

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WILLOWS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kirkham, Preston

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119626

Headteacher: Mr P F Croft

Lead inspector: Mrs L Read

Dates of inspection: 14 – 16 June 2004

Inspection number: 258175

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	147
School address:	Victoria Road Kirkham Preston Lancashire
Postcode:	PR4 2BT
Telephone number:	01772 684371
Fax number:	01772 684371
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Hornby

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Willows Catholic Primary is smaller than most schools, with 147 pupils on roll. It serves the parish of St John the Evangelist, which covers a wide area of Kirkham. Housing is mixed; it is largely private, with a small proportion of council-owned properties. Overall, social and economic circumstances are average and children entering the reception class have a range of learning experiences and attainments that are average for the age group. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (17 per cent) is around average; most of these have difficulties with learning and a few with behaviour. Four per cent of the school population has a statement of special educational needs, and this is well above the national average. Around six per cent of pupils claim their entitlement to free school meals, which is below average. Most pupils are of a white, British background, with a few being of Irish decent.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Willows is a very good school and provides **very good value for money**.

Teaching is very good. Leadership and management are very good, and are firmly focused on high standards and ensuring that all pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Attainment is well above average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). It is above expectations in many other subjects.
- Achievement is very good.
- Very good leadership and management drive the school forward successfully.
- Very good teaching is responsible for very good learning.
- Pupils do not always transfer their good skills of handwriting to their everyday work.
- Opportunities for children to explore or pursue their own interests are not always included in lessons for the reception class.
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development, resulting in very good attitudes to learning, very good behaviour and very profitable relationships.
- The curriculum is very well enriched and enhanced by visits, visitors and out-of-school clubs.
- There are very good links with parents who hold the school in very high regard.

Improvements

There have been very good improvements since the time of the previous inspection, especially in teaching, standards, links with parents and in governance. Issues relating to management and to multicultural education have been fully addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Work seen during lessons and in a scrutiny of completed work confirms a further improvement in standards for English this year, and a continuation of high attainment for mathematics and science. Attainment for the current group of Year 6 pupils is well above average for all three subjects. Achievement is very good because pupils have a very high quality of teaching and they work very hard to reach the challenging targets set for them. The lower results of 2001 and 2002 were predicted since both year groups had a lower-than-average profile of prior learning on entry to school, and the percentages of pupils with special educational needs was higher than usual. Recent improvement in planning has had a positive effect on attainment; this includes more problem solving and investigational work in mathematics and science, and a whole-school project to improve writing skills. However, some pupils do not take enough care with the presentation of written work. Children in the reception class achieve well in language,

mathematical and ICT skills, and very well in personal development. In the other areas of learning, progress is sound but opportunities for children to instigate or follow their own lines of enquiry are not always included in lessons. In the present Year 2 group, attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and science and ICT is above average. Throughout the school, those pupils who have special educational needs progress at a rate equal to the majority because they have good support. By Year 6, attainment in art and design, design and technology, history, geography and physical education is above expectations. It was not possible to make a judgement for music. Higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted or talented have additional challenges in their work, and achieve very well.

Pupils' **spiritual, social and moral development is very good and cultural development is good.** The resulting **very high standards of pupils' behaviour, their very positive attitudes and very good relationships** underpin the very good learning seen. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and has a direct impact on the very high standards seen. Teachers present their pupils with interesting lessons, driven at a fast pace. Some outstanding practice was seen in classes for the younger infants and older juniors. In the single- and mixed-age groups, teachers use assessment information very well to set work at different levels of difficulty. This ensures that pupils of different ages and abilities have the challenge or support that they need to learn effectively. Teaching assistants are well informed and make a good contribution to learning.

Curriculum There is a good, broad curriculum that successfully meets the needs and interests of the pupils. Higher attaining pupils have appropriate challenges in their work. The planning for mathematics, science and design and technology includes a very good element of problem solving and investigation; this underpins the quality of learning very well. There is very good enrichment for the curriculum. Good innovations, such as the sessions to develop pupils' thinking skills, are very much enjoyed. The accommodation has been much improved and is good.

Care and guidance are very good. Pupils form trusting relationships with adults and say that they feel safe. Pupils who have statements of special educational need have very good, continuous support from staff and their friends. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is very good and the information is used very well to set challenging targets for learning that are shared with pupils and parents. This helps to promote a rapid pace to learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT are very good and sharply focused on high attainment. Governance is very good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work as a very good team. Between them, they have considerable expertise and experience. The sharing of information allows for very good day-to-day management and the very good promotion of links with parents. The quality of self-evaluation is very good. The subject managers are effective; their leadership is reflected in the above-average standards across many areas of the curriculum. Governors have a very good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and play a pivotal role in shaping the school's direction and development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The results of the parents' questionnaires and the meeting show that parents have very good levels of confidence in the school. Pupils have very good views and they play a good, active role in school development through the prefects' council.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide further opportunities for children in the reception class to initiate their own lines of enquiry.
- Improve the handwriting of some pupils when recording work to the consistently good standard seen in handwriting lessons and books.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children in the reception class achieve well. Standards seen in Year 6 are well above average for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Achievement is **very good** in these subjects throughout school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant number of children exceed expectations in personal development, language work, mathematical understanding and ICT by the end of the reception class.
- Skills in knowledge and understanding of the world could be further developed by including more opportunities for children to initiate their own lines of enquiry.
- In the Year 2 class, a high number of pupils attain at an above-average level in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Attainment by Year 6 in art and design, design and technology, history, geography and physical education is higher than nationally expected.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well in relation to their starting points.
- Boys and girls, and those pupils capable of higher attainment, achieve equally well.

Commentary

1. When children enter school, their learning experiences match those expected for the age group. They achieve very well in personal and social development. Progress in communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding and in using ICT is good. By the time they move into Year 1 attainment in these three areas is above expectations. In other aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative and physical development children achieve soundly and attainment is in line with expectations by the end of the reception year. Their skills of investigation could be promoted further. Nevertheless, children gain a thorough grounding in their education that prepares them well for work in Years 1 to 6.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.3 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	13.3 (14.4)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.4 (16.7)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. When compared with schools nationally and to those in similar circumstances, the 2003 results at the end of Year 2 were well above average, and there was a high percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that, in Years 1 and 2, pupils attain above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The vast majority of pupils are working at the lower

Level 2C in reading and mathematics, and nearly all are in the 2B and above range. This represents a good improvement since the 2003 tests and the previous inspection. The reasons underpinning the improved achievements are: the very good teaching, pupils' willingness to learn and work hard, and a much improved system of checking pupils' progress. The school has worked hard to improve skills in writing and success is seen in the improved standards. The next target is to move more of the 2C pupils into the 2B category, as seen in mathematics and reading.

