

INSPECTION REPORT

MOULTON SCHOOL

Northwich, Cheshire

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111052

Headteacher: Mr D Coulbeck

Lead inspector: Mr Clive Davies

Dates of inspection: 24- 26th May 2004

Inspection number: 256974

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	195
School address:	School Lane Moulton Northwich Cheshire
Postcode:	CW9 8PD
Telephone number:	01606 592182
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G W Scott
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Moulton is an average sized primary school situated in Cheshire. It serves a fairly affluent community with the number of pupils entitled to school meals free of charge being below the national average. There are no pupils attending whose home language is not English and there are very few children from a non-British background. Although a few children start and leave school at times other than at the beginning of reception and end of Year 6, the pupil mobility rate is low. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs list is well below average but the number of pupils with statements for special needs is about average. When the majority of children first start school their academic and personal skill levels are above those expected for their age. This is especially the case for children's mathematical skills. The school was awarded a School Achievement Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark and an Artmark Silver in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3639	Clive Davies	Lead inspector	science, information and communication technology, foundation stage of learning
9883	Brian Sylvester	Lay inspector	
27777	Rob Greenall	Team inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education
33225	Liz Greensides	Team inspector	mathematics, geography, history, religious education, special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a very good school with many impressive features. All pupils achieve well with the older, more able pupils achieving very well. The staff's commitment to each and every pupil is an outstanding feature. The headteacher's charismatic style of leadership supports and challenges staff resulting in all working to a common purpose. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership very effectively combines academic rigour with strong care and support for all staff and pupils.
- The school successfully evokes in pupils a love for literature.
- All pupils are being challenged effectively resulting in high levels of achievement in literacy, numeracy, science and art.
- More able pupils achieve very well in writing with special attention given to creativity.
- The pupils' enthusiastic attitudes to learning are helping them to make rapid progress.
- Pupils are provided with wide ranging artistic experiences resulting in standards in art being high.
- The school currently lacks the resources to ensure that pupils' skills in, and use of, information and communication technology (ICT) are impacting on the rest of the curriculum.

The school was last inspected in April 1998 and it has made good progress since that time. All the main issues identified at that time have been dealt with appropriately, although there is still work to be done to improve provision in ICT. Pupils of all abilities now achieve much better with particular strengths noted in pupils' ability to make full use of their literacy skills in a range of ways.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Standards have been high for many years with pupils in Years 3 to 6 making particularly good progress in literacy, numeracy and science. The school's National Curriculum test results have frequently been in the top 5 per cent nationally. **All groups of pupils achieve well, with more able pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieving exceptionally well.** The table below shows how well Year 6 pupils have been performing over the past few years.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	A	A	A
mathematics	C	A*	A*	A*
science	B	A*	A*	A*

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

When children first start in the reception many display mature personal and academic skills with strengths noted in their mathematical understanding. During their first year at school they make good progress with the vast majority attaining the early learning goals expected for their age in all six areas of learning. Approximately a quarter of the children move beyond this. In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue making good progress with standards in reading being particularly impressive. In Years 3 to 6 the more able pupils achieve very well and produce some outstanding work especially in creative writing, science and art. They read widely and make excellent use of this in their own written work. Pupils with special educational needs, across the school, are very well supported and make good progress resulting in only a few pupils not attaining at the expected level for their age in National

Curriculum tests for 7 and 11-year-olds. Standards in art are good and well above national expectations. Pupils make good use of their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, which help to raise standards in geography, history and religious education.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Pupils have an enthusiasm for learning and this is helping them to make very good progress. There is little time lost to any disruptive behaviour in classrooms and this maximises the time available for pupils to learn. The creation of a school council has enabled the pupils to have an important say in issues about school life. Pupils are polite, well mannered and a joy to spend time with. Pupils have a good depth of knowledge about the lives of people who have different faiths and cultural traditions to their own.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good. Pupils make effective use of their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum although a lack of resources is preventing the same impact in the use of ICT across all subjects. The school gives high priority to creativity and there is good use made of the local environment to enrich the curriculum. **The quality of teaching is good with many very good features. It is having a very positive impact on pupils' learning.** There are a considerable number of strengths in the teaching, especially the challenge provided for more able pupils. Pupils are provided with good information about what they need to do next in order to improve with targets being used effectively in this respect. Teachers' planning and preparation are exceptionally well organised to meet the needs of pupils of different ability. Pupils work hard and take a great deal of pride in their achievements. They are well cared for with careful consideration given to their personal and academic needs and progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher is at the heart of the school and has gained the respect of all associated with it. His leadership is outstanding providing staff with clear guidance and support whilst putting appropriate emphasis on challenge and success. There is a steadfast focus on the achievement of pupils and a strong sense of celebration and enjoyment about the work they produce. The governors are very knowledgeable and demonstrated, through their handling of school's recent extension, that they have very clear understanding about how the school is getting the most value from its spending.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents think very highly of this school and value the way the school is led and managed. They appreciate that their children are educated in a safe environment and are very well cared for. They believe they play an important part in their children's education and provide effective support for the work their children do at home. The pupils love their school and feel that, through the school council, they have a strong voice in school life.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve resource levels for ICT so that pupils can improve their ICT skills and make greater use of these skills across the curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

All groups of pupils achieve well, with more able pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieving exceptionally well. This has resulted in standards being high in English, mathematics, science and art and design.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test results for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils have been well above the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science for many of past few years.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in Years 3 to 6.
- The school successfully evokes in pupils a love for literature.
- More able pupils' writing is extremely impressive.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics and science is used to good effect in helping them with investigations and problem solving.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well.
- Children in the reception class make good progress and are provided with a good start to their education.
- Pupils make good use of their literacy and numeracy across the curriculum although this is not the case for ICT.

Commentary

- 1 The National Curriculum test results for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, over the past four years, show that the school's performance has often been in the top 5 per cent nationally. This has been especially the case for writing in Year 2 and for mathematics and science in Year 6. In 2003, for example, 84 per cent of Year 6 pupils attained at the higher level (Level 5) in mathematics, 87 per cent did so in science and 61 per cent did so in English. In each case this was more than double the national average. In addition, relatively few pupils fail to attain the expected level for their age (Level 4). Although the results have not been quite as impressive in Year 2, pupils' performance in writing has been very good with twice the national average attaining at the higher level (Level 3) in 2003. The table below reflects the good results with Year 6 pupils in 2003 averaging more than a year above the national expectation in English, mathematics and science. This is a very positive picture.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.9 (15.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.3 (14.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.9 (16.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.9 (28.9)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	30.9 (30.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	32.0 (32.1)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 2 When taking account of the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and comparing it to their attainment at the end of Year 6 there has been very good gains made. This is because the vast majority have made rapid progress and achieved very well. The good foundations laid in reception, Year 1 and 2 pay dividends as pupils move through Years 3 to 6. The very good achievement applies to all pupils of different abilities. More able pupils make impressive headway because of the challenge that is provided for them. In the meantime lower attaining pupils, including those on the special educational needs list, are very well supported ensuring that they make good progress. When looking at the national statistics for attainment in Year 6 compared with Year 2 the school's performance in 2003 is in the top 5 per cent nationally for mathematics and science and is well above average for English.
- 3 Throughout the school, one of the most striking and exciting features is the way pupils deal with literature. From very early on pupils are introduced to a range of authors, encouraged to describe their feelings about the types of books they read and to share their thoughts with others. By the time they are in Years 5 and 6 pupils have a deep knowledge of a range of authors and can talk with some authority about their styles. One of the most exciting features is the way pupils use their knowledge of the styles of different authors to develop their own ideas in writing. This is happening throughout the school and reaches a particularly mature level in Years 3 to 6. In Year 3, for example, pupils use Kevin Crossley-Holland's 'Sea Tongue' to inspire them while in Year 5 pupils use Berlie Doherty's 'The Midnight Man' as the basis for their own writing. The headteacher takes a very strong lead and encourages staff to read, at personal level, books that are aimed at widening their experiences and thinking. This has resulted in the staffroom being a place where staff bring in their own books to share with their colleagues.
- 4 Partly as a result of being steeped in literature and partly because of the challenge and support provided for them more able pupils' writing is extremely exciting. There are thrilling extracts of mature work composed by Year 1 based on the book, 'Where the Wild Things Are'. Pupils have been clearly inspired by the story and write imaginatively and, at times extendedly. In Year 2, where pupils have been reading 'Alice in Wonderland', there are some lively letters written to Alice warning her of 'the dangers of drinking from strange bottles'. By Year 4 work samples reflect some powerful and inspirational teaching. Pupils' work is consistently based in literature and often captures the quality, as well as the style, of the author. The writing has great expressive quality, with original use of syntax and strong, evocative vocabulary. Pupils' writing has imaginative vitality having being honed from a series of drafts. In Year 6 the same quality of excellence exists. Pupils show an extraordinary mature literary sensibility and an ability to capture and use the style of a particular author. For example, in the retelling of 'The Highwayman' pupils show a capacity to use first person narrative to bring out inner motivation and feeling. The written work reflects the undoubted talents of the pupils, which is carefully nurtured by inspirational teaching, especially of imaginative literature, together with a strong partnership between home and school.
- 5 Standards in mathematics and science are high. Pupils are helped to improve their knowledge and understanding of basic number work as well as scientific facts. This serves as a good platform for helping pupils to cope with problems in mathematics and investigations in science. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to practise their number work in a variety of games and mental agility work at the beginning of lessons. As a result they are increasingly able to apply their basic mathematical knowledge and understanding to a range of mathematical situations. By Year 6 pupils have developed different ways of solving mathematical problems and try out their own ideas to see which work best. Many competently give their reasons for how they reach their answers. When problem solving, older pupils make good links between aspects of mathematics - for example, decimals, percentages and fractions - and can often use these at will and by choice. In science, pupils are taught the basis of fair testing from very early on and are encouraged to carry out practical tasks to test out their scientific hypotheses. As a result pupils are confident of their ability to carry out investigations on their own or with partners because they have a good

