

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 123999

Headteacher: Mr I Gurney

Lead inspector: Mrs J Tracey

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 March 2004

Inspection number: 258110

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:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	515
School address:	Greatbatch Avenue Penkhull Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST4 7JU
Telephone number:	01782 233280
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Perry
Date of previous inspection:	18 May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Willows is a new school, established in January 2003. It was formed from the amalgamation of four schools, including a school for the deaf, and hearing units from the city of Stoke. The school is much larger than other primary schools with 515 pupils of ages 3 to 11 on roll. It is the sole provider in Stoke for primary age children with hearing impairment. Most pupils live in the locality, except for the pupils with hearing impairment who come from all parts of the city. The proportion of pupils who leave or join at other than the usual times is about average. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals (12 per cent) is broadly average. The accommodation is excellent. The new buildings and surroundings are bright, well maintained and welcoming. The provision for deaf pupils is very good, both in terms of the technical resources and the number of specialist teachers and assistants. Attainment on entry is average for the vast majority of pupils but it varies overall from one year group to another depending on the number of pupils with special educational needs. The proportion of these is below average because the school works hard to enable some of them to come off the register by the time they reach Year 6. The proportion of pupils with statements of need is above average. Pupils' specific needs include learning difficulties, social, emotional, behavioural and physical disabilities. The majority of pupils are of white UK origin. Others come from Asian, African, Fijian and mixed backgrounds. The proportion with English as a second language is high. The funding for them is relatively low at present.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20270	Mrs J Tracey	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology
9399	Mr R Watts	Lay inspector	
19709	Mrs J Fisher	Team inspector	Foundation Stage History Geography
23204	Mrs C Wojtak	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Physical education
7994	Mrs P Weston	Team inspector	Special educational needs Design and technology Art and design Music
23081	Mrs C Waine	Team inspector	Science Religious education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The Willows is a good, new primary school with some outstanding features.** It provides well for pupils' all-round personal development. They rapidly gain in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils with hearing impairment are very well integrated into all aspects of school life. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are average. Overall, pupils achieve well because teaching is good. The teaching is suitably targeted on the wide-ranging needs of all pupils. Leadership and management are very good. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has created a caring and welcoming ethos that successfully encourages pupils of all abilities, background, race and culture to work well together.
- Provision is very good in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with special educational needs. It is also very good for information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education.
- There is a very good climate for learning, which is created by the excellent leadership of the headteacher and the total commitment of staff in working together as a team.
- The teaching assistants provide very good support for individual pupils with specific needs.
- Pupils' writing skills could be developed further.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not fully co-ordinated across Years 1/2 and Years 3 to 6.
- The very good range of additional activities, particularly in sport, provides good opportunities for pupils to develop new interests and to work with pupils of different ages.

The school has made very good progress since it opened in establishing routines and uniting pupils and staff to work with a common purpose. In particular, pupils' interest in ICT and in learning to work alongside pupils with hearing impairment is rapidly improving different methods of communication. This is the school's first inspection so no judgement is made about overall improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	NA	NA	C	B
Mathematics	NA	NA	B	B
Science	NA	NA	B	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar free school meals.*

Overall, **pupils achieve well.** Children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage. They are on course to achieve the goals expected of them by the end of reception, and to exceed them in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards vary across year groups relative to the wide range of abilities in each. Currently, they are average in Years 2 and 6. In 2003, pupils' overall attainment in statutory tests taken in Years 2 and 6 was above the national average compared with all and similar schools. This is a considerable achievement taking into account the fact that pupils' education was disrupted when they moved to The Willows from other schools in January 2003.

In Year 2, standards are above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. In Year 6, they are average in mathematics and science and below average in English. Pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as they should be. Standards are above average in ICT in Year 2 and in physical education throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs, particularly those

with hearing impairment, achieve very well because of the exceptionally good level of support they receive from specialist teachers and teaching assistants. They meet their targets, and sometimes exceed them. Pupils for whom English is not the first language make good progress because the school endeavours to provide extra support from within its own resources, but, overall, the standard of their work is below average. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** It is reflected in their good attitudes and behaviour and the very good relationships that exist throughout the school. Attendance is average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good.** Pupils' personal and educational development is firmly underpinned by a good support system that draws well on home/school links. The provision for pupils with hearing impairment is exceptional. The broad-ranging curriculum is satisfactory. **Good teaching** is supported by a very good programme of additional activities, particularly in sport, and a high level of commitment from staff and adult workers in the community. Pupils' learning has progressed well in the relatively short time that the school has been in existence because of skilful planning. The curriculum in each year group is sufficiently flexible to cater for the needs of all pupils. It encourages them to work collaboratively, which in turn helps them to become good, independent learners. Pupils are motivated to learn through interesting lessons that enable them to assess their own learning against the teachers' aims. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not yet co-ordinated into a whole-school system. Pupils enjoy learning through discovery and finding things out for themselves. The teaching of ICT through other subjects of the curriculum is particularly effective because pupils can immediately see the usefulness of the skills they are learning. The accommodation is excellent. It is thoughtfully designed to provide all pupils with the best of opportunities in which to develop and grow in maturity.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, supported by the deputies, is evident in the way that staff and pupils from different schools have come together so quickly to form a single harmonious community. Priorities were identified at critical points in time and good strategic planning, focused on raising achievement further, is taking the school forward step by step. The leadership of English, mathematics and science has not yet been firmly established. The school is well managed. It provides stable routines through which pupils feel secure. Governance is very good. The governors worked very closely with the headteacher and the local education authority in setting up the new school. They were instrumental in establishing procedures to mitigate the effect of disruption to pupils' work at the time of the changeover in the middle of a school year.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very pleased with the quality of education provided and the caring atmosphere that makes all pupils feel valued. They have no significant concerns. Parents appreciate the way that their children are learning to understand and respect each other's different qualities and talents. Pupils think that The Willows is a very good school. They are keen to take up opportunities to learn sign language so that they can communicate with hearing-impaired pupils. Pupils feel that they are fortunate to be working in purpose-built accommodation and are proud to belong to the school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards further in English by improving pupils' writing skills.
- Develop a whole-school approach to the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Overall, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with special educational or language needs, achieve well throughout the school. Currently, overall standards of work are average in Years 2 and 6.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching focuses very specifically on pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, achieve very well because they are taught and supported by specialist teachers and assistants who enable them to tackle the same work as other pupils of similar age.
- Pupils' writing skills could be developed further.
- Standards are above average in ICT in Year 2 and in physical education throughout the school.

#### Commentary

1. Children's attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is broadly average for their age, apart from the children whose special educational need are identified at a very early stage. Children achieve very well in the nursery and reception classes. By the start of Year 1, most achieve the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy skills, mathematical and creative development. Many exceed the goals in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world.
2. Pupils' results in statutory tests taken in Year 2 in 2003 were well above the national average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. They were similar to those of schools with pupils from comparable backgrounds. In the current Year 2, standards are above average in reading and average in writing, mathematics and science. The quality of pupils' work is positively influenced by the teaching strategies in use, which incorporate techniques that relate well to pupils' individual styles of learning.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (NA)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	27.8 (NA)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.0 (NA)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 73 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. In 2003, pupils' results in statutory tests taken in Year 6 were average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The results were well above average in science and above average in English and mathematics compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. It is not possible to compare the results with schools with similar prior attainment, or to compare trends, because The Willows is a new school. The difference between standards in English and mathematics/science is indicative of the greater difficulty the pupils with English as second language or with statements of need have with language. The pattern is similar in the current Year 6 where standards are below average in English and average in mathematics in science. The lower standards overall this year accurately reflect the range of abilities in the year group. The school has been successful in bringing a good proportion of lower-attaining pupils in Year 6 off the register of special educational needs and supporting them through intense monitoring. They achieve well but their standards are below



average, as are those of many of the pupils still on the register. Higher-attaining pupils are given suitably challenging work. Standards of work often exceed those expected of pupils of their age.

4. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, achieve very well and have made very good progress in relation to the specific targets in their individual education plans. Hearing-impaired pupils make particularly good progress, communicating their needs through sign and sound.
5. The quality of pupils' work represents good achievement overall throughout the school, particularly taking into account that pupils' studies were disrupted in 2003 when they moved to this new school mid-year. Pupils successfully adjusted to the much larger school and the integration of pupils with hearing impairment with minimal effect on the quality of their work. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
6. The school has satisfactorily implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In literacy, the high focus on developing pupils' oral skills is right for the school's population and is leading to increasing confidence in the use of language. Pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as their reading skills. The main reason is the high proportion of pupils with English as a second language whose written work is often below average for their age. Pupils' numerical skills are average. Their mental agility in number work is satisfactory and most can transfer its application to other topics, such as money, measurement and the handling of data.
7. Evidence from the examination of pupils' work and observation of lessons indicates that standards in ICT are above average in Year 2. Standards in Years 3 to 6 are rising because pupils are building quickly on their previous learning. Pupils in Year 6 have more to make up than younger pupils but they are achieving well. Their standards are average. Throughout the school, standards are above average in physical education and average in religious education. Standards were at least average in the lessons sampled in other subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Most pupils are very interested in their work and the life of the school, but a few become too easily distracted. Behaviour around the school is very good. Pupils act responsibly.
- Children in the Foundation Stage behave very well and show good maturity for their age.
- The very good provision for pupils' moral and social development contributes well to pupils' personal development and the feeling of unity within the school environment.

### **Commentary**

8. Attitudes to school are good overall. In lessons, they vary from very good to, very occasionally, unsatisfactory. Attitudes are directly related to the quality of the teaching. Where teachers motivate and inspire them, pupils respond with great enthusiasm. They listen, hanging on the teacher's every word, and almost leap to respond to questions. They make perceptive suggestions of their own and are confident in making observations because they know that, even if they are not quite relevant, they will be listened to with respect and valued. Pupils work hard, striving to put into practice what they had been shown, and extending it. In a few lessons, however, where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, pupils became bored too easily and showed little inclination to think for themselves.
9. Children in the Foundation Stage develop very positive attitudes to school from the start. They quickly grow in confidence and are very keen to talk about their new experiences. Pupils'

behaviour around the school, in the dining hall and in the playground is very good. They are very polite. Behaviour in lessons is good overall. It is usually achieved with very little corrective action from the teacher. It is an indication of the pupils' understanding and respect for the disciplinary system that there were no exclusions in the last school year.

10. Attendance is average. Most of the absence is due to illness but a few pupils, whose families have been contacted by the education welfare service, have poor attendance records. Some absence is for religious observance. School procedures for monitoring attendance are secure. *Note. No attendance data is available for the last school year as the school was only in existence for two of the terms.*
11. Relationships within the school are very good. Although a few parents and pupils had concerns, there appears to be very little bullying and if it occurs, pupils say that it is sorted out quickly. There is no evidence of racism; pupils respect and enjoy working with the diversity of cultures within the school. As far as is practical, hearing-impaired pupils and those with English as a second language are fully integrated in all classes for their year group. Most have very good attitudes, a strength being their determination to learn. The way in which able and disabled pupils relate to each other clearly reflects the school's mission to generate understanding and sensitivity to the needs of everyone in the school community, and society in general.
12. Pupils talk with pride about their school. They appreciate the very good quality of resources in the new building and the fact they now have far more opportunities to mix with pupils of different ages, talents and abilities than in their previous, smaller schools.
13. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good, with some very good features. The school actively enables its pupils to develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness through varied opportunities for debating and considering different points of view. Similarly, lessons in religious education and personal, social and health education promote debate and an understanding of the meaning of citizenship. In this way, pupils develop a set of beliefs that stand them in good stead for the next stage of their education. The school has an effective Race Equality Policy, which is seen to be practised. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is strong. They explain the name of the new school, linking it to the Potteries and the story of the willow pattern.

#### **Outstanding practice**

One of the highpoints of the inspection was a truly uplifting moment when the choir not only filled the hall with a wonderful sound but, as one, signed each song in unison using British Sign Language, so that pupils with hearing impairment could share the experience. As the sound swelled to a climax in *Any Dream will Do*, the title of the musical had a particular resonance. Observers left the school hall having been touched by the spirit that is present in the everyday at *The Willows*.

14. Pupils' social and moral development is very good because the culture of the school encourages acceptance and a healthy respect for diversity. In classrooms, pupils are allowed to be themselves. Teachers and support staff are very skilled at achieving the delicate balance of meeting the needs of individuals without spoiling the flow of learning for the majority. This prepares pupils for life in a diverse society because they experience it at first-hand on a daily basis. Pupils like each other and they know that boundaries are necessary, for safety, and for order. They know and accept that harming others is wrong. In lessons, teachers are even-handed when asking questions. Their teaching styles value all pupils' contributions, and they encourage quieter pupils to give a considered answer. As a result, pupils who do not speak English as their first language feel comfortable enough to query phrases that confuse them. Morality is stressed in assemblies, through modern day parables and meaningful first-hand experiences.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. It provides well for all the pupils in the school, underpinning their academic and personal development and promoting thoughtful concern for members of the school community and those outside. Teaching and learning are effective. Pupils' education is enhanced through a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Good use is made of assessment procedures to guide lesson planning and individual pupil's work in class, but, as yet, the school lacks a clear overview of pupils' attainment and progress through a whole-school approach.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are very good.
- Pupils with hearing impairment are very well taught by specialist teachers and qualified learning assistants. This is a contributory factor to these pupils' very good achievement.
- Teachers make good use of ICT and encourage pupils to transfer skills across all subjects.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It does not provide pupils with enough information about how to improve.
- Assessment procedures for recording pupils' attainment and progress are good but the system lacks a whole-school approach.

### Commentary

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 67 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (4%)	19 (28%)	28 (42%)	16 (24%)	1 (2%)	0 (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. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are very good. Teachers and adult assistants make learning stimulating and productive for all children. They build up children's confidence and positively encourage them to 'take the next step'. As a result, children become more articulate and adventurous. Those with learning difficulties are quickly drawn into the framework of school life and soon begin to make progress. They are encouraged by staff and by the other children.
16. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school. Some of the teaching, in a number of subjects, is very good. Three outstanding lessons were seen. One of these, in the nursery, typified the very best of teaching techniques by making physical and intellectual demands that required breadth of approach and in-depth understanding of all that had gone before. Particularly good features of many lessons are the high expectation and the promotion of 'can do'. Teachers have developed good strategies for motivating pupils and making them believe in their ability to succeed. One in particular is very effective, that of using challenging discussion to promote understanding through the use of spoken language. This encourages pupils to explain accurately and provides good opportunities for deaf pupils and those with English as a second language to join in the lesson and share their thoughts with other pupils. Learning assistants provide very good support at this stage, using sign language where necessary. Pupils are attentive and patient when listening to each. Another effective tactic is the promotion of learning through practical and investigative work. Here too, pupils of all abilities learn well through sharing and working out for themselves how to proceed. This gives them confidence to go further. Teachers' planning pays attention to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Writing skills are the least well developed because, as explained above,

there is more of an emphasis, often through necessity, on learning through oral work. The marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent. Pupils are praised for good effort but there are not enough informative comments to help them know what to do to improve further.

