

INSPECTION REPORT

PALACEFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 130271

Headteacher: Mrs. D. M. Moran

Reporting inspector: Mr. R. Gill
4074

Dates of inspection: 8 - 12 May 2000

Inspection number: 190499

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Badger Close Runcorn Cheshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Stapleton
Date of previous inspection:	18 November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. R. Gill	Registered inspector	Science and art.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs. K. Berry	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
Mrs. D. Atkinson	Team inspector	Under fives, information technology, geography and music.	
Mrs. B. Clarke	Team inspector	English, design and technology and religious education.	How good are the curricular opportunities?
Mrs. M. Griffiths	Team inspector	Equal opportunities, mathematics and physical education.	
Mrs. H. Ward	Team member	Special educational needs and history.	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7-11
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12-14
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14-16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16-19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19-20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20-21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21-23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23-24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25-30
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31-47

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This school is a large community primary school for boys and girls aged between three and 11 years old. It has 296 pupils on roll with 26 part-time children in the nursery. Taken together, pupils' attainment on entry is well below that found nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. There are 26 pupils with a statement of special educational needs which is much higher than average. The school has within it a special needs unit catering for junior age children, with moderate learning difficulties, from the surrounding district. There are 23 pupils in this unit all of whom have a statement of educational needs. No pupils come from an ethnic minority background. Forty-two per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school serves an area with significant levels of disadvantage.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Palacefields Primary School is an effective school. Pupils are well taught by staff who work well together as a team. Standards are improving year-by-year due to the improvements made in teaching and learning in the last two years. The quality of teaching has been greatly enhanced by the newly appointed headteacher who has helped the school make its rapid improvements through systematic monitoring, evaluation and support. The school's expenditure is relatively high, but nevertheless, in the context of its good teaching and improved standards achieved, it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Gives strong leadership which offers excellent direction for the school in the job of raising standards.
- Provides some high quality teaching that has helped to raise standards.
- Ensures that pupils in the special needs unit make very good progress.
- Creates a very positive ethos in which relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Promotes a high degree of team-work that has ensured very good improvements since the last inspection.

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievements in English.
- Standards in information technology by the age of 11.
- The rate of progress made by pupils in the infants.
- Long-term planning of the curriculum for pupils in mixed-age classes.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in November 1996, the school has made very good progress in dealing with the key issues from the previous report. Teaching, at that time, was a major weakness with one in four lessons judged as being unsatisfactory. This is not the case now. There are very few unsatisfactory lessons and about one in three lessons is at least very good with a few being excellent. Much of this improvement is due to the direction, monitoring and support given by the newly appointed headteacher and the successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The improvement of teaching has been accompanied by equally rapid improvements in the following: the curriculum; a programme of development for information technology; the role of the teachers with

management responsibility; and the provision of more information for parents about the school and its activities.

There is a very successful working relationship between the governors, the headteacher and other senior managers. The school is very able at pinpointing the necessary areas for improvement and in making sure that they are given priority in the school's development plan and accompanying budget. The commitment to continue raising standards is very strong. In this context the school's capacity to improve even further is very good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	E	D	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	E	E	D	B	
science	E	C	E	C	

This table shows that pupils' overall attainment, aged 11 in 1999, was well below the national average in English and science and below it in mathematics. Attainment was more favourable compared with pupils' results from schools with a similar free school meal figure. The scores in English were not so good by comparison because attainment in writing was not high enough. However, these scores are misleading and do not give a true picture of the kind of achievements being made by pupils in mainstream classes in Year 6. The school has a very effective special needs unit in which 23 statemented children between the ages of seven and 11 are taught by a specialist team. The results of these pupils, which are invariably below the national average, are included in the results shown in the table above. Taken on their own, the mainstream figures show that pupils, in 1999, for example, attained above the national average in mathematics, broadly in line with it in science and below it in English. Reading was just below the national average but writing represented a big weakness with only 33 per cent of pupils achieving the expected levels.

The above results refer to pupils who left the school last year. Attainment for 11-year-olds, at the time of the inspection in Year 6 mainstream classes, in English, mathematics and science is about average and the school is on course to meet its ambitious targets in English and mathematics. The standards of pupils' writing has improved greatly from 1999 to bring current Year 6 pupils broadly in line with national expectations. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well below the national expectation for seven-year-olds. The figures for those reaching Level 2 match well with other schools nationally. However, the higher number of pupils at the lower levels and the small proportion achieving above the national average makes the overall picture less promising. Attainment is below the national expectation in information technology at the end of the juniors. In physical education and art pupils throughout the school attain higher standards than those normally found in pupils of their age. Standards reached by 11-year-olds in art are very high.

