

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITEGATE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whitegate

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111338

Headteacher: Mr. I. Percival

Lead inspector: John Brennan

Dates of inspection: 25 – 27 April 2005

Inspection number: 268249

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:	5 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	118
School address:	Whitegate Northwich Cheshire
Postcode:	CW8 2AY
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. L.Eden
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Whitegate is a voluntary aided village school situated between the towns of Winsford and Northwich that caters for 118 pupils aged 4-11. Significantly more boys attend the school than girls. As well as admitting pupils from the immediate locality, approximately 60 per cent come from either Winsford or Hartford. Most pupils live in private housing. Socio-economic indicators are above average and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Mobility rates are below average. Although pupils' attainment on entry to school covers the full ability range, relatively few children have skills that are below those typically found. At ten per cent the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below average. Most pupils' special needs are learning related. The vast majority of pupils come from a white British background, although there is a small number of pupils of either Indian or Pakistani origin. None are at the early stages of learning English. The school received the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2004 and an Achievement Award and a Healthy School Award in 2002. It is a Fair Trade school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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32678	Kathryn Dodd	Lay inspector	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Good teaching and leadership enable pupils to achieve well to reach standards that are above average by the time they leave the school. The school successfully fosters pupils' personal development so that attitudes to learning and behaviour are good. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children's education gets off to a good start in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils achieve well in English to reach standards that are well above average. Much of this is down to the very good quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils achieve well in art and design and, through Years 3 to 6, in science to reach standards that exceed expected levels.
- A lack of ambition in teaching in Years 1 and 2 means that higher attaining pupils do not achieve what they are capable.
- Achievement for pupils of all abilities is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 1 and 2.
- Leadership succeeds well in fostering a sense of unity so that the school operates as a harmonious community in which pupils' personal development is given a high priority.
- Management practices are not rigorous enough in checking up on the work of the school.
- Additions to the curriculum make learning more interesting and help develop pupils' sense of citizenship.
- The school works very well with parents and the wider community whose commitment to the school has a telling impact on pupils' achievements.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen in English and science. Resources for ICT have improved but not enough use is made of these in Years 1 and 2. Better use is made of them in Years 3 to 6 so that standards in Year 6 are higher than when the school was last inspected. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved because of the school's successful efforts to foster their personal development. Attendance rates are higher. There has been some improvement in assessment. Good processes are now in place but teachers make inconsistent use of them. The school is still not doing enough to assess the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the impact of some initiatives is diminished and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement exist.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A	A*	A*	A
mathematics	A	A	B	D
science	A	A*	A	A

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

Pupils achieve well. From a broadly typical starting point, children by the age of 5 achieve very well in their personal and social development and in language and literacy. They achieve well in their mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. It was not possible to judge achievement in the other areas of learning. Many children are on course to exceed Early Learning Goals, especially in reading. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well in reading and in speaking and listening in which standards are above expected levels. Standards reach expected levels in writing, mathematics and science in Year 2. However, teaching does not expect

enough of higher attaining pupils and so these pupils do not do well as they might. National test results for Year 2 pupils in 2004 were well above average in reading, above average in writing and average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools they were above average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics. Results over time have matched the national trend. Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Standards are below expected levels because pupils are not using computers often enough. Achievement in general accelerates in the juniors, especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils achieve very well in English. Standards are well above average. Although standards are above average in mathematics, higher attaining pupils are capable of achieving more. Pupils achieve well in science. Standards are above average. In ICT achievement is satisfactory and standards reach expected levels. Results over time in national tests have outstripped the national trend. In 2004 they were well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools they were well above average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Throughout the school, but especially in Years 5 and 6, pupils achieve well in art and design in which standards are above average. It was not possible to make a judgment on achievement and standards in other subjects.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance rates are very good and punctuality good. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good overall. With the effective contribution of the teaching assistant, a well-planned curriculum and good teaching, provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Teaching and learning in the juniors, especially in Years 5 and 6, are more effective than teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 where tasks are not always challenging enough for higher attaining pupils. The school makes good provision for pupils who have special educational needs and for those who have particular talents or gifts. The school has good procedures for marking and the setting of targets but these are not always used well enough to best effect. Pupils enjoy a very good range of trips, especially residential visits. The school has established very good partnerships with the local and wider community. The latter, through a link with Kenya for example, helps pupils consider the needs of others and wider moral issues. Such links make a strong contribution to the personal development of pupils and help make learning more meaningful. The school takes good account of pupils' views and acts on them. Very good partnerships have been established with parents, who offer the school very good support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. Good leadership, especially by the headteacher, creates a positive climate in which pupils and staff feel valued. The deputy headteacher makes a strong contribution to school improvement. Management is satisfactory but the school development plan does not focus the efforts of leaders well enough, and too little evaluative work takes place. Governors are supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils both hold the school in high regard. Parents like the 'family' atmosphere of the school and feel that the school works well with them. Pupils feel that the school takes account of their views. Inspectors agree with these views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Set more challenging tasks for higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Extend the access and use of computers for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the quality of school development planning and subsequent evaluative work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are above average and pupils are achieving well. Achievement is stronger in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. Children in the Foundation Stage are achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in their personal and social development and in language and literacy skills.
- Higher attaining pupils mark time in Years 1 and 2. As a result their achievement stalls. Throughout the school higher attaining pupils are capable of achieving more in mathematics.
- Pupils achieve very well in English in the juniors, especially in Years 5 and 6, to reach standards that are well above average.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils achieve well in art and, in Years 3 to 6, in science to reach standards that are above expected levels by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or who have particular talents and gifts achieve well.

