

INSPECTION REPORT

BROOKHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bromborough

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105018

Headteacher: Miss Susan Watkin

Reporting inspector: Margot D'Arcy
23158

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 246429

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: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Brookhurst Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Graham Parry

Date of previous inspection: March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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23158	Margot D'Arcy	Registered Inspector	Art and design Design and technology Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well pupils are taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve?
11096	Margaret Davie	Lay inspector	Educational Inclusion	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?
16971	Roger Hardaker	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography Physical education	
27777	Robin Greenhall	Team inspector	English History Special educational needs	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20970	Irene Wakefield	Team inspector	Science Religious education The Foundation Stage	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is slightly larger than average sized primary school catering for 258 boys and girls aged between four and eleven. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. All pupils speak English as their first language. Reception children are taught in a single year group class, whilst others are taught in mixed-age classes containing two consecutive year groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including statements of special need, is below the national average. The range of needs includes moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average. Most pupils remain at this school throughout their seven years of primary education. When children begin school in the reception class, their attainment is above that which is expected for their age. A new headteacher has been appointed since the school's last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school. Effective teaching is helping pupils to learn at a very good rate and is supporting the raising of standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum for these subjects, and for children in the reception class, is good. In other subjects, however, learning experiences are not always covered in sufficient depth. Leadership and management are both good and underpin the good improvements that have been made in a number of key areas, including bringing to a halt the underachievement that had been occurring in the juniors. While pupils' test results are often favourable in relation to national averages, the school knows that standards are not yet high enough and continues to prioritise this. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in ICT and standards are above average by Year 6.
- Junior pupils make good progress in geography, history, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE). By the end of Year 6, standards in these subjects are above average.
- Throughout the school, teaching is at least good and often better.
- The headteacher provides effective leadership and is driving the school forward at a good rate.
- Very good systems for assessing pupils' standards and progress in English, mathematics and science are helping to raise standards.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, behave very well and have very good relationships with staff and each other.

What could be improved

- The standards achieved by pupils in Years 1 and 2 in geography and history.
- Assessment systems for subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- The balance of time between subjects.
- The way the school promotes pupils' spiritual development.
- Provision for pupils who are particularly gifted or talented.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected in March 1998. Good improvements have occurred since the appointment of the current headteacher, including dealing with weaknesses that had been causing junior pupils to underachieve for some time. Teaching has improved, with the quality now being more consistent throughout the school. The weaknesses pointed out by the last inspection have been addressed. In particular, standards and progress in ICT are now one of the school's strengths. In most other subjects, standards are similar to those that were achieved in 1998. Higher attaining pupils are now challenged and systems to assess pupils' basic skills are much improved; marking is now good. Clear improvements are also evident in the way the school is led and

managed and links with parents are much better. Improvements have been made to the accommodation, resources and staffing. The school is judged to have good capacity to continue its course of improvement.

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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	C	A	B
Mathematics	C	B	B	C
Science	D	D	B	C

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

The table shows the good improvement that occurred to pupils' English and science results in 2002. However, in relation to the standards this group of pupils achieved at the end of Year 2, results were only average in English, below in science and well below in mathematics. The Year 6 test results in 2000 and 2001 also showed significant underachievement in all three subjects in relation to pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 2. The rise depicted in the 2002 results brought the school's overall trend of improvement (from 1998 to 2002) broadly into line with the national upward trend. However, prior to this the school had not been improving at the same rate as schools nationally for at least two years. The current group of Year 6 pupils have made satisfactory progress, overall, since the end of Year 2 due to the action that has been taken to address the causes of the underachievement. These, and other junior pupils, are now making progress that is at least good, and future test results look set to improve. This is reflected in the targets that have been set for pupils, which are realistic but challenging.

Year 2 pupils achieved very good test results in 2002, which were in the top five per cent nationally in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. Their performance was favourable in relation to similar schools¹ and showed considerable improvement from the previous year. Test results have generally been at least above average in most years. Inspection findings show that the current group of Year 2 pupils' standards are well above average in reading, writing and science and above average in mathematics.

Standards in ICT are improving rapidly for all pupils and some good work was seen in this subject. Strengths were also noted in the work junior pupils produced in geography, history, RE and PE. There was insufficient evidence to form secure judgements about standards in design and technology (DT). In all other subjects, standards are at least average by the ends of Years 2 and 6. However, Year 2 pupils should achieve better standards than they do in geography and history, given the good standards achieved by reception children in these subjects. Reception children achieve well in all aspects of their work and by the end of the year reach standards that are above expectations for their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn, try hard and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils show consideration towards others, play together amicably and move around the school sensibly.

¹ Based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on very well with adults and each other. They are keen to take on responsibilities and work well co-operatively.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are punctual and their attendance rate is well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	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 and learning are very good overall and particularly effective for junior pupils and reception children. Throughout the school, English and mathematics are taught well, resulting in pupils making good gains in learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively in lessons and are promoted satisfactorily in other subjects. In all year groups, ICT is taught effectively and used well to support learning in other subjects. Teachers' lesson planning is good. Teachers generally match work well to pupils' ages and levels of attainment so that those who find learning difficult are well supported and higher attainers receive good challenge. The school has not yet made specific provision to address the needs of the minority of pupils who are gifted and/or talented. This sometimes limits teachers' effectiveness in planning work to challenge and extend them. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expect pupils to work hard and achieve well. They provide interesting lessons so that pupils are motivated to learn. Teachers' very good relationships with pupils also make them eager to work hard to please their teachers. Where teaching is less effective, though not unsatisfactory, the pace of lessons is somewhat slow. Support staff make a good contribution to teaching and learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall and very good for reception children. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 receive a broad curriculum but the balance of time is too heavily weighted in favour of literacy and numeracy, which limits the depth of learning experiences in many other subjects. There is a good curriculum for science and ICT, but weaknesses in curriculum planning for geography and history have resulted in pupils in Years 1 and 2 repeating work already covered in reception. The range of extra-curricular activities is narrow and limited to junior pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with learning difficulties take part fully in lessons and are given work that challenges them and helps them to succeed. They achieve well, making good progress toward their specific learning targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Very good for moral development, with pupils being taught to respect people and property and consider others' views. Opportunities are missed to promote spiritual development in lessons and assemblies. Pupils learn about their own culture, but not enough about the multicultural nature of society. While there are opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively and good manners are promoted, pupils' views about school are not sought.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. This is a caring school where pupils are well looked after. There are effective systems to promote good behaviour. Regular assessments in English, mathematics and science ensure pupils are learning successfully. In other subjects, however, assessment is underdeveloped.

The school enjoys a good partnership with pupils' parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads and manages the school well and provides good direction for improvement. She is supported well by a hardworking deputy and senior management team. Co-ordinators are keen and knowledgeable, but in some subjects there is scope to provide more opportunities for them to check on teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are a hardworking team, committed to helping the school to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher has a clear understanding of how well the school is performing in relation to other schools and has identified the right priorities for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Most learning resources are used well, including effective deployment of support staff. Classroom computers are used well, but the ICT suite is often empty when it could be used for lessons.

The number of teachers and support staff is adequate to meet pupils' needs. Overall, the accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory. The school works hard to ensure that it gets the best value from all its spending decisions and continually compares its performance with other schools. However, it does not consult parents or pupils enough about its provision.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The teaching is good. Their children make good progress and are helped to become mature and responsible. • The information they receive about their children's progress. • The approachability of the headteacher and staff. • The school expects children to work hard and behave well. • The good standards of behaviour. • The way the school is led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities, including some for infants. • Consistency of homework between classes. • A minority feels that the school does not work closely with parents.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. Parents' concerns about extra-curricular activities are justified; the school is endeavouring to improve this aspect of provision. Inspectors feel that while the school's partnership with parents has improved since the last inspection, there is still scope for communication to be better. Inspectors judged homework provision to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children come to school with a good range of social experiences and general knowledge. They have good speaking and listening skills and their basic understanding of literacy and numeracy is also good. The assessments that are made of children when they begin the reception class show that standards are above those that are expected for their age. Progress is good and by the end of the year, most children reach or exceed the early learning goals expected for their age in all areas of learning². Many are currently working competently within the lower levels of the National Curriculum in English, mathematics, science, geography and history.
2. The results of national tests taken by Year 2 pupils in 2002 were well above the national average in writing and very high (in the top five per cent nationally) in reading and mathematics. In relation to similar schools, these results were very high in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments show that standards in science and speaking and listening were also very high. In these tests and assessments, the proportions of pupils achieving a level higher than that expected for their age was well above the national average, being very high in both reading and mathematics. In reading, writing and mathematics, the 2002 results showed significant improvement on those achieved in 2001. Writing results also improved significantly between 2000 and 2001. Over time, girls have generally performed better than boys in reading, but in writing and mathematics, there is no significant difference.
3. The results of national tests taken by Year 6 pupils in 2002 were well above the national average in English and above in mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, these results were above average in English, average in science and mathematics. The results showed notable improvement to those achieved in 2001 in both English and science and remained similar in mathematics. Whilst the 2002 results are favourable in relation to national averages, given pupils' test results at the end of Year 2, progress during the four junior years was unsatisfactory overall. The significant rise depicted in the 2002 results brought the school's overall trend of improvement (from 1998 to 2002) broadly into line with the national upward trend. However, prior to this point, the school had not been improving at the same rate as schools nationally for at least two years. Over time, boys and girls have generally performed similarly in English tests, but in mathematics there have been some significant differences in specific years, with girls performing better than boys in 1999 and 2001, but boys doing much better in 2002; in science, there is similar disparity, but with girls generally performing better over time.
4. Through rigorous analysis of test performance data, both the headteacher and local education authority (LEA) detected the underachievement that had been occurring in the juniors and began a programme of action to deal with it. Some of the causes were general in terms of their impact on all year groups. For example, the limited time the school had been implementing the national literacy and numeracy strategies in comparison with schools nationally. Others, however, were more specific and localised to particular classes. Whilst some of issues that had to be tackled were

² Personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; creative development.

unable to be resolved immediately, the drive to address them and to raise attainment and improve pupils' progress has been, and remains, a priority.

