions and raise their self-esteem. Children in the nursery and reception class have opportunities to select activities independently but many are still acquiring these skills, especially in the nursery where they are still learning to tidy away their equipment at the end of an activity and to treat resources with respect. Those children who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are given sound support, enabling them to make the same progress as others. The majority are unlikely to achieve the expected level by the time they leave the Foundation Stage.

Communication, language and literacy

87. Skills in this area of development are very low when children first start nursery. Children make steady progress in their acquisition of language skills in the nursery where teaching is satisfactory. In the reception class progress in lessons is often better because teaching is good, with effective teamwork focussing on language development. In a very good lesson the reception teacher gave good attention to teaching basic skills of letter recognition. Through effective use of praise she raised confidence and self esteem. Well-targeted support ensured full inclusion of all children. She promoted good book handling skills, checking one boy for misusing his book. The well focussed learning increased children's knowledge well and also very effectively promoted speaking and listening. In spite of this, no one could build past the initial sound of a word. Many demonstrated a limited vocabulary and

very limited recognition of sounds. Some lower attaining children had no letter recognition and had not yet established that writing goes from left to right. In spite of opportunities for children to speak to adults and other children in the class, a significant proportion, when they join the reception class, have skills that are very low in speaking and listening. They make steady progress overall, but listening skills remain a weakness for a significant number of children who do not listen carefully or follow instructions promptly.

88. Children enjoy listening to stories. The careful teaching of basic skills in the reception class results in most children handling books carefully. However, in the nursery many children have poor skills, holding books upside down, and turning pages incorrectly. These children demonstrate limited concentration when looking at books.

89. Writing skills are weak. In the nursery most children are unable to write their name. The higher attaining children write and sometimes give meaning to marks as in their writing of stories about *The Enormous Turnip* and *The Three Little Pigs*. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for children to write for different purposes. For example, in the nursery they make spell books, cards and send a letter to teddy inviting him for a picnic. In the reception class there is a good focus on making class storybooks. For example, *The Giant Dinosaur*, *Cinderella*, *Mr Wobble and the Whale* and *Dear Daddy* are the result of shared stories enjoyed by the children.

90. In the nursery and the reception class, opportunities to write are included in the role-play. In the café in the nursery the children 'write' menus and take orders for food but this requires constant intervention to ensure that the play does not deteriorate through a lack of ideas from the children. In the reception class, writing activities centre round the airport role-play area with various tasks, such as checking in, security checks and boarding passes and tickets. Skills in writing are at a very early stage and remain very low for the majority of children. A significant number of children have poor pencil control and many are still at the mark-making stage. Few are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception class.

Mathematical development

91. By the end of reception, attainment in this area of learning is low. It is better in number than in other aspects of mathematics. Most children count to 5. Higher attaining children count beyond this, counting reliably to 20 and beyond in the reception class. More able children show understanding of 'one more than/less than'. Numbers are not formed accurately by a significant proportion of children. Higher attainers match numbers to objects, know how to double numbers using dominoes and show understanding of some positional language but most are unsure of 'before' when counting a sequence of numbers. They match numbers to the word for 1 to 5. They understand terms such as biggest and smallest and mathematical vocabulary such as first, second and third. Children enjoy number rhymes and these are used well to reinforce numbers. Many in the nursery do not always join in because they do not have sufficient understanding of number. Higher attaining children recognise some common two-dimensional shapes such as circle and square but are not secure when drawing, about the properties of other shapes.

92. Problem solving skills are very limited for all but the most able. These children are beginning to total two numbers to 10 using tallying, for example, they make marks when the teacher says put 4 in the box and 6 outside. They then count to 10. Most children are not secure yet with number formation to 10. Activities exploring the sand and water help children to develop their understanding of mathematical language, such as 'full', 'empty', 'more', or 'less'. Sound teaching in the nursery and good teaching in the reception class results in

satisfactory gains in learning overall. Nevertheless, standards remain low in most aspects of mathematics and well below the expected level in number.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

93. When children start school their knowledge and understanding of the world is very weak. Sound teaching in the nursery and good teaching in the reception class help children to make steady gains in their learning. They explore bubbles and make fans, which they use to move around objects on the table. There are missed opportunities in nursery to extend the learning through questioning. Most children chase the bubbles and enjoy making them but the teaching is superficial. In the nursery most children have some awareness of floating and sinking. When naming parts of a flower, most know 'flowers' and 'leaves' but few know 'stem' and 'root'. They explore materials making texture collages and use nails and screws to make pictures. They make houses for the 'three pigs' using construction materials.

94. In the reception class children grow and measure beans. They plant seeds. They use construction and off-cuts of wood to build a house for 'little owl' and create a garden with soil, plants and a pond. They are helped to learn more about the world around them by role-playing a flight to Hong Kong from check-in, security checks, flight and arrival. They look at pictures and artefacts but although they show interest most responses are one-word answers such as 'towers' in response to being shown a post card of high-rise buildings. The children investigate materials making comments such as 'soft', 'fluffy'. All children in the Foundation Stage have access to computers. In the nursery all are at a very early stage of familiarisation with the mouse, many making random movements with little control. In the reception class, with support, they control the mouse, using directional moves, moving a boat to an island, for example. This shows steady progress in their skills from nursery. They learn about different fruits as they help to prepare this for snack-time. The supporting adults intervene well to extend language and increase knowledge and understanding. In spite of steady gains in their learning, for most children, attainment remains below the expected level at the end of the Foundation Stage.

Physical development

95. Whilst provision for this aspect of learning is good in the nursery with a large outdoors space with imaginatively designed grassed areas and hard surface, the use made of this valuable resource is often unsatisfactory. This is because there is a lack of structure to many of the activities. For example, during the inspection the children rode wheeled vehicles randomly and wildly over the raised grass areas where others were rolling or sitting. The lack of clearly established routines resulted in very superficial gains in learning. The use of the outdoor area for a bear hunt following the story was unsuccessful because it had not been carefully planned or resourced and the rules and routines had not been clearly established with the children. As a result, many lost interest and left the activity. There are missed opportunities to make greater use of the outdoor resource for developing knowledge and understanding of the world as well as for physical development. In spite of the lovely weather, many of the activities took place indoors, such as sand and water play, which could so easily have been used outdoors. The lack of regular access to the climbing frame, which only comes out on Mondays because the teacher says it is heavy to move, is unsatisfactory. The missed opportunities and lack of appropriate intervention in some activities restrict the progress being made. Opportunities for regular outdoor play in the reception class are limited but these children do have access to the hall space to develop their physical skills although this was not observed. They also benefit from 'Gymkins' – an after-school club for reception aged children.

96. A significant number of children lack good control and co-ordination and more opportunities for structured outdoor play would increase the opportunities for skill development, problem-solving and creative expression. Fine motor skills are not well developed for a significant number of children who have difficulty with pencil control and using scissors and paintbrushes, for example. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, resulting in satisfactory gains in learning, the teaching of physical skills in the nursery and the use of these resources is unsatisfactory. Attainment is well below the expected level at the end of the Foundation Stage.