By the age of five children attain beyond expectations in creative development, but achieve below expectations in language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen, polite and very willing to help.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally good. Some pupils find it hard to settle down to activities and several call out instead of waiting to be asked, but cases of disruption are few and far between. Those pupils with marked behavioural difficulties are well managed and try hard to control themselves.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. They show initiative when something needs to be done, but they are limited by the responsibilities that they are asked to undertake. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is higher than the national average, but the school is vigilant and tackles this problem with great thoroughness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	satisfactory	good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons and very good in 28 per cent of lessons. It is excellent in a further six per cent of lessons. Lessons are unsatisfactory in only four per cent of cases. Teaching of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is generally good in the juniors. The standard of teaching sometimes varies markedly between classes, particularly in the infants. This causes pupils' progress to be slower than it should be. For example, the strong teaching in Year 2 has to make up for comparative slower progress made by pupils in Year 1.

The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been well implemented by staff, and pupils benefit from lessons that have clear purposes and well-organised content. The school has created various groupings of pupils based on how well they have learnt in the past and these have also helped to raise standards.

Pupils in the special needs unit are taught very well as are those pupils who need specialist help in mainstream classes. In this respect the school is meeting the needs of these pupils very well. Equally, higher attaining pupils are well catered for, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where they are placed in one class with a teacher who is very aware of how to meet their needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a much improved curriculum which meets all statutory requirements. It concentrates heavily on the national strategies for literacy and numeracy in order to raise standards. It also includes a broad provision of other experiences to complement the basic skills in art, for example. Long-term planning for mixed-age classes is a relative weakness.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is a strength of the school. The special needs unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties provides a very good standard of education. Those pupils with special needs in mainstream classes are also well provided for. The link between pupils' individual education plans and teachers' lesson plans is not always made clear in mainstream classes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good throughout the school. Spiritual development is satisfactorily catered for, but collective acts of worships are not planned systematically enough to ensure good development in this respect.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff understand pupils' needs very well and do all they can to help and support pupils and ensure their safety. Pupils' behaviour, attendance, punctuality and attainments are very well monitored and effective action is taken where necessary

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, supported ably by the deputy headteacher and other senior managers, is very effective in establishing a clear direction for the school and for managing the associated improvements. Co-ordinators play an increasingly active role in management, but have yet to monitor teaching for themselves.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors work effectively to shape the direction of the school and judge the outcomes of their work. They challenge the school to do better, obtain resources at the most competitive prices and utilise them in the best possible way to achieve their aims.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a key feature of the school's management. Pupils' results, teaching in general and school improvements are monitored and evaluated most effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Resources in the form of staffing, accommodation and equipment are used very well to help raise standards and improve achievements.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
• Teaching in the special educational needs unit. • That their children like school. • Improvements in behaviour. • Teaching in general. • Approachability particularly the headteacher. • The high expectations staff have for children. • The way in which the school supports children's personal development.	• The amount of reading practice that children receive. • The homework system. • The amount of information received about their children's progress. • Provision of extra-curricular activities.

The inspectors agree with what parents like about the school. The school treats seriously the issues of reading practice and plans to provide additional individual reading time for all pupils. The different way in which teachers are interpreting the homework policy is an area in which the school could do better. Parents have many opportunities to gain information about their children, but the annual reports are not always written to include areas for development and the lack of a spring term parents' evening prevents targets being set for children that can be worked on before the end of the school year. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities that enhance the children's learning and personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Initial assessments on entry to the school show that the majority of children are well below average in literacy, mathematics and personal and social development, when compared to the rest of the children in Halton. This is borne out by the findings of the inspection. Children are on course to reach the nationally expected goals in learning by the time they are five in personal and social development, mathematics and physical development and go beyond them in creative development. They are, however, not on course to achieve them in language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.
2. The most recent National Curriculum test results show that 11-year-olds were below the national average in science and well below it in English and mathematics. These results compared quite favourably with similar schools around the country. For example, in mathematics the school's results were above those achieved by similar schools and matched other schools in science. The English results were below the levels achieved by schools in a similar situation. However, this picture of the school's performance does not take into account the fact that the school has a special needs unit and the results from this class are included with those from the mainstream classes which gives an unfair comparison with other schools around the country without such a unit. When the mainstream pupils' results are taken on their own the picture is a lot different. For example, in 1999, mathematics results would have been above the national average and well above the scores achieved by similar schools. Science figures would have matched the national average and been higher than those in similar schools, while in English results would have been ten per cent lower than the national average, but in line with levels achieved by similar schools.
3. Over a four year period from 1996 to 1999, pupils' results at 11, including those from the special needs unit, compare very favourably with the national trend of improvement. Basically, the school has been improving faster than most schools, particularly in the last two years, since the arrival of the current headteacher.
4. When compared with all schools, National Curriculum tests in 1999, for seven-year-olds, show that pupils were well below the national average in reading and mathematics and below it in writing. It is the high number of pupils with low scores and the few who reach the higher levels that makes the school's overall performance so low. This level of performance has existed over the last three years with all three aspects of learning being well below expectations. These results compare quite favourably with those achieved by similar schools. In 1999, for example, reading figures matched those achieved by similar schools while writing results were above other schools. Only in mathematics were the scores below those achieved by similar schools. That is not to say that pupils could not do better. The school is not complacent about these results and is constantly seeking ways in which to improve them. For example, the deputy headteacher has mounted a very successful project to raise the attainment of boys since the school identified that they were particularly low attainers. The relatively slower progress made by pupils in Year 1 is also an issue that effects eventual attainment in Year 2.
5. Over a four year period from 1996 to 1999 pupils results, in general, at seven in reading, writing and mathematics have been well below the national average, but the school's rate of