Commentary

1. Children's education gets off to a good start in the reception class. Children begin school with a broad range of skills that are largely typical for their age. As a result of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum they achieve well. Achievement is at its strongest in personal and social development and in language and literacy. In these areas children achieve very well. The great majority are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in their personal development and in reading especially. Achievement in mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world is good; a significant number of children are likely to go beyond the goals set for them by the time they leave reception. It was not possible to judge achievement in other areas of learning. All in all, therefore, many children begin Year 1 as well-adjusted learners already working on level 1 of the National Curriculum.
2. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not build on these strong foundations well enough because it does not challenge higher attaining pupils. The achievement of these pupils stalls. The high level of parental involvement, good teaching and a well-organised curriculum means that all pupils continue to achieve well in reading so that standards are above average in Year 2. Achievement in speaking and listening is also good, and standards in Year 2 exceed expected levels. However, in writing, mathematics and science, standards meet expected levels. Given the small number of pupils taking the national tests care must be taken in putting too much emphasis on results in any one year. However, the trend of results, although matching the national trend, is not as strong as that found in Year 6. Results in 2004 tests were well above average in reading, above average in writing and average in mathematics. Based on prior attainment, results do not compare as favourably with similar schools, being above average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics.
3. The trend of results in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 has outstripped the national trend. Achievement is stronger in the juniors and especially in Years 5 and 6, than in the infants. Results have been particularly high in English where they have often been in the top five per cent of schools. This is because of the strong emphasis given to the use of personal writing, especially for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and continued good practice in reading. Pupils are achieving very well and are well above average in reading and writing in Year 6. A better quality of questioning also lifts achievement in speaking and listening so that standards here are well above average. Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is very good but is not as strong in mathematics as in English. This is because the school has not been

decisive in acting on patterns in national tests that pointed to higher attaining pupils not doing as well as they might. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, with higher attaining pupils still to make the most of their abilities. Throughout the school there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. The school meets the targets it sets for itself in national tests at the end of Year 6.

4. The increased emphasis given to investigative science in the juniors means that achievement here also picks up, with standards above average in Year 6. Achievement is also good throughout the school in art and design. As in other subjects the best work is seen in Year 6, Standards here exceed expected levels. It was not possible to judge overall achievement and standards in other subjects.
5. Not enough use is being made of the computers in Years 1 and 2. The range of work and frequency of pupils' experiences is such that achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below expected levels in these year groups. Achievement improves in the juniors and, although satisfactory, is strong enough for standards to meet expected levels in Year 6.
6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, in part because the targets in their individual education plans are clear and achievable. Also, they receive good support and guidance from their teachers. Pupils with gifts and talents also achieve well because they receive extra support, both from within school and from outside agencies. For example, pupils who are particularly talented in mathematics are members of a 'Master Class' at one of the local high schools.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.6 (18.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.2 (16.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.1 (17.4)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.4 (30.9)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.9 (30.9)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.9 (31.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their very good attendance.
- Although there are good opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility, there are relatively few similar opportunities for younger pupils.

- A caring ethos with a strong sense of community is the bedrock of the school's very good provision for pupils' personal development.
- The school has done much to clarify approaches to managing behaviour but on occasion these are not used to best effect.
- Provision for pupils to appreciate their own and other cultures is very good.

Commentary

7. At the time of the previous inspection, attendance was satisfactory but it was affected by a number of parents who removed their children from school for holidays. The very good relationships between home and school, the clear reporting procedures and efforts to encourage good attendance have contributed to improving attendance which is now consistently very good. Parents are very supportive and ensure that their children attend very regularly and arrive punctually.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (96.8 %)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.1	School data	0.1
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

8. Discussions with pupils and parents confirm that pupils are very keen to attend. Pupils say they enjoy school. They work hard and achieve well as a result of the happy, warm, caring and safe environment, where their views are respected and where their achievements are valued. Opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities around school, particularly in Year 6, are good. They listen to younger children reading, become playground buddies at breaktime and prepare the hall for assemblies. Pupils carry out these duties with enthusiasm and enjoy helping one another. The views of younger pupils are represented well through the school council. There is scope, however, for younger pupils to take on an increasing number of responsibilities as they grow older, thus extending their contribution towards the school community.
9. Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and it is now good. There have been no exclusions in the past year. Pupils are friendly, and most behave well in lessons and around the school. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and these make a good contribution towards provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils understand the expectations placed upon them because they are consulted about codes of conduct, and because of the clear system of rewards and sanctions that are displayed around the school. Teachers generally manage pupils' behaviour well, but pupils respond better when teachers praise good behaviour rather than when they highlight poor behaviour and focus on sanctions.
10. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. This stems from the distinct sense of community and togetherness that is fostered throughout school, for example during events such as the 'Bringing the World into the Classroom' project, 'One World' and 'Fair Trade Week'. Provision is successfully threaded across many curricular areas, assemblies and other aspects of school life. This enables pupils to broaden their understanding of, and respect for, the cultures and lives of others. For example, an appreciation of the diversity of cultures around the world is very well promoted through displays of imagery and artefacts around school, visits from African artists and attendance at a Brazilian music workshop. Throughout Fair Trade Week, numerous fund-raising and other whole-school activities, many organised by the pupils themselves, develop pupils' awareness

of social responsibility towards addressing issues affecting the global community, including that of a fair society and the impact that their own actions can have on the lives of others.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are stronger in the juniors and the Foundation Stage than in the infants. Pupils benefit from a very good range of trips that add interest to the curriculum. They are well cared for and their views are listened to and acted upon.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good knowledge of how young children learn, and an effective partnership with the teaching assistant, help children in the Foundation Stage achieve well.
- Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and in the main manage behaviour well. This creates a good climate for learning.
- Teaching in Years 3 to 6 places higher expectations and demands on pupils than in Years 1 and 2.
- Teachers meet with mixed success in helping pupils see how they could improve their work.

Commentary

11. The effective partnership the reception teacher has established with the teaching assistant and very good knowledge of how young children learn are the bedrock of children's good achievement in the Foundation Stage. In particular, teaching related to pupils' personal and social development and reading are very good. All in all a good balance is struck between short, teacher-focused tasks and opportunities for children to make choices for themselves.
12. In the main teachers manage pupils well, with improved guidelines on managing behaviour overcoming a weakness noted in the last inspection. Most teachers use praise well to build very good relationships with pupils. These are characterised by mutual respect which enables teachers and pupils to go about their work in peace. Little time is wasted and pupils feel able to give of their best and join in lessons well. Relationships are at their best when teachers use praise as a first resort. Most teachers do this well. However, there are still a few occasions when teachers are either too quick to reprimand pupils or do not set clear enough expectations of behaviour. On these occasions pupils' enthusiasm can be stifled or is ill directed, as for example, when they shout out answers. Most lessons, though, run smoothly and teachers are able to work with a chosen group of pupils in the confidence that pupils working by themselves will make the most of their time working independently. The best teaching, as is often seen in the juniors and in the Foundation Stage, exploits this positive atmosphere by questioning pupils well. This not only aids speaking and listening, as pupils are given opportunities to explain their thinking, but also enables teachers to test pupils' understanding before setting them off to work independently. This goes a long way towards enabling pupils to work by themselves so that they are not over-reliant on the teacher.
13. It is the ability to build on the relationships that teachers have created that marks out the better teaching. In the main this is to be found in the juniors, especially in Years 5 and 6, and in the Foundation Stage. Too much of the teaching lacks ambition in Years 1 and 2, impacting on the interest level and challenge of pupils' learning. There are a number of factors which distinguish satisfactory teaching found here from the good and very good teaching to be seen elsewhere:
The interest level of the work. In most subjects in the juniors pupils are presented with work that makes them think. This is typified by the approach teachers in Years 5 and 6 take to writing. Pupils are often posed questions to answer involving decision making. For example,

cogent reasons and argument were made as pupils addressed the question ‘Are children today couch potatoes?’ Such work is not a rare occurrence, and more often than not thought-provoking work is set within a range of subjects, often combining work across several subjects.