Creative development

97. There are many opportunities for children to paint, print and use collage materials in the nursery and reception class. The youngest children mould dough, create collage pictures, paint daffodils from observation and help to paint friezes of familiar stories. The most able in the nursery paint Mog with reasonable shape, although brush control is limited. The majority of children lack control in fine motor skills such as cutting, sticking and drawing, resulting in work of a low standard. With support, children in the nursery and reception class weave with shades of coloured material. This shows increasing progression in skills and reinforces awareness of colour. In the reception class children rolled, squeezed and moulded clay, imprinting patterns using a variety of objects. This was in the context of a very well planned lesson where children handled artefacts made of clay, explored texture and pattern prior to creating their own patterns and textures. The teacher focused well on artistic vocabulary and questioned children to encourage them to use their senses carefully. Children use a variety of media to print, paint and create patterns using marbling techniques.

98. Children make observational drawings of plants using pencil. These skills are at an early stage of development. Evidence of children mixing colours independently and selecting brush size is limited in the Foundation Stage. Children enjoy singing and music making. In the nursery, they learn nursery rhymes and simple songs such as 'The Wheels on the Bus'. They join in the actions but a significant number do not join in the singing. Few children can clap a steady beat. They enjoy movement songs, such as, 'Row, Row, Row your Boat' but there is little opportunity to refine singing or actions. Singing in the nursery is pitched at a low level and some children have difficulty singing as a result. In the reception class the children are given a very good introduction to music appreciation, listening to excerpts from 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice', for example. They explore a wide range of musical instruments making loud and soft sounds. The support assistant focuses well on the names of instruments such as the 'gathering drum' and explains how they are used. Children know the difference between loud and quiet sounds and follow a sound pattern with reasonable accuracy. Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory. It is good in the reception class, helping children to make steady gains in their learning. In spite of this, few are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave the Foundation Stage, as attainment remains well below the expected level for most children.

ENGLISH

99. The standard attainment tests in 2001 found that the majority of pupils at eleven were well below national expectations and below that of schools in a similar context. In the same year by the age of seven pupils achieved well below national expectations in reading and writing. However, when reading standards are compared with schools in a similar context, standards were in-line with expectations, although standards in writing remained well below. The overall judgement on standards in the present inspection shows that by the age of seven they are well below national expectations and they are below national expectations by the age of eleven. However, when comparing the achievement of those pupils who are not on the special educational needs register, which is approximately half of all pupils, standards in

English are well above national expectations. Although pupils on the special educational needs register make good progress overall they do not achieve the higher standards. However, when these standards are compared with the very low attainment on entry the picture shows that pupils are making good progress overall. There is a very simple explanation why this is so and that is the quality of teaching that pupils' receive as they move through the school. There is very good teaching overall and sometime outstanding teaching and this, combined with the exceptional leadership in the subject and whole school commitment to ensuring all pupils receive their full entitlement to learning, is contributing to pupils' achievements. Furthermore, the standards observed during the inspection indicate that standards in English are rising, due largely to the teachers' increasingly skilled implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the focus on writing which is beginning to have an impact on standards overall.

100. In general, the quality of pupils' speaking and listening skills on entry is well below that expected nationally and the support of outside agencies, such as the speech therapist, is engaged. However, the importance of consistent attendance at therapy sessions has highlighted the need for the school to investigate the possibility of arranging after-school speech therapy sessions. Very few pupils on entry to the school have either had experience in a playgroup or nursery and they arrive lacking confidence in speaking and listening.

101. Early identification of special educational needs ensures that pupils are supported regularly on a day-to-day basis. For example, during the inspection a lesson was observed in the Learning Centre where nine pupils ranging from the reception class to Year 2 class were engaged in learning activities targeted at developing their speaking and listening skills, starting with reading and singing nursery rhymes. It was testament to the success of the school in building pupils' confidence and self-esteem that all pupils were able to engage in this activity and they were observed confidently singing a nursery rhyme on their own to the other pupils and adults. These pupils felt secure and safe with their teacher and teaching assistant and knew that their efforts were valued, especially from the verbal praise and applause given after their performance, and this knowledge showed in their faces.

102. As pupils move through the school, teachers make a deliberate effort to build on each incremental step, no matter how small and provide a wider range of learning opportunities to extend their skills in speaking and listening. Pupils' vocabulary also increases alongside their good progress in basic reading skills. By the age of eleven pupils' level of competence in speaking and listening is broadly in-line with that expected nationally. When comparing this with the limited range of vocabulary pupils have on entry to the school, it demonstrates the very good progress they make over time. Most are keen to answer questions and to add their comments in lessons. They have developed a broader vocabulary and this is being helped by their ongoing progress in reading and writing. They listen carefully to the teacher and to other pupils and are able to adapt their remarks to a widening range of contexts, including group and whole class situations. As well as engaging in discussions in circle time, in lessons and drama activities in school-time, pupils have the opportunity to join the drama club after school and also to take part in school assemblies and school productions, all of which enhance their developing speaking and listening skills. Some pupils are members of the school council and this gives them valuable skills in debating, discussing and reporting back to their peers, often in house assemblies.

103. Throughout the school pupils show a great enthusiasm for reading; they enjoy both being read to and reading books themselves. This is because teachers model the skills of reading aloud well and pupils are quick to pick up the importance of expression in their reading and this enhances their enjoyment of reading on their own or to other children. To further enhance opportunities for reading there is a reading club, which is well supported. Pupils' overall attainment in reading in Year 2 and Year 6, when considering those pupils not

on the special educational needs register, is high and this is largely due to the special emphasis the school places on the teaching of reading, rather than just listening to reading. This is a method of teaching that has incorporated a published scheme, workbooks and reading skill books and has been developing over a period of seven years. For example, in the observation of a Year 3 and 4 reading session the lesson objectives were for pupils 'to read with fluency and understanding' and 'to respond to reading.' Pupils were working in four groups, some groups reading with the teacher and other groups working independently on activities that develop reading skills, such as accessing information from texts, understanding the use of the contents page and reading the meaning of words listed in a glossary. When the National Literacy Strategy was introduced the school system of teaching reading was successfully incorporated within the strategy. Pupils who have lower levels of the achievement are well supported and make good gains in their learning through group lessons with the special educational needs co-ordinator and have early literacy support and additional literacy support, some of which takes place in lunchtimes.

104. Reading has a high profile in the school and there are displays of well-known children's authors and poets that are the focus of pupils' studies across the school. Pupils study a range of writing by children's authors, including the work of Rudyard Kipling, Roald Dahl, Dick King-Smith, Ann Fine, J.K. Rowling and Rose Impey. Not only has the work of these authors stimulated the pupils' appetite for reading, but also their enthusiasm for writing. However, although pupils are clear about skills in accessing information from books, they are less sure about library skills and how to find a reference book from the school library.