understanding of how to isolate variables and to check their results carefully by the time they reach Year 6.

- 6 Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the targets within their individual education plans, and, where relevant, their statements. This is because work is carefully and specifically matched to their needs. Class teachers ensure that support staff are well briefed, and together with the special educational needs co-ordinator they play a significant role in meeting the individual needs of these pupils, enabling them to make good progress. As a result, pupils with special educational needs often achieve standards in line with national expectations. The trained co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils is at the early stages of identifying the needs of these pupils and integrating specific provision throughout the curriculum. Tracking and assessment data shows that the achievement of these pupils is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6.
- 7 Children in the reception class make good progress, especially in the areas of communication, language and literacy and creativity. In all aspects of their work children are encouraged to talk about their ideas and to offer suggestions about books they read or the work they are engaged with. The imaginative teaching is helping the children to be open about offering ideas and this is helping to create a classroom environment where children feel secure about moving into make-believe or imagined world. The enthusiasm children show for their work spills over into their home life with children regularly bringing in items from home that is relevant to the work they are doing in school.
- 8 There is effective use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in several curriculum areas. Pupils regularly carry out research for work they are carrying out in science, history, geography and religious education. In Year 6, for example there are excellent examples of pupils writing a letter home as an evacuee and other examples of pupils keeping a blitz diary as part of their historical studies. One of the most extraordinary examples is from Year 4 pupils, as part of their personal development, writing about a 'different day', which came about as a result of pupils' discussion of the statement, 'we are all equally different'. Some pupils had spent an extended period of time covering their eyes whilst others had covered their ears so they could not see or hear respectively. The outcome was extraordinary, powerful and evocative writing, which reflected the pupils' empathy with the physical impairment they had chosen to consider. In numeracy pupils competently measure accurately and record their results using graphs and charts in science, geography and history. However, due to a lack of resources pupils are not provided with a full range of opportunities to develop their ICT skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good and this is enabling them to learn effectively.
- The school council is making an important contribution to school life.
- The school works hard to ensure that provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is good.
- Attendance levels and punctuality are very good.

Commentary

- 9 The pupils are a delight to spend time with. They are very keen, take a great deal of pride in their achievements and behave exceptionally well. Their behaviour in all aspects of school life

is very positive. For instance, lunchtimes are calm and enjoyable occasions when pupils of all ages are able to socialise in an atmosphere that is emphasising good manners but also encouraging pupils to communicate appropriately. On the playground pupils are able to play together constructively, make up games and involve everyone. A significant point was made by a school councillor who said that they used to have 'buddy stations' but they had become redundant in the school. During personal development lessons pupils have the opportunity to talk about important issues, such as race and discrimination. The caring way these topics are handled adds much to the pupils' personal perspective on behaviour in many different situations. The very good behaviour of pupils is an important contribution to how effectively they learn. They are receptive, keen and enthusiastic. *There have been no exclusions in the school for many years.*

- 10 The school council has an important role. Members of the school council are chosen by their peers and each person has a strong voice during meetings because there is a great deal of respect given to each members' point, irrespective of age. There are ample opportunities for school council members to receive and feed back information to others in their class. The school council has been responsible for considering how the new extension could be furnished, how playtimes could be more interesting as well as giving thought to which charities the school should support. The pupils on the council are eloquent individuals who have much to suggest and provide the school with a good source of advice. Staff take the council's points seriously and many of their ideas have come to fruition. The school council recently conducted a very confident presentation about their roles and responsibilities to a number of other schools in a lecture theatre at a local university.
- 11 Pupils' social and moral development is very well promoted during personal, social and health education sessions. The main issues of working and living together are very well addressed and have been partially responsible for the harmony that exists in the school. There are ample opportunities provided for pupils to take on responsibility and to work collectively together in small or larger groups. During these sessions pupils display great maturity when considering different roles and responsibilities that they take on within the group. There is a strong emphasis on taking account of each other's feelings and emotions. This has resulted in pupils, throughout the school, being quick to spot anyone who is feeling down and working at cheering them up. Relationships between older and younger pupils are particularly positive.
- 12 The provision for pupils' cultural and spiritual awareness is good. There are many opportunities taken in a range of situations to enhance pupils' spirituality. Assemblies play an important part with pupils being encouraged to participate and to have time to reflect. In lessons, teachers work hard at enhancing pupils' spirituality by involving them in a range of activities that help them to appreciate the natural world around them. The school has made positive links with a range of people from different backgrounds. Indian dancers and Muslim clerics from Bradford are amongst recent visitors to the school. The school has a number of on-going links to schools in Europe but as yet have not established a link with a school in this country, which has a catchment that has more ethnic diversity to their own.
- 13 Attendance rates are very good. They are well above the national average and pupils arrive in good time to start lessons at the beginning of the school day. The school works hard to promote good attendance and are largely successful in this. They recognise that there is a little concern about parents taking pupils on holiday during term time but have done everything possible to alert parents to this issue.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (96%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
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 provided is good. Pupils make effective use of their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and the school gives high priority to creativity.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good with many very good features. It is having a very positive impact on pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The level of challenge provided for more able pupils is very good.
- The use of learning targets, sharing of learning objectives and teachers' marking help pupils have a clear understanding about they need to do next in order to improve their work.
- Teachers' effective planning supports the learning of pupils of different ability.
- The emphasis placed on developing pupils' interest in literature is paying dividends in relation to their achievement in writing.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is a major contributor to their good achievement.
- The lack of ICT teaching aids results in teachers using inferior aids to help promote pupils' learning needs.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well taught.

