

INSPECTION REPORT

CHANCEL INFANTS' SCHOOL

Rugeley

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124168

Headteacher: Mrs J Dale

Lead inspector: Mrs D Brigstock

Dates of inspection: 8-10 December 2003

Inspection number: 255751

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	172
School address:	Wolseley Road Rugeley Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS15 2EW
Telephone number:	01889 256137
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Bowers
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Chancel Infants' School is an average sized school, which includes a nursery. Most pupils are admitted from the local area, and are from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, which overall is around average. Attainment on entry is average.

Almost all pupils are white and British and none are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is above average because the school includes a designated nursery for children with special educational needs who are admitted from other areas of the county. These children have a wide range of learning difficulties including autism and speech and communication. Pupil mobility is high because these children transfer to other schools. In the mainstream school, the number of pupils with special educational needs is average. The majority have social, emotional and behavioural problems, but there is a wide range of needs. The school is involved in two national initiatives; Dyslexia Friendly Schools and the Effective Early Learning project.

The school received an achievement award in Year 2000 and gained the Investors in People award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23067	Mrs D Brigstock	Lead inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, information and communication technology, personal, social and health education, Foundation Stage
13395	Mrs J Illingworth	Lay inspector	
14851	Mr G Laws	Team inspector	Special educational needs, science, art and design, music and physical education
16038	Mr R Grigg	Team inspector	English, geography, history, religious education
16038	Mrs J Bavin	Team inspector	Special educational needs - nursery unit

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Chancel Infants' is an effective school and gives good value for money. Children enter the school with broadly average attainment and standards at the end of Year 2 are above average due to the good teaching that takes place. Pupils' achievement is good. Provision in the special educational needs (SEN) nursery is good, as is children's achievement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is very good for children in the Foundation Stage and good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 because the quality of teaching is good overall, and assessment is used well, except in information and communication technology (ICT), to track pupils' attainment and plan future work.
- The inclusion of the SEN nursery has been beneficial to the school because the level of teachers' expertise has improved, resulting in good achievement for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school, including children in the SEN nursery.
- Pupils' personal and social development is very effective and makes a significant contribution to the standards being achieved because pupils' attitudes towards learning are very good.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher, governors and key staff are good.
- The quality of written marking is too variable between different classes in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about cultural diversity in Britain.
- There is not enough up-to-date computer software to support learning in some curriculum areas.

The school has responded positively to the issues from the last inspection. Support and guidance from the co-ordinator for Early Years is now provided for the nursery on a regular basis. Key co-ordinator roles are developed well and they monitor and evaluate work throughout the school. Standards in mental mathematics have improved. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	C	B	B	B
Writing	B	B	B	A
Mathematics	D	B	B	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Achievement is good overall and very good in the Foundation Stage. Standards of the current Year 2 pupils are above average and they are likely to attain the same standards as in the 2003 tests when pupils made very good achievement in writing and mathematics. Last year's reception pupils did not attain the expected standards in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. Current standards at the end of reception are well above average because most children are on line to reach the expected goals by the end of the year and a significant minority to exceed them. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the SEN nursery class, achieve well because of the effective support provided.

Pupils' personal and social development is **very good** throughout the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall, although learning about cultural diversity is the least well-developed aspect of this provision. Attendance is **satisfactory**. Pupils' attitudes towards

learning, their behaviour, and their relationships between themselves and staff are consistently **very good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Interesting and clearly planned lessons effectively engage pupils and motivate them to learn and work hard. Classroom assistants are used very well to support pupils and accurately assess their learning in each lesson, although assessments need to be more specific in ICT. Although teachers tell pupils how well they are doing, the quality of teachers' written comments on pupils' work is inconsistent in Years 1 and 2. Teachers' expectations and the level of challenge they provide are very good overall and excellent in reception. The curriculum is good, as is the range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of care, guidance and support pupils receive is good. The accommodation and resources are good overall, but the outdoor learning environment for younger children is not inspirational and there are too few up-to-date computer programs to support pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**, with leadership having some very good features. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's improvement, which is shared by the staff. The systems in place for forward, strategic planning are very good. The senior management team, responsible for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, is effective in raising standards and providing an enriched curriculum. The work of the governing body is good and statutory requirements are fully met. Governors and the headteacher work as an effective team and are fully committed to providing the best possible education for all pupils. Management, including financial management, is good. The monitoring of teaching and analysis of data is thorough and informs senior managers, curriculum leaders and governors well, in making their decisions for future school improvement. Currently the headteacher manages all performance management in the school. Some of this work now needs to be devolved to the senior management team.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. They are pleased with the information they receive about the curriculum, but inspectors found targets for each pupil's learning need to be more specific in reports to parents. Pupils are universally positive about the school. In responses to the questionnaire, they did not want to change anything in school because they like it the way it is.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Agree a marking policy that is applied consistently in Years 1 and 2.
- Introduce formal assessments of pupils' skills in ICT and ensure that there are sufficient computer programs to support learning in other curriculum subjects.
- Further improve opportunities for pupils' to learn about other ethnic groups in this country.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is a measure of how well pupils are doing, taking their progress and their capability into account.

Achievement is good overall, being very good for children in the Foundation Stage and good in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are above the national average and well above those of similar schools. Achievement for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school because of the good support they receive.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement in the SEN nursery is good because of the specialist knowledge of the staff and additional therapy provided on the site.
- Children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is very good due to the wide range of learning activities provided and the teachers' knowledge and understanding of how children learn.
- Standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 are well above average in writing and science and above average in reading, compared to similar schools.
- By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in music and achievement is good because of the specialist teaching pupils receive.

Commentary

1. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They benefit from a strong programme of support particularly in English and mathematics. The school's emphasis on improvement is being rewarded with good achievement. When withdrawn for individually tailored speech therapy programmes, pupils' achievement is very good. Children's achievement in the SEN nursery is good because the quality of teaching is good overall and the staff have a good level of specialist knowledge and understanding of children's individual needs. The support of specialist professionals who give additional teaching on site is an important factor in this good achievement. They give effective guidance to teachers in the SEN nursery and the main school.
2. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well because teachers' use of assessments to record stages in their learning and plan the activities to take learning forward further is accurate and effective. The wide range of practical learning activities in both the nursery and reception are well planned, fun and motivate children to learn. Children benefit very well from the very good personal and social education they receive, which effectively fosters their independence and promotes their very good behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Last year, although their achievement was good, all children did not reach the standards expected in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development or knowledge and understanding of the world, because of the high proportion of children with special educational needs in this group. Currently standards are well above average as very nearly all children reach, and a significant minority exceed, the expected standards for their age.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.7 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.8 (15.1)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.3 (17.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The school's trend for improvement is above the national trend. The 2003 results for Year 2 were above average overall. Compared to similar schools they were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments in science were well above average. This represents good achievement over time. The standards being attained are higher than those at the last inspection and improvement is good. Current pupils in Year 2 are on line to make similar gains in their learning and their achievement is good. This good achievement reflects the good teaching seen in the inspection for Years 1 and 2.
4. Pupils in Year 1 also achieve well, but the overall standards are unlikely to be as high by the time they leave because of the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. Teachers' use of regular assessments in the core subjects of English and mathematics is an important factor in maintaining above average standards. Test results are analysed regularly to identify weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This information is fed into future planning documents to provide more targeted support and learning activities in these areas, resulting in improved attainment.
5. In music, pupils are attaining above average standards throughout the school, and their achievement is good because of the specialist support they have from one of the teachers who has high expectations and uses her expertise well to promote good learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they enjoy coming to school. The provision for their personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and the programme for personal, social, health and citizenship is very good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- From their early days in school, pupils are made to feel safe, confident and part of the community. As a result, they flourish in its busy atmosphere.
- The provision for moral and social development is very good and good for spiritual development.
- Pupils' social skills are very well developed as a result of very effective teaching and management.
- Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to learning and are well motivated by teachers.
- Standards of behaviour in the classrooms and around the school are very good.
- Celebration of the cultural diversity within Britain and the wider world, whilst satisfactory, is limited compared to other aspects of the provision.