17. Pupils with special educational needs are consistently well taught. They achieve very well because teachers have a very good understanding of the pupils varied learning needs and carefully match work and expectations to their attainment levels. This is particularly good in literacy for example, where additional help for small groups enables pupils to receive very good individual teaching. Learning assistants are very well informed about pupils' special needs and work very closely with class teachers to help achieve the pupils' learning targets. Hearing-impaired pupils are taught by specialist teachers and support staff. They have very high levels of expertise and a commitment to meeting pupils' specific needs. Teaching is exemplary. It enables these pupils to achieve very well in relation to their ability. In the Foundation Stage, very well structured activities are carefully planned and taught to meet the children's clearly defined needs. Pupils with English as a second language, some of whom also have hearing impairment, are well taught. Teachers build on pupils' determination to want to learn. A weakness is some teachers' lack of training in knowing the important things to check for in these pupils' work, such as nuances and the order of sentences.
18. Teachers pay good attention to cross-curricular themes to encourage the transfer of skills from one subject to another. A prime example is the scheme of work in ICT, which is directed at teaching skills though the context of work in other subjects. This is very effective because pupils are not learning ICT skills in isolation from their intended use. Teaching is good overall in the subjects inspected in detail - English, mathematics, science, ICT and physical education. In other subjects, where the work was sampled, the teaching was at least satisfactory.
19. The collection and analysis of data about pupils' attainment and progress are good. The use of assessment information by senior managers to inform planning and detect underachievement is satisfactory but it is not yet being used as a whole-school system to drive standards up further. For example, in writing, pupils' attainment is not being targeted for progressive development. The school is aware of this. Improvement in the assessment system is an element in its strategic planning document.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum and the local agreed syllabus for religious education. It is enriched very well through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The breadth of opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. Staffing and resources are very good overall and the accommodation is excellent.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In Years 1 to 6, the very good focus on literacy, numeracy, ICT and science sometimes reduces the time available for other subjects.
- There is an excellent commitment to help all pupils take a full part in all activities. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. That for pupils with English as a second language is good.
- The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good.

## **Commentary**

20. The very good curriculum provided in the Foundation Stage includes a wide range of interesting and exciting activities that engage children's interest well.
21. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. It is currently being reviewed to ensure that planning provides for the continuous development of knowledge and skills between the infant and junior phases of education. The review is part of the school's scheduled strategy

following on from the amalgamation last year. There is a very good focus on teaching English, mathematics, science and ICT, which have generous amounts of time allocated each week. However, lessons in literacy and numeracy are quite long, which leaves less time for lessons in other subjects. This results in lessons in some subjects being too short, leading to inefficient use of time. For example, in religious education in Year 2, there are two half-hour lessons each week. Pupils make a good start on their work in the first lesson but often do not have enough time to finish recording their work. Time has then to be spent in the next lesson on reviewing what had been done in the first lesson before pupils can complete their work. In music, there are some lessons of only 15 minutes duration, which does not allow adequately for the development of skills. The school is now developing links between different subjects to maximise the use of time and to ensure that pupils make measurable gains in learning in every session of teaching. For instance, instead of being taught ICT skills in isolation, they are taught within the context of current work in other subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and design and technology. This is very good practice. It is extremely effective.

22. There is an excellent commitment to including all pupils in all activities. The school makes very good provision for this through a very good level of high quality support staff, who are very well trained and informed. As a result, pupils with special educational needs, including younger children in the Foundation Stage, make very good progress in relation to their previous learning. Their individual education programmes, which are very specific, are used very well as a basis for very detailed plans of work. Pupils with hearing impairment are well integrated into the school and have full access to the curriculum through the very sensitive support provided by all staff. In addition, they have a very good speech and language programme that reinforces their learning. The curriculum for pupils with English as a second language is sound. It enables them to make good progress from their starting point. Strengths lie in the emphasis on learning through oral work, the planned opportunities for collaborative work and the provision for those who have special educational needs in addition to language difficulties.
23. Accommodation in the new school is excellent. It is very spacious. The welcoming, attractively presented interior encourages pupils to want to come to school and to do well. The school is set in attractive, large grounds, with good provision for physical education. Facilities include tennis courts and a swimming pool. There is a secure outside play area for the nursery children, but there is no designated play area for children in the reception classes. Provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good. Every classroom is fitted with appropriate technical equipment and there is an audiology suite. Resources for ICT and for pupils with special educational needs are particularly good. They make a significant contribution to the very good achievement in these aspects of the school's work.
24. The most valued and valuable resources in the school are the dedicated and highly committed teaching and support staff who work tirelessly to provide a varied and stimulating curriculum for all children entrusted, readily, to their care. Teachers are supported very well through the provision of training in vital areas, such as special educational needs and ICT. Staff were keen to learn sign language so that they could communicate directly with pupils with hearing impairment. This has been very effective in enabling these pupils to settle in quickly.
25. A wide range of clubs, events, visits and visitors to school enrich the curriculum very well. Participation rates in these activities are high, particularly in sport where the school meets with good success in competitive activities. The extra activities contribute significantly to pupils' personal and social development. The provision for pupils' personal social and health education is good. It is targeted well to meet the needs of all pupils. Sex education is provided for pupils in Year 6. The curriculum for this and awareness of the consequence of drug and alcohol abuse is currently under review as part of the personal, social and health education programme.

#### **Outstanding practice in working towards a fully integrated community**

An excellent aspect of the extra-curricular provision is the opportunity for all pupils to learn to communicate and work together in the two signing clubs for pupils in Years 1 to 6, and in the 'Singing, Signing Choir'. It exemplifies the school's high commitment to including all pupils in all activities. About forty pupils, including some profoundly deaf pupils, perform together in the choir on a weekly basis and at public events. Some act as 'signing conductors' and perform their responsibilities with great confidence.

The learning support assistants for the hearing impaired make an invaluable contribution to all pupils' personal development in these activities. In lessons and at breaktimes, hearing pupils often instinctively sign to their deaf friends when working and playing together.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Procedures for ensuring pupils' care, welfare and safety are good. The school provides good support and guidance for pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. Pupils are consulted about what they would like to see improved.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Individual pupils are very well cared for and supported in their personal development within a caring, family ethos.
- The school provides a safe environment in which pupils confidently grow in maturity.
- Pupils are quickly welcomed into the school by staff and other pupils. They soon inherit a sense of belonging to a vibrant community.