5. Inspection evidence shows that the present group of Year 2 pupils are attaining standards that are well above average in reading, writing and science and above average in mathematics. Standards for the current Year 6 group are well above average in English and above in mathematics and science. In all three subjects, this represents overall satisfactory progress for Year 6 pupils in relation to their test results at the end of Year 2. The school knows that considerable scope remains for pupils to achieve much better than this, however, and has rightly prioritised raising standards in its development plan. Although there is still some way to go, the success of the action taken so far is already being seen in the good progress currently being made by junior pupils in English, mathematics and science, which bodes well for future improvements to Year 6 test results. Inspection evidence did not find any specific differences between boys' and girls' attainment.
6. At the ends of Years 2 and 6, standards are in line with expectations for pupils' ages in art and design and music. During the inspection, junior pupils were producing artwork of a high standard in lessons and some displays of their work also showed above average standards. Overall, however, evidence was limited and therefore insufficient to judge standards to be any higher than average. During Years 1 and 2, the amount of time allocated to music allows pupils to make progress that is just satisfactory. However, there is little to enhance the music curriculum in either the infants or juniors. Whilst lesson time in music increases in Years 3 to 6 and some very good teaching was seen in the juniors, progress over time is only satisfactory. All pupils are making good progress in ICT where standards are in line with expectations by the end of Year 2 and above by the end of Year 6. In physical education (PE), Year 1 and 2 pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to teaching that is mostly satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, however, PE standards are above average overall, because teaching is mostly good. All pupils make satisfactory progress in RE. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2 and exceed them by the end of Year 6. In the juniors, twice as much time is allocated to this subject, which generally accounts for the difference in standards.
7. In geography and history there is a disparity between the standards attained and progress made by pupils in Years 1 and 2 and those in Years 3 to 6. While standards in both subjects are in line with expectations by the end of Year 2, progress during Years 1 and 2 is unsatisfactory given the high standards being achieved by children at the end of the reception year. The reason is that pupils are repeating much of the work that they have already covered in reception. During Years 3 to 6, however, progress is good, with work building on what has already been learned; this accounts for the above average standards by the end of Year 6. There was insufficient evidence upon which to base secure judgements about pupils' standards and achievements in DT.
8. The school makes good use of performance data to set targets and to monitor any variation in the performance of different groups, such as boys and girls and pupils of the same age in different classes. In addition to helping the school to plan action for improvement, the information informs the target-setting process. Challenging, but realistic, targets have been set for the current Year 6 pupils to achieve in national English, mathematics and science tests, both at the expected and the higher levels. Although it is not a requirement, the school has also set targets for Year 2 pupils in the same way. The process is currently based on a rigorous analysis of test and assessment data. This has not always been the case. As a result, the Year 6 group

that took the tests in 2002 did not achieve the targets that had been set for them some considerable time before.

9. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in relation to the clear targets in their individual education plans (IEP's) and higher attainers are also achieving well. The school has not formally identified those pupils who are particularly gifted or talented so no specific provision is made for this minority over and above the extension work that is provided for higher attainers. Overall, however, they make at least satisfactory progress, varying in relation to specific subjects.
10. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Standards in most subjects are now similar to those achieved in 1998, having recovered from the decline and underachievement that occurred during the interim. Standards and pupils' achievements in ICT have moved from being a weakness to a strength.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been successfully maintained and pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour continue to be a strength of the school. Pupils are very hard working and eager to learn. The oldest are generally mature and sensible, well prepared to move on to secondary education. Behaviour is very good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievements. Last year, one pupil was temporarily excluded for inappropriate behaviour. Attendance is very good and also makes a strong contribution to pupils' achievements.
12. Pupils are positive about the school and the work that they do; their eagerness often leads to a very high rate of learning. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 history lesson, they were clearly impressed by the amount of information they could gain about the Ancient Greeks from one small picture on a vase shown to them by their teacher. They were keen to get on with their own tasks and, because these were interesting and well matched to their abilities, they applied themselves well and worked enthusiastically. Very occasionally, when the pace of lessons is too slow, pupils become fidgety and lose concentration.
13. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school and relationships are very good. This view is strongly supported by parents who say that their children really like school. Throughout the school, pupils work and play together well and are kind and helpful to one another. Pupils are aware of the seriousness of bullying and are pleased that this is not really a feature of their school. Children in the reception class have all settled well to school life. They contribute confidently in lessons and are already developing very good standards of behaviour. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well integrated into the school and have very positive attitudes to learning. The minority that has emotional and behavioural needs respond well to personal support and the school's caring ethos.
14. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Many are mature and sensible for their age and have good social skills, which results in them sharing and working together well. Although pupils carry out jobs in classrooms and around the school responsibly, they are not given enough opportunities to extend their personal and social skills, for example, by working with children of different ages or having a say in the way the school is run.
15. Attendance is well above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is low. However, despite discouragement from the school, too many pupils miss parts of

their education because they are taken on holiday during term time. Indeed most of the unauthorised absences are due to this, being in excess of the ten days that the headteacher can authorise. Pupils are very punctual in the morning, which means they make a prompt start to their day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good and has improved since the last inspection. During this inspection, 71 per cent of lessons were good or better, with 21 per cent being very good and four per cent excellent; no teaching was less than satisfactory. Teaching is particularly effective in the reception class, where it is consistently good and often better, and in the juniors. Throughout the school, there are strengths in the teaching of literacy, numeracy, science, ICT and RE. In the juniors, teaching strengths are also evident in geography, history and PE. Some excellent teaching of art and design was seen in the juniors and some very good teaching of music in Years 5 and 6.
17. The quality of teaching for reception children is of a high standard, resulting in them making good gains in learning. The teacher and classroom assistant work well as a team and have a very good understanding of the way in which young children learn. A wide range of relevant and practical activities is planned to meet all children's needs and capture their interest. These activities, including play, are thoughtfully organised to promote simultaneous learning across a range of areas. There is an effective balance between child-chosen activities and those led by teaching staff. Staff intervene effectively and continuously to encourage key skills of speaking, listening and personal and social development. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are also constantly promoted throughout the day. The high quality of teaching provides children with a very good start to their education.
18. A comprehensive programme of staff training and development, teachers' commitment to providing the best for their pupils, and the school's good system of monitoring teaching and learning, have underpinned the improvements that have occurred since the last inspection. The improvements that have been made to assessment systems in English, mathematics and science, together with improvements to teachers' planning, are now allowing work to be matched better to pupils' attainment. Consequently, the weaknesses that existed in relation to setting higher attainers challenging work has now been addressed and these pupils are learning effectively. Similarly, the work set for those who find learning more difficult is appropriately modified to challenge them and allow them to achieve success. Marking is now good and provides pupils with useful pointers on how to improve. This, along with the individual and group targets that are set for pupils and the sharing of the learning objectives of lessons, is giving them a good insight into how well they are learning.
19. The system of grouping junior pupils into sets for literacy and numeracy lessons is working well and is aided by very good teamwork between teachers in planning work for pupils' different levels of attainment. Whilst literacy and numeracy skills are sometimes very effectively promoted during work in other subjects, particularly history, this element could be planned for more effectively. Teachers make good use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. Classroom computers are used well. Their use during lessons is thoughtfully planned to relate to the learning objectives. As such, learning in this subject is good and is being constantly promoted.
20. Throughout the school, strengths in teaching include teachers' very good relationships with pupils. One of the effects of this is that teachers' intervention in lessons is

extremely productive, with pupils listening well and trying hard to please them. In a Year 3 and 4 art lesson, for example, pupils assessed and improved their work objectively because of their teacher's skilful use of praise and challenge, which resulted in an extremely high rate of learning. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson when the teacher praised a pupil for how well he had grasped division by 10 and 100 he visibly bloomed, tackled his task energetically and took part in the rest of the lesson enthusiastically.

21. Another strength is teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations, particularly in the juniors where pupils are challenged particularly well in many subjects. Teachers also make effective use of a range of methods such as direct teaching to the class, demonstrations, group work, and role-play; these capture and sustain pupils' interest and support their learning very well. The most effective lessons, in both the infants and juniors, are those that are taught at a brisk pace, which, again, maintains pupils' interest and allows them to accomplish much in the time allocated. Teachers also promote subject-specific vocabulary very well, expecting pupils to use this in their answers and written recording. Homework provision is well thought through and effective in supporting and extending the work pupils do in class.
22. Where teaching is less effective, though not unsatisfactory, the pace of lessons is too slow, which occasionally results in pupils losing concentration and not paying full attention. Occasionally some work is not matched well enough to pupils' prior attainment, but this is mostly because new teachers have not yet got to grips with pupils' standards. However, the new teachers are coping with a steep learning curve very well and making very effective daily evaluations of their teaching so as to adjust and improve their input in lessons. Some very effective teaching was seen from these teachers. Support staff are deployed and used well and make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning.
23. The quality of the teaching for the small number of pupils with learning difficulties is good. Most teachers are well aware of pupils' individual needs and target them well during lessons to ensure that they are included. In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers often provide specific work or additional support for pupils, which are linked to the targets in their IEP's. Class teachers also give regular one-to-one support to pupils at carefully arranged times outside lessons. The good management of the very few pupils with emotional and behavioural needs consistently reinforces the school's positive expectations.