105. The school has focused particularly on writing and though variable, overall standards in writing are below national expectations for seven-year olds. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils make good gains in their writing and a significant number of pupils are achieving the national expectations. This is because their lessons are well planned to match their individual needs and are taught very well. For example, most pupils can write for a range of purposes such as giving instructions, for example 'How to make a ham and cheese sandwich' and the re-telling of traditional stories after experiencing the 'Just So Stories' of Rudyard Kipling. Pupils' story writing is enhanced by opportunities to analyse settings, events and characters in professionally written examples, such as the stories of Roald Dahl. Pupils had researched where he was born and other events in his life and had identified the illustrator of his books. From one of his books 'Fantastic Mr Fox' pupils were able to undertake a number of activities that included the use of speech marks and speech bubbles and also imagining being a reporter and writing a newspaper report. One pupil, writing for the Daily Echo wrote a report with the headline 'Troublesome Tractor.' Most examples of story writing are quite brief and at this stage, pupils' written work includes only the most basic punctuation though good progress is evident as they make more consistent and appropriate use of capital letters, full stops and question marks. The spelling also improves and follows from the increased emphasis on the identification of letter sounds within words when reading and on the systematic attention now given to spelling itself. There are examples of cross-curricular writing where, for example, pupils have completed a chart of the 'Life cycle of a flower' as a link to a scientific task. All pupils, including those with special educational needs show satisfactory progress in handwriting by the end of Year 2.

106. By the time pupils reach eleven they have had a breadth of experience in writing for a purpose. Pupils are set in ability groups for English and a significant number of the pupils in the top sets are achieving national expectations. Examples of writing include comparing books and looking at the setting, plot and character studies and from these experiences pupils start to plan their own stories. Displays in classroom celebrate and value the pupils' writing. For example, photographs of the pupils accompany their work and these 'budding authors' demonstrate their enjoyment, pride and enthusiasm in their work and how interested and stimulated they are from their studies of the work of famous authors. It is significant that

this focus has not only inspired and enthused pupils but has also identified pupils who are particularly gifted in writing. For example, one Year 4 girl, when writing about "The Birds" wrote: "One day I saw the birds. They flew around me, glittering in the sun" and continued, "They sang. They sang their sweet, soothing, yet loud song. I looked around me. I just wish I was a bird like them. Swishing around like I never had a care in the world!" She concluded with, "One of the birds came down, I knew she liked me! I called her, Sunnydown! She was my bird. No one else's! Mine!"

107. Pupils study a range of poetry, including poetry from around the world, and they also write their own. There are examples of pupils' poetry anthologies, one memorable example being where pupils had been writing poems on happiness. One boy had written, "Happiness is the tiniest creature in the palm of my hand." To make the poem more poignant the teacher had found a photograph of a tiny baby weighing just 1 kilogramme being held in a hand and this was displayed along with the poem. 'Supermarket poetry' was inspired by pupils visiting the local supermarket. Pupils write play scripts with scene plans and directions, combined with well-constructed dialogue written in script form. Writing also supports work on other subjects, such as science, history, design and technology and religious education. For example, some good examples of cross-curricular writing include, 'Making a Windmill,' 'The Tomb of Tutankamun' and 'Space – Venus". Pupils also undertake report writing, one example being a report following a visit to a theatre to see 'The Snow Queen.' On the week of the inspection pupils in Year 5 and 6 were heavily engaged in a simulation of an issue concerning a proposed bypass being built near a village. This enabled pupils to take positions for and against the bypass being built and to engage in writing formal letters to the council, learning about the features of persuasive writing and how some people might want to disguise opinion as fact. In the lesson observed pupils were introduced to the skills of journalistic writing and the teacher worked with a group who were looking at designing a layout for a newspaper. This session was well led by the teacher who enthused, stimulated and challenged the pupils' thinking and ideas through very effective focused questions. Pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation by the age of eleven are generally satisfactory and shows consistent progress over time. Handwriting is legible and generally well formed, but in some cases the presentation of pupils' work is untidy. By the end of Year 6, pupils with special educational needs have made good progress having been well supported by additional staff.

108. The use of ICT is underdeveloped in English. Although the computer suite is well used, pupils do not have regular access to computers to work independently on a range of literacy tasks, such as drafting their writing. There was however, one example of the effective use of the internet to access children's reviews of books. The school has identified this as an area for further development.

109. Throughout the school, pupils have good attitudes to learning English. They are invariably well behaved, work well together and are caring towards each other. The relationships that have been formed are very good. This is a consequence of the good role models presented by teachers, teaching assistants and all the staff that work in the school. A particular strength in the teaching of English is the teamwork that enhances pupils' learning. Teaching is very good because teachers have good subject expertise, plan for the individual needs of the pupils, have excellent behavioural management strategies, high expectations and importantly, know their pupils well.

110. The quality of documentation, including English policy, assessment and target setting and the regular review of the documentation are very high. The joint leadership and management of the subject ensures that in the infants and in the juniors the work is carefully monitored by each co-ordinator and is focused on a consistent approach as pupils move through the school. The school liaises regularly with the local education authority literacy

team who have been instrumental in assisting the school in the analysis of the standard attainment tests at the age of seven and eleven and subsequent target setting to raise standards. Standards in English are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

111. The last inspection judged that standards in mathematics were close to the national average and that attainment varied according to pupils' abilities. Inspection findings confirm these results and detailed examination of pupils' work demonstrates that most pupils make good progress from a very low starting point. Almost half of all pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and inspection evidence confirms this finding. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is very low for most pupils. Although teaching is very good and pupils achieve well in the infant classes by the age of 7 results overall are well below average. This is mainly because five times as many pupils, 46 per cent, as seen nationally achieved Level 1 or below in the 2001 national tests. At the higher levels of attainment three times more pupils nationally achieve Level 3 than do so at Lache Primary School. By the age of eleven, results have improved. In 2001 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 was much the same as seen nationally, but fewer pupils achieved Level 5. Careful comparison of results at age 7 and 11 indicates that while most pupils make the expected gains more could be done to ensure all pupils do as well as could be expected. Boys make more improvement in the junior classes than do the girls. This is because the dynamic teaching style and well-chosen examples ensure boys sustain an equal enthusiasm for mathematics in junior classes. Overall, the school's performance in mathematics is improving at a faster rate than the national improvement between the ages of 7 and 11.

112. The attainment of pupils in the current Year 6 is below that expected at the age of eleven. However the percentage of pupils likely to achieve Level 5 is higher than in previous years. One reason for this is that the school has identified a number of pupils with the potential to achieve Level 5 and has arranged additional classes at lunchtime for these pupils. Pupils are clearly benefiting from very good teaching and the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. However there are still some aspects of pupils' progress where further improvement is required. For example, the school has set personal targets for each pupil to achieve at the end of the school year and by the age of 7 or 11 but these are seldom referred to in lessons or in marking. Pupils' work is regularly marked and skills are tested frequently but currently there is no mechanism in place to identify pupils who are falling short of or exceeding the identified target. This means a whole year may go by before better or worse than expected performance is identified and acted upon. Similarly, because there is no profiling system in place for mathematics, comparable to the one in English, pupils have less information about how well they are achieving and what they need to do next.

113. The published targets set for attainment in mathematics in 2002 are challenging since they require a 14 per cent rise from the results in 2001. This reflects the value the school wants to add to attainment in mathematics in the future. However in order to achieve this level of improvement the school needs to improve the monitoring of the progress made by individual pupils so that it can take more effective action to improve standards. There is a good sense of determination to do things well and the potential to improve standards looks good.