### **Commentary**

26. Induction arrangements for new pupils, of whatever age, are very good. They set the scene for the care and support pupils receive throughout the school. Pupils with English as a second language, some of whom have only recently arrived in this country, are soon made to feel 'at home'.
27. The school is a very happy, secure place where pupils feel confident and able to learn. Most pupils in the survey agreed that there was an adult they could turn to if they had concerns. Conversations with pupils confirmed that they could rely on staff to resolve minor conflicts and personal worries. Teachers take time to discuss any issues that arise with the whole class, so that pupils can co-operate in understanding and resolving conflicts. Staff know the pupils very well and support them individually. Teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors play an important role in forming a pastoral team with the class teachers. All staff work well together, using consistent rewards and sanctions so that pupils know exactly where they stand and how they can improve. The pupils appreciate the fairness and security that this promotes. The home-school liaison worker provides good support for identified pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Families are involved too, which has resulted in improved attitudes and better home-school links.
28. There are very well organised procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils with special educational needs. Teachers and teaching assistants have very high levels of understanding of their pupils' individual needs and are very caring and sensitive in their relationships. Effective communication is established between home and school through a daily diary, which keeps teachers and parents in touch with pupils' development. There are very strong links with the speech, language and audiology departments within the health sector, which work closely together because of the very good on-site facilities built into the school. The multi-disciplinary approach immensely enhances the provision available for these pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are well provided for within the total dedication of the school to enable all pupils to achieve to the very best of their ability across all areas of the curriculum.
29. The premises are formally inspected annually for safety hazards and any necessary remedial action is taken promptly. As the premises are new, there has been due concentration on

correcting building defects but there is no assumption that nothing can be improved. The newly-formed governing body has not yet started to play a formal role in risk assessment but the school makes appropriate risk assessments and records them. All equipment is correctly maintained. Child protection procedures are in place and staff are appropriately trained.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has good links with parents, the community and other schools and institutions. Home-school links are strong.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school works hard in conjunction with other services to establish good home-school links that benefit both parents and pupils.
- Parents provide good support at home for their children and work closely with staff to raise standards.
- There is good liaison between the staff of this school and other educational establishments.

### **Commentary**

30. Parents receive good information when their child starts school about what is taught, and how. This is updated each term so parents can provide additional support at home if they wish. The annual written reports meet statutory requirements, but those for older pupils do not always describe progress in art and design. Parents have regular opportunities to meet the teacher to discuss their child's work. Some parents feel that there is not enough privacy in these discussions, especially if issues are very personal.
31. Most parents hear their child read at home, which contributes towards the good achievement in reading. The home-school liaison worker organises a wide range of interesting and relevant courses for parents. Some of these enable parents to keep abreast of current initiatives and new practices. Plans are well advanced to provide even more support in raising parents' self-esteem.
32. The school informs parents when their children are placed on the school register of special educational need and they are fully involved in agreeing new learning and behaviour targets. The school hosts several good initiatives for deaf children. Parents of hearing-impaired children, some still babies, have access to classes on understanding the disability and learning sign language. This helps to allay their concerns about how their children will cope with education.
33. The Parent, Teacher and Friends' Association is very active in organising events that contribute towards making the new school a single community. While the school does not often use formal methods to seek parents' opinions, the headteacher has a high profile before and after school. He is readily available to listen to their comments. Governors attend social events, which enables them to gauge parents' views. The strong, driving role of the headteacher in developing links with parents contributes to the very high regard that parents have for the school.
34. During the design and building of the new school, local residents' views were considered and their concerns over car parking are continuing to be worked through. The Spode factory helped with the design of the school badge and gave generous gifts of pottery and artefacts that are now on permanent display in the school. These will be reminders for future generations of the very close links the school has with local history. The school calls on local people to broaden pupils' experiences and bring lessons to life.

35. Links with other schools extend the curriculum and benefit physical education in particular. Pupils enthusiastically take part in inter-school sports and the Education Action Zone promotes the learning of more unusual sports such as trampolining. An interesting innovation is pupils' work with older pupils from a local secondary school who provide coaching in netball, athletics and hockey. The transfer of pupils to secondary school is smooth because there is a good exchange of information and pupils have opportunities to experience life in their new school in the summer term prior to starting.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The quality of leadership and management is very good. The school is very well governed. The leadership of the headteacher and deputies is very good. Very good management in translating decisions into effective practices contributes to the smooth running of the school and pupils' good achievement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills in the establishment of the new school. He is very well supported by the deputy heads and senior staff. Very good teamwork across the whole school is making a significant contribution to the school's good reputation in the local community.
- Strategic and financial planning are closely linked.
- The day-to-day management of the school is very good but the management role of some subject leaders is underdeveloped because of a period of changes in staffing.
- Leadership and management of ICT, the Foundation Stage and for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- Whilst provision for the pupils with English as a second language is good, staff have not yet had sufficient training in this area.

### **Commentary**

36. The school has achieved remarkable progress in its first year. Long-term, strategic planning and sensitive management in the deployment of staff have been very effective in creating a strong learning ethos, high levels of teamwork and very good relationships between all members of the school community. Teaching of the deaf is a new experience for most staff. It has been readily embraced and, as a consequence, pupils are experiencing a much richer education. There is an excellent commitment to developing a school that helps all its pupils take a full part in all its activities. This is already very successful; for example, the integration of those pupils with hearing impairment is excellent and it is a joy to see them confidently working alongside other pupils in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Other members of the senior management team support the headteacher very well and share his vision for the school. Arrangements for the inclusion of all pupils permeate the whole organisation. In a time of continuing change and a reducing budget they are working very effectively together to develop whole-school approaches to school policies and procedures.
37. There have been several changes in staffing in the school's first year. This has opened up the opportunity to establish a new staffing structure, which will better support the whole-school leadership and management of curriculum subjects. Most subject leaders have focused initially on establishing schemes of work for the new school. They provide good role models for other staff but have not yet gained a full overview of provision and standards in their subjects, although this has been undertaken effectively by senior managers. The planned staffing structure, due to take effect in the next school year, will provide greater opportunities for subject leaders to develop their management skills. The performance management systems of the school are linked very well to training and are promoting improvement well.
38. Leadership and management of ICT, the Foundation Stage and for the pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, are very good. They are promoting



high standards of provision, including training for staff, in these areas. Teachers have not yet been trained to the same high standard in the teaching of pupils with English as a second language.

39. The governing body is very effective and fulfils all its statutory responsibilities. Whilst providing strong support for the school, it is not afraid to make difficult decisions and to challenge those of senior managers. Governors have worked very closely with the headteacher in strategic planning for the new school. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and very high expectations of what must be achieved.
40. Day-to-day management of the school is very effective. Administrative and maintenance staff make a very significant contribution to its smooth running and efficiency. Financial control and budgetary planning are very good. Spending is prudent and closely linked to strategic planning and the school improvement plan. The school is entrepreneurial in seeking out resources, for example with respect to the current initiative for supporting pupils with English as a second language. *Note. It is not possible to provide information about the financial year April 2002 to March 2003 because the school was only in operation for one of its terms. Information for 2003/04 is not yet available.*
41. Parents have great confidence in the school and its leadership. Taking into account the school's funding, pupils' achievement in the short time since it has been established and the very good provision for pupils of all abilities and needs, the school provides good value for money.

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

## **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**. It provides children with a stimulating and productive start to school life.