Commentary

14 The teaching is good overall and having a very positive impact on the pupils' learning. There are significant strengths in the way teachers challenge all pupils, especially the most able. The table below shows that more than 30 per cent of the teaching seen was very good or better.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	7	13	6	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 The more able pupils are consistently challenged. This is especially the case in Years 3 to 6, where additional activities are introduced at the right time so as to move the learning on for this group. The planning is helpful with the needs of the most able pupils clearly identified and teachers therefore working hard to raise their achievement. In literacy, a modification to the National Literacy Strategy enables the most able pupils to study full-length novels for sustained periods. This helps to excite these pupils' awareness of character, situation and style and enables them to manipulate language for effect. The result is that there are some examples of stunning pieces of writing, such as the chapters written in the style of Dick King-Smith. In numeracy, pupils are being continually challenged to think of efficient ways of solving problems both orally and in written form. More able pupils are particularly good at developing different ways of solving mathematical problems and they can competently give their reasons for how they reach their answers. In science, pupils' investigational work benefits from their being involved in testing experiments from an early age. This then provides more able pupils, in particular, with a secure platform from which to investigate their own ideas and hypotheses.

- 16 Pupils have good knowledge of what they do well and what they need to do next in order to improve. This is because there is a good combination of sharing learning objectives with pupils; marking their work effectively and leaving pupils with pertinent comments that is helpful for future work; and using learning targets to help pupils work at small improvements. In Year 4, for example, not only are the learning objectives shared with pupils but also the teacher successfully talks with the pupils about what they have learnt recently, what needs consolidating and what they are to learn in the next lesson. This is one of a number of effective introductions, which helps pupils clarify what is expected of them. In other lessons the teachers do not just introduce the learning objective but refer to it again and again as the lesson proceeds. Good and effective plenaries also emphasise how well pupils have done. The marking, which is thorough and constructive, is also giving good quality information to pupils about what they need to do next in order to improve. All pupils have learning targets for literacy and numeracy. The individual pupils know these well and can talk about their aspirations as a result. They see these as being very useful to them and frequently refer to them as lessons proceed.
- 17 The quality of planning is very good. Not only are learning objectives identified, but also there are clear links between long, medium and short term planning. This leads to good continuity and progression in pupils' learning. In subjects such as science and art and design it is easy to follow what the intended major skill development is. In literacy and numeracy it is clear how pupils of different ability are to be challenged and supported. One of the key strengths of the planning is the way that teachers link what has happened in previous lessons to the next one.
- 18 Literature, and the enthusiasm for it, is at the heart of the school. It spills over from staff's personal interest in literature to using literature as a focus for much of the learning. The choice of books used with pupils from early on makes a telling contribution to generating enthusiasm amongst the pupils. For example the use of Alice in Wonderland in Year 2 helps pupils move smoothly into a creative world that entrals them. Older pupils talk lucidly, with eyes wide open, about the books they have read. They take the listener with them on a journey into the focal point of the book they are describing and leave no one in any doubt about their excitement and interest. Teachers don't miss an opportunity to use literature as a vehicle for their teaching. Fiction and non-fiction books are used frequently and well to engage pupils' interest in science, history, art or religious education. For example, in Year 1 the teacher has the pupils excited about the journey of the Blue Whale. Year 5 pupils created exciting art work using the story of Sir Gawain as their main stimuli. As a result of the strong embedding of literacy styles, pupils' writing is one of the school's strongest features.
- 19 Pupils' attitudes to, and enthusiasm for, learning is making an important contribution to the way they achieve. Lessons proceed without any unnecessary disruption and therefore teachers are able to maximise the time available for learning. Pupils are prepared to persevere with difficult tasks, which is particularly important for more able pupils who frequently face tasks that at first look demanding. When asked to work in small groups or in pairs, pupils quickly settle and there is very little time lost as discussions develop. This was seen at its best in Year 6, where pupils considered the potential harmful effects of a range of drugs. Independent study is also a strong feature with pupils carrying out research to support work in a range of areas, especially history, geography and religious education.
- 20 Pupils with special educational needs are identified early through effective assessment and screening procedures. They are taught well in lessons when teachers use good support strategies including adapted materials, appropriate questioning, praise and encouragement, to motivate and keep them on task. This is especially the case in English and literacy lessons. Pupils also receive good reinforcement of basic skills in special sessions such as reading recovery.

The curriculum

The curriculum meets pupils' different needs well. It promotes good achievement for all pupils in all areas, particularly in the junior years. It is stimulating and often innovative, and is enriched by a very good range of popular visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Resources are satisfactory overall and very well designed new extensions make the accommodation good.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Ambitious projects make strong links between subjects to give pupils excellent opportunities for imaginative creative work.
- A rich variety of popular educational visits, visitors and after-school clubs powerfully supports and extend pupils' learning.
- The school is strongly inclusive and provides equally well for those who find learning difficult and those who have special gifts or talents.
- Recent building work has significantly extended and enhanced the learning environment.
- Children in reception still lack a secure area for outdoor play.
- Planned improvements in provision for ICT and the library are not yet complete.

Commentary

- 21 The curriculum is well planned to meet all statutory requirements and the needs of all pupils. Regular reviews initiate continual improvement, and curriculum development is very good because it focuses successfully on enabling pupils to find and fulfil all their capabilities. Innovative and far-sighted initiatives often link subjects powerfully to create rich and coherent learning experiences. A shared vision across the school drives this inter-linking, as can be seen in the way the arts subjects are managed as a harmonised and creative group. Creative work in the arts has high status in the school and leads to impressive achievements, such as the huge banner created by pupils in Year 1 when working with an artist in residence and an African storybook. The emphasis on creative achievement is also seen in the remarkably ambitious stories written and illustrated by pupils in Years 3 to 6, and bound into strikingly attractive books. Pupils' skills in ICT contribute to the presentational quality of these books. Overall, however, work in ICT does not contribute as much as it should to the school's cross-curricular initiatives and learning projects.
- 22 English and mathematics remain the heartbeat of this effective curriculum. Having successfully embraced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, the school has adapted and extended them so that pupils have many and varied opportunities to use their well-developed basic skills to support their learning in other subjects. As a result, pupils develop a clear vision of the wider uses and life-enhancing possibilities of these skills. In this regard, developments have been unusually imaginative and effective, as results show.
- 23 The school is strongly inclusive and both the personal and the academic needs of all pupils are central to its mission. Different strategies and resources support those with learning difficulties as well as those with specific talents. Teachers consistently show by example that every individual effort is valued, and they ensure that everyone has equal access to the opportunities provided. The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship both through a developing programme of lessons across the school, and through well-established opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, such as the school council and the 'buddy' systems.
- 24 The school is committed to creating opportunities through which individuals can make positive discoveries about themselves that stay with them and shape their lives. It seeks to make lessons rich in opportunity and to extend such opportunities outside the classroom and the school day. Pupils actively support the very good range of extra-curricular sports, arts and other activities that complement and enrich the taught curriculum. Educational and

residential visits further contribute to pupils' learning and to their developing social skills and independence. Good arrangements for pupils to work with visiting coaches, instrumentalists and artists help pupils discover talents to realise and enjoy in their lives beyond the school.

- 25 A cohesive team of teachers and support staff effectively meets the demands of the curriculum and pupils' needs, and is a strength of the school. Resources for learning are satisfactory. In most areas they are good, but in ICT they have not kept pace with demand. This also affects the resources available to teachers in classrooms. Overhead projectors are used in classrooms that are too light and therefore make it difficult for some pupils to see. The use of interactive boards would help teachers and it is something the school is actively pursuing. The accommodation is good. The new extensions are very well designed and handsomely overcome the restrictions of the old building. This leaves the school free to realise the potential of the former canteen and its excellent field. Immediate priorities, however, as the school fully recognises, are the development of the computer suite and of a secure outdoor play area for the reception class.
- 26 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school pays particular attention to ensuring that they are offered the same opportunities as other pupils throughout the curriculum and fully included in all aspects of school life, and there is an expectation that lessons will be tailored specifically to their individual needs. Although on occasion pupils are withdrawn from lessons to follow specific programmes, teachers ensure that withdrawal is from different curriculum areas over the week and that pupils are given opportunities to cover any missed areas of work.

Care, guidance and support

The school's care and welfare, and attention to the health and safety needs of pupils are **very good**. There is **good** provision for support, advice and guidance based on thorough monitoring. The school ensures **very good** involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good emphasis on ensuring the physical and emotional health and safety of all pupils
- There is a family ethos throughout the school, because each adult knows the pupils as individuals and understands and values their own responsibilities of care.
- The headteacher places great value on the views of pupils
- The school's systematic assessment procedures enable the progress of individual pupils to be tracked throughout school.