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

24. For children in reception, the curriculum is very good. The school makes imaginative use of the recommended curriculum for children of this age, planning a full and balanced range of learning experiences that give them a 'flying start' to their education. Overall, the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. It is broad in that it meets statutory requirements and includes RE, all subjects of the National Curriculum and a programme for personal, social, health and sex education. However, there are weaknesses in the organisation and balance of curriculum time between subjects. The total teaching time is in line with national recommendations, but so much of it is given to literacy and numeracy that the time allocated to many other subjects is much less than pupils receive in most other schools. Despite the school's good efforts to restore balance through improved links between subjects, this distribution of time restricts the range and balance of learning opportunities. As a result, standards in several subjects are below what pupils are capable of achieving. Moreover, time is not always used

efficiently; for example, too many lessons in literacy and numeracy unnecessarily exceed the recommended time.

25. In some respects, the curriculum is better than at the time of the last inspection. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have now been fully implemented. There are some good opportunities for pupils to use literacy skills to support learning in subjects such as history and science, which are making a useful contribution to improving standards in English. Other improvements include a more extensive programme of educational visits. The homework policy has been improved and made to work more consistently. There is also much better provision for ICT, which is promoting effective learning in this subject and providing good opportunities for pupils to extend learning across the curriculum. The science curriculum makes particularly good provision for developing pupils' experimental and investigative skills. Curriculum planning for most subjects has improved, with subject co-ordinators making good use of national guidance materials and those provided by the local education authority (LEA) to formulate work programmes for all year groups. These contain good detail and generally build well on what pupils have learned previously. The exceptions are in geography and history, where pupils in Years 1 and 2 repeat work that has already been covered in the reception year and at the same level.
26. Overall, satisfactory provision is made to ensure that pupils have equal access to the full range of learning opportunities. Good provision is made for the few pupils who have learning difficulties. The targets in their IEP's are very specific and achievable. The small size of most classes makes it possible for teachers to ensure that these pupils participate fully in all activities. Whilst higher attainers are generally challenged well in lessons, there is no specific provision for those who are particularly gifted or talented and there are clearly pupils of this nature within the school. A relevant policy has been agreed, but the pupils have yet to be formally identified along with the action and practical steps needed to help them realise their potential.
27. The range of extra-curricular activities is more limited than in most schools and is restricted to junior pupils. During the inspection, the activities that took place outside of lessons were the clubs for computers, French and Spanish. The football club also became active again, with a former Everton player as the new coach. Whilst all these activities provide good opportunities and are well supported, the demand for a better range, including that for infant pupils, is clear. The school is aware of this; to some extent the lack of provision is a temporary problem, with the number of activities having diminished recently due to the lack of volunteers to run them. This situation continues. Whilst the headteacher is keen to improve provision, there are no surplus funds in the budget to 'buy-in' the necessary expertise and supervision so volunteers are needed.
28. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. Although the school has no written policies specific to drugs education and sex education, in practice, its arrangements are adequate. A series of half-day workshops for older junior pupils on drug and alcohol abuse are provided by a local specialist agency. The school nurse leads meetings with these pupils and their parents on sex education. The school weaves the themes of 'growth' and 'harmful substances' within its health study programme, mostly within science, and other social topics, often covered in RE.
29. Links with the local community make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning. The school has close ties with the nearby Anglican and Methodist churches, where Christmas celebrations are held. The ministers from these churches also visit the school to talk to pupils and lead assemblies. Staff from the public library service visit to

promote pupils' library skills and a good link has been established with a university to support science work in the juniors. The school takes part in local galas, quizzes and sporting contests, and governors are endeavouring to forge better links with local businesses and industry. Links with a local high school have made a good contribution to learning in science, initiated a joint 'Mini-Olympics' event, and prepared pupils for their move to secondary education. The school provides good work experience for student teachers who, in turn, offer valuable extra support for pupils' learning.

30. Provision for pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall. However, there are differences in the quality of the various aspects that contribute to this. For example, provision for moral development is very good but that for spiritual development is unsatisfactory, with this latter element having declined since the last inspection.
31. The school promotes a sense of community and encourages pupils to work co-operatively. There are also strengths in the way relationships are fostered and how pupils are taught to show respect for living things and the environment. However, the school's policy that the daily act of collective worship is influential in promoting spiritual development was not evident during the inspection. A brief prayer is said or a hymn sung, which just meets the statutory requirement. There is an absence of 'spiritual atmosphere' within whole school assemblies that might be provided, for example, by a visual focus, such as a candle, or music to aid reflection. An exception was an infant assembly in which the teacher made reference to the music that was playing as pupils entered. In talking about 'fear', she involved pupils in discussing aspects of their fears and revealed her own as a child. Her fear of the dark was related in a sensitive way and pupils expressed ideas about how she could be comforted, such as, '*Cuddle your teddy*', '*cry*' and '*hide under the covers*'. Before reciting the prayer, the teacher asked pupils to think while they listened. Older pupils' views are that they are not keen on assembly; they say that they prefer it when class teachers do it, '*because it is more like a lesson*'. Indeed, two class sessions in the upper juniors were successful in promoting a spiritual atmosphere and encouraging pupils to reflect on and talk about their feelings and experiences.
32. The collective worship that occurs in class varies in quality, with some fostering pupils' spiritual awareness and others doing little to evoke such feelings. Lessons across the curriculum sometimes make a useful contribution to spiritual development but overall, this element is not explicitly planned for and generally only occurs incidentally. A good example was seen in a Year 3 and 4 art and design lesson, where music from Tudor times was played evoking a atmosphere conducive for pupils' sketches of Tudor portraits.
33. Provision for moral development is very good. Principles that distinguish right from wrong are actively promoted. These are reinforced by class rules and by setting examples of fairness, truthfulness and respect. A good sense of belonging and commitment to the school and community is encouraged. The difference between right and wrong, and of how each individual's behaviour has an impact on others, is taught from reception onwards. Good manners are expected and evident when pupils hold open doors for each other and wait politely for their turn in discussions or in the lunch queue. Staff set pupils good role models and show trust in them, which pupils appreciate. For instance, infant pupils acted responsibly when they were told they could work in the corridor in a group to do a science experiment.
34. Provision for social development is satisfactory. The school provides opportunities for pupils to work in groups, which they are expected to do amicably and productively. At lunchtime, there are opportunities for pupils to engage in a range of playground

activities such as basketball, skipping and large floor games such as chess and snakes and ladders; a quiet area is also provided. However, provision is limited by the small number of extra-curricular activities, lack of a school council and opportunity for residential experiences.

35. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Linked to work in RE, pupils have opportunities to visit Chester Cathedral, a Christian church and a synagogue. Year 5 and 6 pupils visit the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool each year to take part in an Arts Workshop. Whilst pupils are taught about some known artists, these are generally only from Western culture. There is an interesting display about Peru but, overall, resources, books and displays do very little to promote pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Teachers know pupils well and look after them carefully. The deputy headteacher is the designated person responsible for child protection. Whilst teaching staff have received training regarding their responsibilities in this area, non-teaching staff have not and this is a weakness. All have had basic first aid training and there is a very good awareness of pupils' healthcare needs. Pupils are well supervised at work and play. Meal times are well organised, although the cash cafeteria often causes delays while children are sorting out their money to pay for food and means that many are not eating their meals when they are hot and at their best. The building and grounds are regularly checked to ensure that pupils are working in a safe environment; the whole site is very well maintained. The school has taken steps to ensure safe and supervised use of the Internet. There is good liaison with the privately run nursery class on the school premises. This supports the youngest children's smooth transition to school, as do the meetings the reception teacher has with children's parents.
37. Regular attendance is given a high priority and is rigorously monitored. Absences are followed up and parents are regularly reminded about the impact that poor attendance has on their children's achievements. There are good procedures to ensure that pupils behave themselves. Because of the good relationships they have with the staff, pupils listen carefully and work hard at their tasks and seldom misbehave. They have helped to draw up the school code of conduct, as well as their own class rules, and take these seriously. The positive reward system is a relatively new, well thought out initiative to encourage every pupil to have high expectations of themselves to work hard and to behave well in order to gain a bronze, silver or gold certificate. The requirements are explained on a display in the school hall so that children are very clear about expectations.
38. Pupils are encouraged to share any problems that they may have with their teachers; the very good relationships that exist between them mean that they feel confident to do so. However, whilst this aspect is very good, not enough is done to encourage pupils' personal development outside of lessons.
39. Procedures for assessing children's attainment on entering the school are effective. A good amount of information is gained and used well to ensure that children are given appropriate and challenging work and to identify those who need extra support. In Years 1 to 6, systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory overall. The information from the statutory tests taken by pupils in Years 2 and 6 is carefully collated and used to help the school compare its performance with that of others, set targets for improvement and plan action to address any weaknesses. A good example is the specific work programmes that have been

implemented for pupils who need additional support in English and mathematics. In other year groups, pupils are assessed regularly in English, mathematics and science. This gives the school a clear picture of the standards being achieved and of whether pupils have made sufficient progress during the year. The school also makes good use of the data from these tests to monitor performance by gender and to compare the performance of pupils in different classes. However, little formal assessment occurs in other subjects, which limits the amount of information teachers and the school has on pupils' standards and progress, thereby providing a weaker base upon which to effect improvements.

40. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support. Their needs are identified early and subsequent assessment and tracking of their progress is good. The special needs co-ordinator works closely with teachers to ensure that these practices are effective and to regularly review pupils' IEP's. Good working relationships with outside agencies ensure effective specialist support where necessary.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to improve relationships with parents. Significant improvements have been made in involving parents as partners in their children's education. Most parents have positive views about the school, although a minority rightly feel that communication could be improved further. Most parents say they are comfortable approaching the school with any problems or concerns and are particularly happy with the exchange of information with staff in the reception class. However, a significant minority say that these good lines of communication tail off once their children start in Year 1.
42. In order to address the weakness identified by the last inspection, the school has made the following good improvements to communication:
- a comprehensive induction pack is provided for new children and their families;
 - regular, well-presented, newsletters are issued, with timely information for parents;
 - in all year groups, information is given about what is being taught each term;
 - a home/school association has been started to provide better lines of communication, organise social events and help raise additional funds;
 - an 'open-door' policy has been established so that staff are readily accessible to parents; and
 - the entrance has been enhanced to make it more welcoming for parents
43. Annual written reports on pupils' progress give detailed information about how children are doing but do not share targets for improvement. Parents are given the opportunity to formally discuss their children's achievements at two parent evenings and again, if they wish, when annual reports have been sent out. The combined prospectus and governors' annual report is informative but omits some of the required information. Governors do not have a required policy that outlines the content and organisation of the sex education curriculum.
44. There is no regular procedure for parents to make their views about the school known. This has led to a number of misunderstandings between the school and some parents. A small number have expressed concerns about how welcome they feel in school. Some believe that they are only allowed to help in class for one half day a week and many feel that the arrangements for leaving and collecting their children at the beginning and end of the school day are unwelcoming, in that they are not allowed to go beyond the school gates. The school is adamant that the concerns about helping

are misunderstood; the headteacher says that they are happy for as much help as parents feel they can give. The school feels that serious health and safety concerns arise when parents enter the playground during PE lessons that are occurring late in the afternoon. A regular system of communication, over and above the governors' annual meeting, would perhaps provide a way to help clear up these kinds of misunderstanding. Parents are supportive of their children's learning and particularly helpful with reading. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties are regularly involved in discussing their children's needs and reviewing their progress. Arrangements for review meetings are thorough and professional.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The quality of leadership and management has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. The headteacher has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified in 1998 and has tackled the causes of underachievement in the juniors. The school is currently improving at a good rate.
46. The headteacher has worked hard at ensuring effective teamwork between teachers and has instigated improvements to key areas such as planning, assessment and systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher regularly observes teaching and learning in all classes. This practice links well with the school's good system for the performance management of teachers and aids the setting of school and individual targets for improvement. Much effort has also been channelled into improving standards and provision in ICT.
47. The headteacher has been well supported by a hardworking deputy and other members of the senior management team. She has astutely tapped into their individual strengths, particularly as very good role models for teaching, to drive through the early priorities for improving the curriculum and teaching in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher has now correctly identified that the time is right to extend the management role of these individuals to allow them to take more of a leading role in aspects of management.
48. Since the headteacher's appointment, the staff have become much more aware of the school's performance in relation to other schools. There is now a shared vision about future priorities and how to achieve them, and a good commitment to improve. The emphasis has been on raising standards in English, mathematics and science. Consequently, the co-ordinators for other subjects have not had formal opportunities to make detailed checks on standards, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. They do, however, produce all but the weekly lesson plans for colleagues, and in this way play a significant role in helping to ensure that learning experiences are progressive. There are now plans to involve co-ordinators much more in the monitoring process.
49. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is well managed. Since the last inspection, systems have been updated to comply with new requirements. There is good liaison between the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and class teachers. The governing body is well informed about provision.
50. The headteacher provides governors with good information about the school's performance and, overall, they have a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, there is some reluctance to accept the extent of underachievement that has occurred or the amount of improvement still required. Some governors incorrectly feel that the lower than average standards shown in some

past test results are because of 'poor' groups of pupils. Others still subscribe to the idea that a considerably narrower curriculum must result from implementing the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Moreover, governors have not yet seriously considered regularly and formally canvassing pupils' or parents' views. This is despite these individuals being major stakeholders and the last inspection identifying the need to improve communication with parents. Nevertheless, governors are a committed and loyal team who give generously of their time and are keen to support the school's improvement. They fulfil their statutory duties satisfactorily.

51. The quality of financial management is good, with any additional funding, such as that for staff training and to support pupils with learning difficulties, used well. The school works hard to ensure that it gets the best value for money from the spending decisions it makes. The school's development plan is a good working document to manage change and support improvement.
52. There is a satisfactory number of teachers and support staff to meet pupils' needs. Newly qualified teachers are given appropriate support in their first year of teaching. Whilst the number of support staff is small, they are deployed effectively to meet the changing needs of the school. Administrative staff provide a welcoming first contact for parents and visitors and good support for the smooth running of the school.
53. The accommodation is good and has improved since the last inspection. A new computer suite has been constructed and a regular maintenance programme put in place, which has already resulted in an improvement to the state of the outside of the buildings and upgrading of toilet facilities. The interior of the school continues to be maintained to the highest standards by the caretaker. Displays of pupils' work help to provide a pleasant and stimulating learning environment. A temporary classroom is used well for teaching music and for storing instruments. The accommodation for reception children is good overall, but the outdoor learning area needs attention.
54. Resources to support learning are satisfactory overall and in a number of instances have improved since the last inspection. They are good in science, ICT and for reception children, but there are shortages in history and design and technology.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. The headteacher and governors should now:

- (1) Improve the standards achieved by Year 1 and 2 pupils in geography and history by ensuring that their work builds on what they have already learned in reception.

(Main paragraphs 99-109)

- (2) Review the balance of time between subjects to ensure that time is used efficiently and sufficient time is allocated to non-core subjects to allow pupils to achieve their potential.

(Main paragraphs 24 and in various subject paragraphs in section D of the commentary)

- (3) Devise and implement workable systems to assess pupils' standards and progress in those subjects where formal assessments are currently not made*.

(Main paragraphs 39 and in various subject paragraphs in section D of the commentary)

- (4) Improve provision for pupils' spiritual development by:
- developing the quality of assemblies so that they provide a clear spiritual focus, time for reflection, and make better use of music and artefacts to create a spiritual atmosphere.
 - raising staff awareness of how to plan for and promote spiritual development in lessons.

(Main paragraphs 30-32)

- (5) Identify those pupils who are particularly gifted or talented and make specific provision to address these pupils' individual and unique learning needs*.

(Main paragraph 26)

In addition to the key issues above, governors should consider the following, less important, issues for inclusion in their action plan:

- Improve resources for design and technology (94).
- Develop subject co-ordinators' role in monitoring standards, teaching and learning* (47).
- Make better provision to support pupils' personal development, for example, by forming a school council through which pupils can express their views, and by extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of life in a culturally diverse society (14, 35).
- Ensure that all staff have received training in child protection (36).
- Make better provision for extra-curricular activities* (27).
- Devise systems to find out about parents' views of the school (44).

** The school has already identified these issues as priorities for improvement.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	12	26	16	0	0	0
Percentage	4	21	46	29	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)	N/A	258
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	13

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	16	15	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	30	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (87)	97 (92)	97 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	15	16
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	30	30	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (90)	97 (97)	100 (92)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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
	2002	27	19	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	31	19	24
	Girls	17	14	19
	Total	38	33	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (78)	73 (78)	96 (93)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	23	25
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	34	39	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (80)	87 (82)	93 (89)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	212	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	40	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, 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)	10.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	28.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	61

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	570,408
Total expenditure	565,969
Expenditure per pupil	2,029
Balance brought forward from previous year	17,731
Balance carried forward to next year	22,170

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
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)	2
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: 47%

Number of questionnaires sent out	258
Number of questionnaires returned	121

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	36	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	36	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	46	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	50	16	2	0
The teaching is good.	59	39	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	48	7	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	33	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	41	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	49	11	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	47	43	2	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	43	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	25	34	14	17

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

56. Children enter the reception class in the September of the academic year in which they turn five. All have had some pre-school experience and, overall, begin school with standards that are above those expected for their age. Progress is good and by the end of the year, most are performing at or above the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. A good number of children are working competently at the lower levels of the National Curriculum.
57. Teaching is very good in all areas. The teacher and learning support assistant provide a wide range of activities, including carefully planned play. These are very effective in supporting children's learning and attitudes to school and work. The children are happy and industrious in all their activities and respond well to the teacher's high expectations. Children's progress is regularly assessed and recorded, with the information being used well to plan future lessons and activities to challenge and support them all.

Personal, social and emotional development

58. Children are very keen to learn. They have good relationships with one another and with adults. They take turns, play together harmoniously and concentrate well. For example, when discussing 'feeling happy' in circle time they react spontaneously, talking freely, smiling, and looking happy. They listen to each other politely. Expectations of children's behaviour and social skills are continuously reinforced throughout the day by all staff. The result is that children are familiar with and adhere to classroom and school routines and behave very well. In activities, they persist for lengthy periods co-operating with others and sharing sensibly. Most children have good skills in dressing and undressing for PE lessons, with very few needing assistance. Skills of independence are fostered very well by the way in which resources are organised in the classroom. This results in children being able to access the things they need for their work and assists them in tidying away at the end of lessons.