Commentary

6. Adults make every attempt to involve and integrate pupils. Indeed, relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are a major strength. As a result, most pupils mature very well. At the outset, they are encouraged to become independent and willingly take on a range of

responsibilities appropriate to their age. Lessons are characterised by high levels of co-operation and mutual support. Children in the Foundation Stage develop their personal and social skills very well because of the high profile this area of learning has in their curriculum. As a result, standards are well above average in this aspect by the time they enter Year 1.

7. Nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have very positive attitudes to their work. This is one of the main reasons why they do so well in school and is due to the good support and role models, that teachers and classroom assistants provide. Pupils are ready to learn when lessons start and work hard on the tasks set, showing very good levels of sustained concentration for their age. This was demonstrated in a Year 2 handwriting lesson when all pupils carefully wrote lines from a festive song. Pupils with special educational needs approach their studies positively. They co-operate very well when working in groups. The strong relationships that exist throughout the school help to make them feel secure and valued.
8. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They demonstrate very high standards of behaviour in their lessons, during assemblies and while on the playground. This is largely because adults are very good role models, for instance, by showing respect for the opinions of pupils and in the provision of interesting lessons. There have been very few cases of bullying, but these were addressed in the proper manner.
9. Through various well-planned activities and events, pupils are taught the importance of valuing themselves and others. For instance, in one lesson on 'special people' Year 2 pupils were asked to "peep, but not tell" as the teacher's 'special box' was passed around. Each waited their turn in eager anticipation, showing very good self-control and patience, before seeing their own reflections in a mirror inside the box. Artefacts, such as toys, are used to good effect in assemblies and lessons to introduce aspects of caring. Spiritual awareness is fostered well through assemblies, visits and visitors, together with appropriate opportunities in subject teaching. For instance, nursery children experienced a sense of awe when they observed seeds grow into plants. In history, older pupils begin to appreciate the personal sacrifices of families, for example, when they attended the local cenotaph and spoke in the classroom about the meaning of Remembrance Day.
10. The satisfactory cultural provision is enhanced by a wide range of visitors and out-of-school visits. Teachers take opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own culture, for instance, by inviting grandparents to school for a 'special lunch' and to contribute to history lessons. However, teachers do not make the most of celebrating the rich, vibrant cultural diversity within Britain and the wider world.
11. The school has good procedures to monitor pupils' absences and parents usually co-operate well by contacting the school when their child is absent. The school discourages holidays during term time, but they are a factor in the attendance figures. The level of attendance is satisfactory and lessons start and end promptly. Parents get their children into school at the right time and those children from the nursery line up before school starts, ready and willing to begin work. There have been no exclusions over the past three years.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.4
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Both teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and there are effective links with other schools. The quality of care given to pupils is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. In the Foundation Stage teaching, learning and assessment are very good. Teaching, learning and the use of assessment are good overall in Years 1 and 2, although the quality of teachers' written marking is inconsistent in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lesson planning, which takes account of previous assessments, and includes the use of resources to promote learning, is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can learn.
- Classroom assistants are used very well to support learning.
- There is a high proportion of very good teaching and learning, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2.
- Practice in making comments in pupils' written work is inconsistent in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

12. Teachers write very specific lesson plans that take previous learning and assessments into account. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are taught in groups according to their prior attainment for English and mathematics, so narrowing the range for which teachers plan. The assessments made in these subjects are very thorough, and the results are effectively analysed to set specific targets for each group of pupils. These targets are reflected in planning documents. Lesson plans in these subjects are firmly rooted on the expectations of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies for and help pupils make good progress in developing their skills. The plans clearly identify the learning objectives for each group in the class, including pupils with special educational needs and the very highest attaining pupils, and teachers plan work that challenges them to do better. The resources required, including the appropriate use of ICT and targeted support by classroom assistants, are clearly identified. These resources are chosen to capture pupils' interest and so engage them well in their learning. For example, in a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher provided groups of pupils with tubes of small sweets that they had to sort to make graphs. At the end of the lesson, pupils knew that they would be allowed to have a sweet each if the work was completed, which motivated them well. The planned activities are varied, and take account of the different ways that pupils learn. For example, in a good lesson in religious education, pupils had to work in pairs to classify different types of Christmas cards and give well-considered reasons for their choices. The quality of planning, and thoughtful preparation, is a key factor in the above average standards being attained by the end of Year 2.
13. Teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve are high. Targets for different groups of pupils are prominently displayed and teachers and pupils assess progress against them during the plenary parts of lessons. These assessments are shared with pupils, and when achieved, new ones are set; this is significantly supporting pupils' progress in learning and their good achievement. Teachers challenge pupils to think and find answers to questions, such as why children were evacuated into the countryside during the last world war, and to find answers from information books. Teachers quickly pick up on improvements that pupils could make and expect them to do better. For example, in dance, when concentrating hard on the movements they were making as 'puppets', pupils forgot to tread lightly. This was instantly pointed out by the teacher and led to immediate improvement and higher levels of concentration and effort followed by immediate praise.

14. Support assistants have a major impact on the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. They regularly make notes about pupils' responses and contributions in whole-class question and answer sessions, so that this information helps to plan future work. Class teachers are fully aware of the needs of each individual and organise work that helps them to achieve well. They assess progress regularly in English and mathematics to update their lesson plans so that these pupils can learn effectively.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3 %)	13 (36 %)	15 (42 %)	7 (19 %)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

15. There is a high proportion of very good teaching and this is a good improvement since the last inspection. From monitoring reports, it is clear that feedback from the headteacher and senior staff, resulting in focused training, and targets for improvement are a factor in this. The best teaching occurred in reception and in Year 2. Here the pace of lessons was faster and pupils' independence was encouraged more. For example, in a very good lesson in reception a highly productive atmosphere was generated through the variety and organisation of such activities as direct teaching for one group, plus using the computer, newspapers, rhyming games, catalogues, play dough, white boards and a listening centre. All these activities were effectively planned to improve spelling and the identification of rhyming words. The lesson finished very effectively with learning, for each group of children, being celebrated and extended by the teacher. A significant factor in the quality of learning is pupils' very good personal and social development. From an early stage, children are taught to take some responsibility for their own learning, For example, in reception, children register on to different activities themselves, and these registers are then analysed to monitor children's interests in different activities and to guide them to explore different ones. Teachers' expectations of good behaviour are very high, and they use genuine praise well to encourage pupils to work harder and achieve well. Pupils agree very strongly that they find out new things, have to work hard, that their lessons are interesting and fun and they get help with their work if they are stuck.
16. Where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the management of behaviour is not as good and pupils tend to shout out answers, slowing the pace of lessons, as teachers have to spend time correcting this. Also some opportunities were missed to extend learning, for example, by using ICT, because of a lack of appropriate computer programs. Or, on occasion, pupils had to sit too long watching demonstrations so were not actively engaged in their learning.
17. Accurate assessments are recorded on pupils' learning and knowledge and these are used well to plan future work. Teachers also talk to pupils about how they can improve. However, there is inconsistent practice in making written comments on pupils' work in Years 1 and 2. Some teachers write simple comments that pupils can read and understand. These tell them how well they have done or what they need to do next to improve. In other classes, work is just ticked, or stamped with either a happy or sad face. This limits these pupils' ability to improve their work and does not inform their parents on how well their children are achieving. An agreed new marking policy would be useful to iron out these differences and make this type of marking more consistent.