Commentary

- 27 The school is highly committed to providing a safe working environment for staff and pupils, and there is a rigour, vigilance and determination to be alert to both the physical and emotional health and safety of all pupils. As a result, the school quickly identifies the particular and specific needs of pupils, and works closely with parents to provide appropriate support, care and guidance. The arrangements for child protection are comprehensive, and comply fully with the local education authority procedures. Regular procedures for general risk assessments are in place, and safety inspections are carried out on a regular basis. This was of particular importance during the recent extensive building work. There are an appropriate number of qualified first aiders and good records of accidents and injuries are maintained. Pupils are taught about their own health and safety through science and the personal and social education curriculum.
- 28 Staff throughout school know the pupils very well, and are quick to observe any personal difficulties exhibited both within the classroom and in the wider school context. They know

who to approach for further guidance, and as a result, prompt and effective action is taken. Pupils themselves are confident to approach their teachers, the headteacher and all other adults in school should any problems arise, in the full knowledge that appropriate support and guidance would be forthcoming. As a result of this very good standard of pastoral care, pupils feel happy, secure and confident in school. This is confirmed in the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire returns.

- 29 The headteacher places great value on the views of pupils, and these are taken into consideration when staff are reviewing policies and procedures. Pupils' perceptions of the school are collected through pupil questionnaires and through the school council, and also informally through lessons and discussions. These are analysed systematically to provide the headteacher with a very good overview of the issues, which are important to the pupils, and prioritised into those which have the greatest specific impact on school life. The school council makes a positive contribution in helping to discuss these issues fully before they are taken to the staff for further development. As a result, pupils grow steadily in confidence and have full assurance that they will be listened to in all aspects of school life.
- 30 The headteacher has a very good knowledge of the progress of individual pupils through the very effective and systematic assessment and tracking procedures in place, and through his discussions with class teachers and support assistants. As a result, there is quick identification of pupils whose progress is slower - or faster - than expected, and early provision of appropriate support and guidance in the classroom. Data collected is shared with class teachers and used for individual and group target setting in literacy and numeracy, and occasionally for behaviour. Where staff place high emphasis on using this information to target pupils to higher achievement, lessons have a greater focus on individual learning needs. However, this emphasis is currently inconsistent throughout school and is not yet monitored for its impact. This has been recognised by senior staff, who are developing a whole school approach to the use and sharing of targets.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is **very good**. The links with the local community are **very good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Strengths

- Parents are given quality information about their child's targets, achievements and progress.
- The school is at the heart of the community.
- Mechanisms for the transfer of pupils to the Leftwich High School are very good.
- The vast majority of parents take an active interest in their child's education, including homework, and this assists their learning.
- The involvement of parents, through seeking, valuing and acting on their views, is very good.
- The parents think very highly of the school and value the way it is led and managed.

Commentary

- 31 The parents hold the school in high regard. They are given quality information about their child's targets, achievements, progress and homework. Parents think the school is very welcoming and that it is well led and managed. The parents' response to the inspection questionnaire was very positive and there was a return of over 50 per cent, which is high. The school has begun carrying out its own parents' questionnaires.
- 32 Informative newsletters are sent out monthly, some via e-mail. The school has a website. At the start of the school year, parents are informed of their child's future curriculum, so that they can help them at home. The pupils' annual reports tell parents what their child knows, understands and can do and set some targets for improvement. There are two formal

opportunities a year, in the autumn and spring, for parents to discuss their child's progress with their teacher. Attendance at parents' evenings is very good. Parents also have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher after their annual reports have gone out. Homework is supplied regularly; it is valued and supported well by parents. Pupils have reading diaries, which parents contribute to. The importance of quality relationships with parents, as fellow educators, is recognised and encouraged. This assists the learning of the pupils.

- 33 The school has a fundraising committee, which works very hard organising successful events, like the Summer Fayre. The money raised is used to purchase resources for the school, to subsidise trips and visiting artists. Parents and grandparents help in the school and on trips. School events, like the termly book week, are supported well by parents. There is a good attendance of parents at concerts and sports days. Parents new to the school are invited to new starter evenings and are given an induction pack. The school works closely with local playgroups. Parents of pupils who have a 'diary', because their behaviour is a concern, visit the school regularly for reviews and updates.
- 34 The school is making the most of its locality and has the confidence of the local community. The Parish Council meets at the school and the Parish Council and the local church are represented on the school's governing body. The Vale Royal Harriers use the school facilities for cross-country events. Classes go out into the locality for village studies and nature walks. There is a partnership with St Stephen's Church. The vicar conducts weekly assemblies and talks to the pupils. The pupils designed a beautiful stained glass window for the church, to celebrate the Millennium. Pupils sing for the local Old Friends' Association in the village hall at Christmas. Pupils were interviewed about their views on the Parish Plan.
- 35 Links with other schools and colleges are good. Most of the pupils transfer to the Leftwich High School. The headteacher and chair of governors of the primary school are governors at the High School. The arrangements for the transfer to the High School are good. Pupils spend time in school, prior to transfer. They also go away to Anglesey in their new Year 7 classes, before they enter the High School. There is good liaison between the schools. There are good links with local playgroups. The school has a partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University. Trainee teacher students carry out teaching practice in the school. Students from Chester University College and John Moores University also come into the school for training. The school is part of the Comenius Project, which promotes international links. There are no links with schools in Britain, which have a multicultural intake.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and motivates staff and pupils to do their best.
- The governors, through their handling of the school's extension, demonstrate a depth of understanding about how to get the best possible value from the school's finances.
- The school's leadership puts high priority on pupils achieving well and there are secure systems in place to check on this.
- School development planning reflects good analysis of the present provision and is aided by effective audits of subject provision undertaken by teachers.
- There is effective leadership of special education needs provision.

Commentary

- 36 The headteacher is at the heart of the school and is very well respected by pupils, parents, staff and governors. He has had a very long association with the school but his excitement about pupils' learning and his enthusiasm for quality work has not diminished. He sets the tone of the school through his very presence. He rarely needs to intervene in a strong handed way but is able to do so if pupils' interests are not put first. His leadership style is one of 'subtle encouragement' that leads to 'gentle persuasion' that is high on support and challenge. The headteacher knows all the pupils, knows what they are capable of and works determinedly to ensure that they do succeed. New staff are quickly into their stride because of the systems and procedures that are in place enabling them to concentrate on enhancing pupils' learning. Parents, through their pre-inspection questionnaires gave a very strong endorsement to the style of leadership that exists at the school. In addition, many went out of their way to express much appreciation for the way their children had been set a standard by the headteacher. Governors also expressed their appreciation of the person who had led them through the recent changes in legislation putting a huge emphasis on how pupils would benefit. Pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaires expressed their admiration for the headteacher and wrote many anecdotes that helped the inspection team gain an insight into the person as well as the leader.
- 37 The school new extension is a testament to the hard work of the governors who fought for the accommodation that would most benefit the pupils. They handled much of the work directly, interviewing architects and builders in the process. They were given a great deal of autonomy in handling the finances and put in place the necessary procedures to ensure that they were gaining the best possible value for money. They made a strong association between the cost of a suitable building and enabling pupils to achieve to their potential. As a result of this high involvement with the extension project it served to strengthen the governors principles used for checking best value purchases throughout the school. Financial management has therefore improved, as has the school's ability to keep control of its finances. The table below indicates that the school's financial status is secure.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	459,409	Balance from previous year	14,461
Total expenditure	465488	Balance carried forward to the next	8,382
Expenditure per pupil	2387		

- 38 There is a high priority on pupils' achieving well. The school is particularly proud of its record in supporting pupils from different backgrounds and attainment. The headteacher has developed electronic systems to help track the progress pupils are making and to identify any areas that need to be addressed. The headteacher provides frequent updates to staff by way of presentation packages and all pertinent issues regarding pupils' achievement are discussed at this point. The quality of analysis is very good with the headteacher using his expertise and experience to help focus staff attention on any issue that arises. The school is aware of distinctive features relating to pupils and use this as a major part of its analysis of how different groups of pupils are performing. The thoroughness of the tracking system used helps all staff to ensure that their teaching is focused on raising standards.
- 39 The school improvement plan is a very effective document, which helps the school to deal with issues it identifies by giving specific attention to the resources required and to the outcomes expected from planned developments. The subject leaders provide effective support by carrying out audits, which then contribute to the whole school planning. Staff are knowledgeable and their audits are focused on pupils' achievements. The headteacher has an impressive form of leadership, which allows individual leaders of subjects to blossom within a framework, which is very supportive to them. As a result school improvement is

focused on pertinent issues and the staff all know their part in ensuring that the area to be developed is supported appropriately.