Communication, language and literacy

59. Children listen carefully to their teachers and readily take part in conversation. They tell their news and show interest in what each other has to say. During play activities they chat happily to each other and use simple, but well formed sentences when answering and asking questions. Reading skills are developing very well. When the teacher introduced a new 'big book' the older children were able to identify the 'author' and 'illustrator'. All children's understanding of the story increased as the teacher helped them to read the words together and talk about the pictures and text. Children's contributions are encouraged and valued, which supports their enjoyment of reading and gives them confidence. They are proud when they correctly identify common words and the names of characters in their reading books. Effective teaching has resulted in the children having a very good knowledge of letter sounds. Continual reinforcement of this basic skill throughout each day, both planned and incidental, leads to children's high success rate in correctly identifying sounds at the beginning and end of words and those that rhyme. Literacy skills are also promoted in other areas of learning. For instance, using a large information book to introduce a science

lesson, the teacher promoted children's understanding of the contents page and word meanings. Early writing skills are developing well, with most children forming letters correctly and with growing control over their size. With some support, the oldest children are using their knowledge of letter sounds to independently compose phrases and simple sentences.

Mathematical development

60. Children's number skills are effectively promoted, both in specific numeracy lessons and incidentally throughout the day. For instance, counting activities feature at the start of each day during registration. Children know that there are 26 in the class and try to work out how many are present/absent and the number of boys/girls. The teacher works hard to ensure that mathematics activities are fun, which promotes children's very good attitudes and enthusiasm. During the inspection, children were making good progress in extending their knowledge and skills of addition and subtraction. For example, sorting real objects into two groups, the children counted 'how many altogether' and learned to use the plus sign to symbolise combining two sets of numbers. Mathematical language is promoted well by the teacher and older children have a good understanding of words such as 'estimate'. Children's knowledge and skills in other aspects of mathematics, such as shape, space and measure, are developing well. Carefully planned activities in sand and water enhance their understanding of key ideas such as capacity, including associated language such as full, empty and half-full. Children know the names of a good number of two-dimensional shapes and provide simple descriptions of their properties.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

61. Children's scientific, historical, geographical and technological learning are developing well within a wide range of interesting activities that effectively promote learning in this area. Their knowledge of the world and the people within it is also furthered through lessons in religious education.
62. The children can name the days of the week and are learning about the months. Each day, they take note of the weather and record their observations on a weather chart. The teacher is helping them to relate this work to an understanding of the seasons. A walk around the locality provided a good stimulus for children's growing knowledge of different types of houses. So vivid and interesting was this experience that a week later they were able to remember and name six different types of dwelling, including detached house, bungalow and cottage. They quickly recognised their own house numbers and streets, which is aiding them in learning their address. This work is linked well with science. For instance, children identify different features of a house and learn about the different materials used for each. During a very good lesson, the children investigated a range of materials used in building houses and were prompted to make use of all their senses to describe how these looked and felt. Previous work also shows children's growing scientific understanding and skills, for example, of the effects of colour and reflection. One child wrote, *'I looked at my face through red plastic. My face was red and my hair was a darker blond'*. Another wrote, *'I looked at myself in a spoon and I was upside down'*.
63. A particularly effective aspect of the teaching is the way that different areas of work are linked so as to make learning more meaningful. For example, the development of children's historical and technological skills are linked to the work that they are completing in geography and science. They are helped to construct a simple timeline showing houses that are old, very old, and new. They learn that today and long ago

kings and queens live/ed in castles and palaces. They don hard hats to work with sand and construction materials to build houses and are captivated by a computer program that allows them to build a 'virtual house' by using the mouse to select 'materials'. They wait patiently as they independently print off their work and are delighted as they watch the paper emerging from the printer.

Physical development

64. Children's physical skills are being promoted well. They have many opportunities to use pencils, scissors and paintbrushes and to manipulate malleable materials such as clay or small construction equipment to make models. This good range of activities results in them becoming more dextrous as they get older. Children engage enthusiastically in PE lessons and outdoor play. They have a good awareness of space and others around them and are gaining skills in running, hopping and skipping. They move confidently forwards, backwards and sideways whilst walking. They listen well to the teacher and stop and start on command, trying hard to do what she asks. During the inspection, the children were learning to use their bodies to make wide, tall and small shapes and to combine these to make a simple movement sequence. Teaching is good overall, although there are some missed opportunities for children to observe each other's work and comment on how it could be improved. The teacher helps the children to understand the effects of exercise on their bodies by asking them to feel their heartbeat before and after exercising. When playing outside, children cope very well with large equipment and wheeled toys, developing greater co-ordination and control of their bodies as they peddle and manoeuvre these.

Creative development

65. Children make good progress in developing knowledge and skills through a range of well planned activities. From an early age they learn to mix their own paint and are learning about shades of colours. For example, after experimenting, they used individual sheets of paper to produce lilac, grey, pink and light blue. Their work was then put together to create a large wall display of Elmer the patchwork elephant. Their individual paintings of houses and faces show good development of the artistic element of form and many include good detail, such as facial features and hair. Children learn about pattern through engaging in printing activities using different sizes and shapes of blocks. This work is linked well to their learning about houses, as they create brickwork patterns. Previous work shows children experimenting with marbling techniques to produce an underwater scene and developing collage skills to make sunflower pictures after looking at Van Gough's work on this theme. Whilst skills are well developed through interesting activities, there is scope for children to be more independent in selecting materials and equipment to communicate individually through art and craft activities.
66. Children's musical skills are developing well and they are making good progress in this aspect. The musical idea of rhythm is taught well as children engage in clapping out their names. The teacher chooses a good variety so that children notice differences, for example, in the number of syllables. Good links are also made with numeracy as the children count out the syllables. Children have a good understanding of loud and quiet, naming a good number of sounds in these two categories. For example, they suggest '*a dog barking*', '*giants footsteps*', '*a rabbit sniffing*', '*tip-toeing*', and '*raindrops falling in little drops onto snow*'. They also demonstrate their understanding by modifying their voices in a patterned song depicting loud and quiet phrases. They have learned the words and tunes to a number of familiar songs and rhymes and sing these enthusiastically.

ENGLISH

67. The current groups of Year 2 and 6 pupils are achieving standards that are well above average. Overall, this marks a slight improvement since the last inspection. Since that time, senior staff and the school and very capable English co-ordinator have implemented a good number of improvements. These include:
- full implementation of the national literacy strategy and improved book resources to support this;
 - better planning, ensuring that pupils of the same age in different classes receive the same learning experiences and enabling teachers to cater for different levels of attainment within their teaching groups;
 - better systems to assess pupils and use of the information for planning action to raise standards and improve learning experiences;
 - effective marking, focused on helping pupils to improve;
 - increased opportunities for pupils to make choices about what they read and to develop critical reading skills; and
 - upgrading and restructuring the programme for teaching reading and developing the partnership with parents to provide more effective home support for reading.
68. Standards in speaking and listening are high throughout the school. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and pay equally close attention to each other. Most respond confidently and skilfully to demanding opportunities to discuss their work. In response to teachers' questions about texts, higher attainers typically extend their answers in a connected and reasoned way. Whole-class discussions are often of high quality because of teachers' skill in drawing all pupils into the talk and using their ideas to build a coherent, critical and shared understanding. In this way, the 'shared reading' and 'shared writing' activities actually become very focused 'shared talking' sessions, in which pupils learn as much about how to talk effectively as about how to read and write.
69. The development of speaking and listening has been strengthened by the introduction of a systematic programme of activities. Most English lessons have a specific focus on talk at some point. For example, a good lesson in a Year 1 and 2 class required each pupil to choose a character from a picture-story book. Pupils took turns to sit in the 'hot seat' and answer questions 'in character'. They quickly learned that questions requiring only a 'yes' or 'no' answer did nothing to enliven the interview and eventually they began to ask questions that really taxed the 'hot seat' character, resulting in quite detailed and imaginative responses. A similar activity with a Year 5 and 6 class took the same skill to a much higher level. Groups were asked to frame questions that would require the highwayman in the poem they were studying to explain his thoughts and feelings about himself and his situation. Most thought closely about the text, and selected questions that searched 'between the lines', which showed their developing grasp of the meanings that lay beneath the surface of the poem.
70. Standards in reading are high. Even most of the lower attainers reach the expected level for their age. Improved resources and quality opportunities for reading promote pupils' positive attitudes and are supporting the raising of standards. Parents' support at home makes a significant contribution, as does the increasing use of ICT, for instance in research activities. Most teachers use shared reading sessions effectively to develop pupils' understanding of how to read for different kinds of meaning and of how these meanings depend on how authors use language. Pupils in Year 2 read accurately, fluently and with confidence and pleasure. Their growing knowledge of the

complex relationships between sounds and letters enables almost all to tackle unfamiliar words successfully. Teachers check and record individual progress carefully to ensure that books pose the right level of demand and that pupils advance through the graded scheme at their best rate of learning. A good range of established weekly routines helps to develop pupils' knowledge, enjoyment and effective use of books and libraries. Most pupils in Year 2 know how to distinguish fiction from non-fiction and how to use an index and glossary.