The new school caters for the admission of 60 children to the nursery each year. This represents a planned reduction in relation to the number of pupils in the older age groups. The attainment of the majority of children on entry is about average in all areas of learning. Major strengths in the provision are the supportive relationships and the way in which the teachers and assistants work together as a highly effective team. The very positive relationships give children security and confidence, enabling them to work enthusiastically and with commitment. Children have very positive attitudes to school and develop high self-esteem. As a result, behaviour is very good.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is very good in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical and creative development, and knowledge and understanding of the world, where it leads to very good achievement. Teaching, learning and children's achievement are good in communication, language and literacy. Strong leadership and management result in highly effective organisation in the Foundation Stage. Teachers' expectations are high in all areas of learning, and with respect to children's behaviour. Very detailed planning for all adults who are teaching, supervising or assessing children's activities ensures that children's needs are known, understood and very well met. The very good ratio of adults to children benefits all children because they have plenty of opportunities to talk one-to-one and in small groups. Incidental opportunities to promote and develop skills are incorporated skilfully into all the areas of learning. No judgements were made in physical development because not many of the activities were observed during the inspection. Accommodation in the purpose-built nursery is excellent. However, there is no designated outside play area for children in the reception classes, which restricts full access to the curriculum.

Children with special educational needs are identified at a very early stage. Consequently, their work is targeted from the outset of schooling. They strive intently and although they do not reach the same goals as other children, they achieve very well in relation to their capabilities.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils are on course to exceed the goals expected of them in this area of learning by the end of the reception year.
- A warm, secure atmosphere is generated in which the children feel valued and enjoy coming to school.
- Daily routines incorporate high expectations of behaviour. Children respond well.
- Excellent relationships create a highly effective learning environment that fosters children's moral, social and emotional development very well.
- The school makes very effective arrangements to prepare children and parents for introduction to school life.

### **Commentary**

42. This area of learning has a suitably high profile in the nursery and reception classes. The adults are effective in nurturing pupils' personal and social skills and generate a warm, secure atmosphere. They enjoy very good relationships with the children and make them feel valued.

There is an air of peaceful harmony at all times in the classrooms. As a result, children gain in confidence and settle happily into school. Classroom routines are quickly and securely established. They provide very good opportunities for children to develop independence and show responsibility in simple matters of routine. Interesting activities lead to very good work habits because they are designed to sustain children's concentration. Children are well motivated and co-operate sensibly when sharing equipment. Very good links with parents before their children start school and in the early days in school, along with the adults' caring provision, support children's development well. Most are likely to exceed the expected goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception year.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective teaching of reading and the wide range of activities on offer, result in good achievement for most children.
- Very good opportunities are provided for children to become competent in expressing themselves orally.
- Writing skills are developed very well, and systematically.
- In all classes, some of the work displayed is too high for the children to see.

### **Commentary**

43. Achievement is good overall because of teachers' thoughtful questioning, sensitive listening and the many varied opportunities that children have to talk, listen and read. Speaking and listening skills are taught well and reinforced through a wide range of other activities. Children express their opinions confidently, such as their likes and dislikes of cooked eggs. Reading and writing skills develop well. Informal opportunities to promote and develop writing skills are incorporated skilfully into all the aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Examples of early writing in the nursery's *Garden Centre* and staff records show that many children can write their name independently. In the reception classes, good emphasis is placed on the recognition of letter sounds and the skills of blending and segmenting these sounds within words. At this stage, many children are successfully beginning to read simple texts. Well-thought out practical activities provide good opportunities for the development of independent writing and practice in joined-up handwriting. Consequently, children are developing very good control of the pencil. Indications are that most children are on course to reach the expected goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception year.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers grasp opportunities in all activities to promote children's mathematical understanding.
- Lively mental arithmetic warm-up games make learning fun.
- Very good equipment, activities and displays of numbers help children to achieve very well.
- Well-chosen resources motivate children effectively in independent work.

### **Commentary**

44. The good quality teaching of practical activities, including working with number, shape, space and measure makes a significant contribution to children's achievement. In the nursery and reception classes, adults support children very well and make learning fun. They introduce lively

mental warm-up games, which make numbers meaningful. In the reception classes, children manipulate numbers satisfactorily in simple addition and subtraction problems. With help, they satisfactorily convert information into charts, although, at times, interest wanes, because of the length of the activity. They learn to use simple mathematical vocabulary correctly, such as when measuring and comparing the 'longer' or 'shorter' tails made for their paper mice. Most children are on course to reach the goals expected of them by the end of the reception year.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff plan a very good range of interesting activities to stimulate children's curiosity and broaden their experiences.
- Opportunities to learn about multi-cultural issues feature highly in the planning.
- Children are introduced to ICT at an early stage and use the computers regularly.

### **Commentary**

45. Children are provided with a wealth of opportunities to learn about the world. Good questioning and sensitive listening enable children to focus on the key elements of the lessons, to talk about their observations and to make sense of what they see. Visits and visitors, along with the excellent accommodation and high quality resources, support this area of learning well. Children are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Investigations take place regularly, such as when children in the nursery explored *Growth*. Their response "planted grass seeds need light and water to make them grow" is indicative of the depth of thought given to the answer. The imaginative play areas are changed regularly to keep interest levels high and challenge children's thinking. Children satisfactorily learn about other cultures and religions by celebrating many of the important festivals. Computers are used regularly. By the time children are in the reception classes they move the mouse confidently to make pictures and patterns. They make sense of simple language and mathematical programs. A very well equipped sensory room gives all children first-class opportunities to explore their five senses. They hear, see and touch the excellent resources and experience the room's calming atmosphere.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Very little teaching of physical education was seen so no overall judgements can be made about this aspect of learning. Children's skills at handling pencils, scissors, brushes and other tools are good because of the effective, high focus on teaching the correct usage. The nursery outdoor play area, shared with the reception classes, is excellent and the resources are very good. The lack of a designated play area and ready outdoor access for children in the reception classes restricts certain aspects of their physical development, such as spontaneous outdoor play and the use of large-scale play equipment.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very effective teaching of specific skills is combined with very good opportunities for children to learn through play.
- Role-play areas are used profitably to encourage imaginative activities and language development.

## Commentary

46. Displays provide a bright, attractive backcloth to the learning environment and indicate that children have very good opportunities to explore and experiment using colour, texture, shape, form and space in two and three-dimensional artwork. Children in the reception classes use paint and modelling materials boldly. Great sensitivity was shown when one child lovingly and gently stroked the chick she had modelled. Resources for role-play are very good; they stir pupils' imagination. The current *Supermarket* theme provides rich opportunities for dressing up, imaginative play and simulated shopping activities. Resources are readily accessible for children to choose and they are used responsibly. Children in the reception classes are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the year.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well overall because teaching is good. It encourages pupils of all abilities and backgrounds in language to be creative and express themselves accurately. However, there are some inconsistencies in expectations and marking.
- Standards in reading are above average throughout the school. Standards in writing are not as high as they should be.
- Pupils with hearing impairment are integrated well in lessons. They achieve very well in relation to their ability because of the high quality support they receive.
- There is no clear overview of pupils' progression in the subject across the whole school.
- Many teachers effectively incorporate the use of ICT in the development of literacy skills.

## Commentary

47. Pupils' results in statutory tests taken in Year 6 in 2003 were similar to the national average. In Year 2, pupils' results were well above the national average in reading and average in writing. There is no reliable comparative data by which to judge the school's performance because it is a new school. Compared with similar schools based on pupils' eligibility for free school meals, results were well above average in reading and average in writing in Year 2, and above average in English in Year 6.
48. Currently, standards of work are average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6. They accurately reflect the range of pupils' ability in English in the year groups. Throughout the school, standards in speaking and listening are average; reading is above average. There is a sound emphasis on handwriting and the basic elements of grammar and spelling from Year 1 upwards, but, overall, pupils' writing skills are not as high as they should be. Sometimes, work that is not good enough is accepted and marked too positively. Overall, pupils achieve well taking into account the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the extent to which pupils with hearing impairment are fully integrated into lessons. Another key factor is the increasing number of pupils joining the school, mainly in Years 3 to 6, with English as a second language. Some speak little English and have minimal experience of school. The Willows has had very little extra funding so far to provide additional support for these pupils, but, nevertheless, they are making good progress from their starting points. Help has been sought from external sources, which is guiding teachers' planning in structuring learning steps in language. There is a keen willingness on the part of the staff to learn more about strategies for teaching the early stages of English.

49. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers engage the pupils very well through exciting approaches and challenging discussion. The focus on promoting understanding through the spoken language and visual representation benefits all pupils, particularly those with English as a second language or hearing impairment. The methods that teachers choose are inspired. The very good relationships and skilful questioning raise pupils' confidence in the use of language. Standards in reading are high because of the good quality support given to pupils in the infant classes and the emphasis on teaching pupils to look for meaning in the text. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They meet, and quite often exceed, the targets set for them. Teachers make good use of ICT in the context of teaching English. This strategy is proving very successful. It is engaging pupils' interest and enthusiasm. For example, in Year 4, pupils are producing their own 'talking books' for young children. Pupils discuss the characters in their stories, develop plots and present good quality finished products on the computer.
50. Senior staff monitor planning for English to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Leadership and management are satisfactory but the staffing structure for English is not yet clearly established so there is no clear overview of pupils' progress across the whole school. The school recognises the importance of liaison between Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6 and has strategies in place to introduce whole-school systems for curriculum development and the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in the next school year.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

Speaking skills, together with reading and drama are used regularly and effectively across the curriculum to extend learning. Writing skills are promoted effectively and used well in subjects such as history, geography and science but less so in other subjects, particularly where lessons are short. In some classes there is too much use of worksheets, which limits opportunities to develop pupils' independent recording skills.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good overall. It incorporates strategies that focus very clearly on pupils' exact needs and promote good learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the high quality support they receive in lessons.
- Teachers are not as aware as they should be of practices in mathematics in other key stages. The lack of a whole-school approach to marking and the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress leads to inconsistency in practices.
- Good use is made of ICT to aid pupils' learning in mathematics.

#### **Commentary**

51. Overall, achievement in mathematics is good throughout the school. Teaching assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers, providing the extra support that lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs require to give them confidence when using mathematical skills. The grouping of pupils by ability in mathematics from Year 2 upwards benefits all pupils because the pace of work in each group is adjusted to their level of understanding.
52. Pupils' results in statutory tests taken in 2003 were average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. They accurately reflect the range of abilities in the year groups. Overall standards of work vary from one year group to another in relation to the proportion of pupils with special

educational needs. Currently, standards are average in Years 2 and 6. The highest-attaining pupils are working at levels above those normally expected for their age. Pupils with special educational needs are generally working at levels below the expected level, but often in excess of the targets set for them. They achieve very well. The main difficulty for pupils with hearing impairment and for those with English as a second language is in understanding the text of word problems. The numerical skills needed to solve the problems pose less difficulty. Higher-attaining pupils respond well when given challenging work that requires initiative and independent thinking.

53. Overall, pupils' numerical skills are average. There is a good focus on mental arithmetic, which is very relevant because the lower-attaining pupils often find it difficult to calculate quickly and accurately. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is underpinning work across the whole curriculum. It is helping pupils to realise that there is often more than one way of reaching an answer.
54. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a sound understanding of the subject material, which they use well to pitch work at a suitable level. For example, in Year 6, the most able pupils debated how and why they had chosen particular numerical operations to find answers to a challenging investigation, while, in a lower-attaining class, the work was aimed at reinforcing very basic work on geometry through repeated, step-by-step practice. The very good support for pupils with hearing and language difficulties gave them confidence to reach answers for themselves, albeit in work at levels lower than expected for their age. The development of logical practices in tackling the four basic operations - addition, subtraction, multiplication and division - is giving pupils the confidence to apply them in questions of increasing complexity, such as when older pupils work with percentages and ratios. Teachers set challenging, but realistic, targets for pupils in lessons. Pupils know what they are expected to learn, and the extent to which they have been successful. In the best lessons, teachers constantly assess pupils' knowledge and its correct use, for example in mental arithmetic. Support is quickly directed to individual pupils, often within the same lesson, where it is clear that there is a lack of understanding. Teachers are quick to point out useful techniques, such as the use of 'jottings' as a reminder of interim steps in a calculation. Pupils take note of such comments and experiment with them to determine which they find helpful in their own work. Teachers encourage pupils to write their work up neatly and logically, which most do. The work is well marked, often with suggestions as to how it could be improved. However, practices in assessing pupils' work are inconsistent so there is no clear overview of year-on-year progress within a whole-school system. The use of ICT is integral to the teaching of mathematics, both in whole class and individual work.
55. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed by different teachers in the infant and junior year groups. This arrangement does not provide sufficient opportunities for the development of whole-school systems, or for staff to gain a wider view of mathematics across the whole school.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

Pupils' numerical and mathematical skills are used well in other subjects although there is no overall plan to ensure consistency in methods, the use of units or the form of presentation of graphs and charts. However, this does not detract from the frequent and good use of mathematical concepts to collect and record results and to reach conclusions based on the analysis of data.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well to reach average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

- Teaching is good with a strong focus on independent learning through investigation.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and display enthusiasm in their investigations.
- Marking does not inform pupils how they could improve their work.
- Whilst the subject is led effectively, the co-ordinator's management role does not allow her to gain a full overview of standards.

## Commentary

56. Standards of work are currently average in Years 2 and 6, which accurately reflects the range of pupils' ability in science in these age groups. Standards are rising as the impact of a new curriculum, with a greater focus on developing pupils' independent investigation skills, is felt. Most pupils achieve the levels expected nationally in these year groups, with an average proportion exceeding them. They achieve well, making good progress in developing their skills of investigation. They build up a sound bank of knowledge in all areas of the subject, which they draw upon well when carrying out their own investigations and observations. Pupils understand how to devise a fair test and apply the conditions carefully. Those pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by staff and other pupils and achieve very well; the support for those who are hearing impaired is particularly effective. These pupils meet, and sometimes exceed, the targets in their individual education plans. The progress of those pupils with English as a second language is good because staff take care to ensure that they understand what is said and explain new vocabulary to them. Overall, their attainment is below average because some find it difficult to record their findings or explain their reasoning clearly.
57. Teaching and learning are good. Activities are planned well to provide a sound level of challenge to all pupils through opportunities for independent observation and investigation. Resources are used well to engage pupils' interest and they are enthusiastic about their work, developing very good attitudes to learning. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and pupils respond very well because they are motivated so well to learn. They are attentive to teachers and listen with respect to each other's points of view, sharing equipment and ideas confidently. Work is planned in small groups, which develops pupils' co-operation and collaborative skills very well. Teachers question pupils well and challenge them to explain their answers, making them think about what they have learned. Computers are used well to support learning. For example, pupils enter their scientific data into spreadsheets and present them in computer-generated graphs. Some good opportunities are provided for writing independently.
58. During lessons, teachers provide good guidance and oral feedback to pupils as they work but this is not reflected in the quality of marking. This is limited to ticks or congratulatory remarks that do not inform pupils sufficiently on how they could improve their work. There are good assessment procedures in place and the information gained is used well to identify areas for development in the curriculum. It is not yet used to inform pupils how to improve work or to plan extra challenge for the highest-attaining pupils.
59. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The subject leader has rationalised the curriculum to provide a whole-school scheme of work to develop skills and knowledge progressively. However, because of recent staffing changes and the newness of the school, she has not had the opportunity to gain a clear view of standards and learning across the whole school through a planned programme to check the quality of teaching and learning. This work has been undertaken effectively by senior staff.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school. The very good resources encourage them to want to use ICT in their studies.