An over-reliance on worksheets. A key weakness in teaching in Year 1 is the overuse of worksheets. Here, in several subjects pupils, regardless of ability, are given the same worksheets to do. This gives higher attaining pupils in particular too little scope to employ the good level of skills and knowledge they leave reception with.

The use of learning objectives. As a consequence of seeking accreditation for the Basic Skills Award, short-term planning has been enhanced. This has given lesson a sense of clarity. However, it is only in the juniors that teachers make intentions fully clear to pupils. In a very good geography lesson in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class, for example, pupils were left in no doubt about what was expected of them when they came to map out the classroom. This went beyond what pupils needed to do to show success and stressed how pupils’ success in working together could be demonstrated. This not only helped make learning clear but also ensured good behaviour. The clarity of learning also helps to make the end of the lesson valuable as pupils were encouraged to reflect back on how well their effort satisfied the success criteria outlined at the beginning. Such practice, however, is not a common feature of teaching.

14. In an attempt to address a key weakness in the last inspection the deputy headteacher has put together good assessment procedures. However, the inconsistent use of learning objectives is one facet of the mixed success the school has in involving pupils in their work. This is because too little is being done to see how well new procedures, such as target setting, are working. Marking is of variable quality. The best, as seen in writing in the juniors, occurs when pupils are given very clear indications about how to improve their work and are expected to respond to the teacher’s advice. This is not a feature of marking in other subjects or in teaching in general in Years 1 and 2. Teachers now assess pupils in all foundation subjects and outline a progressive ladder of skills in core subjects that pupils work their way up. These are written in everyday language that pupils understand. Junior pupils use these well to analyse strengths and weaknesses in their work. However, targets that follow on from these do not have sufficient impact on learning because they are not often referred to in lessons or form a part of planning for future activities. The school meets with more success in assessing the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and in identifying pupils who have particular talents. This enables the school to provide well for these pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and they achieve well. They benefit from working in small classes during the morning when they receive additional help from their teachers. Work is usually differentiated to match the targets on their individual education plans, and teachers take care to ensure that they play a full part in lessons. The part-time classroom assistant works effectively with small groups of less able pupils, helping them to achieve well, albeit in small steps at a time. The school employs a support teacher, for one afternoon a week, who also gives good support to pupils with learning difficulties.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	3	13	10	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.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is satisfactory overall. There are very good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very good range of opportunities to enrich the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented is good.
- Careful attention is given to ensuring that pupils make good use of their literacy skills in other subjects.
- The school meets with mixed success in getting best value from improved accommodation, resources and the current organisation of staffing.

Commentary

15. With the exception of the constraints of the hall affecting physical education, the school has successfully addressed issues relating to the curriculum from the last report. Provision for personal, social and health elements of the curriculum, including sex education and drugs education, is now included. Pupils in Year 3 receive regular swimming tuition. All teachers have an input into the planning of the curriculum, and the head and deputy headteacher have taken on the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the provision. They ensure that the curriculum fulfils statutory requirements. In the main, therefore, schemes of work are adhered to and pupils receive a suitable balance of learning intentions. The main exception to this is ICT in Years 1 and 2 where, currently, pupils' experiences lack range and frequency.
16. The school has maintained its tradition of enriching the curriculum through a very good range of visitors and visits. From Year 2 onwards pupils still have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit each year. The school has maintained its commitment to the promotion of sporting activities, and extra-curricular provision remains good for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Wider issues are explored during 'Fair Trade Week' as well as initiatives such as 'Cheshire Young People's Learning' which help to develop pupils' understanding of citizenship and to provide opportunities for learning across subjects. The school achieves most success with this in literacy and in art.
17. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs has been maintained. Pupils facing difficulties are identified at an early stage and receive additional support to meet targets that are clearly set out. As a result, pupils achieve well and a very high percentage reach expected levels in national tests. An addition to the curriculum is the provision for pupils who are gifted and talented. This provision, which encompasses all areas of the curriculum, is good. All pupils identified have extra support, either through the school or through outside agencies.
18. The governing body and the headteacher have been energetic in pursuing improvements to accommodation and resources so that, overall, learning resources are satisfactory. It has also maintained a high teaching staff level so that single year groups operate in the mornings in the infants and for some literacy and numeracy lessons in Years 3 and 4 and in Years 5 and 6. The reception teacher, in conjunction with the teaching assistant, makes effective use of new facilities to plan an interesting curriculum that, in particular, takes advantage of the easier access children have to outdoor learning. However, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not benefiting from increased spending on ICT, and in general, insufficient advantage is taken of the availability of small classes during the morning in Years 1 and 2 where pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is also the case for the single year mathematics groups in Years 3 and 4. Much of this is down to a lack of differentiation. This rather mixed picture highlights a need for management to ensure that it is getting best value from the decisions it makes.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes good provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Support and guidance, based on the monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development, are good. The school has good procedures to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between pupils and adults enable pupils to feel safe and give them the confidence to do well at school.
- Pupils know that their views matter and they have good opportunities to contribute toward the work of the school.
- The school's good systems for involving pupils in setting their own targets for learning and personal development are not always followed up purposefully enough.