- 40 Leadership and management of provision for special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator maintains all appropriate documentation and liaises well with the headteacher, class teachers and outside agencies where necessary to ensure that all pupils receive appropriate support. The provision is well organised and managed and pupils are well maintained by support staff. The trained co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils is at the early stages of identifying the needs of these pupils and integrating specific provision throughout the curriculum. However, tracking and assessment data evidences that the achievement of these pupils is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 41 The vast majority of children in the reception class have attended local playgroups and a minority have attended private nurseries before starting school. Their attainment at the point of entry varies considerably but overall they display personal and academic skills that are better than expected for their age. This is particularly the case for mathematics and also for communication. The teacher in the reception has forged strong links with the local playgroups and as a result they have developed a joint action plan to help smooth transition between playgroup and school. Very effective links have been made between the parents and school with many opportunities for parents to visit the school before their children start and just after they have started.
- 42 Children make good progress in their reception year with many opportunities being provided for them to talk about the work that is taking place. As a result most children are meeting the early learning goals in each of the six areas by the time they finish their reception year. Approximately 25 per cent of children move beyond this and are exceeding the learning goals in each of the six areas. Children with special educational needs make good progress and are very well supported during their first year at school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is huge emphasis given to this area of children's development.
- Children work together well.
- Children make good progress and achieve well in this area of learning.

Commentary

- 43 The teacher puts much emphasis on this aspect of children's learning. It is very prominent in all that is happening. During stories the children are encouraged to discuss the main points and to consider their own feelings as well as those of others. For example, after the telling of the story of the lion and mouse children sit together and consider when they were last helpful to someone else. Each day a 'special helper' is chosen who has to 'show' the rest of the class what to do. This helps children to recognise the importance of leading by example. This emphasis on special awards and rewards is an important part of the children's lives and one that leads to children having a good understanding about what is and is not acceptable in school. The children are very excited about the reward jar in the classroom, which they aim to fill to gain their special reward of choosing an activity.
- 44 A strong feature of the children's personal development is the way they work together. They work effectively in pairs or in larger groups and there is good consideration to each other's feelings as they do so. Children are capable of and able to carry out discussions and this is helping them to think more deeply, to challenge each other's ideas and to reach decisions. During a physical education lesson in the hall children co-operated very well when passing a ball to each other or when taking turns. As a result of the emphasis given to this aspect of the curriculum the children make good progress with nearly all meeting the learning goals and at least a quarter moving beyond this point. The teacher and support staff give much attention to this aspect of children's learning and it is working in helping children to achieve to their potential.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for children to communicate together and to listen attentively are maximised throughout the day.
- Most children are able to recognise all the letters in the alphabet, read a number of key words and know how to handle a book.
- Children write their own names very well and can form all the letters of the alphabet successfully.

Commentary

- 45 Children are very confident communicators. They listen for extended periods of time and ask mature and pertinent questions. They explain themselves very well and offer opinions about activities they are participating in. When the teacher has read a story children are quick to offer ideas about what might happen next or how the story could have finished differently. They work well together in small groups and explain things to each other. There are few confrontations with children being prepared to hear what someone else says before imposing their own ideas. This ability to talk in full sentences using a full range of adjectives is a major strength and enables the class to engage in many activities that tests their thinking.
- 46 Children are introduced to a range of activities that they see as fun games to help them recognise letters of the alphabet and the common blends, such as, 'ch', 'sh' and 'th'. Children respond very quickly to words that start with these blends and are particularly excited if they 'spot' a word that starts with any of these blends out of context. Children have daily reading sessions with the vast majority being able to recognise more than 50 common words by the time they finish their reception year. All children are secure with telling a story through the pictures in the book. Children have free access to a range of well-chosen books and are enthusiastic about reading. The teacher puts a great deal of attention on making reading enjoyable and the children respond positively to this.
- 47 Most children recognise all the letters in the alphabet and can write them down with surprisingly few reversals by the time they finish their reception year. All can write their own first and surnames and many are able to write full sentences. Most children make a good attempt at writing a short story with many words being recognised even though they may not be spelt correctly. Most children make a good attempt at using the sounds they hear when writing down unfamiliar words and in most cases adults can read them. There are several opportunities provided for children to engage in writing activities during play activities such as writing down lists in the garden centre. As a result of good teaching in this area children achieve well and make good progress. Almost all attain the learning goals and more than a quarter exceed them for this area of learning.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong emphasis on ensuring all children use correct mathematical language.
- Mathematical development permeates almost all activities.

Commentary

- 48 Many children start school with knowledge and understanding of number that is beyond that expected for their age. Many can count and recognise numbers to 10. They are also familiar with many number rhymes. During their time in the reception class they make good progress and achieve well. They are introduced to a full range of mathematical vocabulary and can recall what is meant by words like subtraction, multiply and sum. They use the correct names for two and some three-dimensional shapes. Good teaching methods are adopted to make this aspect of children's work fun and easy to remember.
- 49 There is very good attention to maximising mathematical development opportunities in all activities. Shapes are used in the water tray, money is exchanged in the garden centre and counting activities are integrated into physical work in the hall. As a result pupils are particularly good at making use and applying their mathematical knowledge in a range of different situations. Careful planning ensures that there are many opportunities for this to happen. The teaching is good ensuring that there are no missed opportunities to engage children in mathematics during the day.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good use made of the local area to help children appreciate how things change and why shops and services are necessary.
- Children are encouraged to carry out investigations and know how things grow.

Commentary

- 50 The school makes very good use of the local village to help widen children's knowledge and understanding of local needs. Children have a good understanding about why shops are needed in their village and who works there. They are also able to recognise the differences between houses that are new and those that have been there for some time. They appreciate that their village has changed over the past few years. They bring their good level of general knowledge with them when they start school and can talk about animals that can be found in different parts of the world and those that are unlikely to be found in our country.
- 51 Children have a fascination for things that grow. In the garden centre that has been created in the classroom the children can explain about what seedlings need to ensure that they grow properly. They know that they must put some water in their seed trays every day but not too much. They also know that different seeds will turn into different plants and know that these seeds will not end up looking the same. They appreciate that their own bodies rely on food to help them grow and they know that when they run fast they get out of breath and can talk about heartbeats. There is much emphasis placed on helping children to widen their knowledge and understanding of the world and most attain the learning goals for this area of learning by the end of the reception year. Teaching is good and making a positive impact on the way children acquire new knowledge.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in their finer physical skills, like drawing and writing.
- The lack of access to an outside area is inhibiting children's progress in this area.

Commentary

- 52 The children have ample opportunities to practise their finer motor skills and have little difficulty in tracing, gluing and cutting with some accuracy. As a result they create interesting models that have been carefully painted, appropriately joined together with materials being cut out with some expertise. They also show satisfactory progress in developing their gross motor skills and the vast majority can throw a small ball half a meter in the air and catch it. They make good use of the school's large hall to move around and dodge each other. They show good control when balancing on one part of their bodies and can pass a ball along the floor with reasonable accuracy, either by rolling or kicking it.
- 53 Unfortunately there is no direct access to an outside area. This is inhibiting much of the work that could happen outside. It also means that the class has to taken into the hall for more formal physical education lessons in order to enhance their physical skills. Despite this issue children still make satisfactory progress overall in this area with the vast majority attaining the early learning goals. The teaching is good and having a positive impact on children's learning.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A great deal of time is spent on helping children to move into a make-believe world.
- There is much emphasis given to developing the artistic skills of children.