3. Pupils' spelling is largely accurate and pupils include detail in their well-punctuated sentences. In mathematics, pupils are confident in calculating mentally and have a secure understanding of shape, measures and in making graphs and charts. Skills of scientific enquiry and investigation have improved considerably and are good. In ICT, pupils use the keyboard and on-screen prompts efficiently when applying their skills across the full programme of study.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (25.8)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	28.4 (26.6)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.7 (27.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in the 2003 tests was above the national average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, attainment was well above average in English, mathematics and science. Evidence gathered from Year 6 during the inspection shows that standards for the present year group are well above average in all three subjects, with a good number of pupils working at the higher Level 5. Achievement is very good and there are very good improvements since the previous inspection. Notable strengths were seen in skills of mathematical computation and problem solving and in scientific experimentation. However, some pupils' presentation in their general writing is not up to the good standard seen in handwriting books. Last year's targets for the Year 6 pupils in English and mathematics were met and, for the most part, exceeded. The school is on track to achieve this year's targets, according to the teacher assessments and records kept.
5. The school has a very effective system of tracking pupils' progress and of setting learning targets year on year to guide teachers' planning. This ensures that pupils achieve their potential, including the higher attaining groups and those who are gifted or talented. Boys and girls achieve equally well in their lessons. Test results show some differences here, but there are imbalances of gender numbers in some year groups that can influence the statistics. In class, boys and girls do well because teachers find ways to engage both groups, and choose topics to interest all.
6. Attainment in ICT is above average by Year 2 and well above average by Year 6, and there have been very good improvements here since the inspection of 1998. The improved teaching, subject leadership and resources have all contributed to the much higher standards. Attainment in history and geography is above expectations, with major strengths in pupils' skills of historical enquiry and in mapping work. Pupils use

their very well-developed skills in mathematics and science to good effect in their design and technology lessons, and attainment is above average by Year 6. In art and design, some very good experiences across a wide range of media underpin the good progress. Attainment in physical education is above average and is supported by a good amount of competitions and clubs out of school hours. No overall judgements were made about attainment in music but clear strengths were seen in singing and performing.

7. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well throughout school. They have individual learning goals that are set at regular intervals. Their parents are kept informed of progress made and advised on how to help at home. The broad curriculum allows pupils to develop their creative, physical, thinking and practical skills, so that all have the opportunity to find their own talents.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, in and out of lessons, are **very good**. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is **very good**, and cultural development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Pupils are responsible and reliable and have high self esteem.
- Pupils behave very well both in lessons and in the playground.
- Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

Commentary

8. Pupils' relationships with each other and their teachers are very good. This has a significant, positive effect upon their learning, especially in the Years 5 and 6 class where the respect and trust between teacher and pupils allows for a good deal of independent learning and for pupils to take the initiative. Throughout school, the interesting curriculum stimulates a very good desire to learn, and pupils work very well in pairs or small groups. As a result, Year 6 pupils are very confident and articulate young people.
9. There is a strong emphasis on promoting personal development in the reception class and children usually exceed the expectations in this area by the time they enter Year 1. This provides a good foundation for learning and social education. In all but a small minority of cases, behaviour in lessons, moving around the school and in the playground is very good. Dinner times are well organised and are civilised occasions. There is, however, a small minority of infant pupils who do not always follow classroom conventions, such as putting up their hands before speaking.
10. Pupils are very polite, helpful and forthcoming. The whole school works in harmony and there is no evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour. It is clear that pupils enjoy their lessons and like their teachers and friends. They are keen to take part in the varied activities the school offers.
11. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well integrated and are fully involved in all aspects of school life. They have positive attitudes to their work because they are supported well by teachers, teaching assistants and other pupils. The accommodation of special equipment, such as electric wheelchairs, or the use of special techniques, such as signing, help pupils to be independent.
12. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good and cultural development is good. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection, especially in cultural education.
13. There is a strong spiritual element in whole-school worship. Pupils are encouraged to take part. For example, two juniors read from the Gospels. Some class worship sessions are organised and led entirely by pupils and are wonderful occasions, full of reverence. At these times, the pupils' behaviour and attention is faultless, it needs no prompting and it signifies their deeply embedded spirituality.

14. The school offers a safe and open learning environment in which pupils are confident to voice their opinions and practise decision making. The school provides them with the security of being able to express views or make mistakes without fear of ridicule. A wonderful example of this occurred when a large group of Years 5 and 6 pupils debated moral issues, of which fair trading was one. In a mature discussion, they showed great respect and care for the feelings, values and beliefs of each other and for those of the wider community. Clearly, pupils of all ages know the difference between right and wrong. A range of sporting activities creates good opportunities to acquire social skills when playing team games such as football, netball and cricket. During the inspection, a team of boys and girls enjoyed taking part in an inter-school cricket match, which showed great sporting spirit. They encouraged each other well, acknowledging skill and success.

15. The curriculum for music and art and design significantly enhances the opportunity for cultural development. The school provides good opportunities for drama productions and musicals. There is opportunity to perform through acting, singing and playing musical instruments. Pupils study a wide range of works from various cultures around the world and from different times in history.

16. The key issue at the previous inspection, with regard to multi-cultural provision, has been well addressed. This element is now good and the school has sought to improve its provision through literacy and religious education. The school emphasises well the study of other faiths and cultures. Last year, a visitor from the Council of Mosques introduced pupils to the music and history of Islam, and they thoroughly enjoyed the experience. In addition, pupils learn about life in third world countries through their geography and personal development lessons. Some interesting artefacts from worldwide cultures and religions have been acquired and these are helping to raise awareness of the multi-cultural nature of our society.

Attendance

Attendance is **very good** and is a further indication of pupils' enjoyment of their school and of their **very good** attitudes. Parents are clear about procedures for notifying the school when their children are absent, and there are very few incidents of unauthorised absences. Punctuality is **good**.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.8
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll
119

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
2	0

White – any other White background	5	0	0
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The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Exclusions

The exclusions relate to one pupil. The school has good systems for working with parents to develop behaviour management strategies where they are needed.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **very good** throughout school and pupils achieve very well. There are improved and very good processes in place for checking pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science and for setting challenging targets for future learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good range of subject knowledge.
- The teachers' planning is very good and uses assessment information very well to set targets for pupils' learning, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers use a very good range of strategies and resources to challenge, motivate and encourage pupils. They have very high expectations of endeavour and behaviour.
- Staff ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are fully involved in all lessons and receive the support that they need.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (11%)	11 (30%)	19 (51%)	3 (8%)	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.

17. The teaching of personal and social development in the reception class is very good and, consequently, children make very good progress. This is a major strength of the Foundation Stage and is reflected in pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour throughout school. Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good, in sessions for communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding and ICT. As a result of the good provision, children achieve well in these three areas. Their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative and physical development are soundly promoted, and they make satisfactory progress. In some lessons, the teacher includes a good emphasis on practical experience when children solve problems, explore and try out their own ideas. In these cases teaching is good. There is scope to extend the number and range of open-ended tasks over the adult-directed sessions that are more common at present. Within the teaching of physical development, there is a good emphasis on promoting manipulative skills. As a result, pupils develop their hand-eye coordination well and learn to handle pencils and other small tools effectively. Taking all factors into consideration, teaching and learning in the reception class is good overall.
18. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 are successful in developing a very solid foundation across all subjects. Some excellent teaching and learning was seen in Year 1 and there is a good emphasis in Year 2 on the creative subjects. In both classes, pupils learn to use a good range of reading strategies to help them tackle new texts and, in mathematics and science lessons, they try out different approaches to problem solving. Skills in ICT are very effectively promoted. These strengths in teaching and learning prepare pupils very effectively for the more demanding curriculum in the junior classes.