The curriculum

Overall provision is **good**. The curriculum is good, being broad and rich. It meets the needs of individual pupils especially well and ensures a smooth transition between stages. Both the accommodation and resources are good overall and are effectively supporting learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
 - Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good.
 - Arrangements for personal, social and health education are very well planned.
 - The range of extra-curricular activities is good.
18. All statutory requirements are met. Schemes of work in all subjects are fully in place and teachers ensure that they are tailored to meet the needs of all pupils; this is a major reason why all pupils achieve well. The structured planning in English and mathematics is fundamentally important in supporting pupils' good achievement. Weekly reviews of planning, by the headteacher, lead to consistent approaches to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs, who are provided with effective support, tailored to their needs. Their individual education plans are well written and specific to individual pupils. They focus clearly on the next steps in learning, and promote pupils' independence effectively. Teachers work together as a team and ensure that individual strengths can be utilised. For example, a specialist in music not only plans the curriculum, but also takes a leading role in teaching it across the school. The arrangements for teaching pupils in groups according to their prior attainment in English and mathematics work well and pupils' movement between the groups, according to their achievement, is planned. Links between different subjects are being developed. For example, teachers refer to impressionist artists when introducing 'light and dark' in science. The emphasis on investigational approaches in mathematics and science is promoting the development of skills well.
19. In the nursery and reception classes, the work planned for children clearly reflects the recommended curriculum for their age. Here, there is innovative work being carried out. The nursery nurses, encouraged by the Early Years co-ordinator, have undertaken a lengthy, nationally recognised, evaluation of the curriculum and pinpointed areas where there was not enough adult interaction with children. This led to a change in provision, particularly in mathematical development, which has benefited the children and raised the profile of the nursery. The curriculum provided is exciting, fun and based on the provision of a wide range of practical learning activities. It extends children's thinking and reasoning skills well, particularly in their personal and social development, which is very good.
20. The strong ethos that permeates the school is underpinned by the very effective personal and social education programme. Every year, there is a two-week 'Healthy School' project, which makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and enhances the curriculum. For example, visits from the dentist, a local policeman and the health visitor give additional emphasis to learning about staying safe and healthy. The school's programme of personal and social education plays an important role in this area. It makes good provision for circle time, where classes and teachers talk about relationships and feelings. These sessions encourage pupils to be open about their worries and help them to solve problems through sharing and discussing them.
21. Resources are used to good effect to enable pupils with special educational needs to achieve the targets in their detailed individual education plans. This guarantees their full access to the curriculum and extra help where necessary. Some pupils, in Year 1, receive additional, well-structured support for literacy for 20 minutes each day in the 'Molly Club' and this is proving effective in raising their attainment. There are good opportunities for enrichment, particularly in the arts, with regular concerts and productions. During the inspection, pupils were enthusiastically taking part in a soccer training session, and in a recorder group.
22. Links with junior schools are effective, so that pupils are well prepared when they move on to the next stage of their education.
23. Accommodation is good overall, although the outdoor play area for the younger children is adequate but uninspiring compared to the indoor environment. The development of this area is

a priority on the school improvement plan. Well-presented displays throughout the school enhance the environment and celebrate pupils' work well. Recent upgrading of facilities includes toilets and improved access for the disabled, which is now very good. The quality of resources is good overall, although access to classroom computers is hampered by a lack of appropriate software to support learning in some curriculum subjects. Support staff play a full part in all aspects of school life and their expertise contributes significantly to the very positive ethos in the school.

Care, guidance and support

The school looks after its pupils well and has good procedures for ensuring their welfare. Pupils receive very good advice and guidance, and this promotes their academic achievement and personal development well. The school has satisfactory arrangements for seeking pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Trusting relationships between pupils and adults in the school enhance the quality of support and guidance.
- Pupils' personal development is monitored very effectively.
- The school makes very good provision for child protection.
- There are good arrangements for the induction of pupils into the school.

Commentary

24. The school provides a supportive environment for its pupils in which they feel secure and are able to make good progress. Children of all ages receive good pastoral care. The school makes good arrangements for the induction of the new intake into the nursery and reception classes. Children settle quickly because they, and their parents, are well supported during this potentially difficult time. The effectiveness of the support that they receive contributes to their good achievement during their early years in the school. In all year groups, the very good quality of relationships significantly strengthens the provision for care and guidance. Members of staff care about pupils' welfare and know them very well as individuals. Relationships are characterised by respect and trust on both sides, and pupils, therefore, feel able to approach members of staff when they need advice. In pupil questionnaires, 99 per cent of them said that that there is an adult in school to whom they can turn to for help.
25. The school monitors pupils' personal development very effectively. Some of the monitoring is informal, but successful because it is securely based on teachers' and teaching assistants' thorough knowledge and understanding of pupils and information gained from personal, social and health education lessons. Every pupil has a record sheet on which teachers record any concerns that they have about the pupil's attitudes, behaviour and personal development. This record follows the pupil through the school and provides a very effective history of his or her progress. The school's very good arrangements for monitoring ensure that no one who needs help falls through the network of support. The system of rewards also makes an important contribution to arrangements for monitoring and supporting personal development. Members of staff recognise and keep records of pupils' successes and the whole school celebrates good achievement in regular celebration assemblies. The system promotes personal development well by raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence.. Pupils' work in English and mathematics is assessed thoroughly and the information is used to plan further work to improve their learning, although assessments in information and communication technology are not as well developed. Pupils who are experiencing difficulties are identified and given help that is tailored to their needs.
26. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers and support staff take great care in providing an appropriate, stimulating environment for all pupils. Transition arrangements to local junior schools are extensive and effective. Outside agencies are effectively involved whenever appropriate.

27. Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good overall. Good co-operation between the school and support services enhances the quality of care for pupils. The school has a comprehensive development plan for monitoring health and safety, and has put nearly all of it into effect. There are firm plans to address any remaining issues. Arrangements for child protection are very good. The school's child protection officer has received very good training in the subject and shares her knowledge and expertise effectively with her fellow teachers. Supervisory staff and new members of staff receive good briefings on the procedures that they must follow, should an issue of child protection arise. Parents have good access to the school's policy on child protection, as a copy is included in the school prospectus. The school works closely with the local support services and with other providers of public services, and the very good relationship that it has with these organisations enhances its provision of pastoral care. For example, local police officers talk to pupils about protecting themselves against 'stranger danger'. There are very effective links with the education welfare officer and the school and they work together on initiatives to provide support for families with social problems.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents and with other schools in the area. Links with the local community are very good. The involvement of parents and the community in the life of the school is good and has a positive effect of pupils' learning and progress. The links with other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents give very strong support to the school and make a very good contribution to their children's learning.
- Parents receive very good information on the curriculum and topics of study.
- The school makes very good use of the local community and local area as resources for learning.
- There are effective links with other schools through the cluster system and good liaison with Chancel's partner junior schools over the transfer of pupils.
- The targets for improvement in the annual reports to parents are not precise enough to inform parents on how they can support their children's learning.

Commentary

28. The school receives strong support from pupils' parents, who are very pleased with the quality of home/school links. They appreciate the ease with which they can approach members of staff over any queries or concerns and feel that the school seeks and takes account of their views. Almost all of them come to consultation evenings to discuss their child's progress with teachers. They attend school plays in large numbers and give good support to the parent teacher association's fund-raising and social events. Around a dozen volunteers regularly help in lessons, and other parents are willing to act as supervisors on school trips. The school successfully encourages parents to hear their children read at home and support them in their homework tasks, and it organises family learning initiatives, such as information technology classes for parents. The response is very positive and some of these parents now support pupils in school in learning how to use information and communication technology. A striking example of parent partnership is the 'diary' that parents write when their child, in the nursery and reception classes, brings home a teddy bear for the weekend. It indicates a high level of co-operation between home and school over strategies to promote children's learning and progress.
29. Communications with parents are satisfactory overall, with some positive features. The school provides very good information on the curriculum in the form of half-termly leaflets on topics of study. Parents also receive details of what their children are learning through home/school

diaries, consultations with teachers and written reports. The annual reports on pupils' progress give very good accounts of what children have studied and can do in each subject of the curriculum. They give an assessment of the progress that the pupil has made during the year, concentrating on his or her strengths. However, because of this positive focus, the reports provide very little information on pupils' weaknesses. They include targets, but these are not specific to subjects and give only very broad indications of what the pupil needs to do to improve. Despite this, parents are satisfied with reports on progress and feel well informed about how well their child is getting on.