114. Overall, teaching is very good and learning is good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers in this school have to work extra hard to help pupils achieve well. This is because standards on entry are very low, pupils' ability to solve problems is hampered by their poor ability to read and identify key words, memorise their tables and decide which strategies to employ. Improving these skills remains an area for improvement throughout the school. In lessons teachers consistently provide good

opportunities for pupils to solve problems as a group or whole class, identify key words and know what strategies they need to employ, while multiplication tables are practised in class and as homework. In a very good lesson in Years 5/6 the teacher ensured the lesson proceeded at a brisk pace and much was achieved in the time available. She made constant reference to pupils' homework task and made sure pupils identified the vital steps in solving multi-faceted problems. In Year 2 the teacher taught a very effective demonstration lesson which was part of the school's very effective programme of staff development. Regular demonstration lessons and a rigorous programme of classroom monitoring are the main reasons why teaching has improved.

115. The numeracy strategy has been introduced with considerable success and the sharper focus on knowledge, skills and understanding that this has brought is benefiting progress and standards. Younger pupils have regular practice to improve their ability to add and subtract quickly and accurately and explain how they found the correct answer. There is constant reinforcement of sums as in a Year 3/4 lesson when pupils quickly found the answer to sums such as $\frac{1}{2}$ of 50; 14 divide by 2; 2×7 ; and $3 + 4 + 7$. Pupils swiftly identified how these last three sums were linked and then went on to explore fractions. They achieved high standards but many lower attaining Year 3/4 pupils could not identify $\frac{1}{4}$ of 4; some were uncertain which sign was required to complete a sum such as $5 ? 6 = 11$; and a few were not confident in adding two numbers to 20. The highest attaining group of pupils in Year 5/6 used all 4 operations to solve a range of problems and also demonstrated their confidence in working with equivalent fractions and decimals. Some pupils initially found this difficult but because the teacher built their knowledge and understanding step by step all were much more confident by the end of the lesson.

116. The teaching of mathematics has many strengths including the management of pupils, the teaching of basic skills and the very good contribution made by teaching assistants. This last strength is a central reason why pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make good progress in mathematics. However there are not enough teaching assistants and the pupils in lower groups and sets would benefit from more support if it were available.

117. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and they make very good use of question and answer sessions in lessons to check knowledge and understanding. However, feedback to pupils needs to be much more specific so that they know precisely what they need to do in order to improve the level of their work. In the very best lessons learning is reviewed very well and reinforced at the end of the lesson but this is an aspect of teaching and learning which could be improved in otherwise satisfactory lessons. Learning for all pupils is an interesting and enjoyable experience. Many are well challenged in lessons because teachers know how to build learning incrementally so that lessons which begin at a safe and familiar level soon become demanding. This was seen to good effect in the special needs unit and in most lessons in the junior classes. Pupils work hard in lessons and produce good amounts of work. They make good progress in lessons and show increasing maturity and responsibility in their learning.

118. The subject is well led and managed by two able enthusiastic co-ordinators who provide a very good model as effective practitioners. Mathematics is a continuing priority for the school but school managers know well what needs to be done and have the energy and commitment to succeed.

SCIENCE

119. Inspection evidence identifies that standards in the infants are well below the national average and those in the juniors are below the national average. There is a significant

difference between the attainment of approximately half of all the pupils who have special educational needs when compared with the half that do not. The latter pupils achieve significantly above expectation. This is due in great part to the high proportion of good and very good teaching.

120. The progress that all pupils make, including those with special educational and behavioural needs, is good. In the previous inspection, standards were judged to be satisfactory. Since that inspection in 1998, standards rose significantly until year 2000. The 2001 cohort was particularly weak and results dipped as a consequence.

121. The science curriculum is well planned on a two-year cycle. It is appropriately broad and balanced and satisfies national curriculum requirements. Topics are visited twice during the pupils' primary school careers. Content is developed to a much higher level on the second occasion but gives lower attaining pupils good opportunity to consolidate their earlier learning.

122. Pupils have a developing knowledge and understanding across the science curriculum. In Year 1, pupils begin to develop their skills of enquiry by investigating the weight of water that different materials, used to make bridges, can support. The concept of fair testing begins to be developed by using the same foundations for the bridges and the consistency of spacing of the supports. When they visited Conway, their understanding of materials was reinforced, when they learned about the change of castle construction from wood to stone. Year 2 pupils develop their investigational skills by making a 'planning tree' for future experiments. They then follow those planning procedures to test water and light requirements of plants. Fair testing principles are identified when pupils are encouraged to use the same type of seed and compost. They later extend testing to include the principle of osmosis. When red food colouring is added to the plant's base water supply, they correctly predict that the flower will change colour. The development of skills and knowledge is good. Many pupils' poor speaking and writing abilities do not sufficiently support discussion and recording skills.

123. In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils investigate to find the most appropriate material for making dishcloths. They also develop their knowledge and understanding when they investigate differential growth rates in relation to the growing environment. Planning the experiment, making predictions, establishing 'fair test' conditions and drawing conclusions are now a normal approach to their work in science. Under-developed literacy skills detract greatly from the ability of large numbers of pupils, when they come to record their findings.

124. The oldest pupils conduct experiments to develop their understanding of materials and how some are better thermal insulators than others. Seven similar bottles are wrapped in different materials and filled with the same temperature of water. At ten-minute intervals, the temperature of the water is taken. They discover that cotton wool is best and that cling film is the worst insulator. Mathematics is well supported when pupils display their results as graphs. They also draw Venn Diagrams to represent the different foods eaten by herbivores, omnivores and carnivores. This is very good practice.

125. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. In a practical, investigative lesson with all Year 5/6 pupils, teachers' planning, very good subject knowledge and excellent class management skills resulted in all pupils making good progress in their understanding of up-thrust related to the force of water. All three Year 5/6 teachers took responsibility for delivering different aspects of the lesson, based upon measurement of up-thrust related to objects of different mass. Teamwork was excellent, and teachers were very well supported by the teaching assistant from the special needs unit, whose pupils played a full part in all aspects of the lesson. During a good lesson involving Year 3/4 pupils, they experimented with

their teacher to establish the lifting power of different magnets. In a very good Year 2 lesson, pupils experimented with a wide range of wheeled toys when they investigated push and pull operations. Their prediction, communication of ideas and recording was limited greatly by their under-developed literacy skills, but they made good progress in knowledge and understanding. In a satisfactory Year 1 lesson, teacher expectations were not sufficiently demanding to stretch more able pupils. The assertive discipline techniques employed were too harsh for the age and ability of the pupils and did not support pupils' development of self-discipline.