Commentary

19. The very good relationships between pupils, their teachers and other staff are an important factor in creating a caring environment where pupils feel at home. Parents recognise and appreciate this and, as a result, are very confident that the school takes good care of their children. Parents are very happy with the support that they and their children receive when they start school and say that it allows their children to become quickly settled into their new surroundings. This very good start to school lays strong foundations for the further building of relationships that flourish as pupils move through the school. All staff get to know their pupils very well, so that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. Equally, pupils are confident that, if they have a problem, there will be an adult available to confide in. The very good provision for pupils' personal development makes them keen to help one another.
20. There is a well-established system of setting and reviewing targets for pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils have regular opportunities to discuss with an adult how well they are getting on at school. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection, when provision for monitoring the personal development of pupils was unsatisfactory. Discussions between class teachers and pupils now take place each term, and targets are well documented by the pupils themselves. However, teachers do not generally make enough reference to the targets on a day-to-day basis and this limits pupils' support and encouragement to achieve them. As a result, not all pupils know enough about what it is they need to do to improve, and the impact of this initiative is diminished.
21. The school values the views of pupils and has good procedures for involving them in its work. Pupils know that their views matter, and that they can influence school decision-making. They say that this makes the school a better place. The school council operates with a clear structure. Meetings are well organised, discussions are documented and decisions are fed back to fellow pupils through assemblies. This ensures that all pupils have good opportunities to express their ideas and opinions and, as a result, pupils develop a very clear understanding of their role as valued members of the school community. Recent issues discussed included bullying, and this has resulted in the development of a 'playground buddies' role for junior pupils. Members of the school council say they are particularly proud of their achievements in organising many successful charitable fundraising events.
22. Procedures for ensuring that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment are good. Governors fulfil their duties by completing annual risk assessments around school. Good quality risk assessments are also completed for residential and other educational visits. However, procedures for identifying risks to pupils for specific activities around school or for individual pupils are not yet formalised. The school has satisfactory procedures to safeguard pupils' use of the Internet. The range of policies and procedures covering health and safety is comprehensive, and staff are generally well trained to carry them out. They give careful consideration to administering medicines and recording accidents correctly. Arrangements for child protection are fully in place and all staff are now secure in their understanding and knowledge.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and the community are very good. Links with other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are encouraged to be supportive of the school; they involve themselves very well in their children's learning.
- Very good links with the local community and further afield make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and are mutually beneficial.
- Parents of children who start school in the reception class receive good information about how best to help their children at home.

Commentary

23. Parents overwhelmingly feel warmly welcomed into school. The openness of the headteacher and staff promotes an atmosphere in which parents feel very comfortable about approaching the school with concerns. The school takes parents' concerns seriously; giving parents the confidence that they will be dealt with. As a result, parents show a genuine interest in their children's learning and an eagerness to become involved in school life. A significant number of parents take an active role in the work of the school on a very regular basis. Each day, numerous well-trained parent helpers hear pupils reading. This allows pupils to have regular opportunities to become confident to read and discuss books with adults. High quality written records and discussions between helpers and teachers ensure that pupils' progress in reading is closely followed and ensures that each pupil receives very good support. These parents, therefore, make a highly valued contribution to pupils' achievements in reading. The school benefits from the support of parents in many other ways, including organising maypole dancing, attending school events and raising valuable funds to buy learning resources, for example computer equipment.
24. Parents are equally supportive of their children's learning at home. Parents understand the clear structure for pupils' homework because it is communicated well by teachers through quality newsletters. The school provides a detailed package of information to new parents to help them to get the most out of their child's education. Arrangements for all parents to find out about their children's progress are good. In particular, the pupils' records of achievement, which are sent home at the end of each year, track their children's progress throughout their time in school. Whilst parents are happy overall with the information provided to help them to understand what and how their children are doing at school, in recent years there has been relatively little information to help them to understand how children learn, for example in their mathematics and reading.
25. The school reaches out very well into the community to enrich the curriculum and to ensure very good provision for pupils' personal development. There are many educational visits, including residential visits for pupils from Year 2 onwards, and a good number of visitors into school from both the local community and further afield. The school fosters close links with the local church, community professionals and a good number of other members of the community who work in school on a voluntary basis. A very good range of opportunities exists for pupils to become involved in local events. The annual May Fair is a very popular, whole-community event, in which the school plays a central role. Pupils organise and support a good number of charitable fundraising activities, both in the locality and further afield. As a result, pupils develop a real sense of belonging to their local community.

26. Links with the wider community have enabled pupils to develop a very keen sense of social and cultural awareness, enabling them to compare their lives with the lives of others. Links with a local business have assisted the school in the development of a valuable partnership with a school in Kenya. Pupils particularly enjoy this aspect of their learning. They share letters, photographs, music and artwork and, through this, learn about the cultural diversity of the global community. Pupils are keen to raise funds and send resources to improve the quality of the lives of others. Links with other local schools are good. Pupils participate in several inter-school sporting competitions, and well developed links with local high schools help to enrich their learning, for example, by attending mathematics, science and dance classes, and anti-bullying workshops. There are suitable arrangements for the transfer of pupils to secondary schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher, aided by other key staff, leads the school well. Aspects of management, although improved since the last inspection, could be improved further. Management is satisfactory. The quality of governance is satisfactory. The school has been partially successful in overcoming the particular barriers to managing a small school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Collegiate leadership sets a good tone for the school so that an ethos of respect, teamwork and community is successfully fostered.
- Shortcomings in development planning and evaluative work undermine the impact of leadership.
- Governors are supportive of the school but do not keep a close enough eye for themselves on how well the school is doing.

Commentary

27. The strength of leadership is the success it has in building a sense of community. Parents are particularly pleased with the 'family' atmosphere of the school and the way the school seeks to involve them in the life of the school. The open attitude of school leaders makes the most of this, resulting in parents having a strong impact on pupils' achievements. The headteacher is central to this as he knows pupils and parents well. Backed by other staff, an ethos of respect for the individual has been engendered, so that pupils in turn show respect for each other and for themselves. This positive working environment is having a telling impact on achievement and the very positive attitudes pupils have towards school.
28. The headteacher's collegiate manner can be seen in how he consults with staff on what the school needs to do and in the way performance management procedures are used to draw staff together in seeking improvement. This approach has had two significant effects. Firstly, all staff feel valued, staff morale is high; and staff absence rates are low. Secondly, it has brought out the leadership qualities of others. This has led to improvement in important aspects of the school and, on the whole, key staff are ambitious to improve provision they are responsible for. The Foundation Stage leader, for example, has set about building a very effective partnership with the teaching assistant, a weakness noted in the last inspection, and revised working practices to make best use of the improved accommodation now available. In a similar manner, the deputy headteacher, who is also the special needs co-ordinator, has been instrumental in making improvement in assessment, a weakness noted in the last inspection. The school is making increasingly good use of assessment data to highlight areas of weakness and so has a good idea of where effort is needed. Much of this is down to the work of the deputy headteacher. The process of seeking accreditation for the Basic Skills Award has helped provide a good structure for the school to plan and take change forward. As a result, for example, short-term planning is now sharper. However, too much depends on the qualities of individual leaders. When they have a well-defined structure to guide their work, as in the case of The Basic Skills Awards or in the case of art and design, in seeking the

Arts Mark, action planning and development are well thought out. However, the school's own methods of developing planning do not provide for this and so in several important areas such as mathematics, for example, action planning is weaker. This leads to inconsistencies in the impact leaders have on their respective areas of responsibility.