30. The school works hard to involve parents in their plans for pupils with special educational needs. All parents support the school and their child by attending review meetings and helping with work that is sent home.
31. The school has a very good partnership with the local community. Links with employers are well developed for an infants' school. Pupils' learning is enlivened by educational visits to local supermarkets and to the environmental centre at Rugeley power station.
32. There is good co-operation between Chancel School and the local junior schools in an extensive programme of induction events for pupils in Year 2, which include joint assemblies, activity days and visits for parents. These ensure that pupils are prepared well for their transfer to the next stage of learning. Chancel School has productive links with other schools in the area. It is a member to the Early Years cluster, and, through the cluster is able to explore and share ideas, for example, in completing the Foundation Stage profile.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher's leadership and management are **good** with some very good features. The contribution made by key staff is good overall. The governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's processes for reviewing what it does well and what it needs to do next in order to improve further are very good.
- The headteacher has created a very effective team of teachers and co-ordinators fulfil their roles well and especially well in the Foundation Stage and for special educational needs.
- Governors are well informed and know the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
- The quality of the headteacher's monitoring of teaching and learning is effective in bringing about improvement.

Commentary

33. The headteacher leads the school by example. Her clear, calm and considered style of leadership has created a very good team of staff in the school and is good. She and the governors have raised the profile of the school in the community through being awarded the prestigious 'Investors in People' award this year. The headteacher, staff and governors work together very openly to evaluate what the school does well and what it could do to improve. Decisions are made on evidence collected from regular analysis of performance data, school self-review, the views of parents, governors and staff, and evaluations of teaching and learning throughout the school. From this evidence base, the headteacher, governors and co-ordinators decide their priorities for action, and compile a very clear and precise school improvement plan. The goals in this plan closely match the judgements made during the inspection. It is firmly focused on raising standards for pupils, and the provision of a rich curriculum. It promotes teachers' professional development and their involvement in up-to-date research, for example, in learning or special educational needs. These well-embedded systems for school improvement are a key factor in the standards of education provided for the pupils and in their achievement.

34. The senior management team is very good. These key co-ordinators, for the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics, share a clear vision of school improvement and set a good example to other staff in their own practice. They support other staff very well through regular monitoring, evaluating their performance and keeping their teams well informed of their expectations. Their own subject knowledge is very good. For example, the deputy headteacher, who leads the Foundation Stage, monitors the work of the nursery and has been very actively involved, not only in improving provision in the nursery, but also in encouraging and supporting nursery nurses to take part in a lengthy, and thorough, self-evaluation project called the Effective Early Learning Programme (EELs). This has required great commitment from the staff involved and has led to well-considered changes in the nursery curriculum, based on the evidence collected.
35. The headteacher has provided enlightened leadership in the co-ordination of special educational needs. Monitoring of teaching and standards has been undertaken with a thoroughness that underpins the very good provision in this area. Resources are very effectively allocated and support assistants are especially well deployed to support the learning of pupils with SEN. The roles of other subject co-ordinators are good overall. They write their own action plans for their subjects based on an audit of need and these form part of the school improvement plan. Their role in monitoring is less well developed, but planned for the near future. The headteacher and governors have a very good commitment to including all pupils especially well in all that the school has to offer. Since the headteacher's appointment, the SEN nursery, previously managed by the local education authority, has been assimilated into the school. This decision was not taken lightly. The governors and senior staff had several meetings to discuss the financial and educational implications of the move, which they decided gave better value and benefits to the school. The inclusion of the nursery has resulted in an increased knowledge of the very varied needs of these children whose achievement, from a very low base, is good.
36. School management is good. The school is organised efficiently, and the headteacher is helped in this by an effective team of administrative assistants, one of whom is the bursar. The bursar is up to date in handling and monitoring all financial data in school and keeps a close eye on the budget, challenging any apparent discrepancies and then reporting them and the action she takes to the headteacher. The headteacher monitors this work regularly and is well informed without having to spend too much time on financial detail, thus releasing her to focus more on other tasks. The minor recommendations in the latest audit of school finances and systems have been dealt with efficiently.
37. All staff are clear about the procedures for performance management. The goals and targets set for teachers are consistently focused on raising standards in the school and improving teacher expertise and leadership roles. Since her appointment, the headteacher has reviewed and set all the performance management targets for all teaching staff. The school has recognised that senior staff should play a greater role in reviewing the performance of their teams, which is planned to take place in the next academic year.
38. Governors are active in supporting the school and some visit on a daily basis. Several governors work in a voluntary capacity, helping pupils to read and giving them additional practise and reducing the workload of teachers by filing work, photocopying and other administrative duties. They share the headteacher's commitment to providing the best possible education and working environment for the pupils, and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because they are actively involved in the process of school self-review. Governors make sure they obtain the relevant information and carefully consider all options before taking decisions. For example, during the summer holidays when work was being carried out to improve disabled access to some of the toilet facilities, the Chair of Governors, in consultation with the headteacher, decided that similar improvements should be undertaken for other toilet facilities throughout the school, so saving money in the long run. The Chair monitored this work and the improvements

being made throughout the summer break and there are now better, re-furbished facilities in each area of the school.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	531,670
Total expenditure	510,157
Expenditure per pupil	3,000

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	40,649
Balance carried forward to the next	21,512

Expenditure per pupil is higher than average because of the additional income the school receives to fund the SEN nursery. When these figures are removed the expenditure is broadly average for this age and type of school. The school had planned to create a community room for parents with the money carried forward from last year. This plan has now been altered due to the school's uncertain future after reorganisation takes place in the local area. Currently, the carry forward will be used to pay for increased staffing costs and consideration is being given to improving resources in ICT.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Provision for children in the special educational needs nursery is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and children achieve well.
- Very good teamwork means that children are secure and ready to learn.
- There is not enough use of signing and picture symbols throughout the sessions.
- Links with the school nursery are managed well.
- The provision is led and managed well and there are close links with outside specialist professionals.

Commentary

The inspection of the nursery was only for one day and it was not possible to report fully on all areas of learning.

39. At the time of the inspection there was a supply teacher in the nursery covering long-term staff illness and a classroom assistant from the main school new to the special educational needs nursery. This means that the team of teacher, nursery nurse and classroom assistants had been working together for less than a term. It is to their credit, and a result of the headteacher's skilful leadership and management, that children are continuing to learn at a good rate. In all six lesson observations, the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory, and in two of these lessons it was very good. The very good teaching was characterised by the very good relationships built between staff and children. Staff use specific language very well, patiently encouraging children to have the confidence to use new resources, which raises children's self esteem. For example, in a very good lesson in **knowledge and understanding of the world**, a nursery nurse used questions very well to help children learn and use specific language such as 'click', 'up' and 'down' when using the mouse on a computer program for mathematics. The children involved responded very well to her patience, shown by their excellent achievement by the end of the session, in remembering and using the terms reasonably independently.
40. Children's achievement is good in their **personal, social and emotional development** because staff treat children with unfailing patience and courtesy. The very good example they always set makes a significant contribution to children's learning, their expectations for behaviour and how to conform when working in a small group. Children respond to warm

relationships and consistent expectations by often giving adults a remarkable degree of attention and co-operating very well. Their response to very skilful individual teaching is impressive and on these occasions they pay close and rapt attention to their task. For example, in a lesson on **mathematical development**, the teacher offered a degree of choice in activity. She valued the decision to thread beads and this motivated the child to stay on task and listen to a suggestion about making a pattern of colours, which then led to very good learning of mathematical language such as, 'more', 'less', and 'how many'.