126. Leadership and management of science are very good. Only one of the two co-ordinators could be interviewed during the inspection, but it is clear that co-ordinators work closely with colleagues to improve all aspects of science, particularly to improve the teaching of investigative skills. Planning is very good, understood by all members of staff, consistent in approach and carefully monitored by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinators are keen to develop non-compulsory, assessment procedures for all year groups, in order to identify weaknesses in pupils' learning and to inform teachers' future planning. The process of targeting skills against attainment targets has already started. The co-ordinators work hard and effectively to raise standards in science. Opportunities for them to monitor teaching and learning and to give demonstration lessons are under-developed. However, monitoring of lessons is included in the current school development plan. ICT is insufficiently used to support learning. Good quality resources are stored in labelled topic boxes. Storage enables easy access. Accommodation for the teaching of science is very good.

ART AND DESIGN

127. The high standards identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Standards are above national expectations throughout the school. Junior pupils build upon skills and understanding learned in the infants and by the age of eleven standards are well above expectation. A wide range of media is offered and many techniques are taught. Pupils have very good opportunities to consider different kinds of art and design, craft and design and all pupils make good progress.

128. Very good use is made of visits and visitors. Pupils are taken to the Tate and Walker Art Galleries in Liverpool. Examples of their own quality work are displayed alongside the exhibits of other schools, at the nearby local authority teacher centre. In the period after national tests, visiting artists discuss and demonstrate their skills. This is very good overall provision. It gives all pupils opportunities to observe the skills and methods of well-known artists and sculptors. They are encouraged to copy the two and three-dimensional work and to compare their own work with that of others.

129. Pupils are provided with good quality sketchbooks that are used extensively throughout the year. This allows the pupils to develop pride in their work and to assess how their skills are developing over time. They are used to great effect and they reflect the quality and range of work being undertaken throughout the school. For example, willow branches and twigs are used to create imaginative designs for real life structures, such as skeletons.

130. The very good art and design curriculum is developed from the local authority's scheme of work. The use of art and design in cross-curricular work is a particular strength of the subject. Many interesting and stimulating tasks are provided. They are planned to make very good use of the excellent, wide range of resources. All teachers display pupils' work in a most attractive manner, very well supported by brightly covered drapes and natural objects. Copies of the work of well-known artists such as Matisse, Dufy, Van Gogh, Porche, Mondrian, Van Eyck and Berg promote pupils' awareness and appreciation of still life, observational drawings from nature, painting on clay and landscape painting. They learn to

appreciate the importance of line, shape, texture and form. Artwork adds significantly to the overall attractiveness of the school environment.

131. Although only one lesson was seen, the number of pupils present represented almost one third of the school. The work being undertaken in the lesson, the extensive range of evidence around the school and the quality of work in sketchbooks, suggests strongly that the teaching of art and design is very good. Talking to pupils and observing them at work identifies their developing enjoyment of art and design lessons.

132. In the lesson seen, eighty Year 3 and Year 4 pupils took part alongside four teachers and a support teacher. A previous lesson, related to the style of work of Leonardo Da Vinci, was reconsidered before moving to the contrasting style of L.S.Lowry. A very good, skilful demonstration of how the artist operated, using close attention to detail and speed of sketching to catch the moment, was presented using another teacher and a group of pupils as models. The pupils worked in their sketchbooks and on card, in four groups, well supported by their teachers. Pupils from the lower junior unit who were spread between the four groups were included in all aspects of the lesson. The work of each group was very well supported by framed copies of Lowry's paintings and by pupils who dressed in clothing representative of the time of the industrial north of England. Pupils sketched quickly and effectively before developing the work, using pastels, pencil and ink. Groups moved from one resource base to another within the assembly hall, to enable the use of the different media and also to identify similarities in the four different paintings provided. The lesson demonstrated very good planning and team teaching, with very effective use of time and resources, very good large group management skills and excellent inclusion and involvement of all pupils and teachers.

133. The co-ordination of art and design is satisfactory. The subject is in the care of three curriculum leaders. They are responsible for art and design in the three different age groups. All three are strongly committed to the promotion of their subject responsibility. There is no overall leader of the subject responsible for the monitoring of teaching and learning within the subject or to give direction for development. This is an area for consideration alongside additional study of art and design from non-Western cultures.

134. An art club for pupils and parents is held after school, and is well attended. The work of twelve family groups is currently very professionally displayed for exhibition purposes in the designated art and design room. The quality of the work is very high.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. The standards of attainment in design and technology for seven-year olds are below that expected of pupils of a similar age because the curriculum is not yet in place and the skills of designing and making are underdeveloped. However, the standard of attainment of eleven-year olds is in line with expectations, because the scheme of work is based on national guidance for the teaching and learning of design and technology. The school is aware of the need to develop the scheme of work for pupils in the infants, and this is under way. This will ensure consistency of practice and progression in design and technology as pupils move through the school. Only one lesson was seen and judgements on standards have been made from teachers' planning, displays in classrooms and around the school and discussions with pupils and the subject co-ordinators.

136. It is clear from the displays around the school that design and make activities have been undertaken in line with the scheme of work. For example, a display of the designing and making of packaging was seen in Years 3 and 4 that was made as part of a two-day residential visit to Tattenhall Residential Centre. After the making of the packaging, pupils filled them with truffles and learnt to perform a dance during which they were to present their gifts in the church as part of the Christmas celebrations. In Years 5 and 6 pupils had looked at pop-up books as a stimulus for ideas towards making their own pop-up cards. In the lesson observe in Year 5 and 6 two teachers worked as a team where one group was investigating their prototypes for cam mechanisms and the other group was making a frame using 'Jinks' corners to make the shape stronger. The aim of the lesson was for the pupils to learn to measure and cut accurately and to use saws to cut wood and join to make a frame. The teacher was very supportive and gave good tips on how to draw and cut accurately. Pupils responded well, and the quality of the finished products was good. It was, however, clear that the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the design and make process and skill development in cutting and joining a range of materials was underdeveloped. The planned adoption of a scheme of work that develops, refines and builds on skills as pupils move through the school is a pre-requisite to supporting their ongoing development in a consistent and progressive way and to raising standards.

137. At the present time the infant stage is working on topics linked to the art and design curriculum and elements of the design and technology process have been undertaken, although mainly the work has been craft based. For example, as part of a Victorian study, pupils dressed up in role and cooked a Victorian recipe and also made a Victorian 'Whizzer.' Other photographic evidence shows Year 2 pupils making a sandwich. However, once the scheme of work based on national guidance is introduced the consistency of practice and skills development will secure a more systematic and progressive curriculum for design and technology and thus enable standards to rise.

138. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and they are proud of what they achieve. In the lesson seen pupils were enthusiastic, stimulated and keen to talk about their work. Since only one lesson was seen during the course of the inspection it has not been possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching. However, it was clear in discussions that teachers know pupils' specific needs well and that the reason much of the work is teacher directed is to avoid any feeling of failure by the pupils. This, for some pupils, would damage their confidence and self-esteem.

139. There is a range of good quality resources, including tools and equipment, sufficient to teach the subject. Good links are maintained with the high school where Year 6 pupils are invited to spend a design and technology day.

GEOGRAPHY

140. Although pupils achieve well and make good progress, average standards in geography by the age of seven and eleven are below expectations, because pupils enter school with very low levels of attainment and their language skills are insufficient to enable the fifty per cent of pupils with special educational needs to reach expected standards. All pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and the small minority for whom English is an additional language. Their progress is a consequence of being presented with interesting tasks, which are carefully matched to their needs, and their receiving well targeted support to ensure that they are fully included in, and understand all activities.

141. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 are able to explore the immediate locality acquiring early mapping skills as they place buildings and amenities on a road map, and recognising human and physical features around school. Year 2 pupils can identify features which they consider beautiful and those which are ugly. They make positive comments about how they would change the school. For example, one said 'I would put a stained-glass dome around the playground' while another would 'make the classrooms brighter and make the field into a park'. They consider dangers on their route to school and the safety rules to be followed. Pupils identify home and school on a map and plot their route to school. Year 2 pupils have some awareness of the world map, locating the United Kingdom and Australia, and acquire basic factual information about Australia such as its capital and main cities. They know that the climate is different, learn about aborigines and are familiar with some famous landmarks such as the Sydney Opera House. Good links are made to other subjects such as literacy and music, through their writing and the songs learnt. Pupils explore geographical aspects of their topic on castles examining the differences in travel and transport in medieval times and using colour keys on drawings and maps.

142. By the age of eleven, pupils have extended their mapping skills by using more detailed plans and maps, such as street plans of Chester and aerial maps of Lache. Years 3 and 4 use literacy skills to design information for 'a guide to Cheshire' brochure for visitors showing awareness of the main features and attractions in the local area. They make a plan of Lache School with appropriate use of a key. Their knowledge of the local environment is increased through interviews with local residents. Through questioning they explore changes over time such as transport, supermarkets and other developments. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 locate major countries on a world map. They show some awareness of how summer and winter occurs and of different weather conditions around the world contrasting deserts, rainforests and polar regions. Through their study of a river system pupils have developed some understanding of the effect of rivers and landscapes and their physical features. They are familiar with river terms such as 'source', 'mouth' and 'tributary', for example, and know that the local River Dee flows into the Irish Sea.

143. Map work is not studied to a great depth in Years 3 to 6. The quality of pupils' written work is limited by the poor literacy skills of a large proportion of children. There is evidence of the use of ICT supporting geography well within the computer suite. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson pupils used a digital camera to photograph features and amenities in the local community. A well-chosen computer programme helped pupils to see how a map of the area is built up, producing a graphic design. The purposeful task was linked closely to the work of town planners. There were good cross-curricular links made to the history of the area when the barge people settled in Lache and consideration of what they might have needed in their community. However, the use of the computer to support learning in classrooms is an area for further development.

144. Few lessons were observed during the inspection due to the timetabling of geography on a half termly basis in Years 3 to 6 and alternate weeks in Years 1 and 2. In the lessons seen, planning was good with clear learning objectives shared with pupils so that they were clear about the task. Resources were used effectively, enhancing pupils' learning. There was good emphasis on practical work, which is one of the reasons why pupils enjoy the subject and make good progress. Teachers also make very good use of day and residential visits to improve geographical knowledge and understanding. Examples of these include local studies of Chester as well as residential visits to Delamere and Menai in Years 5 and 6. Teachers and support staff work closely together ensuring that pupils with special educational needs achieve a similar rate of progress to other pupils. Although work is marked positively, it does not often identify how pupils can make improvements. This is a missed opportunity to improve standards, as is the absence of any formal assessment to check pupils' progress in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding.

145. The subject management team provides good leadership and ensures that a rich and exciting curriculum is presented to pupils. The work in geography makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to their overall personal development. Learning is further enriched by the high quality of displays.

HISTORY

146. Standards in history by the age of seven and eleven are below average for most pupils because they are starting from a low base when they enter school and their language skills are insufficient to enable the fifty per cent of pupils with special educational needs to reach expected standards. Higher attaining pupils achieve standards, which are as expected nationally. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and small minority of pupils with English as an additional language make the same good progress as others in the class because the work is carefully matched to their needs. Support is well targeted and the exciting curriculum is rich in first hand experiences bringing history alive for all pupils and motivating them to learn.

147. Pupils in Year 2 have a sound knowledge of life in Victorian times. This is because teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to understand what it felt like to live at that time. Pupils visit Erddig, a Victorian mansion, learning about Victorian costumes worn by servants such as the stable boy. They are able to identify some changes over time through looking at artefacts and photographs of, for example, changes in the house, the kitchen and school days. Real experiences, such as a Victorian picnic with food made following Victorian recipes, strengthens their understanding. Good links are made to literacy and numeracy as they write in the first person about Victorian school life and are introduced to time lines and family trees. However, limited literacy skills for the majority of pupils hamper their ability to record their ideas at length. Links to other subjects such as art and design are made as pupils explore the life and work of William Morris. They develop a sound sense of chronology as they compare events and people in the 1960s such as The Beatles, the Space Race and England in the World Cup; and in the 1970s with events such as decimalisation, the Space Rescue, Star Wars and Abba. They have sound knowledge of castles from the motte and bailey castle made of wood to those made of stone. They know why castles were built on hills and how battles were fought. Good links are made with geography as pupils use a key to explore the parts of a castle and learn about contours on a map to show a hill. This learning is enriched through a visit to Conwy Castle for Years 1 and 2 where they learn about the different parts of a castle and the people who lived and worked there. They show awareness of the contrast between rich and poor. Very good use is made of role-play to recreate a battle scene. Year 1 pupils make models of castles in papier-mâché and paint pictures, while Year 2 make a three dimensional card model and use observational drawing skills to make good sketches of aspects of Conwy Castle. Pupils make a local visit to Chester cathedral to learn about the life of St. Werburgh. Pupils write accounts of their visits showing steady progression in these skills from Year 1 to 2 and making use of computers, on occasion, for word processing purposes.

148. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 build well on these earlier skills developing their sense of chronology through the use of time lines when studying the Romans. They know about Chester in Roman times, reinforced through a visit to Chester and the Grosvenor Museum. They have some knowledge of invaders and settlers such as Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, and this is often brought alive through role-play. For example, in one lesson the whole class were involved in rowing a Viking longship to the beat of a drum, having considered what important items they should take with them on their journey from Sweden to Britain. In Years 5 and 6 pupils study Victorian life in depth, using research skills and identifying fact and opinion, for example, when learning about Victorian religion. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of aspects of Victorian school life, rich and poor Victorians and children

working in the coalmines or the mill. They know about important figures of the time, such as Dr. Barnardo and literary figures such as Charles Dickens and his work, for example, *Oliver Twist*. When exploring the employment of children, they write about them being 'cheap to employ' and one writes 'working conditions were dreadful'. Role-play in lessons and through drama club makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. There is good evidence of pupils' self-assessment. One boy wrote 'I think I did well on 'the work house' but I didn't put as much effort into 'time off work'. Pupils are able to identify some important changes over time and create time lines showing events in the reign of Albert and Victoria it was only Victoria who reigned.

149. Consistently good teaching results in enthusiastic learners, who are motivated by interesting and well-matched tasks. Lessons are well planned. Teachers make very good use of the excellent opportunities for visits and visitors as well as using photographs, artefacts and videos to develop pupils' interest. Good links are made to literacy, although weaknesses in literacy skills adversely affect many pupils' ability to record at length. Because of this, there is considerable use of work sheets, writing frames and writing copied from the board. Lessons proceed at a good pace. Pupils behave well because they are interested and keen to learn.