29. Although the strength of development planning lies in the corporate nature of the document, its weakness lies in the lack of clarity about key objectives and a lack of detail in action planning. Not enough is being done by senior management and governors to sift staff views and the increasingly extensive evidence resulting from an analysis of performance data in order to arrive at a manageable number of key priorities. In this respect the school is yet to adapt fully approaches to that of a small school where there is limited time and expertise available for development and where it is important to set a realistic development agenda. The plan is overfull because it mixes up routine jobs with important areas for improvement. The school has made some progress in addressing a key issue of the previous inspection and does keep a closer eye on teaching, but problems still remain in directing observations at the right areas. This results in an inconsistent pattern of achievement in the school and variable success of new initiatives arising out of the development plan. Action plans themselves are of mixed quality. Some, such as special educational needs, are detailed and identify precisely what it is hoped will be achieved by change. However, in others there is a lack of success criteria against which impact can be measured. This makes it difficult to make best use of the limited time available for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Evaluative work in which the impact of change is assessed is a relatively weaker area of management so that although change is made not enough is being done to see how effectively changes, such as new guidelines for marking, for example, are being implemented and to judge impact on pupil achievement.
30. Governors are not sufficiently involved in school development planning, their role being one of receiving the draft copy rather than joining with the school in writing it. Consequently, the work of the governors does not feature prominently enough in the plan and so does not give the governors a clear enough agenda with which to carry out their quality assurance role. Governors' knowledge of the school relies too much on informal methods and, although many visit the school regularly, their knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses is piecemeal. Finances are well planned and have led to improvements in accommodation. A close eye is kept on spending, with regular meetings checking underspends and overspends conscientiously. However, not enough is being done to assess that the school is getting best use out of these. Governors do ensure that they meet their statutory duties. They know, for example, that the school has a Race Equality Policy and visit the school for them to see the school in operation. Governors offer the school much practical support, with the special needs governor, for example, giving up much of her time to work voluntarily in school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	321,143	Balance from previous year	30,191
Total expenditure	340,810	Balance carried forward to the next	10,524
Expenditure per pupil	2131		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

31. Provision is good overall. It is very good in personal, social and emotional development. Although there is some variation in children's skills when they start school, in general they are as expected for their age, with relatively fewer children with skills below those found nationally. Teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching observed in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy areas of learning. Induction procedures are good; parents are given the opportunity to meet the Foundation Stage staff before their children join the reception class. This is the start of an effective partnership between school and parents that is fostered throughout the children's first year at school. Care is taken to plan a wide range of stimulating activities which link the six areas of learning in a very natural way. Assessment procedures are good overall although recording of children's activities during activity time is on an informal basis.
32. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator works closely with the classroom assistant to produce a very effective team where roles are interchangeable without any disruption to the provision. The accommodation, which has been extended since the last inspection to give immediate access to the outdoor area, now provides an exciting environment for young children. The outdoor area is used productively to support all six areas of learning. Parents are right to be pleased about the good start their children receive in their first year at school.
33. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about provision for children's **physical development**. However, children's skills in manipulating small tools, scissors and pencils develop well because of the good opportunities they have to practise and apply them. The outdoor area has improved since the last inspection and is now used regularly to enhance provision across the Foundation Stage curriculum.
34. Planning for children's **creative development** denotes a good range of activities in this area. Although not enough teaching was seen to make an overall judgement on provision, the work on display, some of which is of a high standard, indicates a wide range of media being used. Role play is stimulated well by the 'Whitegate Surgery' where patients are quickly cured by a number of efficient staff.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and very high expectations set by staff ensure that children achieve very well.
- Warm and trusting relationships help children to be kind and considerate and to care for each other.
- The curriculum is designed to allow children to initiate their own activities and to make choices and decisions.

Commentary

35. Children's personal, social and emotional development is nurtured very well. The teacher and classroom assistant are very skilled at promoting this in everything children do. Both adults provide very good role models for children to follow. Children are treated with respect and courtesy which in turn helps them to be considerate and to care for each other. One boy helped a less able friend to drag a letter to the right place on the computer screen saying "I'll help you". Adults are very encouraging in their approach and make each child feel special

whether, for example, they are sharing their news, showing their classmates their work or reading a book. Children's independence is promoted very well when they are given a manageable choice of tasks and the opportunity to make simple decisions such as which piece of pipe will make the best slide or where to place the cones on their cycle track. They also have the responsibility to finish more formal tasks in a given time. The consistently very good teaching in this area means that most children will reach standards well beyond those typically expected by the time they move to Year 1.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with other areas of learning help the development of language skills.
- Whole-class, shared reading activities are very good.
- Parents play a significant role in helping their children to develop their reading skills.
- Skilful teaching gets children off to a good start with writing skills.

Commentary

36. A good feature of the teaching is that particular attention is paid to developing children's communication skills. Children are encouraged to talk about themselves and to explain what they have done in all the areas of learning. Shared reading times are enjoyable educational experiences. Children listened with rapt attention as the teacher read '*The Bear in the Park*' with expression and suspense. Time was used very well to extend children's understanding of the text, punctuation and rhyming words. The willingness of parents to help their children to learn new words at home and to develop an understanding of the content furthers their progress in mastering reading skills. A significant number of parents help in school by listening to children read and thereby providing opportunities for them to practise the reading skills taught so effectively by their teacher. Children are taught to form their letters correctly, and regular practice ensures that they quickly gain the confidence to progress from single words to phrases and then to sentences. Overall, children achieve well; by the end of reception, most will have reached the level expected for their age, with a significant number already working within level 1 of the National Curriculum, particularly in reading.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of practical activities stimulates and encourages children's mathematical development.
- Children are given opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other areas of learning.
- The teacher and classroom assistant are good at teaching basic skills, both verbally and through the use of resources.
- Activities are not always matched to children's abilities.