71. Year 6 pupils know how to find and use information from different sources, including libraries and the Internet. Most have secure skills in using notes to record information, before interpreting and communicating what they have found out in their own words. Some good opportunities are provided for pupils to extend these skills in other subjects; recent work in history is a notable example. The impressive projects produced by Year 6 pupils on wartime Britain bear witness to their ability to research a topic in breadth and depth and to express their learning powerfully in their own words. The same pupils show similar skills in working out the different layers of meaning in a text. For instance, in response to an unseen story opening, average and higher attainers were quick to identify the effect of the passage and to see how the author's choice of words created this effect. Two pupils showed excellent skills in working out how the narration changed the reader's relationship with the character.
72. By the ends of Years 2 and 6, writing standards are good. Key skills of punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation all develop well, and most Year 6 pupils work to a good standard of accuracy and style. Most Year 2 pupils form and use upper and lower case letters correctly in a style which prepares the way for joining letters in the juniors. By Year 6, almost all pupils write neatly in a fluent and legible joined style. Pupils in Year 2 learn to write in different ways for different purposes, such as instructions for making a diva or personal stories about 'losing my teddy'. Most write in complete and correct, but short, sentences. Higher attainers extend their writing with detail and dialogue and vary sentences and word choices to provide interest. Year 6 pupils write in a wide range of different forms. Most show a clear understanding of how a specific purpose requires a distinct way of organising information, as well as particular choices of grammar, layout and vocabulary. Again, their history projects show that they can write a poem on the Blitz as effectively as a factual account of the evacuee programme. Through their good work in literature, pupils develop sensitivity to words and images. For example, as average attainers shared their first drafts of a poem on fear, they instantly recognised the force of lines such as, *'fear is a sharp pin twisting under the skin'* and *'fear lives under the stairs.'* On the theme of Bonfire Night, many pupils had written vividly evocative personal accounts in a diary style.
73. Whilst the large amount of time allocated to specific English lessons is supporting pupils' progress in writing, there is much scope for developing writing opportunities and skills in other subjects in the way that has happened so well in history.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved since the last inspection. The most effective features across the school are:
 - the high quality of joint planning and teamwork between teachers;
 - teachers sharing the learning objectives of lessons with pupils;
 - teachers' skilful questioning;
 - the teaching of basic skills in both spoken and written language; and
 - comprehensive and constructive marking of pupils' work.

75. The good learning and progress explained in earlier paragraphs stem mainly from these effective practices. Where teaching is less effective, though not unsatisfactory, the pace sometimes dips and not enough time is provided at the end of lessons for pupils to review what they have learned and identify any points that they still find difficult. Pupils with learning difficulties are given good help from teachers and support staff, enabling them to progress at the same rate as their classmates.
76. The subject is well led and managed. Development planning year on year has reflected good self-evaluation systems and is bringing about steady improvements to standards, learning experiences and teaching. Resources are satisfactory. Whilst there have been good improvements to the library, book stocks still lack range and balance across different subjects and cultures.

MATHEMATICS

77. The current groups of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are achieving above average standards. During Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and maintain the favourable standards achieved by children at the end of the reception year. Junior pupils are making at least good progress in lessons. There is still room for improvement, however, and the school is working hard to secure this through initiatives such as setting and providing specific work programmes for identified groups of pupils. Pupils are benefiting from the school's full implementation of the national numeracy strategy and improved teaching. Pupils are very enthusiastic about mathematics and enjoy lessons. They behave very well. They apply themselves well to mathematical tasks, quickly settling to class and group activities after the initial whole-class sessions. They co-operate well, often working for long periods with sustained concentration.
78. During Year 1, the clear focus given to developing numeracy skills promotes pupils' counting skills so that, by the end of Year 2, they are confident and proficient in working with numbers up to 100. They add and take away numbers making effective use of good recall of addition and subtraction facts. Higher and average attainers know that three single numbers can be added together in any order. Higher attainers use simple strategies for adding together three numbers; for example, if appropriate, first adding together any two numbers that make ten. Pupils' understanding of shape is also good. Average and higher attainers name and describe the properties of a range of simple two and three-dimensional shapes such as a triangle, square, circle, cylinder and sphere. A good focus on the development of mathematical vocabulary is improving pupils' ability to use this correctly when discussing their work or explaining how they solve problems.
79. By the end of Year 6, higher and average attainers have a good grasp of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and are confident working with high numbers in thousands. They have good recall of multiplication tables, which aids them in working quickly to solve problems. Lower attainers show a satisfactory understanding of hundreds, tens and units and use this to solve simple multiplication and division problems using whole numbers. Higher and average attainers have good knowledge of fractions. For instance, average attainers know that one way to find a quarter of a given number is to halve it then halve it again. They also have good knowledge of fractional equivalence and can apply a range of strategies to work out fractional amounts of given numbers. Higher attainers have a good understanding of ratios and can order vulgar fractions by converting them to decimal fractions.

80. The quality of teaching is generally good across the school and often very good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' mathematical knowledge is good, ensuring that basic numeracy skills are taught well. Weekly planning documents clearly identify the things that are to be learnt, including key vocabulary and necessary resources. In lesson plans, teachers make distinctions between the differing learning needs of pupils and modify or give them different work accordingly, so that all make progress. Those with learning difficulties make good progress as a result of effective support from teachers and the support staff who help to implement specifically designed work programmes. These pupils benefit from an emphasis on the steady and progressive teaching of basic numeracy skills. Particularly good use is being made of ICT to support these pupils. Higher attainers are being set appropriately challenging work, but there is scope for pupils who are particularly talented in the subject to achieve more.
81. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are encouraged to discuss their work, using a range of mathematical vocabulary to explain the strategies they use to solve problems. Most teachers make good use of assessment throughout lessons to check on pupils' understanding. Work is regularly marked. The use of homework to support learning is good. It is set regularly and referred to in lessons as part of the learning process. Numeracy skills are promoted satisfactorily in other subjects. When studying mapping in geography, for instance, older junior pupils apply their knowledge of scale and direction and associated mathematical facts. Year 1 and 2 pupils collect data on modes of transport used on the journey to school and then draw simple graphs. They also use computers to generate pictograms from this data. Older pupils' ICT work on spreadsheets and data representation is beginning to make a good contribution to learning in mathematics. However, whilst some useful links with ICT are being made, there is scope for this to be planned more deliberately and consistently.
82. The co-ordinator is recently appointed and is currently receiving good support from the headteacher. An effective action plan is supporting the drive to raise standards. A wide range of assessment information is collected and is used well to monitor the progress of all groups of pupils and to aid the setting of targets for improved standards.

SCIENCE

83. During Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and achieve standards that are well above average. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average. The difference reflects the underachievement that has occurred in the juniors in the past. This has now been addressed and junior pupils are currently making good progress. The present group of Year 6 pupils have made satisfactory progress in relation to their standards at the end of Year 2.
84. By Year 2, pupils investigating forces predict the outcome of an experiment to compare the speed and distance travelled by toy cars. They know that pushes and pulls are types of forces and use scientific vocabulary very well when explaining their work. For instance, they used words such as 'surface' and 'power' spontaneously as they talked about the aforementioned investigation and included the terms 'attract' and 'repel' in their recording of an investigation into magnetic and non-magnetic materials. Pupils' written work shows that their scientific understanding develops well. They record their findings in a range of ways, including labelled diagrams, tables and individual accounts of what they have done and found out.
85. During the inspection, junior lessons focused on materials and their properties. Pupils apply themselves very well to reasoning tasks and are beginning to think and record

like scientists. Year 5 and 6 pupils can classify solids, liquids and gasses. In investigating how the state of materials change, pupils made good progress in learning how a solid can change to a liquid and then to a gas and about the cyclical nature of these changes. Their good understanding was evident as they made good comparisons with what they already knew about processes such as evaporation, condensation and freezing and linked this to their knowledge of the water cycle. Pupils' recorded work is of a high quality, reflecting their enthusiasm for the subject and the practical experiments that underpin lessons. They record their work scientifically in a variety of ways.

86. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Consistent planning, marking and giving pupils individual targets to achieve are key strengths. The strong focus on scientific enquiry is also particularly effective in helping to make learning more meaningful for pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They plan lessons thoroughly and share the learning intentions with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Overall, tasks are adapted well to ensure that pupils of different ages and with different learning needs are both challenged and supported. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to work in groups and to discuss their work, sharing ideas, with each other. When given the opportunity, pupils use their knowledge and skills in ICT and mathematics to good effect when working on activities in science. There are plentiful resources, organised and stored so that they are readily available, and teachers use them well.
87. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and is supporting developments and the raising of standards very well. For example, by making regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning through observing lessons and looking at pupils' work and teachers' plans and lesson evaluations.
88. Since the last inspection, there has been improvement in several areas. There has been a significant increase in the amount of practical and investigative work undertaken by pupils and many more opportunities are provided for them to work collaboratively on their own ideas rather than those suggested by teachers. Good assessment procedures are helping the school to set targets to raise standards further.