Commentary

- 54 The class teacher puts a great deal of emphasis on enabling children to move into a make believe world as often as it is sensible for them to do so. The creation of a well-resourced garden centre is one example of this being supported in the classroom. Children are provided with different opportunities to play roles, such as shopper or seller and the quality of the resources used enables them to prolong the play. In the past the play environment has been dominated activities such as a Giant's house, including a Giant's chair and coins. Where possible, the creative environment is focused on well-loved stories so that children can identify with different characters.
- 55 Children's artistic prowess is given a high priority. The foundation for the school's very good provision for art is laid in the reception class, where children are provided with chances to explore colour mixing and working with three-dimensional materials. Children have been involved in making a giant collage based on stories, such as, Jack and the Giant Beanstalk. They also learn which two colours need to be mixed together to make a third. They are also engaged in observational drawing from early on. These skills form the basis of work that happens later in the school. They also ensure that most children attain the learning goal for this area and that pupils make good progress in their creative work.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Standards are high in reading and writing by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, and very well in Years 3 to 6.
- As a result of imaginative teaching, pupils develop a strong appreciation of literature and do exceptional creative work in narrative.
- All the hard work done to assess and monitor individual progress achieves its aim of enabling every pupil to do as well as possible.
- Good planning creates very productive interactions with other subjects.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

- 56 Attainment is above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. Girls and boys of different ages and capabilities, not least those with special educational needs, achieve well as they move through the school. In Years 4, 5 and 6, most are achieving very well. National test results at the end of Year 6 have been well above average for the past three years. Since the previous inspection standards have been rising much faster than the national trend, and they are higher now than they were then by the equivalent of a typical year's work and progress. This is remarkable, and it clearly reflects very effective provisions that are made rigorous, consistent and coherent by the strong vision, skill and energy of the headteacher and the co-ordinator.
- 57 The drive for ever higher standards in literacy has been strongly supported by the development of more rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching; for tracking individual progress; for setting more demanding targets, and for matching learning activities to what different pupils can achieve. More significantly, it has been supported by stimulating and very focused teaching; ambitious creative projects; an infectious promotional culture for reading, and exciting opportunities for pupils to read and write in other subjects. All that is needed is a more dynamic use of ICT for whole-class teaching and learning.
- 58 Standards in speaking and listening are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Very good relationships across the school encourage the development of spoken English. Staff set a good standard. They work very interactively; promote good attitudes by valuing pupils' efforts, and provide opportunities for pupils to talk in small groups to support each other's learning and negotiate agreements. Buddy systems and the school council extend these opportunities and skills, as could be seen in the assured way council members answered questions during a video conference at a local university. Pupils are less equipped to take initiatives in speech and to frame searching questions to guide their own thinking and study. Planning is relatively unsystematic in this area of English, and the range and quality of methods and opportunities are more limited than in literacy. There is also a relative lack of procedures to assess progress, and of targets to strengthen pupils' sense of how they can do better.
- 59 By Year 6, pupils' skills in literacy have been developed to a high level. As far as their capabilities allow, pupils understand, both as writers and as readers, why texts vary and how words and structures change to fit a widening range of purposes. They detect different layers of meaning in a fiction text, and they plan and draft their writing to strengthen its quality and effect. Most significantly they learn to use their reading and writing skills in mutually enhancing ways. They have developed a habit of reading for both pleasure and learning, and they can

cite authors, books and styles of writing that most suit their tastes and interests, giving cogent reasons for their choices. They are slightly less convincing in explaining how to use books and book systems to investigate and find things out for themselves.

Example of outstanding practice

How the school's focus on literature is impacting on the quality of writing.

An outstanding feature of work in literacy, especially in the junior classes, is the use of pupils' literature. A modification of the Literacy Strategy allows pupils to study full-length novels, often for sustained periods. Teachers use a variety of methods to promote an intensive approach to the qualities of each text, and to excite pupils' awareness of character, situation and style. These methods increasingly prompt pupils to see the author behind the text, manipulating language for effect. This enables pupils to become authors themselves, and to plan and draft and manipulate language to capture the style, characters and effects of the book they have read. In this way, pupils write alternative episodes or sequels to their class novels, sometimes working independently, sometimes collaboratively. They produce texts of impressive quality and make ambitious use of their skills in art, design technology and word-processing to illustrate, present and bind their work to produce excellent storybooks with all standard features in place. The literary quality of the writing reflects inspirational and challenging teaching and shows how powerfully these ambitious projects extend pupils' higher skills in reading and writing. For example, pupils in Year 4 have written a full-length sequel, in five compelling chapters, to King-Smith's story of 'Sir Tumbleweed'. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have read the published text and expressed their enjoyment in written comments and reviews.

- 60 Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Years 4 to 6. Pupils' learning and achievement over time reflect this. No common or significant weaknesses were observed. However, teachers could often make better use both of classroom computers to support learning, and of the plenary phase at the end of the lesson for pupils to evaluate each other's work and their own learning. The chief strengths that account for high achievement are:
- A huge expectation that pupils will read widely and ambitiously and use their literacy skills creatively for different purposes;
 - The rigorous use of very good assessment information to plan work that matches individual learning styles, capabilities and needs at their best level;
 - The constant reinforcement of basic skills in handwriting, spelling, grammar and vocabulary in the context of creative work to develop higher skills with texts;
 - Very good strategies, pace, teamwork and resources to enable pupils to build new learning securely on prior learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 61 As will be clear from the previous commentary, this is largely an area of strength. English and the rest of the curriculum support each other well. This helps to unify the curriculum and to give it an exciting and creative dynamic. The exception is ICT. Pupils use some computer skills well, for example to send messages to the e-mail partners in Germany or to word-process their stories. Beyond this, ICT gives relatively weak support to learning in English.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because the teaching of mathematical skills and understanding is very good
- Pupils are able to apply their basic mathematical knowledge and understanding to problem solving across the whole range of mathematics
- There are insufficient teacher resources and resources for ICT

- Pupils' very good knowledge and understanding in mathematics supports learning across the curriculum

Commentary

- 62 There has been good progress in mathematics since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, so that by the end of Year 2 standards are above national expectations. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is very good, and by the end of Year 6 standards are well above expectations in all aspects of the subject and a high proportion of pupils achieve at the higher levels of attainment. This is because often very good teaching places strong demands on pupils to develop their mathematical skills and understanding rapidly and to a high level. Teachers are very secure in their knowledge of mathematics, which means they make clear teaching points and answer pupils' questions accurately. However, on occasion there is too little emphasis on focussed questioning to challenge and extend learning. Teachers have high expectations for behaviour and attitudes, and this has a positive effect on the work produced by pupils of all abilities who are able to live up to these expectations because teachers are aware of their different capabilities and support them well. In a Year 4 lesson for example, the teacher very effectively adapted her plans for what pupils of different abilities would do in the light of her assessment of work in the previous lesson. This adaptation enabled pupils to make very good progress in their learning about direction and movement in mathematics.
- 63 A strength in attainment is the very good number skills shown by the pupils, who are taught to learn number facts from the very earliest age. They have swift recall of number facts, and are encouraged to practise these in a variety of games and mental agility work at the beginning of lessons. Year 1 pupils were able to explain a variety of strategies for adding together numbers of two digits, and could make appropriate choices between strategies. For example, they were able to find the answer to '6 add something is 18' and explain different ways in which they found the right answer. Throughout the school pupils are taught an increasingly wide range of mental strategies for calculation, and become confident in using these and making choices. Older pupils can clearly explain how they arrived at their answers. Precise mathematical vocabulary, such as 'digit', 'properties' of number, and 'co-ordinates' is used very well by pupils to describe their work.
- 64 Pupils throughout school are increasingly able to apply their basic mathematical knowledge and understanding to a range of mathematical situations, because they are taught a wide range of strategies. By Year 6 pupils are particularly good at developing different ways of solving mathematical problems and are given opportunities to try out their own ideas to see which work and which do not, and many of them can competently give their reasons for how they reach their answers. When problem solving, older pupils make good links between aspects of mathematics - for example, decimals, percentages and fractions - and can often use these at will and by choice. Pupils have many opportunities to use their mathematics in everyday situations and increasingly complex investigations, which are supported by a good range of recording techniques and a variety of increasingly complex graphs.
- 65 When working with graphs and recording their investigations, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to work on computers, and ICT is insufficiently integrated into planning and teaching. It is therefore not yet a major feature of lessons, and is at present under resourced in the software which pupils currently have access to. However, on the few occasions when ICT is used, pupils show that they are confident in what they do, and older pupils are able to use programs such as 'Excel' to present their work. Teachers have an insufficiently wide range of other resources to fully involve pupils and to extend their mathematical knowledge and skills still further. Pupils cannot always see material presented on overhead projector screens, and there is a lack of classroom-sized resources with which to demonstrate during lessons, and this can lead to error and confusion.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 66 Pupils' mathematical skills are developed sufficiently well to enable them to make good progress in other areas of the curriculum, such as science, when they measure accurately and record their results using graphs and charts. There are, however, insufficient links between mathematics and ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high with pupils of all abilities achieving well.
- There is good attention to investigating and experimenting and pupils are confident enough to take risks.
- The teaching is very good and imaginative enabling pupils to learn in a highly motivated way.
- More opportunities need to be provided to enable pupils to use ICT to enhance the quality of their learning.