Commentary

37. A good feature of the teaching is the daily focus on counting routines and number rhymes. Counting forward and backward to and from 20, and counting in twos, for example, helps children to develop a good sense of number sequence. Opportunities for practical activities are in abundance. Children talk confidently about, for example, whether a cuboid will roll or slide, or how many small containers of sand can be tipped into a larger one. They are motivated to match the halves of the very eye-catching butterflies to show symmetry and to

look for cutters that have symmetry as they make their clay tiles. All of these activities are backed up by effective interventions from both adults. When children begin to record their mathematics in a more formal way, the activity is often the same regardless of each child's prior attainments. This sometimes lacks challenge for the higher ability children or is too difficult for less able children to complete without a lot of support. Overall, however, teaching and achievement are good, and most children are on course to achieve the expected goals, with a significant number going beyond them before they leave reception.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of interesting activities is planned to enhance the children's knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Teaching provides children with opportunities to learn about different cultures and to develop a sense of citizenship.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to practise their ICT skills.

Commentary

38. Effective teaching that is typified by well-planned and exciting activities ensures that children have a good knowledge of a range of topics by the end of their time in the reception class and are working at levels beyond those expected for their age. Links to other areas of learning are seamless. Number skills, for example, were reinforced as children programmed a robotic toy move to a given spot. Early scientific skills are developed as children making rice crispy cakes talk about melted chocolate as being 'runny' and 'it's set again' as it cooled. As well as developing an understanding of their own culture as they visit the local church and dance a simple traditional maypole sequence, children find out about the importance of the tepee and totem pole in North American Indian culture. They play their part in helping to support others when they use Fair Trade bananas to make their milk shakes. Work in this area of learning is also enhanced by visits to, for example, Chester Zoo, where children identified animals from the rainforests. Whatever the activity or occasion, teaching is consistently good and adult interventions are timely to promote children's achievements in this area of learning. However, an area of development is that children do not spend enough time practising their ICT skills. Although the classroom computer is used well, not enough use is made of the computer suite to increase opportunities for ICT.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership has helped oversee improvements in provision but is not doing enough to tackle inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The high profile given to reading helps pupils achieve very well.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects but there are significant variations in how well writing is taught in English lessons.

Commentary

39. Successful leadership has ensured that literacy has a high profile in the school and has put in place good systems and strategies to guide teaching and learning. In the main, therefore, common approaches are fostered which put the acquisition and use of language at the centre of pupils' learning. This has led to results improving since the last inspection, with standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing being well above average at the end of Year 6. However, the pattern of achievement is not even. Teaching in Year 1, and to a lesser extent Year 2, is not as strong as that found elsewhere in the school. Achievement and teaching in these years are satisfactory, with higher attaining pupils capable of achieving more in writing. Much of what the school achieves is down to the very good achievement pupils make through the juniors, where the quality of teaching, especially in Years 5 and 6, is very good.
40. Pupils' achievement in reading follows a more even pattern. The curriculum has been very well organised so that a very good balance is struck between hearing pupils read individually and teaching reading strategies to groups of pupils. Pupils benefit from a very good range of books which provide a rich store of vocabulary and genre for teachers to draw on. Group reading sessions are well organised and well taught in the infants and very well taught in the juniors. The key difference in the quality of these sessions is the nature of questions teachers ask. Questioning in Years 5 and 6 is particularly probing in helping pupils to get underneath the meaning of texts and the motives of the author. This not only aids reading but acts as a springboard for the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills and links very well into pupils' own writing. Questioning in Years 1 and 2 is not as ambitious and, while it succeeds in helping pupils to learn strategies to tackle unknown words, it does not place as much emphasis on pupils giving opinions about what is written. Parents play a significant part in the success of the school. Every day of the week, in every spare corner, parents and children can be found reading together. The school has harnessed this commitment very well and parents are very familiar with the school's record systems and the principle of hearing pupils read. This adds greatly to the provision for reading and ensures pupils receive plenty of personal attention. This is especially beneficial for pupils who lack confidence, and is one of the major reasons why achievement is very good throughout the school.
41. The quality of questioning and the quality of relationships are the major reasons why pupils achieve very high standards in speaking and listening. Pupils achieve well in the infants but, on occasions in Year 1, they do not listen well enough because questioning does not always draw them into the lessons. Pupils are generally more attentive in the juniors because questioning keeps them on their toes and there are more occasions when pupils are asked to share their thoughts and ideas with a partner. The analytical thinking about texts and writing that teachers in the juniors promote makes pupils think, and relationships are such that pupils feel confident in giving their opinions and in listening to the views of other. As a result of this very good teaching, pupils in Year 6 present as articulate and mature debaters who show respect for alternative viewpoints.
42. It is in the teaching of writing that the quality of teaching and the subsequent achievement of pupils is most variable. Teaching in the infants, especially in Year 1, is satisfactory. As a result, higher attaining pupils do not build on the skills they leave reception with. Writing standards at the end of Year 2 are average. Teaching in the juniors, and especially in Years 5 and 6, is very good and is responsible for pupils achieving very well to reach standards that are well above average in Year 6. Inconsistencies result from a lack of quality assurance work by leadership which has not tackled the differential achievement found in the school.
43. There are a number of key differences that demarcate the satisfactory from the very good teaching and learning in writing.
44. *The balance between independent writing and practicing basic skills.* Much of the success pupils have in the juniors is down to the amount of personal writing they engage in. This ensures that they write for a greater variety of purposes and in a greater variety of styles than in the infants. To some extent in Year 2, but more especially the juniors, teachers are skilled

at merging the teaching of basic skills into lessons that concentrate on the study and use of texts. A strong feature of a lesson in Year 3, for example, was the way in which the teacher skilfully and unobtrusively slipped in questions concerning the use of hyphens and exclamation marks while considering the devices that advertisers use to 'hook' customers. In this way pupils learn about basic skills in context and in a way that doesn't detract from the interest level of the lesson. This can be contrasted with work in Year 1 in which pupils largely complete worksheets that concentrate on the acquisition of basic skills. Pupils of all abilities are given the same worksheets and in general have too few opportunities in English lessons to craft writing for themselves. In particular, this fails to give higher attaining pupils an outlet for their talents