ART AND DESIGN

89. During Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve standards that are in line with what is expected for their age. During Years 3 to 6, progress is at least satisfactory, with standards being at least in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. Whilst there were some examples of particularly high quality work from junior pupils, indicating good progress, overall this was insufficient to be able to judge standards to be above expectations. Current standards and rates of progress reflect a similar picture to that found by the last inspection. Careful planning ensures that pupils receive a broad range of learning experiences that includes work in two and three dimensions. However, the amount of time allocated to the subject is limited, being alternated with DT on a half-termly basis. The impact is felt more acutely in the infants where lesson time is significantly less than in the juniors.
90. During the inspection, the subject was not being taught in Years 1 and 2. Displays of these pupils' work show their good efforts at observational drawings of cross sections of fruit, enhanced by thoughtful application of colour with crayon, oil pastels and paint. Some pupils had also shown good skill in using an art software package on the computer to produce work on the same theme. Photographic evidence also shows these pupils using collage techniques to represent faces. Each pupil's work is individual, showing creativity and independent use of a good range of materials. Linked to their work in history, pupils have produced some pleasing drawings of teddy bears and paintings of moving toys. Their study of the artist Kandinsky resulted in them producing some good transport pictures in his style.
91. By the end of Year 6, pupils create their own pictures in the style of the artist Lowry. This work shows good use of colour and awareness of proportion and perspective. Colourful batik work shows creative use of various types of stitching and individualised decoration, for example, with sequins and thread. Work produced during a topic on water shows the development of brushwork skills to depict movement. During Years 3 and 4, pupils study the pointillism technique used by Seurat and apply this on a computer-generated picture. Good links are made with other subjects, such as history where Year 3 and 4 pupils make observational drawings of chairs throughout the ages and include good detail of the different decorative styles. They use modelling material to make 'illuminated letters' which they decorate in Tudor style.
92. Limited evidence means that it is not possible to make secure judgments on teaching. The two lessons seen in the juniors covered all year groups and in both the teaching was excellent. The result was that pupils made extremely good gains in learning and produced work of a high standard. Both lessons were meticulously planned and effectively linked with the history topics pupils were studying. In each there was a very good balance between the time allowed for pupils to work practically and that spent listening to the teacher, answering questions, discussing techniques and evaluating work. The planning and teachers' explanations showed their very good subject knowledge, high expectations and thorough preparation.
93. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and produces the half-termly plans for all year groups to ensure that all elements of the curriculum are covered and that work builds on what pupils have learned previously. No specific time is allocated for the co-ordinator to check on standards, teaching or learning, but some monitoring of this nature has been completed, which has given the co-ordinator some insight into pupils' standards. No formal assessments are made and, whilst a portfolio of photographic evidence has been compiled, this is not extensive in terms of providing good evidence of pupils' standards and progress. Whilst the school is aware that there are some

particularly talented pupils, no specific provision is made for them. There are occasions when the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social, moral and spiritual development, but there is scope for this to be planned for in a much more explicit way. The school has rightly identified as a priority the need to improve opportunities for pupils to learn about art, craft and design from non-western cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (DT)

94. During the inspection, no lessons were being taught in the juniors and only one lesson was seen in Years 1 and 2. There was limited other evidence to support secure judgements being made about pupils' standards and progress, teaching or improvement since the last inspection. However, in discussions with pupils, many were not secure in their knowledge of the key processes of planning, making and evaluating. The range of resources is unsatisfactory. Many are old and in poor condition and the range is narrow. This weakness does not support the provision of quality learning experiences for pupils.
95. In the Year 1 and 2 lesson, pupils were identifying different parts of vehicles in preparation for planning and making their own model vehicles at a later date. They were able to name common parts such as doors, tyres, bumpers and aerials and were introduced to the words *axle*, *body* and *chassis*. Displays show that previous work has involved pupils in planning and making a fruit salad, satisfactorily listing the ingredients and utensils needed. They also show that pupils have used simple joining techniques to cause the arm and leg joints of card teddy bears to move.
96. Past work by junior pupils shows Year 3 and 4 pupils using modelling material to construct good quality picture frames. In Years 5 and 6, pupils have used nets to produce a range of different shaped containers. They later decorated these well using paper folding techniques such as pleating, twisting, fringing, weaving and curling. Junior pupils also complete work on bridges (investigating the strongest structures) and motorised vehicles.
97. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and provides advice to colleagues. However, there are no opportunities for her to monitor pupils' standards or the quality of teaching and learning. No formal assessments are made of pupils and there is no portfolio of photographic evidence to show standards or progress over time. These weaknesses limit the co-ordinator's knowledge and do not provide a secure enough base upon which to plan for improvement. Whilst the curriculum covers the required elements, the time allocated to the subject is only just sufficient.

GEOGRAPHY

98. By the end of Year 2, standards are in line with expectations and by the end of Year 6 they are above. For Year 6 pupils, this represents an improvement since the last inspection; for Year 2 the picture is similar to that previously found. However, during Years 1 and 2, pupils are not achieving as well as they should, given the very good standards achieved by children at the end of the reception year. Pupils' underachievement results mainly from weaknesses in curriculum planning that has Year 1 and 2 pupils being given virtually identical work as reception children. Whilst many of the tasks are generally appropriate for Year 1, they are insufficiently demanding to meet the learning needs of pupils in Year 2. As a result, for example, Year 1 pupils make satisfactory progress in developing simple mapping skills, but Year 2 pupils' skills in this aspect are insufficiently extended. Pupils learn to use a satisfactory range of resources, including reference books, photographs and pictures.

99. By the end of Year 6, pupils have good skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, they display good awareness of a range of environmental issues, including some understanding of global congestion and issues relating to pollution. Drawing on their own experience of urban life, these pupils make informed judgements about the causes of pollution and how these might be tackled. In Years 3 and 4, pupils study the Wirral Peninsula. They compare and contrast two different locations and study a river course, learning about cliff erosion and river pollution. Year 5 and 6 pupils broaden their geographical studies of the world by focusing on modern Egypt. Pupils' written work reflects the development of good enquiry skills and is carefully and neatly recorded, with some good use of note-taking skills.
100. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. Few lessons were seen but pupils' work over time reflects the aforementioned weaknesses in planning. Thus, teachers are teaching the content of the plans that have been prepared for them, but work is not adapted well enough to build on what pupils have learned previously. The lack of assessment plays a part in reducing the accuracy in which teachers can match work to pupils' prior attainment, particularly for Year 2. Consequently, Year 1 and 2 pupils' repetition of work done in reception has not been detected.
101. Teaching in the junior classes is good. Pupils are taught to use maps, atlases, reference books, photographs and the Internet to find out information and they do so effectively. Lesson planning is good overall, with pupils being given opportunities to write, at length, on topics in a range of styles, which supports their literacy skills. Higher attainers in Years 5 and 6 are also given opportunities to work independently, being charged to find out and record information without assistance. A satisfactory range of visits is used effectively as opportunities for pupils to develop field-study techniques and geographical knowledge and understanding.
102. The co-ordinator is not given any time to check on pupils' standards and progress or the quality of teaching and learning.

HISTORY

103. Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. The last inspection reported a similar position. The work completed by pupils in Years 1 and 2 does not build sufficiently on what has been learned in reception. As a result, pupils, particularly those in Year 2, underachieve. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress.
104. The work done by Year 2 pupils since September shows most of the skills and understandings expected for their age. Pupils enjoy the subject and recognise that objects such as toys carry different sorts of evidence of age and change. They learn to use such evidence to sort toys into chronological order and to arrange possible dates to fit the same sequence. Pupils understand that the reasons for many of the things that are said, done or used lie in the past. For example, higher attainers write clear accounts of why cuddly toy bears are called 'teddies'. Pupils' work reflects careful planning to develop their understanding of the past in clear, small, steps but the level of demand is better suited to Year 1 pupils or those who find learning more difficult, than to older and higher attaining pupils.
105. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 maintain strong interest and develop good enquiry skills across a variety of well-planned topics and periods in history. As a result, Year 6 pupils have

good knowledge and understanding, which they communicate effectively in a range of ways. The chief strengths are:

- pupils use a variety of methods of enquiry and sources of information, including the Internet, to deepen their understanding of how British people actually experienced things like rationing and evacuation;
 - they use their very good literacy skills to express this understanding in varied and effective ways, and from different perspectives. For example, they write poetically to express how an air-raid felt, but factually to explain the construction of an Anderson shelter or the system of rationing;
 - the work of higher attainers is entirely independent and original. They bring history to life by interpreting it in their own words and illustrations;
 - all pupils work with commitment and pride. They undertake work at home and achieve a high standard of presentation. Many finish their work in a scholarly way, complete with glossary and bibliography.
107. Good skills in independent enquiry and presentation are a feature of work in history. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have written and illustrated their own 'Bromborough Guide' booklets as part of their recent study of local history.
108. No history was taught in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is good overall. Effective teamwork supports good planning, ensuring that pupils of the same age in different classes receive the same learning experiences. In the best lessons, teachers' good command of the subject is clearly evident in their explanations and questioning. They expect a lot of pupils and provide good, well-organised resources to make the lesson more interesting and meaningful. A very good lesson combined these qualities so that a class of Year 5 and 6 pupils could both extend their skills in using historical evidence and develop initial insight into the civilization of Ancient Greece. A clear, step-by-step development and very skilful questioning reinforced pupils' understanding of primary sources, such as original pottery, and showed them how to 'read a picture' on a Greek plate or vase. Excellent hand-made resources then absorbed all pupils in very focused investigations of different 'pictures' of this kind. Several tasks involve good use of computers. These are so well designed that all pupils work collaboratively and with sustained interest. The good and satisfactory lessons shared most of these qualities, but the pace was slower and the questioning less incisive.
109. The co-ordinator has strengthened several aspects of provision since the last inspection, although the impact of these on pupils' progress has been better in Years 3 to 6 than in the infant classes. Here, the lack of progress has not been picked up because of weaknesses in assessment and the monitoring of pupils' work. The limited time allocated to the subject in Years 1 and 2 and some limitations in resources, such as original artefacts and documents are other factors that reduce the overall effectiveness of learning. Some good opportunities are taken to use the subject to develop pupils' moral, social and cultural understanding, but these are not matched by similar opportunities that develop spiritual understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

110. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 2, standards are average and by the end of Year 6 they are above expectations. This represents good improvement since the last inspection

111. Pupils are making good progress in developing ICT skills and knowledge as a result of recent improvements in resources and an effective training programme for teachers. The latter has raised the quality of teaching; teachers work confidently in the ICT suite and make good use of classroom computers to support learning in a range of subjects. They have high expectations with the result that pupils respond enthusiastically, are well motivated and approach ICT with assurance.
112. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to work at computers. In all year groups, they are expected to log on to the ICT network, locate and open programs and save and retrieve files. Whilst infant pupils require adult support to do these things successfully, older pupils, especially those in Year 6, do it as a matter of course. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and also make good progress.
113. During Year 1, pupils become familiar with the computer keyboard and learn to use a range of function keys. They are systematically taught skills and quickly learn how to alter text by, for example, changing the font, colour and size. They gain skills in 'controlling' an object on the screen by sending a signal via the keyboard. Year 2 pupils use simple word processing programs successfully and insert pictures to enhance texts. They also use computers to generate simple graphs from collected data. Word processing is further extended in Years 3 and 4 as pupils successfully develop editing skills. They successfully compose at the computer and send and retrieve e-mail. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 create interesting presentations on a range of topics. Word-processing skills are put to good use when working in other subjects. For example, pupils produce attractive and individual booklets about life and events during the Second World War as part of their history work. In mathematics, they confidently use computers to handle and make sense of data, for example, by making complex data searches.
114. The school is endeavouring to approach much of the work in ICT through other subjects and, overall, this is working well. There is a good action plan to support improvement, which rightly identifies the need to further extend ICT use across the curriculum so that pupils' knowledge and skills can be applied in a range of contexts. There is already some good practice in this area. For instance, Year 5 and 6 pupils use spreadsheets to make calculations when studying how to budget for a holiday. Some science investigations are enhanced by the use of sensors for gathering information, such as to measure sound and temperature. Effective use is made of the Internet to support research tasks in a variety of subjects.
115. The co-ordinator had only recently been appointed, but is clear about future plans for the subject. Resources are good, with the new ICT suite being a welcome addition to provision. However, this resource is not being used as efficiently as it could be. Specifically it is empty for long periods, despite having the capacity to accommodate a full class of pupils, thereby allowing greater access to computers than in classrooms.

MUSIC

116. At the end of Year 2, standards are in line with expectations. However, during Years 1 and 2, the amount of time allocated to music is quite low, allowing pupils to make progress that is only just satisfactory. During the inspection two junior lessons were seen in which pupils made very good progress as a result of high quality teaching. However, despite this, pupils' standards are only in line with what is expected by the end of Year 6 so achievement over time is only satisfactory. While the time allocated to the subject is greater in the juniors, there is little to supplement or enrich the music curriculum, such as a choir or extra-curricular activities. Some juniors learn to play a

musical instrument in sessions taught by a visiting specialist. However, this provision is paid for by pupils' parents and is limited to a minority. There is considerable scope for pupils to make better progress and achieve higher standards through a review of present curriculum time and provision. Current standards are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection.

117. In assemblies, pupils from reception to Year 6 sang hymns satisfactorily in terms of keeping in time with each other and sustaining the tune, even without a piano accompaniment. By Year 2, pupils identify different types of sound made by instruments and environmental objects. For example, in a game in which the teacher played 'hidden' sounds, pupils identified the triangle, drum, guitar, violin and xylophone. By Year 6, pupils identify different 'families' of instruments such as strings, woodwind and brass and know how these are played. They know that the bigger the instrument the lower the sound and visa versa. They listened attentively to an excerpt from *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* and tried hard to identify when different instruments joined the performance. Pupils have satisfactory skills in following a non-standard graphic score to maintain a beat and rhythm and are learning to read and use standard graphic notation to compose their own melodies using three notes. Pupils are becoming aware of specific musical vocabulary and notation, such as the meaning of the 'treble-clef', 'time signature' and 'fugue'. Discussions with infant and junior pupils showed that their knowledge of composers and different musical styles is limited.
118. There is insufficient evidence to support secure overall judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. However, during the inspection, teaching was satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 5 and 6. In the one infant lesson seen, the focus was on listening; some pupils managed this well, but others had difficulty. The teacher had planned for quite a lot to be accomplished in the short lesson time, resulting in the activities being somewhat rushed and therefore not allowing sufficient time to re-focus pupils' attention on listening skills. The teaching in both of the Year 5 and 6 lessons was very good. Though not rushed, lessons were taught briskly, with teachers making good use of time to explain the objectives and pursue with pupils the key elements of listening, performing and evaluating. Meticulous planning, including teachers' own understanding of the subject matter to be taught, underpinned the success of these lessons. Teachers' very good use of resources, high expectations, and very effective relationships with pupils resulted in them being keen to learn and underpinned the very good progress that occurred.
119. The school is currently without a music co-ordinator. However, there are plans to allocate this role to a teacher with specialist subject knowledge at the end of the year. A small number of visits and visitors are planned for pupils (mostly juniors) each year, which adds to the provision. Music is sometimes played as pupils enter assembly but there are missed opportunities to capitalise on its potential for learning. Whilst the title and performer are displayed, reference is rarely made to the music or time given to allow pupils to reflect upon what it may communicate. Pupils' standards and progress are not formally assessed and no specific provision is made for pupils who may be particularly talented in the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

120. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are in line with what is expected. Good progress during the juniors results in pupils achieving above average standards in dance, games and swimming by the end of Year 6. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in gymnastics.

121. Year 2 pupils develop games skills as they learn to roll, throw and catch a ball. They are taught how to control the ball's movement and direction, individually and whilst working with a partner. They learn techniques for bouncing and catching different sized balls whilst walking, and bounce and roll balls to a partner, increasing the distance between them as they become more skilled.
122. By Year 6, pupils demonstrate good skills in passing, catching and travelling with a ball. In games, they demonstrate good positional sense and the ability to be effective 'off the ball'. Pupils are developing a good awareness of the importance of 'playing as a team' when engaged in competitive team games. By the time they leave school, almost all can swim the expected 25 metres unaided and a good number achieve beyond this. The school's records show a significant number meet the requirements for an award in swimming proficiency.
123. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. A noteworthy feature is the opportunities given for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work in order to improve their performance. Junior pupils respond well to good teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They expect pupils to work hard and improve their performance and skills through practise and critical evaluation. Teachers begin lessons with interesting and effective warm-up activities and progress to well planned activities that help pupils develop and refine skills. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 dance lesson, pupils were encouraged to demonstrate control and poise and start and finish their dance sequence with style. In this lesson, the very good links made with the work pupils were covering in history provided a real context for the dance work and inspired pupils. Following a very good demonstration by the teacher, pupils were eager to perform and improve. By the end of the lesson, pupils worked well co-operatively to implement what they had learned about sequences, formations and steps in devising their own Tudor dance routines to appropriate music.
124. The subject is currently without a co-ordinator. The programme of extra-curricular provision for juniors provides some enhancement to the curriculum, but there is nothing to enhance the curriculum in this way for infants. There are no formal assessment and recording procedures to enable teachers to monitor individual pupil's progress or to challenge pupils who are particularly talented.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

125. During Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and attain the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Progress during Years 3 to 6 is good resulting in standards being above expectations by the end of Year 6. The difference in standards and progress between pupils at the ends of Years 2 and 6 is due to the increased time junior pupils have to study the subject, which is double that allocated to infants.
126. During Years 1 and Year 2, pupils learn about the meaning of the word 'worship'. They make a good contribution to discussion, thinking hard about what they might see in a church and expressing their growing knowledge of why people go to church. They learn about significant features of Christian churches, such as the pulpit, alter and chalice.
127. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 investigate artefacts of the Sikh faith and learn about their symbolism. They begin to understand the key ideas that define faith. By Year 6 pupils have a good grasp of major world religions, including Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Sikhism. They make a fair attempt at comparing one with another, recognising

different key features of each, such as the importance of the Qur'an to Muslims and the Torah to Jews. They know about the significance of important religious festivals such as Christmas and Diwali. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 study artefacts from the Jewish faith, such as the Torah and ram's horn, and learn about their significance. Written work shows how pupils benefit from lessons, when they devise their own *'Ten Commandments for the Modern World'* and draw diagrams to show their responsibilities at home.

128. Throughout the school, teaching is mostly good and sometimes very good. In a very effective lesson, the teacher's own interest and enthusiasm engaged pupils to such an extent that they did not want the lesson to end. The teacher had high expectations of how pupils would work and behave and they responded accordingly, applying themselves well and working conscientiously. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 have effective strategies for promoting young pupils' understanding. For example, they introduce the fictional characters *Nick Nasty* and *Nick Nice* to help pupils to reason which one is the Christian. All teachers plan lessons well, making very good use of resources, including those borrowed from the schools loan service. The sharing of the learning intentions with pupils is good practice, ensuring that pupils understand what they have to learn. There is some effective use of ICT, particularly in the juniors where pupils use a variety of Internet web sites to research information.
129. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator is committed and experienced and is available to give advice to colleagues, but she does not have any time to check on the quality of teaching and learning.