19. There are many strengths in the teaching and learning for Years 3 to 6, with some excellent lessons seen in the class for the older pupils. Mathematics and science lessons throughout the juniors include a very good emphasis on exploration, problem solving and experimentation. As a result, pupils become confident mathematicians and learn to think as scientists. They are encouraged to pose their own questions and to try out different approaches to their work. They show good levels of interest and perseverance. The promotion of speaking and listening and debating skills is a major strength in the teaching. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is well above average here and is one of the factors behind the improved attainment in writing.
20. Throughout school, teachers prepare and plan their lessons with great care and with constant reference to prior learning, thus ensuring that pupils have the challenge or support that they need to do their best. This is especially important in the mixed-age classes, where work is very carefully targeted. Teachers share the learning goal with the pupils at the beginning of each lesson and then review the success achieved at the end. Pupils, and their parents, are aware of their individual learning targets. Consequently, pupils know what they need to do to improve, and parents are able to support their children well at home. Teachers make good use of pupils' very good ICT skills to enhance and extend learning. The digital projectors are used well in classes to demonstrate new learning in ICT or to project text, diagrams and pictures for class discussions. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and actively engaged in supporting learning. Homework is well used to consolidate what is learned in class. The use of the homework diaries is effective in ensuring that pupils and their parents know exactly what is expected. Children in the reception class take reading books home and the teacher makes a feature of any work that children complete at home voluntarily. For example, one child brought in a picture with some writing. She was congratulated on her efforts and this encouraged others to have a try.
21. The checking of pupil's learning is very good in English, mathematics and science, and tracking records show each pupil's progress year on year. These records provide the essential information for the setting of future targets and for teachers' planning. Assessments of learning in the other subjects are completed regularly and the information is used well to plan the next steps.
22. There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Assessments, tracking and target setting have improved very well in the key subjects, and expectations of learning are very high. Teachers have a secure knowledge of how pupils learn. This helps them to bring lessons to life and to successfully motivate their pupils. Very good relationships exist in classes, and pupils rise to the high expectations because they trust their teachers and know that help is readily available if they need it. The older pupils work at an exacting pace and attain some very good standards. In this class, tasks are suitably challenging for each pupil, and there are very good opportunities for independent study and divergent thought.
23. The headteacher evaluates the success of planning and teaching and there is a good programme of training in place to enhance skills. In this small school, teachers pool their ideas and successes, and this is a good way of sharing good practice.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, and it is very good for those with statements of special educational need. This reflects the strong commitment to inclusion that is shared by governors, managers and all staff. Pupils' special needs

are catered for through some creative thinking. For example, the format of sports day has been changed so that pupils with physical difficulties can be fully involved. Pupils who require additional help are identified as soon as possible when they begin school. The special educational needs co-ordinator, together with the class teacher, discuss and develop pupils' individual education plans. Teaching assistants are conversant with the specific learning programmes and know when and how to provide the best support. Teachers use skilful questioning to ensure that all pupils are fully included in lessons, thereby enabling them to make consistent gains in their learning.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good** and it is very well enriched. The accommodation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good breadth of the curriculum helps to ensure that pupils have a good, rounded education.
- There are good links between different subjects of the curriculum that reinforce learning.
- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good overall but there are not enough opportunities for exploration in some lessons.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and very good for those who have statements of special educational need.
- The availability of computers and software is very good.
- The school provides a wide range of activities for pupils outside of the school day.
- Ample opportunities are provided for independent study.

Commentary

25. The school's curriculum has been reviewed and reorganised and has improved considerably in recent years. It meets statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and to provide collective worship. A good range of worthwhile learning opportunities successfully meets pupils' interests, aptitudes and learning needs. Well-structured planning is in place for all subjects, based on the latest national guidelines. This means that teachers are well guided in developing a range of interesting topics on which to base lessons. The planning for pupils in mixed-age classes is particularly good, making sure that pupils of all ages and capabilities are well provided for and that there is no repetition in learning.
26. All the areas of learning are covered in a balanced way in the Foundation Stage. In some lessons, children enjoy solving problems or investigating something that interests them. However, at present, there is not enough emphasis on this type of free exploration.
27. All pupils have access to the full curriculum, and this is a very strong feature of the school. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported so that they can work alongside their peers to take advantage of lessons and activities. The targets set for them are clear and they receive good support. These targets are reviewed and revised regularly to make sure they are appropriate to the pupils' current needs. Provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is very good. When necessary, the curriculum is carefully adapted or special resources are acquired so that their individual education requirements are met.

28. The school has implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well. Guided reading and writing sessions are very successful in promoting these key skills, which are applied to very good effect in other subjects. The development of pupils' skills in ICT is very good. This is a significant and very good improvement since the previous inspection. Throughout school, skills of speaking and listening are very well promoted and, by Year 6, pupils have informed debates and discuss issues of concern from different viewpoints.
29. The school puts a special emphasis on developing personal, social and health education, and an awareness of citizenship from the outset. As a result, pupils develop very positive attitudes. This has a significant impact on behaviour and relationships and enhances the quality of learning. Parents are fully consulted about the programme for sex and relationships education, which is presented to pupils in Years 5 and 6. Suitable attention is given to teaching pupils about drug abuse, and the older ones are well aware of the possible dangers.
30. A very good range of additional curriculum opportunities enriches pupils' learning outside of classes. Participation in sport and the arts is good. For example, during the inspection the school cricket team was successful in a local tournament, and a large number of pupils were observed enjoying athletics training and rounders games after school. A good range of extra-curricular activities includes clubs for mathematics, science, guitar tuition, signing for the hearing impaired, gardening and the environment. An annual residential visit is also organised, where pupils experience a range of outward-bound type and adventure activities.
31. Good links with the parish help to widen pupils' social experiences. Year-wide links with the secondary schools prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their education so that they leave The Willows as confident and mature pupils. This factor is well recognised by parents.
32. The school is staffed by a dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff. They are effectively deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and to support pupils' needs. There are established arrangements for staff development, guided by the school's improvement plan. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Lunchtime supervisors provide a good standard of care at midday and know the pupils well. The site supervisor and his team ensure a high standard of cleanliness and safety at all times.
33. The quality and adequacy of the accommodation for teaching the curriculum is good. The school grounds are spacious, well maintained and provide a beautiful environment for the pupils. The staff present very attractive displays throughout the building and this helps to provide a stimulating environment for learning. The resources in all subjects are at least satisfactory, and in English, ICT and physical education they are good. Accommodation for children in the reception year is good and includes a secure outdoor learning area. The school library is satisfactorily stocked but there are few pupils' books for art and design or design and technology.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are **very good**. Staff provide very good advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good, easy access to well-informed advice, support and guidance available to help them make progress.
- The target-setting system provides very good advice to help pupils improve in English, mathematics and science, and good advice in the other subjects.
- The very good induction arrangements enable pupils to quickly settle into school.
- Child protection procedures fully comply with statutory requirements and all staff are appropriately trained.
- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with the teaching staff and feel confident in approaching them with any concerns.

Commentary

34. The school has made good improvements in this area of its work since the last inspection. Pupils and their families are well known to teachers. Adults are sensitive to the needs of those in their charge, being fully aware of their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. The trusting relationships which the pupils enjoy give them confidence to share any concerns and help them cope with problems that arise in everyday life. This results in pupils feeling confident and valued which, in turn, makes a strong contribution to their achievements.
35. Parents value the secure and happy environment in which pupils' well being is effectively promoted. In returned questionnaires, 98 per cent agreed that their children are treated fairly, and 93 per cent agreed that the school helped children to become mature (a further six per cent did not know). Similar, positive comments were made at the parents' meeting.
36. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a smooth and confident start to their school life because of the very good support given by staff and the on-going involvement of parents in the programme of education. Useful information is provided in the 'Welcome to The Willows' information package, which details activities in all areas of learning and enables parents to become familiar with school routines. In returned questionnaires, 97 per cent of parents agreed that settling-in procedures were good, and the other 3 per cent did not know.
37. There is a very good system for checking progress in English, mathematic and science. Pupils have clear targets that clearly indicate where improvement is needed. Targets are shared and reviewed with parents. They are recorded in the homework diaries as a constant reminder, and this is a useful strategy. Information from the tracking records is well used to organise 'booster' or 'catch-up groups' for pupils to make sure that everyone is achieving their best. In the other subjects, progress is checked regularly and the teachers use the information well in lesson planning.
38. Child protection arrangements are very good and are viewed as a priority. All staff are vigilant and work effectively within the agreed local procedures. There are also good links with outside support agencies. The health and safety representative and caretaker

carry out routine checks of the building, record details of findings and ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken.