45. *The link between reading and writing is more firmly established in the juniors.* Here teachers invariably use the study of good quality texts as the starting point for thinking about and practising techniques that authors use. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils used text to identify and practise two techniques the author used to create humour. This equipped them well for using such techniques in their own writing. This typifies the ambitious use of text in this part of this school and can be contrasted with more limited ambition in Years 1 and 2. In a lesson in Year 2, for example, the teacher used the telling of a story for pupils to list unknown words that they looked up in dictionary. Learning had little sense of purpose and was not building confidence and knowledge that pupils could employ in their own writing.
46. *Pupils in the juniors have a better idea about how to improve their work.* Marking in the juniors but, especially in Years 5 and 6, is very analytical and engages pupils in critically examining their own work. There is an expectation that pupils will respond to marking and this is often the case. Pupils say this helps to improve their work, with teachers requiring improvement in subsequent drafts. This is not the case in the infants where final copies are often a direct copy of a first draft, with no improvements, except in the quality of handwriting, evident. Pupils, often with the help of a teacher, look critically at their work to set targets. However, too little is made of these in between review times. Teachers rarely refer to them in lessons or in marking. As a result, pupils have difficulty recalling them and they are not at the forefront of their minds when they are working. This reduces their impact.
47. *There is a greater celebration of writing evident in the juniors.* Teachers in the juniors, but again especially in Years 5 and 6, put much effort into displaying pupils' work prominently and attractively. Pupils say that this makes them feel that their work is important and motivates them to do their best. Such an approach is mirrored in Years 3 and 4 but is not given the same prominence in the infants.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. A strength of provision in English is the way in which it is used in other subjects. Pupils often write in interesting ways. For example, in Year 2, pupils wrote a newspaper report on the conditions Florence Nightingale found in hospital. Visits are also used to good effect, and important features of the school, such as its Fair Trade status, are used for pupils to write creatively and to consider and debate moral issues.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6.
- Mental and oral work is stimulating.
- The amount of investigational work is limited. This restricts the achievement of higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

49. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, the numbers of pupils reaching the higher levels in the 2004 national tests were well below those reached in similar schools. There are two main reasons for this. Teaching does not always take sufficient account of the needs of pupils who have different abilities. For example, the school is not getting the most from the two separate year group lessons held each week in Year 3 and Year 4. Within each year group the starting point is the same for all pupils, with no added challenge for the higher attainers, and so the rate of achievement for this group is not as high as it could be. This is also the case in Years 1 and 2. Secondly, teaching is too directed at times, with few opportunities for investigational work. This contributes to the sameness and lack of originality in pupils' recording of their work, especially when worksheets are used, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Up to and including Year 4 pupils' achievement is satisfactory, with standards reached at the end of Year 2 meeting expectations. Teaching in some lessons in Years 3 and 4, and especially in Years 5 and 6, has begun to address the lack of investigational work; as a result, achievement picks up, with pupils consistently achieving well in Years 5 and 6. The more ambitious approach to mathematics in Years 5 and 6 was typified in a good lesson in Year 5 where pupils enjoyed the challenge of solving the problem of finding the individual prices of items on a menu, having only the combined prices of different dishes to work from. This good teaching has already begun to raise the standards in mathematics but, although standards are above average, they are yet to fully make up for the flatter pattern of achievement elsewhere.
50. A good feature of all teaching is the rapid mental arithmetic sessions at the start of each lesson. These help to consolidate pupils' knowledge and recall of basic number facts and multiplication tables. Standards in this aspect of numeracy are above expectations throughout the school. In the best lessons, for example in a Year 6 lesson about calculating percentages, the pace and challenge set by the teacher, clear explanations, good use of resources and support for pupils with special educational needs ensured good quality learning when pupils reached standards above those expected for their age.
51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good assessment procedures are now in place to track pupils' progress year on year. Although the issues of higher ability pupils' achievements and the lack of investigative mathematics were highlighted following the 2004 national tests, there has been a relatively slow start to addressing them. As consequence of this and a lack of follow up by leadership to assess how well changes have been implemented, differences in the quality of teaching and learning still exist. As yet, no time has been set aside for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning or the work in pupils' books.

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. The promotion of mathematics to support learning in other subjects is satisfactory. Pupils use their measuring skills in design and technology, draw graphs accurately in science and geography and use their ICT skills to design spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 3 to 6 has raised standards to levels above those expected nationally.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher levels by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils make good use of their literacy skills to support their work in science.

Commentary

53. Over half of the pupils in Year 6 reached the higher levels in national tests in 2004. Standards have risen since the last inspection. This represents an improvement in provision. This is due to the consistently good teaching in Years 3 to 6. Teaching here is marked by clear planning and explanations, opportunities for pupils to take part in practical activities and the choice of resources. This ensures that pupils know how to carry out an investigation, make and test predictions, decide if tests are fair, draw conclusions and use the correct terminology as they record their results. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Here, although teachers give clear explanations and opportunities are provided for practical work, teaching is not so challenging, particularly for the more able pupils, and opportunities are missed to teach the higher level skills. This curbs the rate of achievement for these pupils and slows their progress.
54. An emphasis on investigational science, which marks much of the teaching in the juniors, has helped make science enjoyable. Pupils in Year 6 were enthusiastic and used their skills well to design an investigation into whether or not bees preferred yellow flowers to white ones. Their planning automatically included the need for the test to be a fair one. Pupils generally use their own words to record their work and do not rely on a prepared framework. Pupils respond well to this responsibility and present their work well, including detailed and accurate diagrams. The independence they are given contributes significantly to extending their thinking and reasoning, which in turn affords teachers good assessment information on which to plan the next stage of learning. However, there is scope for improvement in the use of pupils' mathematical and ICT skills.
55. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are no opportunities to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning or pupils' books. This limits the prospect of identifying where teaching is effective or where improvements can be made and means that differences in curricular emphasis and in the quality of teaching persist.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership has been effective in improving resources but has not done enough to ensure that they are used well.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 spend too little time using computers.
- A good structure is in place for the development of skills but not enough thought is given to acquiring and using them in interesting ways.