41. For some children, a smile, nod, word or phrase represents good achievement in the key area of **communication, language and literacy**. When working with an adult, children are beginning to use their improving communication skills very effectively. For example, in a session on **creative development**, children were sensitively encouraged to speak about their paintings using glitter, and some made decisive comments such as, "I want that one" or "I very good painter". In two of the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory, rather than good or very good, when opportunities to use extra means of communication such as signing or picture cards, to help direct children with no spoken language, were missed. On these occasions, strengths in relationships and the suitability of the planned activities meant that children made reasonable progress, but their learning was not enhanced as fully as possible.
42. This new team has a good understanding of the needs of young children. The permanent nursery nurse has a very good understanding of individual children's needs. The whole team cares enormously about doing their best for the children. Consequently, under the headteacher's leadership, staff share their various strengths and expertise to the benefit of the children.
43. There are close and constructive links between the school and support services such as the Autism Outreach Team, the Sensory Support Service and speech and language therapists. This has been particularly beneficial in helping the new team to maintain the previous strengths of the provision and in checking the success of children's preparation for working more with their peers in the main school. Similarly, the speech and language therapists have provided sufficient help for staff to begin to use special communication resources effectively at snack time. While everyone involved acknowledges that the development of the nursery curriculum and specialist teaching has been slower than hoped because of staff illness, a good start has been made to meeting individual children's needs with individual 'inclusion' and communication programmes. The headteacher has a very strong commitment to the children from the SEN nursery successfully working with other children. Her vision is of a far more flexible timetable, which not only meets individual pupil's needs well, but also allows an increased 'flow' of children between 'special' and 'ordinary' provision. Meanwhile a significant indication of the nursery's success is that almost half of the children who leave them do so to join 'mainstream' schools.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Children enter the school with broadly average attainment and their achievement is very good overall. Children achieve well in the nursery and very well in reception because of the very good quality of teaching, use of assessment and organisation of activities, which take children's learning forward at a very good rate. Since the last inspection, the curriculum, staffing levels and standards of attainment have improved. Currently the majority of children in reception are on line to meet all the Early Learning Goals in each area of their curriculum and some will exceed them.

Both leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator oversees provision in reception and the nursery, and both reception teachers teach groups within the nursery once a week. Meetings between the nursery nurses and reception staff, take place weekly to consider the assessments of children's achievements and to plan further activities for the youngest children to experience. This is an improvement since the last inspection when links between the nursery and reception were not close enough.

The quality of teaching is very good in reception and good in the nursery and planning is very good in both areas. Teachers and nursery nurses set a very good example for children to follow. They are always very actively engaged in helping children to learn, and provide a wide range of practical, learning activities that capture children's interest. The quality of assessment is very good. Teachers and nursery nurses identify 'star' children every day and they, and well-briefed classroom assistants, record detailed assessments of the skills and learning children acquire. These assessments are then used to plan activities to both consolidate this learning and take it to the next step. There are good induction procedures and all children, even the youngest in the nursery, come into school happily. In reception, children are 'grouped' by age for morning activities in language and mathematical development. Both groups work towards achieving the same objectives in lessons, but the activities designed reflect children's differences in age and maturity. This organisation is proving effective in tailoring the work planned more specifically to children's learning needs.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Classroom routines are well established.
- The children achieve very well because they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions throughout the day.
- Staff provide very good models for children to follow.

Commentary

44. Children in the nursery know the daily routines well. From the moment they are greeted by the staff, they independently choose from a well-planned range of activities. However, they know the rules and do not crowd around areas such as water or sand play because they know that only a certain number of children are allowed in these areas at one time. When it is time for registration they clear away some of the resources they have been using and settle quickly on the carpet. Chosen children take the register to the office. Children in both areas sit quietly to eat their daily fruit and have a drink. They wash their hands before eating, so learning the first steps in staying clean and healthy.
45. This level of independence is taken a step further in reception where children register themselves at the activity tables on tick sheets, so providing information to the teachers on

which children favour particular learning activities and which may be avoiding them. This allows the staff to track individuals and encourage them to use a wider range of equipment. Children's concentration is good for their age because of the interesting and worthwhile activities on offer. They persevere well, for example, in collaborating to complete a 72 piece number jigsaw puzzle. Children are very well behaved, polite, and listen to each other carefully for their age.

46. All staff are very polite and well mannered and provide good role models for the children. Staff use praise effectively to encourage children to follow the class rules and skilfully encourage the shyest members of the class to take their turn. As a result, children take turns well and know they have to put up their hands to answer a question when they are all gathered together on the carpet. At the end of the day, children and their teachers have a quiet moment of reflection. They hold hands to sing their 'Time to go home', song followed by a few moments of stillness as an additional spiritual element to the day. As a result of the good knowledge and understanding of how children learn, the well-chosen activities to promote learning and good use of assessment, children are likely to reach the standards expected for their age and some will exceed them by the end of the year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults use opportunities throughout the day to develop children's language skills and lessons have pace, variety and challenge.
- Children's achievement is very good.
- On occasion, the children in the nursery spend too long sitting and listening to a story.

Commentary

47. Throughout each day, in the nursery and reception classes, all adults model speaking and listening skills very well. For example, in the nursery, children took turns to put their hand inside a 'feely box' and the nursery nurse leading the activity, asked good questions of the children to draw out their description of what particular objects felt like and add to their vocabulary, leading them to make a good guess at the contents. In a very good lesson in reception, the teacher's questions and explanations were very clear when identifying words that rhymed, for example, with 'tight' and 'quite'. Independent activities, consolidated this learning, with some children using their knowledge of letter sounds to build their own rhyming words to write simple words such as 'tap,' 'cap' and 'nap' on small white boards. Other children independently used a computer to add initial sounds to words with the help of pictures and sound, gaining instant reward from the program.
48. In the nursery, children listen well to stories and can describe what happens in sequence. They know how to handle books, the difference between print and pictures and how to turn the pages, telling the story by looking at the illustrations. The highest attaining children in reception have a good 'sight' vocabulary and use this, their knowledge of letter sounds and illustrations, to read words such as, 'pond', 'frog', 'eggs' and 'wet' from a previously unseen book. One child described the word 'delicate' as being "very precious". Younger children in reception can retell a story from a book, turning pages carefully. Most children can sing the alphabet in order and match the sounds to letters. Children in reception are likely to meet the expected standards at the end of the year and a large group are likely to exceed these. This represents a real improvement from the previous year. In the nursery, after registration, and while two nursery nurses are preparing the next set of activities, children take part in singing, rhymes and stories with another nursery nurse. Sometimes they spend too long sitting in the same place and some children begin to lose interest.

49. Most children in reception can write their names, and practised their independent writing when composing letters to Father Christmas in the writing corner. The writing is at an early stage of development, but they know what they want to say and add illustrations before posting their letters in a postbag.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' use of a good range of resources enhances children's learning.
- Children's achievement is very good.
- Teachers have high expectations of what children can learn.