- Teaching is good. It is exciting and challenging, so pupils want to learn.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good. They make a significant contribution to the rising standards throughout the school.
- Learning assistants provide very good support, particularly for pupils with special educational needs.

## **Commentary**

60. Overall, pupils achieve well in ICT. Standards are above average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. They are rising steadily from Year 3 upwards because of the good teaching and very good facilities available to pupils in the new school. Lessons are challenging, lively and relevant to real life situations. Information and communication technology skills are taught in the context of other subjects in the curriculum. This is innovative and very successful. Pupils see immediately the purpose of their learning and are adventurous in seeking to go further. They work collaboratively, sharing ideas and experimenting with different programs to tease out information, analyse data and to present work in a format that is visually appealing and useful. Pupils with special educational needs, of all kinds, benefit enormously from the teaching methods in use because they receive just enough individual help to enable them to tackle work similar to other pupils. This gives them confidence because they often find communication through technology easier than through the handwritten word. They achieve very well.
61. Pupils' operational skills in many aspects of the curriculum for ICT are advanced for their age. For example, in Year 4, pupils are preparing 'talking books' for younger children based on their own scripts and illustrations. Pupils' excitement about their work is evident across all year groups. The quality of work on display in the ICT suite, appropriately named the 'Learning Zone', is impressive. The range of work seen is indicative of thoughtful planning and an understanding of what motivates pupils to want to learn.
62. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some of the lessons observed were very good. There is a high level of expertise amongst the staff that is used well in planning and executing lessons. It results in pupils being inquisitive and realising that the computer is only as good as the user's ability to make it perform the operations required. Pupils accept it as a tool to access other learning. They are involved in the written self-assessment of their own work, which makes them self-critical and aware of where improvement is possible. Teachers have high expectations and present the pupils with challenging demands. Lessons have good pace. The promotion of pupils' literacy skills is a key feature in the planning. It causes pupils to think carefully about spelling and grammar. Good tactics in the teaching include clear introductory sessions, with practical demonstrations on a large screen, and skilful questioning to ensure that pupils have the confidence to start the activities on their own. The breakdown of the work into stages, each introduced at carefully planned points, allows teachers to track pupils' progress and support those who need more help whilst pushing others on at a faster rate. These strategies work well because well-informed learning assistants work alongside teachers in all the classes. They provide good educational and technical support. They also lead extra-curricular activities and are available to give extra help at lunchtimes to pupils who want to sort out problems or who just enjoy working on the computers.
63. The subject is very well led and managed. It is considered to be central to the school's curricular provision. The school is involved with local and national initiatives and works in collaboration with other schools, the community and local businesses. All in all, the subject is making a very valuable contribution to pupils' overall development and is preparing them very well for the next stage in their education.

## **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

Teachers' planning regularly incorporates ICT. There is clear evidence that pupils use ICT skills to underpin work in other subjects and that they know when their use is appropriate. Older pupils

recognise the versatility of ICT as a tool for communication. They appreciate the extent to which it can add a different dimension to their work.

## HUMANITIES

64. Very little geography was being taught during the inspection. Currently, there is no subject leader to oversee work in the subject. There is adequate planning for the teaching of geographical concepts, knowledge, skills and understanding. Skills are built up systematically. Pupils develop good observational skills and make use of the relevant geographical vocabulary. The work in pupils' books, most of which is neatly presented, shows satisfactory progression as pupils move up the school. They progress from the study of the world they see about them to a wider, global perspective, including a detailed study of the countries in the European Union. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes towards the subject and recall that the curriculum is complemented through a wide range of interesting and relevant visits, such as a residential visit where they learnt mapping and orienteering skills. The marking of pupils' work praises their efforts and is encouraging, but it does not always provide them with enough information about how to improve their work further.

### History

Provision for history is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective classroom support and organisation allows all pupils' needs to be met.
- Skills in historical enquiry are developed well.
- Resources are good and very effective use is made of ICT.
- There is no subject co-ordinator to form an overview of standards and monitor progress.

### Commentary

65. There was not enough evidence in Years 1 to 2 in history to form fair judgements about standards and teaching. The work in pupils' books was suitable and relevant for the age groups. It showed standards to be at least average for pupils' age. Teachers' planning indicates that pupils' knowledge, skills and gains in technical vocabulary are built up in a systematic way. Pupils in Years 1 to 2 develop good skills of enquiry as they glimpse into the past, for example, by researching into The Great Fire of London and comparing domestic life, clothing, and education of the past with that of the present day.
66. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6. Standards in Year 6 are average. Pupils make satisfactory progress because of good planning and classroom organisation and the very good support from teaching assistants. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where the teaching observed was good, there was a clear focus on what all the pupils should learn and a good balance between talk by the teacher and the related activities. Pupils were eager to work in groups and came to perceptive conclusions drawn from well-illustrated pictorial, written and video resources. During the inspection, pupils in Year 4 enthusiastically joined in an 'Egyptian Workshop' led by a theatrical group. Pupils were captivated and inspired by the high quality snapshots into the history and geographical features of the valley of the Nile and different scenarios of the life, work and death of the Egyptians. Regular use of the Internet adds depth to the quality of pupils' learning, such as when pupils in Year 3 located information on the Celts and their armour. Assessment procedures are in place, but, while marking is encouraging, it does not always provide pupils with enough information about how to improve their work. Senior managers are effective in ensuring that the planning of lessons matches the curriculum guidelines.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning about Christianity and other world faiths.
- There are good links between the curriculum for religious education and pupils' learning in personal, social and health education. This strengthens pupils' personal development and understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
- Some lessons are too short for pupils to follow through their ideas in the one session.

### Commentary

67. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are in line with those expected by the local agreed syllabus for the subject. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils develop a satisfactory bank of knowledge of a range of world faiths, which is enhanced by visits to local places of worship, such as a synagogue, and visitors to the school. They have a sound knowledge of the stories, special artefacts and symbols of Christianity and other faiths and develop good attitudes to learning. Pupils develop respect for those of other faiths than their own and are genuinely interested in their beliefs and traditions. The higher-attaining pupils relate faith to how it affects the way people live. In Year 6, the pupils' recording of work is insufficient to communicate their depth of knowledge and understanding. Opportunities are missed for them to develop their literacy skills and consolidate learning through recording.
68. Only a few lessons could be observed during the inspection and it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6. An examination of pupils' books and discussion with Year 6 pupils, indicate that it is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. A particularly well taught topic is the study of Judaism in Year 2, where teachers have used a good range of religious artefacts and planned work in a variety of subjects, such as art and design, to make learning exciting. The impact of teaching is reduced in some classes because lessons are too short. For example, Year 2 classes have two short lessons each week; pupils begin their independent tasks in the first, and then have to complete them in the second. This means that time has to be spent on reviewing what had been started and reviving pupils' interest in their writing, which is inefficient.
69. Teachers provide many good opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills and deepen their understanding through discussion on faith beliefs and issues. This work is enhanced by the strong links with the programme for personal, social and health education. The two subjects are often adapted to meet the needs of particular year groups. For example, immediately after the new school opened there was evidence that older pupils from different schools were finding it difficult to relate well to each other. Both subjects then focused effectively on the rights and responsibilities of living in a community, both faith and secular, to improve relationships.
70. The subject leader is new to the subject and has developed the curriculum more fully to reflect the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. She has not had the opportunity to gain a full overview of provision and standards, although senior managers have a sound understanding of provision.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