Commentary

56. Leadership has been partially successful in addressing the weaknesses noted in the last inspection. Improved resources, assessment procedures and guidance to teachers have led to pupils now meeting expectations at the end of Year 6. However, pupils are still not achieving well enough in Years 1 and 2, and standards here are below expected levels. This stems from a lack of thought given to making the best use of available resources and a lack of rigour in leadership. Leadership has been overly concerned with resource issues, as is evident in the current action plan, and has done too little to ensure that pupils' learning benefits from using them well. This reflects unsatisfactory leadership and management.
57. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 relies too heavily on the use of classroom computers and does not make sufficient use of the mini-suite and the laptop computers also available. As a result, pupils do not spend enough time using computers and this limits the range and depth of their experiences. Satisfactory teaching ensures that pupils acquire a basic level of skills, such as

changing font size. However, too much of what pupils do is concerned with the development and practice of typing skills, as seen in the copying out of previously written work. Too little is done to develop a wider level of skills and, crucially, to ensure pupils use skills in interesting ways.

58. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 benefit from the availability of interactive whiteboards. Although these are new they are beginning to be used to good effect to demonstrate new skills. Achievement picks up as pupils begin to use computers for a broader range of purposes and with increasing frequency. For example, for giving instructions to a 'screen robot' in Years 3 and 4, or to put a multi-media presentation together in Years 5 and 6 following a residential trip. However, there is still an over-concentration on the acquisition of skills and, at times, pupils still use computers to copy out work they have already written. As a result, teaching in the juniors is also satisfactory but achievement does not rise above satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

59. Teachers meet with mixed success in using computers in other subjects. This is satisfactory overall. There are examples when the computers have been used well to make pupils think. As part of their work on spreadsheets, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 had to plan a meal for the Chinese New Year within a given budgetary limit. This not only allowed pupils to learn about spreadsheets but also gave them a practical application for their newly acquired skills. However, practice is patchy, and at times too much is done for pupils so that not enough prominence is given to ICT skills. In a literacy lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils used computers to write newspaper accounts of the Trojan War. However, templates were provided for pupils thus missing the opportunity for pupils to learn how to set work out for themselves using textboxes or tables.

HUMANITIES

60. There was insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about standards or the quality of teaching and learning as no lessons were observed in either **geography** or **history**. However, work was sampled in both. Planning documents demonstrate that there is satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum requirements in both subjects. As at the time of the last inspection, visits and fieldwork are important elements of both subjects. There are good opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills when they record their activities in their own words rather than using a prepared worksheet which would inhibit their thinking and impede originality.
61. In **geography**, pupils in Year 2 understand that their own immediate locality is different from that of one on an island in the Hebrides. Pupils in Year 6 look in more detail as they contrast their own lifestyle with that of children in Brazil.
62. In **history**, pupils in Year 2 have some understanding of the life of people such as Florence Nightingale and her work in the Crimean hospitals. They empathise with the harsh conditions experienced by servants in medieval times. Pupils in Year 6 design and make eye-catching brochures extolling what was on offer in Roman Northwich. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the past in the local area are better than that usually found for their age.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

63. No lessons were observed in **design and technology**. Work on display shows that pupils are provided with a suitable range of experiences. These cover the study of mechanisms, such as pulleys, and opportunities to design, make and evaluate a range of products.
64. Only one lesson was observed in **music** so no judgements are made about overall provision. In the lesson seen, teaching was satisfactory. Pupils, in groups, enjoyed working out a sequence of long and short sounds which they performed for the rest of the class. A good feature of the teaching was the opportunities the pupils were given to evaluate each other's

work. The achievements of pupils who are learning to play fifes, flutes or keyboard instruments are often celebrated during assemblies or school performances; this helps to raise the profile of music within the school. Pupils take part in the annual music festival in the local parish church.

65. No lessons were seen in **physical education**. There are still limitations to the school hall so part of the gymnastics strand of the curriculum remains untaught. Swimming, however, is now part of the curriculum and pupils in Year 3 have regular swimming lessons at a local baths. Most pupils reach the required standard during this time. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils in Years 3 to 6; netball, football, rounders, cricket, athletics, judo and golf are available. There are opportunities for pupils to engage in inter-school competitions throughout the year. The good number of residential visits undertaken by the school provide opportunities for pupils to sample outdoor and adventurous activities.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school seeks to link art well with the study of other subjects.
- Art makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- The co-ordinator has well-formed views of how she wants to develop art.

Commentary

66. A good structure has been put in place to support the teaching of art and to ensure that the strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained. This ensures that lessons are more than a series of one-off lessons but involve pupils in practising and acquiring skills that they employ in thought-provoking ways. Central to this is the use of sketch books. For example, in a good art lesson in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class, the teacher made good use of these to teach pupils how to sketch out a thumbnail figure for a unit of modelling and painting moving figures. This accurate teaching gave pupils a good grounding in the techniques needed both in terms of drawing and in how to look at pose and posture. This prepared them well for subsequent work. This illustrates a common approach that, in the main, other teachers mirror. The quality of teaching and learning is good. As a result, pupils achieve well, especially in the juniors, to exceed expected standards at the end of Year 6.
67. The study of the work of other artists and art from different cultures, especially from Africa, forms a central feature of the curriculum. Very good use, for example, has been made of a link with an African school. This has enabled pupils to study cultural designs and images which they have integrated very well into highly colourful and carefully observed work of their own. This spans a range of media and includes three as well as two-dimensional work. Pupils say they find this work very stimulating. This is just one of several examples of multi-cultural art that are very well displayed around the school. As a result, art makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. In addition, whether it be aboriginal art in Year 2, the work of Paul Klee in Years 3 and 4 or Giuseppe Arcimboldo in Years 5 and 6, pupils are introduced to a wide range of work from other artists. These are invariably used to help learn from and apply differing styles and techniques to work of their own.
68. Teachers are skilled at linking art to work in other subjects. Pupils say that this gives art a sense of purpose. In history, for example, work on the Celts lent itself well to work on patterns. In the juniors especially teachers are making increasing use of computers for pupils to produce art. The school's success in art results from effective leadership. Manageable assessment procedures help teachers identify talented pupils and those in need of additional help. This is helping direct future lessons. Plans for the future are detailed and focus efforts well on seeking the Arts Mark.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

69. Insufficient teaching and learning were seen to arrive at an overall judgement on provision for pupils' **personal, social and health education and citizenship**. The school ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to discuss a range of sensitive issues and these connect closely with lessons in religious education and to the deliberate strategies that the school has put in place to address pupils' personal development. The school has in place suitable procedures for sex and relationship education and for drugs education.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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