150. Other than through whole class question and answer sessions, there are no formal assessment procedures for checking standards and progress made, which means that opportunities are missed to raise standards further. Teachers' marking does not identify how pupils can improve their work. The history team who manage the subject have good expertise, and ensure a rich curriculum delivered over a two-year cycle. They manage the subject well. There is some evidence of the use of computers for research and word processing skills but this could be extended further within the classroom. The work in history makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their overall personal development. The high standard of displays enhances pupils' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

151. Standards in ICT by the end of Years 2 and 6 are below the level expected. Given their low starting point on entry to school, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs are well motivated by the practical activities and well supported in lessons. This helps them to make the same progress as others in the class. There is good attention to the inclusion of all pupils. The small minority of pupils with English as an additional language also make the same progress as others, with one of these pupils being among the most able in the school.

152. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in the subject. A very well equipped computer suite has been created, staffed by a very able technician who supports pupils' learning well and has developed teachers' subject knowledge and expertise successfully.

153. Pupils in the infant classes learn how to open software packages, load files, and enter, save, and print the data. They begin to use appropriate technical terms and show increasing skill when controlling the mouse, although manipulation of the mouse is not always as steady as expected for this age. They use the keyboard with increasing awareness, although only one boy is able to use two hands. Through assembling and organising text and following instructions pupils are learning to develop and refine their ideas. The highest attaining pupils use 'drag and drop' skills and, with help, save their work. They know how to change the font and print their work.

154. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed soundly in junior classes. In Years 3 and 4 pupils use the computer to answer simple questions. They become familiar with technical terms such as 'search' and 'field' and are introduced to simple databases using record cards to organise information and answer questions. They know that information can be gained from this source. Pupils are introduced to sending emails with messages to and from the teacher. When using word processing skills pupils know how to change the font size and use colour to highlight important words or headings. They learn to 'cut and paste' for example, when sequencing instructions to make a sandwich. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are introduced to spreadsheets but skills in sorting and classifying data and presenting findings in a range of graphical representations are at an early stage. Pupils have awareness of how to use the Internet and higher attaining pupils use the search facility to access information, sometimes to help their work in other subjects, for example, seeking information about India.

155. Within the computer suite good use is made of ICT to support learning in other areas of the curriculum such as literacy and numeracy. In a Year 5/6 geography lesson, for example, pupils made good use of a graphics program to produce a graphical model identifying features and amenities of the environment. However, the use of computers to support other subjects in the classroom is not well developed.

156. During the inspection, infant pupils programmed a robotic toy to follow a simple task. While a few pupils were able to give a series of instructions, most needed assistance in order to complete their sequence. Older pupils have experience of giving commands to the screen turtle. They predict what the instructions will make the screen turtle do and test their hypothesis. The modelling and control aspects of the subject are at an early stage of development.

157. The quality of teaching by the technician, who is also the co-ordinator, is good, particularly for pupils in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 teaching is good but the technician is still developing her skills in aspects of the curriculum for the older pupils. As a result of the good teaching, pupils make good gains in their learning as they move through the school, particularly in acquiring the early basic skills. Few pupils have access to a computer out of school to practise skills, but all are highly motivated and interested in lessons, working with enthusiasm and behaving well. The thorough planning and careful organisation ensures that basic skills are well taught in small steps. The quality and quantity of resources enhances learning. The emphasis upon direct teaching of skills and the ability to allow immediate 'hands-on' experience contribute significantly to pupils' learning and to their positive attitudes to the subject. The technician works very closely with teachers. The good working relationship is also a positive feature in lessons.

158. Pupils acquire technical vocabulary appropriately and with good understanding. The very good use of the electronic whiteboard by the technician supports pupils' learning very well, particularly in reminding pupils of the lesson objective, which is shared with pupils at the start of each lesson. Class management is very good. Within some activities opportunities are built in to enable pupils to evaluate their own learning and whole class sessions at the end are also used effectively to check pupils' understanding in lessons. Pupils' enjoyment in these lessons is very evident.

159. The co-ordinator has worked hard and successfully to develop the subject. The computer suite provides an excellent resource for learning. A well-structured programme is in place outlining what should be taught and when. The support provided by the technician/ co-ordinator is having a major influence on pupils' progress as well as improving teachers' skills and providing clear direction for the subject. However, although teaching staff have improved their confidence in basic ICT skills, many still lack confidence in using it as a valuable tool in

other subjects. The planned training will help to improve this for all teachers. The co-ordinator is aware that her own skills require further development to increase the learning for older pupils in particular and this is being addressed. The development of a consistent system of skills assessment and the setting and sharing of targets for learning for different groups of pupils is also planned as an important step in raising pupils' attainment.

160. The co-ordinator provides an after school club which gives useful opportunities for those who choose to practise their skills. From time to time, the facilities have a wider community use, for example, Year 7 pupils return to use the resources. This is good practice.

MUSIC

161. Provision for music is good and standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 6. Pupils have good opportunities to improve their work in music because the subject is well taught and 'taking part' is a central part of the school's philosophy. The subject is led by two highly committed and enthusiastic leaders who have made sure that the teaching and learning programme covers all aspects of music. Provision is further improved through the addition of recorder clubs, choir, steel band and performance in assembly and at special events.

162. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons and extra-curricular activities seen is good overall. Singing throughout the school is good because it is well taught. Pupils learn the words and this means they can concentrate on improving performance rather than struggling to take part. When new songs are being learned teachers introduce pupils to the idea of selecting appropriate instruments to accompany the singing, very early on. By the end of the infant stage pupils make a confident selection of instruments and know what effect they want to create or change. They know the names of many instruments and how they produce their sound.

163. Infant pupils enjoy their music making activities, especially singing well-loved hymns and songs. In assemblies, they sing enthusiastically such hymns as 'God is so good, so great and so mighty', with good diction and control of the volume and tempo. Pupils playing musical instruments regularly accompany singing in assembly. Pupils learn new skills quickly. For example, pupils in the infant classes learned 'When it's a sunny day'. They recognised that the tune for the verse was different from that for the chorus and began to think about instruments to accompany their singing. Older pupils in the junior choir learned a new song and performed it during the inspection and pupils from Years 5/6 became skilful in producing a samba rhythm after tuition for just one afternoon. Pupils have very good opportunities to listen to music and pupils in Years 3/4 have devised their own notation having listened to 'From Here' by Christopher Benstead.

164. Most pupils develop very good awareness of rhythm and timing. Teachers and pupils consistently improve musical vocabulary by the correct use of terms such as tempo, harmonics, dynamics, and notation. Music plays an important part in the wider life of the school. Pupils sing and perform to local community groups, take part in the Chester festival and are currently preparing to record a CD. Music is often linked to dance and art and design and this resulted in high levels of achievement when Year 5/6 pupils performed a new piece "Inside the Mandala" with the BBC Chamber orchestra.