39. The school is good at ensuring that the views of all groups within the school community are respected, regardless of religion, racial origin or cultural background. Pupils' views of the school are very positive and are expressed through the prefect representatives of the school council and house captains. Their ideas are respected by the headteacher and appropriately acted upon. In their returned questionnaires, 85 per cent agreed that teachers listen to their ideas regularly and 15 per cent said they do so sometimes. The new playtime activities and the plans for the installation of adventure equipment are just two examples of pupils' suggestions that have come to fruition. The school effectively acknowledges pupils' achievements in academic, personal and emotional development at various times throughout the year, including regular special assemblies.
40. Effective strategies are in place to identify pupils who have special educational needs, and the individual education plans that are written to aid their learning are clearly defined. The systems that are in place support these pupils well and their progress is closely monitored. Class teachers monitor pupils' personal development mainly through observation, and readily identify and evaluate strengths and weaknesses, including qualities such as perseverance, application and self-confidence. Relevant information is included in the annual report to parents. The school encourages and rewards good attendance with both individual and class certificates. As a result, attendance figures are very good.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is **very good**. Very good links are established with other schools, colleges and the parish community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents commend the school's high aspirations for their children's personal and academic development.
- Comprehensive information is made available about the curriculum being taught so that parents can help at home.
- The school involves parents well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Good links with other schools and the wider community provide opportunities to enrich pupils' learning.
- Effective communication keeps parents well informed about their children's progress.

Commentary

41. The partnership with parents is very good, with some aspects having been significantly improved since the last inspection. The school takes a deep interest in the home life of the pupils, and plays an important part in the life of the parish and wider community. Parents, in turn, support their children's learning very well at home and reinforce the values that are taught. Governors and staff acknowledge the high level of parental interest in their children's education and the benefits that this brings.
42. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. From the outset, parents of children in the Foundation Stage are fully informed about the learning programme. In

the other year groups, curriculum newsletters are issued at the start of each term to give parents an overview of the topics to be studied. Other regular newsletters detail school activities and events organised with the church and community. The prospectus contains all statutory requirements and the governors' report to parents is informative, including references to the current development plan and academic achievements. Pupils' annual progress reports give a good overview of what has been achieved, and include valuable guidance on areas for improvement and target setting.

43. There are two formal meetings for parents to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher, and they are very well attended. Additionally any parent with a concern or query can arrange a formal meeting to discuss the issue after receipt of the annual progress report. Parents are actively involved in school life through an active parent, teacher and friends association. Funds raised have enhanced the computer suite and enabled the school to purchase drinking water dispensers and play equipment. Help in the classroom is restricted due to the high number of working parents, but many are able to supervise educational trips and extra-curricular activities. There is good support for learning at home and the homework diary forms a good vehicle for communication between parents and teachers.
44. Many parents appreciate the facilities provided by the breakfast club and after-school club. Parents are consulted extensively through questionnaires and meetings, and their views are taken into account to bring about improvements. They have very high levels of confidence in the headteacher and his staff. In returned questionnaires, 100 per cent agreed that they felt comfortable to approach the school, and 96 per cent agreed that they were well informed. Both these views were repeated at the meeting for parents.
45. There are good links with the community that enhance and enliven pupils' learning. Members of the community join the pupils regularly in the celebration of mass or church services. School productions are very well attended and commended. A 'teamtheme' club provides sporting activities on school grounds and another activity club operates over the holiday periods. Representatives from the fire service and police authority visit regularly to discuss local environmental and safety issues with the children.
46. The school provides good opportunities for teachers in training and for students to gain work experience. Links with secondary schools are well established and ensure that the transition between the stages of education is smooth. The school has received an award from the local college for outstanding achievement in a life skills project. This also contributed well to pupils' learning in design and technology. Links developed with industry have increased pupils' economic and industrial awareness and provided a good foundation for subsequent work at secondary school level.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Governors provide very good support and fulfil their statutory duties effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is based firmly on high aspirations and continuous improvement.
- There is very good teamwork and sharing of expertise.
- Management and leadership of the subjects are very good.
- Day-to-day practice reflects the success of the school's commitment to ensuring that all pupils have full and equal access to all parts of school life.
- Governors have a very good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have an ambitious long-term view of development.
- Information gathered from the school's self-evaluation programme is used very effectively in school improvement planning.

Commentary

Leadership

47. The school very successfully lives out its mission statement on a day-to-day basis. Staff and governors are committed to the ethos of the school; they strive for high achievement and provide a caring environment where all pupils, regardless of any special need they may have, are fully integrated into all activities. The Willows has a deservedly high reputation in the area. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very successfully as a team and are well regarded by parents and governors, who value their hard work, approachability and commitment. The teamwork is especially important in this school where the headteacher has a teaching commitment of over 40 per cent of school time. The partnership allows roles and responsibilities to be well covered. Across the school, there is a strong sense of shared purpose and a clear vision for future development. Staff are constantly looking for ways to improve and work hard to this end. Leadership is successful in promoting an all-round education where creative, aesthetic and physical skills, together with the academic, are promoted in a balanced way. The Christian foundation of the school is reflected in the very good standards of pupils' personal development, their enjoyment of lessons and the very pleasant, welcoming environment. The headteacher and his staff appreciate the main aids to learning in school; these include very supportive parents and a dedicated teaching staff. Problems or barriers are generally recognised quickly and tackled effectively.

Management

48. The effective cycle of self-evaluation includes a planned programme of classroom observations. Data from national and optional tests is thoroughly analysed to see if there are any areas that require further development. The pleasing improvement to writing this year is an indicator of the school's successful approach and of the commitment to improvement. The detailed tracking and target-setting system allows the headteacher to check that individuals, classes and year groups are making the expected progress, and to check that good challenges are set for the higher attaining pupils. Records of attainment and progress are thorough and easy to follow throughout Years 1 to 6.

49. Staff have regular performance reviews, through which a programme of training and development needs is established. This represents a good improvement since the previous report. The headteacher is keen to maintain a good work-life balance for his staff. Changes are well thought out, fully discussed and introduced at a sensible pace that allows for problems to be tackled as they arise. In a recent survey conducted by a third party, staff clearly indicated that they felt valued. Scores showed that they contributed their feelings of well being to the supportive culture of the school and the quality of relationships. These are essential factors behind the school's ability to attract and retain staff of high quality.
50. Support staff and teachers are deployed effectively to meet the specific needs of individual pupils and to maintain good provision for the children in the reception class. The school administrators have a good deal of expertise and cover a varied range of duties to provide good support. The accommodation and resources are used efficiently and best value is routinely sought. Taking account of the very good quality of education, the very high standards of attainment, the very good leadership and management and costs that are around average, the school provides very good value for money.