Commentary

50. In the nursery, children learn their numbers from one to five in a variety of interesting ways. They count beyond ten every morning with the nursery nurses during registration times and learn and sing number rhymes and songs such as 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'. Other activities include threading cotton reels and beads, and programming electronic toys to move three steps forward. Children grow cress in patterns of numbers, measure themselves on height charts and handle toy money in the role-play area. The provision of mathematical activities was identified as needing development and highlighted by nursery nurses in their evaluation using the EELs. As a result, the focus on mathematical development has increased, and children's achievement is good. In reception, children are attaining standards that are well above average in number. Most of the younger children can count up to 50 using a pattern of hand movements to help them. Most can count forwards and backwards to 20 and in twos to ten. Children know these are targets for all of them to reach this term. During the inspection, children were learning about repeating patterns and could, by the end of one lesson, confidently predict which colour would come out from the box. The older children can do all the above plus counting in twos up to 20 and could, by the end of their lesson on pattern, use four colours to make a repeating pattern with cubes and small physical education equipment, with aplomb. The activities planned ensured very good achievement for all groups of children in reception. Most children are online to meet the Early Learning Goals and several will exceed them.
51. Teachers have high expectations of what children can learn and this is reflected in the quality of language they model and their lesson plans. These challenging, but not unattainable expectations, such as setting children the task of completing a 72-piece number jigsaw, expecting correct use of mathematical language and reasonably independent use of ICT, are key factors in their very good achievement.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for children to learn ensuring their good achievement.
- ICT is used very well to promote learning.

Commentary

52. In the reception, children are given a wide range of experiences that lead to very good achievement. A great deal of learning takes place in role-play areas set up, for example, as a

veterinary surgery after a visit to Twycross Zoo. One nursery nurse provided African carvings, fabrics and pictures after a holiday in East Africa, which promoted children's understanding of the wider world well. Outside, in the afternoon, one of the adults pointed out the icy cobwebs on the trees and this impressed the children, one of them commenting that she thought they would have melted by now.

53. During the inspection children in reception learned how to make Christmas decorations out of play dough through mixing the ingredients and learning why they had to wash their hands and wear protective clothes. They were very focused on the task and, after good questioning by the teacher, could make predictions on how the dough would change after it was baked, saying it would be warm and harder. Children learned how to use simple tools and the opportunity to promote further mathematical understanding was taken well as the teacher set the timer to an hour and the children counted up to 60 to say how many minutes this was. Teachers use registration times to teach children about the seasons, months and days of the week. Children learn how to pierce a piece of card safely over a soft ball of blutak when making jointed two-dimensional models of Father Christmas. The highest attaining children can recall the word 'evergreen' to describe a tree that doesn't lose its leaves in autumn and almost all children can identify primary and secondary colours.
54. ICT is used well to support learning in the nursery and reception. Here there is a good range of software, suitable for the age of the children, and it is in constant use. The youngest children in the nursery are developing their 'mouse' skills well through using simple programs where they have to click and drag objects around the screen. This was very challenging as the program required them to use very precise movements. Children also have access to small programmable toys, which they can manoeuvre in and around furniture. They are taught how to switch on the television and video under supervision. In reception, children use computers and listening centres with a remarkable degree of independence for their age. They use programs to support their learning in reading, spelling and mathematics. For example, they listen to, read and click on the answers to questions such as "Which is the thicker pencil?". They play games that reinforce their understanding of left and right and get an instant reward from the program when they get the answers right, thus improving their leaning and understanding. They can change from one part of a program to another without adult assistance and have good mouse skills for their age. Pupils make very good gains in their learning and are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of the year and some will exceed them. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards, but the work seen was above expectations. Children have good control over small tools, such as scissors, for their age, and most hold pencils, crayons and paintbrushes with confidence. The children observed outside could ride and manoeuvre tricycles well. All children have access to the outdoor areas in small groups throughout the day. This provision is shared with children from the SEN nursery giving good opportunities for different groups of children to play together, improving their personal and social skills in the process. The outdoor area is adequate for children's needs, but is not designed to motivate them well. The school has rightly identified the provision of a more interesting and better resourced and designed, 'outdoor classroom', as a target in the school improvement plan.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided for role play, which children enjoy.
- There are good opportunities to use a range of materials.

Commentary

55. Both the nursery and reception classes provide and equip role-play areas to a good standard including properly sized and attractively made costumes for children to wear. The 'Christmas shop' in the nursery has a good range of decorations for sale on shelves, a table that children can set for a meal, complete with Christmas paper napkins, and a till containing toy money. Evidence from photographs show that the focus of other role-play areas are similarly well equipped. In reception, the children delighted in dressing as elves and set to work wrapping presents and putting them in a sack for delivery with gusto. They co-operated well together, taking their roles very seriously.
56. The children make models out of dough, use a wide range of differently textured material to decorate their cut out models of Father Christmas and make models from junk materials. They cooked different foods to celebrate Chinese New Year, and then tried to eat these using chopsticks. They have shaped, moulded and baked gingerbread men. They experiment with mixing different paint colours such as gold, silver and bronze. In a very good music lesson, taught by a music specialist, children sang 'Light a Little Candle', with enjoyment, accuracy and good expression, although they found difficulty in clapping in time to the music. Last year all children met the required standards in this area of learning and this year the children are on line to do the same.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average because the quality of teaching and support is consistently good and, as a consequence, the achievement of all pupils is good.
- Basic skills in literacy including for speaking and listening are well taught.
- The subject is very well led and pupils' progress is carefully monitored so helping to raise standards.
- Higher attaining pupils in particular, do not have sufficient opportunities to undertake independent reading using reference material.

Commentary

57. Standards in reading and writing have improved steadily since the previous inspection. Provided pupils in Year 2 maintain their current rate of progress, they are on course to achieve similar standards to those reported in 2003, when standards were above the national average and, for writing, well above those in similar schools.
58. Pupils' achievement is good because they benefit from good quality teaching and support. Close teamwork results in the effective planning and organisation of lessons, in which pupils learn at a rate appropriate to their needs. Teachers carefully plan opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. For instance, they use strategies such as 'talking partners', role play and 'hot-seating' to good effect. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from classroom assistants in literacy lessons, gaining the confidence to contribute to whole-class discussions. Classroom assistants are very effectively deployed, for example, in lesson introductions when they take brief notes on identified pupils' responses to aid teachers in their assessment of how pupils are progressing. There is also very good leadership and management of the subject, which keeps teachers and pupils focused upon improvement. Such provision creates very positive attitudes to learning among pupils who enjoy their lessons.

59. The teaching of basic literacy skills is good because teachers have a thorough understanding of appropriate methods. However, opportunities for higher attaining pupils to undertake independent reading using information sources are limited because teachers provide them with information books within their classrooms rather than allowing this group of pupils to use the school library independently. Overall, the quality of teaching is good with some very good practice in Year 2. Generally, teachers make very effective use of resources, such as 'phonic frames', which maintain pupils' interests. In one very good example, pairs of Year 2 pupils worked on a 'rhyming words' computer program as part of their literacy lesson. They listened carefully to the electronic instructions and took great delight when they were able to identify and drag the correct words into the 'rhyming pot', exclaiming "Yes, we've done it" and quietly congratulating each other. These experiences build important self-esteem and social skills.
60. The current school focus on raising standards further in writing is beginning to have an impact. The higher attaining pupils have a wide range of writing styles for their age using a joined style, and accurately use a good range of punctuation including some attempts at using apostrophes. Spelling is good and pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell unfamiliar words. On the basis of thorough assessment, clear and specific targets are set for pupils to improve their writing, for instance, in punctuation and spelling, and the co-ordinator monitors assessments of these closely in order to track pupils' achievements and raise teachers' and pupils' expectations further. Her very effective leadership and management have been instrumental in helping to bring about improvements in the provision and pupils' achievement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Literacy skills are used well in other subjects. This was illustrated in a design and technology lesson when Year 2 pupils were able to write instructions on how to make puppets for Year 1 pupils, learning the importance of clarity, brevity and the use of visual cues such as arrows.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and by the end of Year 2 standards are above the national average and well above those of similar schools.
- The quality of teachers' planning and use of resources in their delivery of lessons are good.
- Marking practice is inconsistent between year groups.
- ICT is used well to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

62. Pupils attained well above average standards in Year 2 in the national tests and currently their attainment is above average. This represents good achievement over time and reflects the findings from the last inspection. The higher and average attaining pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of number and can count in groups of three, five and eleven. They can quickly derive ways of making a number such as 30 using known addition and subtraction facts in their heads, and give examples of multiples of five and ten, going into the high hundreds. This represents good improvement since the last inspection when mental skills using number needed further development. Pupils' understanding of data handling is very good and they can interpret bar charts, pictograms, tables and pie charts. They have a satisfactory level of understanding of simple fractions. Analyses of test data reveals that pupils are not so secure on finding missing numbers; for example, 5 and $N = 11$.
63. Standards in Year 1 are below average overall, but pupils' achievement is still good. There is a large group of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. Average and lower attaining pupils can say the number that is ten more or less than another number, recognise

odd and even numbers and can count in twos up to ten. They are learning to tell 'o'clock' and 'half past' times.