165. Music is effectively led and all teachers are confident to teach the subject. The curriculum is well planned and a detailed scheme of work is in place that supports teaching effectively. Support and guidance for staff is effective and beneficial to pupils' learning. Currently, little formal assessment is undertaken but pupils are encouraged to evaluate each

other's work. Teachers' lesson planning is monitored. Learning resources are good. Pupils enjoy their work in music and respond well in lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to work with others, which improves their social development. Assemblies enhance pupils' spirituality by giving good opportunities to reflect on the power of musicians and the beauty of music. The self-discipline necessary to work with others in a band or a choir has a very beneficial effect on pupils' personal development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

166. During the inspection games and athletics lessons were observed, swimming records and planning examined. No dance or gymnastics were seen. Therefore it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the attainment and progress of pupils. However in the lessons seen pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve below average standards by the age of 7 years, from a very low base. Overall, teaching is good and pupils are enthusiastic and keen to do well. As a consequence pupils' achievement in improving their games skills between the ages of five and eleven is good. By the age of 11 years standards in games are in line with expectations.

167. Overall teaching and learning seen in games and athletics lessons were good and pupils made good progress. Lessons were well planned to allow pupils to improve in their acquisition of physical education skills. Skills and techniques were taught well. For example, pupils refine and practise basic ball control when playing attack and defender games in Year 2 and by the end of lesson are able to control the puck more effectively. In Years 5/6 athletics pupils improved their ability to throw accurately and increased the distance achieved because of guidance as to how to improve their technique. Running skills were systematically improved as a result of good teaching of correct stance, breath control and the reinforcement of positive attitudes towards winning. Teachers made effective use of good competitive spirit in promoting increased effort. Pupils were given good opportunities to improve their practice as lessons progressed and did so in response to constructive feedback from the teacher. Teachers dressed appropriately to allow for demonstration and to motivate pupils to dress correctly themselves. All pupils responded positively to this lead. Pupils' attention was drawn to the issues of health and safety such as safe use of space for example, during a Year 3/4 games lesson in the school playground. The importance of warming up and cooling down before and after rigorous exercise was well stressed in all lessons. All pupils were included in the activities and boys and girls contributed enthusiastically and performed equally well. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language were included well in the lessons and made the same good progress as the rest of the class. Pupils enjoy the lessons, usually respond quickly to the teachers' suggestions and work well together. On the rare occasion when there was some minor inappropriate behaviour this was dealt with firmly and fairly and did not interfere with the pace of teaching and learning.

168. Older pupils in particular have good opportunities outside class lessons to practise skills in football, basketball and athletics. Boys and girls enjoy the opportunities to play games such as netball, hockey and football and Year 5/6 pupils appreciate their participation in football and netball clubs during the appropriate time of the year. Pupils enjoy all aspects of physical development. Dance skills are often complemented by work in music and feature strongly when pupils perform for each other and in the community. Provision is enriched by support from the local community and pupils worked hard and energetically with a member of the local basketball team. In swimming all the pupils who left Year 6 last year were able to swim the basic standard of 25 metres and many pupils achieved above this target.

169. Subject co-ordination is good. The long term planning gives teachers good support and guidance and ensures that pupils cover the requirements of the National Curriculum games, gymnastics and athletics and develop skills in a logical progression. Dance is covered by a series of creative dance modules and taped programmes. Training to support teachers has been effective in ensuring all are confident to teach the subject well and a useful system for assessment is in place. Resources to deliver the curriculum are satisfactory overall but the junior hall is too small for the oldest pupils to develop their skills appropriately. Pupils across the school have very good opportunities for residential experiences that develop both their social and physical skills in a systematic way.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

170. By the ages of seven and eleven pupils achieve standards which match pupils of a similar age. The policy for religious education was drawn up in line with requirements of curriculum 2000 and the scheme of work is taken from the local education authority agreed syllabus and supported by national guidance for religious education. Religious education is taught as a two-year cycle and two assemblies a week are linked into the religious education plans. The local education authority worship document is used to support the planning for worship within the school. During each year pupils learn about stories from the Old Testament and the life of Jesus in the New Testament. One term each cycle is linked to learning about other faiths that include, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism. In addition, the school celebrates the festivals of Hanukkah, Eid, Diwali, Harvest and also celebrates birthdays.

171. At the time of inspection Year 5 and 6 were studying Hinduism and the specific objective was to 'develop an understanding of puja as worship and of the symbolic use of the articles on the puja tray.' The teacher started by focusing on pupils' own experiences of special occasions and how they prepared for them. Pupils then recapped on their previous learning of Hinduism and compared their own home and church as a place for celebration. To reinforce the learning about the shrine in a Hindu home the teacher had set up a shrine in the classroom and explained its purpose. The teacher explained the symbolism of each item on the puja tray and encouraged pupils to identify the senses they were using with regard to the items. Pupils then were able to simulate and perform an act of worship, Saraswati, that is performed when people are studying for examinations and referred to the forthcoming tests the Year 6 were to undertake. The simulation and role-play was successful and pupils learned well. However, the follow-up recording on what they had learned about the home shrine was a worksheet and consisted of a low level activity of just matching letters/descriptions to objects on a puja tray. The scrutiny of work identified this as an area of weakness in learning because a majority of the work seen was the completion of worksheets. This gives pupils little opportunity to undertake their own independent work that would enhance their learning in religious education and further refine their skills in literacy and art and design.

172. In Year 2 pupils were investigating the role of people who work in a church and a cathedral. This followed on from their visit to a cathedral where pupils and the teacher had used photographs of the visit to remind pupils what they had seen. Very good cross-curricular links were made in this lesson with discussion about the disagreement between the Pope and Henry VIII. Another history lesson observed during the inspection had links with religious education concerning the lives of significant people drawn from the history of Britain, in this case, St Werburgh.

173. An outstanding lesson was observed where Year 4 pupils were exploring the Islamic faith and the belief that people are trustees of the earth and all that Allah created. The teacher made good links with the Christian faith by comparing the words God and Allah. Pupils

explored their understanding of what it means to be a trustee and came up with two ways in which they could care for the earth. They then moved on to the idea of caring in their immediate community and at the end of the lesson they wrote their individual ideas onto leaves to stick onto a tree of care in the classroom. The story of the lost sheep and the caring shepherd linked very nicely into circle time when each pupil identified some way they could care for someone else. Discussions on a particular theme often bring up elements of learning for religious education. For example, pupils in Year 1 were discussing 'What is a leader?' using as examples the headteacher and the leader of a church.

174. The quality of teaching seen was very good and often excellent, thus enthusing and stimulating pupils resulting in pupils' interest and very good attitudes to the subject. Teachers make effective use of relevant resources, visits and visitors, including members of the clergy. The school borrows religious artefacts to support their lessons and there is a good range of religious education books and Bibles for staff and pupils to use. Assemblies are spiritual events because of their musical content, such as the music played as pupils enter the hall. This creates a warm reflective atmosphere. Assemblies end with a period of reflection and a prayer.

175. The team of subject co-ordinators is very knowledgeable and skilled in teaching the subject. However, the overuse of worksheets does not give pupils the opportunity to develop their own independent work and has a negative impact on raising standards.