Governance

51. Between them, the governors have a good range of expertise and experience that they use for the ultimate benefit of the pupils. They have a thorough and informed view of the school's strengths and areas for development, representing a very good improvement since the last inspection. Governors use funds very prudently to provide single-age tuition for the Foundation Stage and infant pupils. They are fully involved in the decision-making processes that lead to school improvement planning, and regularly check on the success of the work covered. They keep a very close eye on attainment patterns and ask relevant questions. Budget decisions are largely based around the targets in the improvement plan, and governors expect to see benefits in pupils' learning as a result of their spending allocations. They are keen to develop the school further and have some ambitious plans for the future.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	388,316	Balance from previous year	48,901
Total expenditure	401,492	Balance carried forward to the next	35,725
Expenditure per pupil	2,731		

The current balance is nine per cent of expenditure. Much of this money is allocated to the budget for 2004/5 in order to maintain single-age group teaching for the Foundation Stage and the infant pupils. The governors' policy is to keep around five per cent of income as a reserve for unforeseen circumstances.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in personal and social development.
 - The children make good progress and have very good behaviour and attitudes.
 - In some lessons children do not have enough opportunities to explore or to follow their own lines of enquiry.
52. The good provision enables children to make a good start to their learning in a stimulating environment. Children's prior learning when they enter school is around the levels expected for children of this age, although several have speech difficulties. There are appropriate induction procedures so that children feel secure and comfortable from the outset, and the emphasis on care for the individual child is evident throughout the Foundation Stage. Children achieve well in communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding, personal and social development and in computer work. In these areas attainment is above average on entry into Year 1. In creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world children achieve the expected learning goals by the end of the year. Overall, this represents a good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in language, mathematical and ICT skills.
53. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and are focused on improvement. The provision supports children of all capabilities and backgrounds well. However, a few lessons are over-directed and leave little opportunity for children to explore or choose an activity that interests them. Children with special educational needs are very effectively supported, so that they are able to take full advantage of all that the class has to offer. Assessment information is used to respond to individual learning needs although the school recognises that the recording of assessments needs to be in a more accessible format to which all staff can refer.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults are very good role models and the children feel valued, happy and confident.
- Daily routines show high expectations of children's behaviour and independence.
- Relationships are very good and foster the spiritual, moral and emotional development of the children very well.

Commentary

54. This area of learning has a very high profile, and children achieve very well because teaching is very good. It is a major strength of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage, and results in children who are confident and who demonstrate very good levels of self-esteem. The work done lays a solid foundation for later learning. Children and staff clearly enjoy each other's company. The positive ethos supports children effectively and helps them to develop very good standards of behaviour. The adults are very effective in nurturing pupils' personal and social skills, and generate a warm, secure atmosphere. As a result, the children feel valued and are willing to try out new activities and accept challenges. Children are well motivated, show good levels of concentration when engaged in their tasks and co-operate sensibly when sharing equipment. Most children are likely to exceed the expected learning for this area by the end of the reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective whole-class and group teaching results in good progress.
- Children have varied and good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Children have good experience of fiction and non-fiction books.
- Computers are used well in this area of learning.

Commentary

55. Children make good progress because of the varied and rich opportunities throughout the day that they are given to talk and listen, read and write. Speaking and listening skills are taught well through a wide variety of experiences, such as singing and listening to stories. The children are encouraged to join in discussions and to express their views. The teacher emphasises and explains new vocabulary and expects that children will use the correct terms. They are taught how to be good listeners and speakers. Reading and writing skills develop well because the teacher places considerable emphasis on the recognition of letter sounds and skills of blending and segmenting these sounds in words. Children recognise features of fiction and non-fiction texts. For example, they point out the author, illustrator, title and blurb. Most children make good attempts at early writing. The teacher draws children's attention to the correct formation of letters and, consequently, they are developing good pencil control. Most can spell simple words, and their letters are usually recognisable, even if not correctly formed. Children take books home regularly and share the stories with their parents and other adults. They use computer programs to explore interactive books, and this adds to their enthusiasm for reading. Indications are that most children are on course to exceed the expected levels in this area of learning by the end of the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical understanding is effectively promoted through many areas of learning.

- Teaching and learning are generally good and children achieve well, especially in number work.

Commentary

56. The teaching is good and includes fun activities to promote learning. For example, children count, repeat jingles and enjoy number songs such as 'Five Little Ducks'. Children are successfully learning to use simple mathematical vocabulary and have a sound understanding of shape and direction. Most can count up to ten, and many to 20 and beyond. Some higher-attaining children recognise and write numerals to 30. They learn about odd and even numbers through practical activities such as jumping two spaces along a number line. They are beginning to work out addition problems. The teacher had made a good link with the theme of 'growth' as children counted bunches of flowers and worked out the total. Children become familiar with money as they serve in the class 'garden centre.' They can order important times in the day and know the days of the week. Most children are on course to exceed the goals expected of them by end of their time in the reception class.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher sets some interesting problems for children to solve.
- There are not enough opportunities, on a regular basis, for children to pose their own questions and to pursue a line of enquiry.
- Early skills in ICT are promoted well, and children are confident in using computers.

Commentary

57. Children enjoy investigating for themselves. They question why things happen and accept problem-solving tasks with enthusiasm. They are encouraged to talk about their observations and to make sense of what they see. In one lesson children worked on repairing a cracked plastic tumbler. They were inventive in their approaches and showed very good perseverance as they evaluated each repair and tried to find better solutions. This is a successful method of developing early scientific skills. However, some investigations tend to be directed by adults and are not as successful in developing enquiry skills. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in this area. Children talk knowledgeably about minibeasts, and know a good deal about creatures and their habitats. They use ICT well as they make an index for their book, changing the colour and size of fonts to enhance the presentation. A good innovation is the provision of cultural dress for role play. This allows children to try out different types of attire and helps them to appreciate the diverse range of clothes worn by both boys and girls. It forms a good basis for their multi-cultural education. Many children are on course to exceed the expected levels for their age in ICT and to meet expectations in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the world.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective, focused teaching of manipulative skills enables children to use tools effectively for their age.
- Sessions in the hall, on the playground and the secure outdoor area provide good opportunities for opportunities for spontaneous outdoor play.
- There is no fixed equipment where children can choose to practise their skills of climbing and balancing.

Commentary

58. Children have confidence, control and sound body co-ordination when moving. They know that exercise is good for them and all use space safely and with good consideration for others. There is a strong focus on developing children's manipulative skills and control in small-scale movements, such as when handling pencils, paint brushes and scissors. Consequently, children show increasing dexterity. Overall, the teaching of physical skills is satisfactory. Children develop skills such as climbing, balancing and jumping through sessions in the hall but there is no permanent apparatus available as a 'choice' activity. Most children are likely to attain the expected goals in manipulative and physical skills by the end of the reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy the opportunities they are given to explore different media and create different effects.
- There are improved opportunities for children to engage in role play.

Commentary

59. Children enjoy their singing and music making, and join in activities with enthusiasm. They know many songs from memory, and music has a high profile in the classroom. They often sing, and sign songs so that children with special educational needs can be fully involved. Children have regular opportunities to explore and experiment using colour, texture, shape, form and space in two- and three-dimensional artwork. However, they have little freedom to choose media or materials for themselves since these are usually provided for them by the teacher. Children learn how to use tools skilfully and correctly. As a result, they are able to paint, colour and model precisely to achieve their intended outcome. Teachers value creative work, which is attractively displayed to enhance the learning environment. Children use their imaginations effectively as they adopt roles in the home area. They often mimic adult language and mannerisms, and this is a good foundation for later work in imaginative writing. Teaching is satisfactory and children are on course to attain the expected goals by the end of the reception year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing is well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Achievement is very good and standards are improving.
- Teaching is good overall, with several examples of very good and excellent teaching observed during the inspection.
- Pupils regularly use the full range of their literacy skills across other subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and achieve well in relation to their starting points.
- There is very good leadership of the subject.
- The standard of handwriting and presentation varies from very good to unsatisfactory.