64. The quality of teaching seen is good. One excellent lesson was seen. Pupils in both Years 1 and 2 are taught in groups according to their prior attainment for mathematics. Teachers' planning is very specific for each group and firmly based on the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons start with a brisk mental mathematics session when pupils practise skills in number and teachers target particular pupils with questions to assess and record their understanding of the concepts being practised. During these sessions, all pupils are actively involved in question and answer sessions. Lessons and resources are well organised and chosen to capture pupils' attention, for example, using small sweets to make simple graphs and charts. Classroom assistants are well briefed to support individuals or groups with special educational needs within each class and these pupils achieve well. Worksheets to support learning in the classroom are regularly taken for homework and this effectively involves parents in their children's learning.

Example of outstanding practice

In an excellent lesson on data handling for the higher attaining pupils in Year 2, pupils were being taught how to gather, display and interpret information in the third lesson of the week on this topic.

This lesson moved at a tremendous pace. After the mental starter, the teacher reminded pupils that the Chair of the PTFA wanted to know what flavour crisps to buy for the Christmas disco. Pupils' interest was immediately engaged because there was 'something in it for them'. With the resources and information they had obtained from a survey ready, one group immediately entered their information into the computer and began producing a range of horizontal and vertical bar charts and pie charts. The average attainers worked with the teacher to make tally charts for the first time while others made tick charts. The classroom assistant helped the lower attainers finish their pictogram, to be displayed in the classroom, adding status to their work. Pupils worked quickly, productively and accurately, spurred on by the teacher's quiet insistence on high standards. In the excellent plenary, the teacher praised the good work completed, gave brief demonstrations from each group and swiftly followed this with excellent questioning to draw out what pupils had to do next. The teacher also investigated problems such as labelling the wrong axes and taught pupils how to rectify these. Finally pupils recapped the key vocabulary they had learned. Excellent learning and assessment took place and pupils' achievement was very good.

65. The scrutiny of work shows there is inconsistent practice in marking between classes. All teachers consistently use a code to show if pupils' work is independent or if they had support to complete tasks. All teachers also tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do next. However, whereas some teachers put helpful comments on pupils' books that inform them and their parents how well they did their work, other books are just ticked or stamped to show pleasure or displeasure and this does not help these pupils to improve.
66. The leadership and management of the co-ordinator are very good. Her influence and expertise make a significant contribution to the standards being achieved. She monitors the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school giving well-considered and constructive feedback as well as giving demonstration lessons to staff from this and other schools. The analysis of recent test results and assessments is rigorous and informs teachers' future planning and target setting. From the assessment information that is gathered each term, the co-ordinator has set challenging targets for each year group, particularly for the end of Year 2.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. Good links are made with ICT, which is used well to support pupils' learning. For example, in Year 2, pupils use a data handling program to support learning about making and interrogating different sorts of graphs. In reception, children routinely use counting programs to reinforce their number recognition.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, particularly in Year 2, leads to well above average standards and good achievement.
 - An increasing emphasis on discovery methods is developing understanding.
 - All teachers are conscious of the needs of individual pupils.
 - The use of ICT for research has not been fully explored.
 - There are not enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on the results of their investigations.
 - There is an over-reliance on the use of television programmes.
68. In recent years, teachers' assessments indicate that standards have been consistently above average at the end of Year 2. In the current Year 2, attainment and achievement are also good. However, a significant number of pupils in Year 1 have learning difficulties. This is, in part, responsible for the below average standards overall in this year group. In addition, the scrutiny of work in these classes indicates that assessment and attention to detail are not as rigorous as in Year 2.
69. In Year 1, written work consists largely of labelling and filling in missing words and phrases on worksheets. The most exciting work requires pupils to work independently, as in their exploration of the senses. The recording of observations is still limited to simple drawings, rather than charts or tables. Many pupils still experience difficulty with writing and this slows down their progress.
70. In Year 2, pupils are increasingly required to interpret information. They have produced some particularly good written work on circuits, and in discussion pupils are able to explain how they work. They enjoyed creating circuits to make Rudolph's nose glow. Worksheets provide the main basis for written work, whilst regular assessments inform future planning. All pupils develop an awareness of the environment in their work on plants and seeds. After a comparison of habitats, they constructed a wormery. The highest attaining pupils are particularly knowledgeable about issues such as classification of living things. They regularly work both co-operatively and independently to determine their own hypotheses. This helps to create a mood of 'discovery' in their science lessons, and underpins the good achievement by all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
71. All teachers are conscious of the individual needs of pupils. In a good Year 1 lesson, three activities at different levels were prepared on the theme of 'light and dark' so that all pupils could experience success. Classroom assistants provide very good support for pupils who need extra help. The planning of lessons is secure, although in one lesson, in Year 1, some key learning objectives were not consolidated strongly enough. In observed lessons, there was not enough time for pupils to reflect on their work or interpret results. Timetabling restrictions made it impossible to observe lessons in Year 2. However, scrutiny of planning, written work and discussions with pupils all point to good teaching.
72. The headteacher who is also the subject co-ordinator is reviewing the scheme of work, which is linked to television programmes, to ensure that it is fully effective, especially for Year 1 pupils. Her review has also highlighted the need to make more use of new technology. There are burgeoning links with other subjects such as design and technology and art and design. Regular visits to local sites, such as the power station, enhance provision. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The amount of hardware and level of staff expertise has improved since the last inspection.
- There is not enough up-to-date software to support learning in most curriculum subjects.
- No formal assessment procedures are in place.

Commentary

73. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall as it was at the last inspection. Their attainment is average. By Year 2, pupils can access data handling programs, entering data, labelling axes and producing a variety of graphs at an above average standard for their age. They can use a 'paint' program to draw straight and curly lines and know how to choose different sizes of paintbrush and fill areas with colour. In Year 1, pupils learn to save their work and can change the size, colour and type of text they write.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned following national guidelines, but their delivery is sometimes hampered by the lack of an ICT suite and so all pupils cannot access computers at the same time. After having a demonstration lesson near the beginning of the week, which, on occasion, can be more 'watching' than 'doing', pupils then take turns throughout the rest of the week to practise the skills being taught. This means that some have to wait for too long for their 'turn' and have to be reminded again what to do because instructions are not fresh in their memories.
75. Since the last inspection, the amount of hardware available has improved and all teachers have had training on the use of computers raising their level of expertise and understanding of the curriculum. There is enough software to support learning in mathematics, but not for other curriculum subjects such as science. This has rightly been identified as a target for development in the school improvement plan.
76. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has monitored work in almost all classrooms and given feedback to teachers on how to improve. She has not yet developed an assessment system that tracks pupils' acquisition of skills from the time they enter school, so that their achievement can be measured more accurately.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. ICT is used well to support the curriculum in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2, there are samples of work in art and design, where pupils used ICT to reproduce their calendars in the style of Mondrian and Jackson Pollack, and for data handling in mathematics. There are few instances of ICT being used to support other areas of the curriculum because of the lack of suitable programs.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected individually and is reported in full below.