Commentary

- 67 The National Curriculum test results show that the school's performance has been in the top 5 per cent nationally for the past two years. This is also the case when taking into account the school's results compared with schools that have a similar catchment. In 2003, 87 per cent of pupils attained the higher level (Level 5), which is double the national average. The challenge for more able pupils is as a direct result of pupils' confidence in experimenting and investigating being enhanced through the way the teachers work with each class. As well as the challenge being provided for more able pupils there is very good support provided for lower attaining pupils, resulting in very few pupils not attaining at the expected level for their age over the past few years.
- 68 Teachers give a high priority to investigating and experimenting. This is most apparent in the planning and in the way resources are organised to support practical tasks. Where possible teachers work from a problem-solving base and enable pupils to discuss issues rather than present them with findings. In a lesson on drugs and their harmful effects the teacher provides pupils with opportunities to carry out their own research in groups of 3 or 4 rather than provide the information for the pupils. The science curriculum is therefore enriched by the way pupils are expected to work. There are also very good links with literacy and numeracy as pupils consider appropriate ways of explaining their ideas and are encouraged to use graphs, tables and matrices to present findings.
- 69 The teaching is very good with outstanding features noted. An outstanding lesson is outlined in the box below. Throughout the school teachers give good attention to pupil discussions and maximise opportunities for groups of pupils to engage in talk. There is very effective organisation of resources enabling pupils to have easy access to a range of materials as they seek solutions to practical problems. There is also very good attention to the needs of pupils of different abilities. In Year 1, for example, pupils follow up the work on life cycles by focusing on different tasks that have been carefully matched to their abilities. Similarly, in Year 4 pupils' experiments are carefully organised so that they can focus on identifying different variables. In the case of lower attainers, the variable is the type of paper used, in the case of more able consideration is given to weight and height. Teachers' own subject knowledge is good as explanations, usually at the beginnings of lessons, are clear and accurate. This was noted in Year 6 as pupils asked a full range of questions associated with different drugs and their likely side-effects.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 4 lesson on air resistance and how it slows down objects

The teacher uses a large parachute as an introduction to the lesson to help pupils gain a deeper understanding about the forces of air resistance on an object. This experience adds to pupils' knowledge and understanding about air resistance as they address different scenarios in the main lesson. For example, pupils are confident enough to hypothesise that a 'helicopter' sculpture is likely to take longer to fall to the ground if the length of the paper wings are made longer. The teacher encourages pupils to make hypotheses about a range of situations before working in pairs to experiment. Pupils are secure in their understanding of fair test principles and know how to isolate variables therefore making it possible for them to carry out independent research. There is good attention to the needs of pupils of different ability with lower attaining pupils using qualitative variable such as the type of paper used as opposed to the more able having a continuous quantitative variable such as length of wing. The teacher successfully uses a 'feed forward' format at the beginning of the lesson, which helps pupils to recognise what they have learnt recently and what they still seem to be a little confused about. In this way there is good focus on the new learning that is expected. Pupils are encouraged to take risks and they do so which underlines the positive working relationship that has been established between the pupils and the teacher. Pupils come up with very interesting and pertinent explanations about the reasons why certain objects take longer to fall to the ground. Pupils' learning has been enhanced and all groups achieve very well.

- 70 Although there is good use made of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in science, the resourcing issues for ICT makes it difficult for pupils to have the same accessibility to ICT equipment. As a result there are missed opportunities for pupils to present findings and to set up databases using ICT. This is something that the science leader is aware of and there are plans in place to improve on this provision as soon as the resources allow. Despite this there are isolated good practice happening as was the case in Year 4 who used bar charts to record their findings on how quickly an object fell to the floor.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The resourcing of ICT is inadequate and holding back opportunities for staff to make full use of this provision.
- Pupils' skills in ICT are in line with national expectations but they are not able to make full use of these skills in all subjects.
- There is only limited use of ICT across the curriculum.

Commentary

- 71 Although the level of resourcing for ICT has improved significantly since the previous inspection there is still some way to go before the school is adequately resourced for this subject. The present provision is not helping teachers to work on improving pupils' skills level fast enough and to enable them to make use of these skills across the curriculum. In most cases it is the latter that is found to be wanting. The ratio of computers to pupils is well below the national average. In addition, there are no interactive boards available to teachers so that they can demonstrate to a whole class at a time. Most teachers use an overhead projector in their class but the clarity of the projection is often weakened by the amount of light in the classroom. This is detracting from the quality of delivery and inevitably inhibits the learning.
- 72 Despite the lack of available computers per pupil skill levels are broadly appropriate for each age group. This is because staff and particularly the co-ordinator have worked hard to ensure that the coverage is matching National Curriculum expectations. For example Year 6 pupils know how hyperlinks work and can explain the process clearly. They also use spreadsheets effectively and can interrogate the text. Year 3 and 4 pupils have experience of sending and receiving e-mail and know how to use an address book. However, by contrast there is little

use of the Internet at school for the purpose of research although all pupils in Years 3 to 6 know how to access the Internet and can copy photographs from websites. In relation to making use of their ICT skills there is underachievement evident mostly because of the limitations posed by the lack of resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73 The use of ICT across the curriculum is limited by the lack of resourcing. This results in missed opportunities for pupils to carry out independent researches that rely heavily on accessing information from the Internet. Most pupils know how to present work using computers but have only limited opportunity to do so. There are pockets of good and very good practice happening across the school. For example, the recording of science work in Year 4 and word-processed stories in Years 5 and 6. It is none-the-less the issue of consistency that is proving to be a problem.

HUMANITIES

Provision for religious education and history is **good** but as no lessons were seen in geography it is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in this subject.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good knowledge of a range of different faiths
- The planned range of visits and visitors considerably enhances provision
- The subject leader has a good vision for subject development

74 The one lesson observed, and the scrutiny of work in books and displays around school, along with discussions with pupils confirm that standards achieved are above those expected locally by the time pupils reach Year 6. This is good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils as young as Year 1 can identify their favourite Bible Story, and can explain the purpose of worship. There is good focus on the traditions and artefacts associated with the main religions studied: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. These are compared and contrasted, and differences and similarities explained and valued. Teachers help pupils to relate their knowledge to the spiritual aspects of the subject through empathy and discussion, and also help them to apply their understanding of religious education beyond the subject. This considerably enhances work in personal and social education, when pupils develop their ideas on important issues such as truth and honesty.