It was not possible to make judgements about provision, including teaching in art and design, design and technology and music because not enough lessons were seen in these practically based subjects, or the lessons were too short to make a firm judgement. Lessons were sampled in the three subjects. The evidence from the inspection indicates that:

- These subjects reinforce well other areas of the curriculum.
- Very well informed teaching assistants support pupils' learning very effectively.
- Some lessons in Years 1 and 2 are too short to develop skills sufficiently.
- The curriculum is enhanced by good extra-curricular activities, which include opportunities for pupils to learn to play different instruments and to learn sign language.

## **Design and technology**

71. Teachers' planning is good. Coupled with the displays of pupils' work around the school it indicates that the pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop the necessary skills. Pupils show that they understand the process of designing and making. They plan and design before embarking on a project. Designs are completed with care and attention to detail, for example, in the very good plans for moving toys in Year 4. Some of the models were connected to the computer and simple programs written to control them. By Year 6, pupils have used a reasonable range of tools and materials and strive for a good standard of finish. The residential visit to Chasewater provides good opportunities for pupils to put their skills of design and problem solving into practice. They experience the success that comes from working together as a team.
72. In the one lesson observed, in Year 1, pupils with special educational needs met with real success because of the very good support they received from experienced teaching assistants. The teaching was stimulating. Adults made very good use of sign language so that all pupils were fully included in the lesson for the whole time. The work set was challenging and pupils rose to its demands. Time was used very productively with very good opportunities for pupils to work together or independently.
73. The subject is used very well to reinforce learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 make houses out of recycled materials as part of their study of the local environment.

## **Art and Design**

74. Art and design makes a good contribution to the school curriculum. Displays are very attractive and play an important role in the general ethos of the school. Pupils have thoughtfully explored colour, texture, pattern, line and tone in a variety of combinations. They are confident in using a computer program to produce their own pictures.
75. In the Year 2 lesson observed, standards were similar to those expected for pupils of this age. Pupils made good progress and achieved well. The teaching methods led to a high level of concentration for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and hearing impairment. There was a very happy, relaxed atmosphere which resulted in a good quality of work because the pupils were actively engaged and enjoying their work. The level of challenge was realistic, with help on hand for those who needed it from two very experienced teaching assistants.

## **Music**

76. The attainment of seven-year-olds is similar to that expected of pupils of this age. The lessons seen in music in Years 1 and 2 were too short to make a judgement about teaching and learning. However, lessons were well planned to develop listening and concentration skills and to rehearse and perform selected songs. Pupils sang tunefully and rhythmically with a great sense of enjoyment.
77. There are very useful short, sharp sessions of music. These take place once a week first thing in the morning. During these sessions the pupils practise various skills that they have opted to develop, for example, in Years 1 and 2, chime bells, recorders or singing. These short sessions do not allow sufficient time for pupils to develop skills to great depth.

78. No lessons were seen in Years 3 to 6. Pupils enjoy singing during assembly, and are well practised in the words. Those with hearing impairment contribute to the singing well because a teacher of the deaf signs for them throughout.
79. Pupils benefit greatly from the opportunity to learn either a string or a brass instrument and to play in the school orchestra. Expectations are high so pupils' musical talents are stretched. The choir's singing is spiritually uplifting as the pupils incorporate sign language into their work. They sing sweetly with rhythm and, from the youngest to the oldest, sign in unison. This is a truly emotional experience for them and their audiences.

### **Physical education**

Provision for physical education is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at age seven and 11 are above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching is good and enhanced by the use of specialist coaching staff for games, gymnastics, swimming, dance and athletics.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and committed to further improvement, but there is no consistent system for assessing pupils' skills and learning in different aspects of the subject.
- Pupils are enthusiastic, interested and disciplined team members. Partnership and teamwork are recurrent themes in the teaching of physical education.
- The curriculum is very good and includes a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- The accommodation is very good, with a swimming pool and playing field.

### **Commentary**

80. Standards are above average throughout the school because of the high degree of commitment to physical development. This is underpinned by the very good leadership of the head teacher and the subject leaders. The subject also has wide support from the staff body, many of whom sit on the local sports association. As a result, pupils have a whole-hearted approach to lessons. All pupils change promptly, try their best and are excited about enriching experiences such as the visits from personnel from Stoke City Football Club. Pupils work independently because of the teachers' high expectations. Standards in swimming are high because of the proximity of the pool, specialist teaching and the early introduction of children to water play.
81. The quality of teaching and learning is good, ranging from satisfactory to excellent. The best teaching consistently stresses independence, self-control and teamwork. Prompt, constructive feedback to pupils contributes to their positive attitudes. The specialist coaching staff give many pupils the chance to learn a range of skills at a good level.

### **Outstanding practice in the use of specialists and community links**

Several lessons observed during the inspection highlighted the excellent relationships with partners from the community. A dance lesson in Year 3 was an outstanding example because skills had been built up over a number of weeks and the visiting teacher from the local high school radiated confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils had previously mastered basic steps leading to a performance in the community. This lesson was about putting 'the icing on the cake' as pupils built on their knowledge and skills by injecting creativity into their own dance sequence. "Yee-ha!" rang out of the hall as each little group of 5 or 6 succeeded in working as a team to create an original piece of work. The teacher provided composition worksheets which pupils completed in their groups. This gave structure to the activity and the organisation was seamless. Teamwork operated well on a number of levels. Teachers and support staff eagerly threw themselves into the activity and checked that pupils with hearing impairments had understood the key points, fully integrating them into the lesson.

82. The rich curriculum is evident in the quality and quantity of activities on offer. Subject leaders play key roles in the support they give to participation in local league competitions and events. Although pupils like to win, the underpinning mission of the school is evident in the commitment to working for the team.
83. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The creation of the new school has not yet given subject leaders sufficient time to gain an overview of whole-school provision. This has hindered the self-review process. The leaders are aware that there is further work to do in this area and in the development of an effective assessment policy.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

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

84. The school has made good progress in bringing together the schemes of work from pupils' former schools. Gaps in the provision have been identified and planning for a whole-school curriculum is well advanced. It incorporates the teaching of personal, social and health education through specific lessons and through teaching in other subjects.
85. The curriculum is interesting and supports pupils' personal development well. Religious education and personal, social and health education are planned to link together to make learning more meaningful. For example, pupils in Year 6 learn about Islam in religious education whilst simultaneously considering prejudice in personal, social and health education. In specific weekly lessons and class discussions, called 'circle time', pupils have good opportunities to share ideas and to talk about their experiences and feelings in a supportive and secure environment. Pupils listen to what other people think, and respect their views. They develop a good understanding of how decisions affect their own and others' lives and learn to be responsible members of a community. The very good relationships around the school, and in particular the care and sensitivity shown to the hearing-impaired pupils by their peers, are evidence of the success of the school's teaching thus far.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	NA
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).*