Inspectors saw one **history** lesson, but **geography** was not on the timetable during the inspection. Provision and standards for both subjects are, therefore, not reported on in any detail. However, analysis of previous work and planning, together with discussions, indicate that the full requirements of the National Curriculum are being met in both subjects. The Year 2 history lesson seen was very well taught and, as a result, pupils achieved very well. They demonstrated a good understanding of how Christmas today is different from Christmas during the Second World War because they were motivated by a range of interesting historical sources and skilful questioning.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' understanding of Christianity is good. Visits to places of worship and visitors help pupils make good gains in learning about the Christian faith.
- Teachers use literacy skills effectively to support pupils' learning about religion.
- Marking and reporting of pupils' work does not indicate how they might improve their knowledge and understanding of religion.
- The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning about and from religion is underdeveloped.

Commentary

78. Standards are in line with the requirements of the Staffordshire Locally Agreed Syllabus and pupils achieve as well as might be expected. This is a similar picture to the previous inspection and so improvement is satisfactory. The school places a strong emphasis upon developing a sense of belonging among pupils and this has a positive influence on their work.
79. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 are able to recognise words and items associated with religion and recall the outline of famous religious stories. For instance, pupils in Year 1 can identify gold, frankincense and myrrh as important elements in the Christmas story. In Year 2, pupils know that the 'Bible' is a very special book and that, among his qualities, Jesus was 'a very good storyteller'. Overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith is good and has previously been enriched by visits to places of worship, including local Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches. From such visits pupils can, for instance, provide simple explanations of the symbolism associated with a baptism service. Previous work in Year 2 shows that pupils gain a sound understanding of Judaism and how it differs from the Christian faith.
80. Although only two lessons were seen during the inspection, work scrutiny and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the one good lesson seen, the teacher concentrated upon developing understanding by the skilful use of 'how' and 'why' questions related to the Nativity story. This challenged pupils to think about the meaning of religious stories, rather than just acquire factual knowledge. Pupils practise their literacy skills to good effect in religious education lessons, for instance, by writing simple labels for religious pictures. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The school has recently introduced an assessment system, but it is too early to judge its impact on pupils' learning. In their marking, teachers tend to focus on the quality of presentation, rather than what pupils need to do to improve their subject knowledge and understanding. The use of information and communication technology to enhance learning in religious education is not as developed as it could be, although when it is used, it is to good effect.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design was not inspected in detail. Samples of work in pupils' folders and classroom displays indicate average standards. When pupils imitate the work of famous artists, they show good appreciation of style and form. For example, pupils in Year 1 use strong geometric lines in the style of Mondrian. Their work on 'light and dark' in science is enhanced by interpretations of impressionists such as Van Gogh and Monet. The use of pointillism as a technique produced some images that lacked impact. **Design and technology** was sampled, as it was not on the timetables during the inspection. Pupils in Year 2 have produced some three-dimensional work on puppets to link in with their literacy (Pinocchio) and dance interpretations. In both subjects, teachers' plans indicate that an appropriate curriculum is being delivered.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Standards are above the national expectation.
- The school has a commitment to regular public performance.

Commentary

81. The quality of teaching is good overall. Standards in music are the result of the effective work of the co-ordinator; a music specialist who leads from the front. She teaches singing to all classes and her very good teaching leads to significant pupil progress. She teaches the importance of having good phrasing and diction when singing and this technical skill raises standards. This does not inhibit the level of fun generated. The good achievement is further reinforced because she also teaches pupils in the reception class, who enter Year 1 with a good understanding of simple, basic principles. Singing in assemblies is of uniformly good quality.
82. Classroom teachers also conduct their own music lessons, where the overall impact is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, but the lack of subject expertise sometimes results in tentative approaches to more technical aspects of performance. Pupils in Year 1 can tap rhythms and appreciate the different sounds made when listening to different instruments. They enjoy accompanying their own singing with untuned percussion instruments. In Year 2, composition skills begin to emerge and pupils develop graphical notation to record their own musical patterns.
83. The strong teamwork in the school results in well-directed support for teachers when they are unsure. A very positive feature is the role of support assistants, who maintain a record of pupil contributions in lessons. The co-ordinator moderates provision regularly, and has introduced a new course with an inbuilt assessment structure. The development plan includes a greater focus on self-assessment, although the use of ICT has not yet been fully explored.
84. Provision is enhanced by public performances that are held at least once per term. This involves all pupils, who sing, play an instrument or dance. The recorder group meets weekly. During the inspection, 14 pupils attended and confidently recognised minims, crotchets, quavers, rests and the value of dotted notes. Instrumental ensembles from the local education authority visit the school to play for children.
85. There is good improvement since the last inspection. A number of initiatives have been instituted, and standards are now higher.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- Progress is more rapid in Year 2 than in Year 1.

Commentary

86. Three lessons were observed during the inspection. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and overall standards are in line with expectations.
87. Pupils in Year 1 show reasonable control when learning how to strike a ball with a bat. In a dance lesson, pupils in Year 2 devised 'puppet dances' based on the story of Pinocchio. They linked stiff and floppy movements, one pupil acting as the 'puppeteer'. Pupils showed good levels of co-operation and responded well to the challenge. Year 2 pupils also produced high quality gymnastic sequences in a very good lesson. They displayed control and poise, using apparatus with great imagination. As a result, they achieve well and are reaching standards above those expected for their age in gymnastics.
88. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. In all lessons health and safety issues are observed rigorously. Pupils are expected to dress appropriately and use space well so that they do not impede others. Their very positive attitudes ensure that they follow instructions very carefully and approach activities with enthusiasm. In dance and gymnastics this is often accompanied by flair and ambition. Teachers make good use of pupil demonstrations to highlight key elements of technique or interpretation. However, pupils do not evaluate precisely their own performance or that of other pupils in the group. Teaching assistants are very effective in helping pupils to develop their skills because they know what the teacher plans to work on.
89. The co-ordinator has only been in post for a few weeks. Already she has demonstrated considerable commitment despite significant management responsibilities in other areas of the curriculum. As yet, there have been no opportunities for monitoring provision. All teachers have undertaken training in aspects of physical education in the past two years. They are following sensible schemes of work, although assessment has not been formalised.
90. A number of sports coaches from outside organisations support activities such as soccer and athletics. The inclusive philosophy of the school results in the participation of all pupils in an annual sports day, where the competitive element is retained. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' skills in personal and social development are above expectations and their achievement is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Assessment procedures are in place, although they are at too early a stage of development to be having a significant impact on achievement.

Commentary

91. By Year 2, pupils listen intently to what other pupils and teachers say and their behaviour is very good. They learn how to respect each other's feelings and take pride in each other's achievements. They know how to stay healthy and avoid dangerous situations at an appropriate level for their age, for example, knowing that only prescribed medicines are for their use. Children in the Foundation Stage learn the conventions of good manners from the beginning of their school life particularly in sharing activities with other children and taking their turn.
92. Teachers plan circle time activities regularly and pupils learn that their views are heard and respected. Teachers use stories well to make their teaching points. In a very good lesson in Year 2, the teacher, very successfully, involved all pupils in sharing their strengths and

achievements with a partner. This resulted in their improved understanding of others and a real feeling of celebration and pride. In another very good lesson in reception, the joint exploration by the teacher and children of the reasons why people gave presents to each other was a real strength and made the children reflect on why people cared for each other. From children's entry into the nursery, personal and social education has a high profile and is an important factor in their achievement throughout the school.

93. Healthy eating is encouraged and eating and drinking are well-behaved, social activities. Each year the 'Life Caravan' visits school, and pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy at an appropriate level for their age.
94. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator keeps a very comprehensive set of records showing how the curriculum is planned and delivered and the additional activities that take place to enhance pupils' learning. The policy is very good and is celebrated on the local education authority's website as an example to other schools.
95. The co-ordinator has recently introduced an assessment package for the whole school so that pupils' attainment in each aspect of the curriculum can be reviewed each half term. It is too early for this to have a significant impact in helping to improve pupils' achievement.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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