Commentary

60. Standards in English have risen since the previous inspection because there has been a strong focus on improvement in this subject. The observation of lessons and an analysis of work in pupils' books indicate that Year 2 pupils attain above average standards. Year 6 pupils attain standards well above the national average and achieve very well. This is a good improvement on the results of the 2003 National Curriculum tests. Pupils make particularly rapid progress in Year 1 and in the Years 5 and 6 class. The school has already identified writing as an area for continued improvement and new initiatives in English are now beginning to bear fruit. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress along their individual learning programmes.
61. Pupils throughout the school enjoy English lessons and achieve very well. They are given many opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills. For example, during lessons, pupils are often given two minutes to discuss with a partner before attempting to write. By Years 5 and 6, pupils attain well above average standards in speaking. They converse with adults confidently and read aloud with excellent expression. A class assembly written and produced by a group of Year 5 pupils illustrated this as they read a Bible story and their own prayers based on the theme of 'friendship'. Overall, pupils' listening skills are very good, especially in situations such as whole school assemblies. However, there are a few boys in some classes who lose concentration easily, although they are well supported by their teachers and support staff.
62. Teachers have worked very hard to improve the standard of reading. Pupils now make very good progress and receive good help from many parents. There is additional support in reading for pupils with special educational needs, and classroom support assistants provide valuable help. Higher achieving pupils in Year 6 are very confident and read with excellent expression. One pupil was half way through reading the whole series of Harry Potter books for the second time, and could discuss all the characters with confidence. Many pupils are members of the local public library and often make good use of it as a source of information. The school is doing everything possible to encourage all pupils and to teach them the strategies that will help them to read with greater accuracy and understanding.

63. In writing, pupils of all levels of ability make good progress. They develop good skills for writing different types of text, for example sequencing instructions or writing letters on a variety of topics. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 write at length when recording their work in other subjects, using an appropriate non-fiction style to match the subject matter. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote an introductory paragraph about flowering plants. They used technical language accurately in their explanatory text. Written work entitled 'A Day in the Life of a Child in Ancient Greece' showed very good understanding of style, and illustrated effectively the pupils' ability to write for a purpose. However, some pupils need to take more care with the presentation of their writing and to apply the good skills that they are learning in handwriting lessons.
64. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is never less than good, with several examples of very good and excellent teaching noted during the inspection. It is enhanced by support staff, who make a valuable contribution to the pupil's achievement. In the best lessons observed, the pace was brisk, expectations were high, pupils were well managed and teachers made very good use of praise and encouragement. These strategies helped to boost the pupils' self esteem. The use of ICT is very good. It is often used to help pupils present their work, and for research purposes.
65. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator's own high level of knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning help her to support colleagues well. Assessment is also used well to inform future plans. Pupils have clear targets for improvement that are recorded in the homework diaries so that they can be easily shared with parents.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. At The Willows, writing is not confined to English books but is found in every subject, often to a very good standard. This was particularly evident in geography and history.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are above average for Year 2, and well above average by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils work hard and show very positive attitudes to mathematics.
- The subject is very well managed and led.

Commentary

67. Standards seen during the inspection are above those found nationally for pupils in Year 2, and well above the national average for Year 6. This is a good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection for Year 2, and a very good improvement for Year 6. It reflects the very good standards seen in the school's test results in 2003 and the good trend of improvement since 2002. Of special note is the high proportion of pupils who achieve the higher-than-expected Levels 3 and 5 of attainment.
68. With the benefit of teaching that is very good or better, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress. Progress is very well supported by the positive learning culture of the school. There were some concerns in the previous report about standards not being high enough and a lack of challenge for the higher achievers; this is no longer the situation. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and eagerly accept the very demanding challenges in lessons.
69. There were four lessons observed and these included an example of excellent teaching. Teachers' planning is very good and is based firmly upon the guidelines of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers have very good understanding of the subject and adopt interesting techniques that capture and maintain the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. They make clear to the pupils what they are going to learn in lessons. The work is planned accurately to match different abilities and to build upon the pupils' prior attainment. Lessons often include games such as number bingo. Such methods promote speed in mental calculation and are much enjoyed.
70. The pupils are managed very well and relationships are very good. Pupils are trusted by their teachers and it is especially noteworthy that Years 5 and 6 pupils are given many opportunities to organise their own learning. The acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding are excellent for pupils in this class. Throughout the school, pupils show a willingness to persevere, often working very well in small groups. This contributes significantly to their very good social development.
71. Lessons, for all year groups, begin with some form of mental activity, and it is during this period that pupils learn various strategies for calculation. As early as Year 1, children adopt the strategy of making 10 when asked to add three single-digit numbers. For example, given $6 + 3 + 4$, the higher achievers quickly make the connection between the 6 and 4 to make 10, and then add the 3 to make 13. They are equally skilled at using the technique of doubling in their calculations. Years 5 and 6 pupils demonstrate good

mental agility when they rapidly calculate the answers to such demanding questions as 'A top athlete earns £2,100 a week. How long will it take her to earn £1,000,000?'

72. A very good, full and varied curriculum is taught. Many examples of investigative work were seen and this is a strength of the subject. All other areas are covered well. For example, Year 2 pupils work with fractions, measurement, date and time and they interpret simple graphs. Learning about shape and their properties took place in a good Years 3 and 4 lesson. Years 5 and 6 pupils were very successfully challenged in a lesson that explored the relationship between metric and imperial measures, and the devising of an algebraic formula. Throughout the school there is very good development of appropriate mathematical language.
73. A limited amount of ICT was seen being used during the inspection period, although there is plenty of evidence of satisfactory use, often in the form of graphical representations.
74. Leadership of the subject, shared by representatives from both key stages, is very good, and there is very effective monitoring of teaching and standards. Good, continuous assessments are carried out against the key objectives of learning, and pupils' targets for improvement are challenging. These factors make a significant contribution to the very good progress made. Homework is set regularly and is well supported by parents. Resources are sufficient and of good quality.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Mathematics is well used in the teaching and learning of other subjects. There are close links between maths and science, and it is in this area that some of the best application of mathematical skills is seen, for example in accurate measuring, producing graphs and data logging. The same skills effectively support learning in design and technology, and contribute to the good standards seen there.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average at Year 2 and well above average at Year 6.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities for practical and investigative activity.
- There are very good opportunities for both independent study and collaborative working.

Commentary

76. The standards of work seen in lessons and books confirm that standards are good at Year 2 and very good by the end of Year 6. The very good attainment reflects the test results of 2003, when all pupils attained the expected Level 4 and over 60 per cent attained the higher Level 5. There is a good improvement since the previous inspection in standards at the end of Year 2, and very good improvement in them at the end of Year 6. Pupils enter Year 1 with an average knowledge and understanding of the world, and there is very good achievement throughout school. This is due to a very interesting

curriculum, very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Work is very well planned to match all levels of ability. Because of this and the good support they receive from teachers, from teaching assistants and from their friends, pupils with special educational needs work successfully and achieve as well as their peers.