75 Throughout the teaching of religious education there is an emphasis on understanding and empathy through experiential learning. Teachers use the expertise of a good range of visitors to introduce pupils to different faiths. Pupils respond very well to these experiences, which considerably enhance provision. For example, following a 'mock' Jewish wedding recently, pupils were very enthusiastic and had good recall of the important details of the ceremony. Older pupils were very keen to talk about a series of visits by the local vicar to teach the history of the Bible and the beliefs of a practising Christian. Lessons for Year 4 pupils were enhanced by visits to a Manchester Synagogue and Manchester Cathedral, where they were able to compare and contrast places and ways of worship.

76 The subject leader for religious education has good strategic plans to further develop the subject and raise its profile throughout school by a range of innovative teaching methods. These methods, which are currently being used within her own class, teach pupils more

abstract concepts connected with religious education - for example making empathetic observations whilst reading about Jewish community life. The emphasis is placed on discussion and sharing of thoughts, and recording is effective, through group and whole class 'mind maps' and charts.

History

Provision in history is **good**

- Pupils have a high level of enthusiasm for history and very good historical knowledge
- Pupils are taught effectively to develop their skills of enquiry

77 In lessons observed during the inspection, pupils displayed a high level of enthusiasm for history, because teaching is interesting, informative, and often demanding and challenging. Pupils throughout school have a good overall historical knowledge, and are able to use their skills well in enquiry. They are able to discuss the main features and people of the current history topic, and have good recall of topics of previous years. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrated their understanding of chronology when talking about old and new toys, and they were able to competently discuss why some toys are no longer played with today. For example, they were able to explain that toys nowadays are made with 'new and different materials', which were not available when their parents were young. Teachers make good use of school resources, and those borrowed from a wide range available in the local authority. There is also a planned schedule of visits to further enhance provision - for example to Chester for the Romans and an 'Evacuees Day' for pupils in Year 2.

78 Discussions with pupils, and a scrutiny of their work show that pupils are beginning to link cause and effect because they are able to apply their knowledge towards more abstract concepts. During lessons they are taught how to frame effective questions to widen their awareness and deepen their knowledge, and are often further challenged by good questioning from their teachers. Older pupils are beginning to be able to apply previous knowledge to new concepts, giving plausible arguments, if occasionally inaccurate answers. For example, one boy in Year 3 speculated that Henry V111 problems arose through his quarrel with Philip of Spain, rather than problems with male succession, and used historical vocabulary during his explanation. Older pupils are developing their understanding of the appropriate use of primary and secondary sources and check different sources of evidence for reliability.

Geography

79 No lessons were seen in geography, and there was little work available during the inspection, therefore it is not possible to make a judgement about provision. The school is currently extending the opportunities for pupils' local study, linking this to aspects of history and science, and also places emphasis on a widening awareness of the outside world. This has led to a growing involvement in international issues, and the school has links with both Germany and Slovenia. These have been extended through a variety of visitors, chosen for their first hand experience of other countries, and the opportunity for some pupils to write to pen pals in both Germany and India. Work from pupils in Year 4 indicates the focus on learning from evidence. Pupils are able to use photographs to gather and interpret information, are encouraged to construct and develop pertinent questions for research, and are given a good balance in lessons between independent work and taught elements. They produce effective wall displays and booklets to record the work they have been doing.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

80 No lessons were observed in **music or physical education** and work could not be sampled. It is therefore not possible to offer overall judgements on provision or standards. Planning is

good in both subjects and pupils appreciate the range of opportunities offered. Good use is made of the playing field, and the new hall greatly improves accommodation for both subjects. Work in lessons is reinforced and extended by instrumental tuition and a good range of after-school clubs, performances and fixtures. There are clubs for cricket, football and netball, and a choir and instrumental group. Visiting coaches occasionally help pupils to enhance their ball skills.

- 81 No firm overall judgements can be made on provision and standards in **design and technology**. Here again planning indicates that pupils follow a nationally recommended programme and have good opportunities to design, make and evaluate a variety of products using a good range of materials and tools. The very good work produced by pupils in Year 6 reflects good achievement. In particular, their impressive models of Anderson shelters show very effective choice and use of materials to achieve strength and camouflage.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards are high by the end of Year 6.
 - Pupils have access to a wide range of materials, experiences and creative opportunities that often link well with other subjects.
 - Good leadership and management spread a clear vision and sense of creative purpose across the arts.
 - Work in art makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, particularly their spiritual and cultural awareness.
- 82 Standards attained in art and design are well above those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. All pupils achieve well, enjoy the challenges offered, and experience success and self-discovery. Some achievements are unusually high and it is easy to see how the school earned the Artsmark silver award. Its forthcoming bid for the gold award is well motivated and strong. Many pupils develop very good skills for their age across a range of themes, styles and media. Their well-maintained sketchbooks provide a fascinating record of good progress through a wide variety of technical explorations. They show how, by Year 6, pupils have developed their powers of observation through drawing in different media, and have experienced painting, printing, collage, textile work and sculpture in each year. What is missing is an element of annotation by the pupils to evaluate their own developing visual ideas.
- 83 Recent priorities for the subject have been to develop more work with visiting artists and to increase multicultural elements. The success of these initiatives is strikingly evident. For example, pupils in Year 1 worked with a visiting artist for three days, using an illustrated storybook of traditional African tale as a source. The remarkable results show what can be achieved by even the youngest pupils. Pupils combined their initial small, individual, sketchbook ideas into large pictures, using ink wash and heavy line. Finally these ideas were ambitiously synthesised in an enormous and visually impressive banner that hangs in the new hall. Similarly, Year 6 worked with the head of Art from the High School, using corrugated board, adhesives and paint to produce powerfully textured figure sculptures.
- 84 Much creative and imaginative work derives from the study of famous artists such as Lowry, Cezanne, Kandinsky, Matisse, Picasso and O'Keefe. Pupils study and adapt distinctive styles, subjects and techniques, and the convincing quality of their emulations show how carefully they have observed and how well they have been taught. Work of this kind often supports learning in other subjects, thereby bringing enriching elements of creativity into the study of history, for instance.

85 A particularly strong feature of the good leadership and management of the arts is the bringing together of the visual and performing arts and harnessing their creative force to support learning across the school. Links between art, drama and English are especially good. For example, the books written, illustrated and bound by pupils in Year 5, retelling the story of Sir Gawain, are works of art in themselves, many illustrations show pupils' skill in using art techniques expressively to capture the tone, events and characters of the literary narrative. Much of this inter-linking stems from the school's work for the Artsmark and shows how such initiatives can enrich the curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for PSHEC is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Pupils have many opportunities outside lessons to learn to handle responsibility and aspects of their future role as citizens.
- Personal development is at the heart of all that the school does.

86 The school has introduced a national scheme of work, taught through weekly lessons across all years. This is being carefully meshed with provisions that were already in place and effective. Its development is seen as significant and has strong backing from the governing body. It is beginning to add coherence and progression to an area of existing strengths, and to widen pupils' horizons.

87 The new scheme is strongly underpinned by a wide variety of formal and informal provisions, all of which enact key aims and policies. For example, pupils learn about the benefits of hygiene, healthy eating and exercise, and about the dangers of substance abuse, through their work in design technology, science and physical education. They learn about pollution in geography, and about the values and systems that distinguish different faiths or civilizations through their studies of history and religion.

88 Reinforcing and giving life to all this formal learning is the school's caring family ethos, and the strong role models presented by all members of staff. The school council, the buddy systems and a wide variety of small roles give all pupils opportunities to contribute to the community of the school. Links with the Parish Council and other village 'bodies' extend these roles. Individual needs are carefully recognised, respected and served by various provisions such as the nurture unit. International links with Germany and Malta, together with charity work for various causes, prompt new understandings of the world.

89 A good example of the school's work in developing personal and social understandings is 'The Difference Day', organised by Year 4. This day gave each pupil an experience of what it feels like to be different because of being blind, or deaf or disabled. Pupils' reflections on their experiences bear eloquent witness to the impact of this venture, which typifies the school's commitment to inclusion.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
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	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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