77. As early as Year 1, very good teaching enables pupils to understand and use scientific language. For example, through their experiments, pupils soon became aware that a circuit must be complete in order to light a bulb. They then discover that the object with which they bridge the gap in the circuit must conduct electricity. In this way, the meaning of 'conduct' was meaningfully learned. A higher achieving pupil then remarked, "So metal must be a conductor of electricity".
78. The teaching of scientific investigation is very good throughout school. Pupils are actively encouraged to ask questions and to find ways of solving problems. In the Years 5 and 6 class, the teacher empowers the pupils very well to plan, investigate and record independently. A great strength of the teaching here is that there is very little direction or prescription in the way of working. This has an extremely positive effect on pupils' initiative and self confidence. It also promotes scientific thinking and a keen interest in the subject.
79. Pupils are increasingly using computers very well as part of their science work. For example, the electronic microscope and interactive whiteboard were used very effectively to investigate pollen. Sensors are used to test for heat conductivity and pupils use the Internet regularly to research for information. There are many good opportunities for the use of literacy and mathematical skills in science, for example reporting outcomes of investigations, measuring and calculating.
80. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leaders' influence in bringing about the greater emphasis on the practical content of each lesson is very significant in the success that the subject now enjoys. Assessments are continuous and thorough, and used as part of the monitoring process. This helps to ensure that provision is maintained at a very good level.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils achieve very well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a secure knowledge of the subject.
- Pupils make very good progress in lessons owing to very effective teaching and good resources.
- The attitudes of most pupils are very good and they have a strong desire to learn.
- Leadership is very good and has given impetus to improvement.

Commentary

81. The school has made significant and very good improvements since the previous inspection. Standards are higher, the quality of teaching and learning is very good, the full curriculum for ICT is taught, resources are now good and subject leadership is very good.
82. Pupils achieve very well across a very broad range of work in ICT. Many pupils work at a level well above that expected for their age. Pupils show great enthusiasm for the subject and are well supported by appropriate tasks, together with the skills of teachers and teaching assistants. The digital camera is very effectively used to present evidence of work in many subjects and to record special events in the life of the school.
83. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are provided with a very good foundation in computer skills. They know that machines are controlled by instructions and are given opportunities to find out from first hand experience how computers function. Year 6 pupils have well developed keyboard skills, so they work quickly and accurately. They use spreadsheets confidently to enhance data logging, to analyse results and make complex calculations. Some pupils were observed using a remote controlled robot which they had built. They successfully programmed it to move around obstacles and to solve many challenges. They were thrilled to demonstrate their finished product and delighted with their success.
84. Since the previous inspection, teachers have become enthused about teaching ICT, and demonstrate a good level of skill to promote pupils' learning. The school makes very good use of its computer suite. Although space is lacking, the suite is a good facility that contributes significantly to pupils' achievement. Very good leadership has contributed a great deal to the school's recent success in the subject. The subject leader has overseen good training and purchased a good range of software to complement the school's broad and balanced curriculum. Assessment information is used well to plan the next steps in learning and to promote good progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. A particular success of the school lies in its creative approach to work in ICT across the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Computer programs are especially well used in subjects such as geography and history. Pupils are constantly encouraged to use the Internet for information when appropriate. They are discriminating in their use of ICT and evaluate whether manual systems are quicker or more efficient for the task in hand.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above expectations by the end of Year 6.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy geography.

Commentary

86. Only two lessons could be observed during the inspection. An analysis of pupils' work completed over the past year and work on display indicates that pupils achieve well throughout the school and attainment is above national expectations by the end of Year 6.
87. Teaching is good and is often based on practical investigation or survey. Year 1 pupils study their local area. They look at different types of houses, making a link with their history work. In Years 1 and 2 they develop their mapping skills well, starting with plans of the classroom and the school and work out their route from home to school. They carry out a traffic survey on the main road at different times of the day, enter the results into a computer, and produce clear graphs. By the end of Year 2, pupils confidently discuss differences between Kirkham and life on a Scottish island.
88. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils are very confident in finding information from books, videos and the Internet. They can interpret maps skilfully using grid references and are knowledgeable about the features of coastal areas. Throughout school, pupils are keen to learn and especially enjoy opportunities for field work.
89. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader has made significant changes to the curriculum, concentrating more on the development of geographical skills. This has helped improve standards, which are now higher than at the previous inspection. Resources are satisfactory and used well by staff and pupils.

History

Provision for history is **good**.

- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching.
- Standards in Year 6 are above expectations.
- There is good emphasis on teaching the skills of enquiry.
- Educational visits help bring the subject to life.
- Good links with literacy and art promote learning well.

Commentary

90. Only one lesson could be observed in history. Evidence from teachers' planning, an analysis of pupils' work and photographic evidence, plus discussions with staff and pupils, indicate that attainment is above expectations by the age of eleven. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well. The learning of higher attaining pupils is often extended through more challenging tasks.
91. Teaching is good. Year 1 pupils find out about health care at the time of Florence Nightingale and compare the provision with hospitals today. Through this work, pupils realise how life changes over time. In an exciting lesson about holidays in the past, Year 2 pupils asked two visiting grandparents some sensible questions about the holidays they had enjoyed when they were young. Afterwards, pupils used their literacy skills well, and wrote a postcard they might have sent home when they were on holiday long ago. They also wrote a letter of thanks to the grandparents who had made their

lesson so interesting. As part of their studies, Years 4 and 5 pupils had arranged a Greek Day when they dressed in traditional costumes, enjoyed a Greek banquet and took part in a mini version of the Olympic games. These activities help pupils to develop an interest in the subject, and many said how much they enjoyed history lessons.

92. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject manager is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The use of ICT as a research tool and for recording pupils' work is very good.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is above expectations in Years 2 and 6.
- The subject supports pupils' spiritual and cultural development effectively.
- There are good links with other subjects to enhance learning.
- Pupils study the work of a wide range of artists.

Commentary

93. Pupils are familiar with the work of artists from various times in history and from around the world. This supports their knowledge of culture and tradition effectively. Over the year, pupils investigate and use a good range of media. Those who have special educational needs often do well in this creative subject and work hard during lessons.
94. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good, as judged by the one lesson observed and a wide range of completed artwork. There is no judgement on teaching for Years 3 to 6 because no lessons were seen. In the good Year 2 lesson, pupils were inspired by the collage work of Matisse. They investigated some coral pieces to gain a feel for the texture of the underwater scene before creating their own. The teacher allowed the pupils to explore different effects and challenged their creative thinking well. There was good use of ICT in the lesson as some pupils created an electronic version of the scene.
95. There is much evidence around school of good quality art work covering a wide range of media. The pictures made in the style of Seurat are of an especially high standard and show very good colour blending. The magazine picture collages are very effective in reflecting different lifestyles, and there is good evidence of three-dimensional work, such as wire sculptures. Pupils use textiles well and experiment with weaving and needlework. When talking to pupils in Year 6, it is clear that they are enthusiastic about the subject. There is good enrichment for art through visits and visiting specialists. The annual arts week promotes pupils' interests well and work is celebrated in an arts display, which is well supported by parents.
96. Good links with other subjects extend learning effectively. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 had made pencil sketches of Tudor kings and queens to link with their history

work. There is a strong emphasis on the design element, which supports learning very effectively in both art and design, and in design and technology. Some projects cut across both subjects. This was seen in the work on wrapping paper inspired by a study of the work of William Morris and the colourful masks on a cultural theme. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, with higher standards in Year 6. Talented pupils are recognised and have additional challenges. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable leader. Good care is taken to choose good quality materials, posters and pictures to meet the requirements of all aspects of the programmes of study, and to fire pupils' imaginations. Attainment in art and design is celebrated around school in some high quality, eye-catching displays.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are presented with an interesting range of projects.
- They have very good attitudes to the subject.
- There are particular strengths in the designing process.
- There are very good links with other subjects.
- Work is celebrated well in displays around school.

Commentary

97. Attainment is above expectations at Year 2 and Year 6 and there have been good improvements since the previous inspection. There are strengths in design work, and pupils achieve well. Pupils in Year 2 have produced some good, moving models of wheeled vehicles. The work on the axles and strengthening of the chassis was of a particularly good standard. Great care was taken with the design and pupils had produced detailed, labelled diagrams before starting to construct. In Years 3 and 4, pupils worked on disassembling packages to see how these had been made. They paid good attention to the position and shape of flaps so that they could use the ideas in their own designs.
98. By Year 6, work is of a high standard and includes motorised model vehicles, pop-up books for young children, and a very good investigation into the working of cams. The whole school has been involved in the design of playground equipment. The older pupils completed some detailed research before designing. They asked questions such as 'Who will use it?' 'Is it durable and vandal-proof' and 'Does it provide access for all?' Their work was enhanced further as they made a detailed list of materials required and a work schedule.
99. Teaching is good and includes a sound balance between developing specific skills, such as handling tools or joining materials, and putting learning to good use through making and refining. There is good attention to safety issues, and personal development is promoted through collaborative working. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good indeed. They share equipment, materials and ideas very willingly and persevere when problems occur.
100. Good skills in other subjects support learning very effectively in design and technology. Pupils measure accurately (mathematics), they have good skills of investigation and problem solving (science), they model their ideas using computers (ICT) and have above average skills in finishing products (art and design). The links between subjects serve to enhance achievement, and projects provide a meaningful way of consolidating skills.

101. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic manager who provides colleagues with new ideas and inspiration. Links with the local technology college enrich provision effectively. Some pupils were recently involved in a building project and had a go at brick-laying. Design and technology has a high profile in school. Well-positioned displays invite pupils to investigate how models work and help to maintain a keen interest in the subject.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils enjoy singing and performing.
- The school's musical performances are of a high quality.
- ICT is not used to full advantage.

Commentary

102. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection. It is not possible to make reliable judgements about teaching and standards overall since lessons did not cover all elements of the music curriculum. Evidence from the lessons and extra-curricular sessions seen, recorded material and discussions with pupils indicate that attainment in singing and performing is above expectations. For the pupils who take advantage of the instrumental tuition and out-of-school clubs, knowledge and understanding of music is above expectations.
103. Pupils sing tunefully and with good diction and phrasing. Assemblies and music lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of music by different composers from around the world and from different times in history. As a result, they are familiar with a wide range of works by famous composers. Musical experiences are enriched as pupils take part in school performance such as 'Cinderella'. All pupils contribute to these productions whether it be as a performer, stage hand or when operating audio equipment. All those spoken to said how much they, and their parents, enjoyed the experiences.
104. In the Year 1 lesson seen, pupils successfully identified notes of a high, medium or low pitch. When performing a favourite song, each maintained their part in singing or playing percussion instruments to a regular beat. In Years 4 and 5, pupils composed new words to a familiar tune, tried them out, appraised the work and made adjustments where necessary. Pupils were confident enough to sing solo and to make critical, but constructive, comments. They were able to maintain accuracy to the rhythm when accompanying the final performance, which was vibrant and exciting. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and enabled to play a full and active part in lessons. Talented pupils are given work to match their strengths, and their achievements are celebrated by teachers and pupils alike.
105. There is a good level of expertise in this subject among staff and their enthusiasm transfers to the pupils. Leadership and management of music are good and focused on improvement. The subject leader is introducing a new scheme of planning and resources to enhance provision further and to provide better support for the non-specialist teachers. Very good use is made of ICT in recording work and in mixing sounds and effects. There is some use

of a computer program to promote the study of music by the older pupils, but the leader is aware that this needs to be extended to more year groups.

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular clubs and inter-school tournaments enrich pupils' learning well.
- The teaching seen in the juniors was very good.
- Pupils are developing good habits of exercise and a keen interest in sport.

Commentary

106. It is not possible to make judgements on standards, teaching and learning for Years 1 and 2 since no complete lessons were seen. However, the indications from the teachers' planning show that pupils are following a curriculum which is designed to ensure the progressive development of skills.
107. Standards seen in Year 6 are above expectations. Pupils have very good attitudes, they work well together and are able to give and receive critical appraisal in order to improve performance. In the lesson observed, they developed techniques for a variety of athletic events, such as relay, throwing the javelin and putting the shot. Well worthy of note and commendation is the pupils' determination to develop the correct techniques. For example, they worked hard to learn a good stance to ensure that the shot is 'put' and not thrown. Pupils demonstrate good stamina and sportsmanship, and achieve well.
108. The limited amount of teaching and learning observed was very good and good resources were provided for well-planned activities. All pupils were correctly attired and the lesson began with a warming up exercise, the purpose of which pupils clearly understood. The teacher recorded pupils' work on video. This strategy not only helps pupils to review and improve their performance but also shows very good use of technology in this subject.
109. When asked, pupils list physical education as one of the things they like best about their school. There have been substantial improvements in provision since the time of the previous inspection. There is a strong commitment to including all pupils in all aspects of the curriculum, regardless of any special need they may have. The school provides very good opportunities to learn and practise swimming. Physical activity features well in out-of-school activities with rounders, football, volleyball, rugby, cricket, tennis, and athletics all enjoyed in their season. Parents provide good help in transporting teams of boys and girls to sporting venues, and this extends their experience of competitions. Recent successes have included winning a football tournament and a swimming shield.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school makes **good** provision for the teaching of personal and social and health education and citizenship (PHSCE).

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships encourage pupils to discuss issues that worry them within a safe environment.
- Very good skills of discussion and debate enable the thorough exploration of sensitive issues.
- Personal development extends well beyond the dedicated lessons for PHSCE.
- Teaching and learning is good overall, and some is excellent.

Commentary

110. Themes are taught in PHSCE lessons and are well integrated into other subject areas, such as science, geography or religious education. In food technology, pupils learn and follow hygiene rules and know the importance of clean hands. As part of their religious education lessons, pupils study different religions and cultures to help them prepare for life in a multi-cultural society. In geography, pupils learn about conservation issues and fair trade, whilst in science they gain a good grounding in the delicate balance of nature and of the interdependence between living things.
111. The ethos of the school and the caring attitudes of adults are reflected in pupils' attitudes and promote mutual respect effectively. This enables teachers to plan lessons around sensitive or contentious issues because they know that pupils listen attentively and show great respect for other people's views and opinions. There is a strong spiritual, social and moral element to lessons. In an excellent lesson for Year 1 pupils, the teacher used drama very well to illustrate what happens when we have too many worries. One volunteer pupil took the role of the story's main character, whilst others in the class explored how she might get rid of her problems. They thoroughly enjoyed solving the issues together and 'dumping the worries in the bin'. In Years 5 and 6, pupils debated, in a very mature way, the subject of stealing, looking at the issue from various viewpoints. They concluded that theft is not always a simple case of right and wrong but can sometimes present a complicated moral dilemma.
112. There are good opportunities for pupils of all ages to take responsibility, to act as monitors and to take initiative. Pupils recognise that rights carry responsibilities and consider carefully the effects of their actions on other people. The school's mission statement is lived out on a daily basis through this subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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