improvement, between 1998 and 1999, in reading and writing has been much faster than the national trend due to the intense work undertaken, particularly in Year 2.

6. The school has set targets for 66 per cent of 11-year-olds to attain the national average in English and 64 per cent to attain it in mathematics in 2000. These targets are very ambitious, but the school hopes to achieve them and is on course with the majority of pupils. The school's strategy of grouping pupils by prior attainment in Years 5 and 6 is having a significant impact on the task of raising standards.
7. In English, seven- and 11-year-olds have usually done better in reading than in writing. Writing is often accurate and conveys meaning to the reader in the form of simple sentences, but pupils find it very hard to write in story form, using description and imaginative language. The school has tended to concentrate on factual, report-type writing to help to raise results and this is being successful. Pupils succeed better when given the task of planning something in writing or describing how to accomplish a task. However, they are not always as careful over spelling, punctuation and presentation as they should be. Eleven-year-old pupils' writing has now improved to a point where it is better than their attainment in reading. In mathematics, pupils, particularly in the juniors, are confident in arithmetic and are reasonably quick to solve simple problems. This accounts for the good results from the mainstream pupils. Pupils in Year 3 are almost back to the national average for their age after being below it in Year 2. They are now very confident at choosing which method of subtraction they will use when solving a problem, for example. In science, many pupils have acquired a satisfactory level of scientific knowledge and have been able to set up test situations for themselves and reflect on their results. By the age of 11, standards are in line with national expectations, but in some of the work these pupils exceed the requirements in a very accomplished way. For example, when working with salt and sugar solutions some pupils can use their previous knowledge of how specific mixtures behave to very good effect and are able to predict what will happen in particular cases. They discuss their findings well in groups and express their own thoughts about what constitutes a fair test and what does not.
8. Achievement in arithmetic is low in the infants and satisfactory in the juniors. Progress in writing is much slower, throughout the school. The school is tackling the low achievement in these areas through the good implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Arithmetic and writing are now improving at a faster rate than reading. The school has identified this potential downturn in reading standards and is currently instituting some extra methods by which pupils' reading can be developed. Standards in finding information from reference books are lower than they should be and the school's new library is designed to tackle this issue.
9. Beyond the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils' attainment is typical for their age in religious education, history, geography, music, and design and technology. Standards are higher than expected in physical education and art. They are, in fact, much higher than expected in art by the age of 11. Standards are lower than they should be in information technology at the end of the juniors.
10. Pupils achieve well throughout the school in relation to their prior attainment, particularly in the reception classes, Year 2, the special needs unit and in Years 3 and 6. Higher attainers are often set more demanding activities and reach particularly high standards in Year 6 where they are grouped by levels of attainment and taught with ambition and challenge. Pupils' achievements in Year 1 are not unsatisfactory, but they are less pronounced than in Year 2 and therefore the rate of progress throughout the infants is uneven.

11. Pupils with special educational needs are well identified and pupils' individual education plans have narrowly defined targets which allow them to make well defined progress. Where pupils are withdrawn for work in small groups, the quality of the teaching, targeted to very specific needs, enables the pupils to make good progress. Most of the support work has been targeted at literacy skills, in the past, but the school is now identifying more children requiring support in numeracy to improve the achievements of lower attainers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to their work are positive and in many lessons are very good and even excellent in some cases. Pupils particularly enjoy lessons that are challenging and move at a brisk pace. The majority of pupils listen carefully and respond to effective questioning with enthusiasm, but some pupils tend to call out the answer instead of waiting their turn. The oldest pupils in the juniors, in particular, are developing mature attitudes in the way that they organise their learning. Nursery and reception children settle quickly and happily although many find it hard to conform to the routines. Sometimes they find it difficult to concentrate for extended periods of time or listen quietly without fidgeting. Many of the older pupils take advantage of the range of after-school activities and there is a willingness to take part in projects outside lessons. For example, with the help of a parent, some pupils produce a school magazine containing articles, interviews and contributions from across the school.
13. Behaviour is good with no exclusions in the last twelve months. The vast majority of pupils respond positively to the high expectation of behaviour in lessons, around the school and in public places. This was particularly noticeable when pupils went swimming and walked to the baths and used public transport on the return journey. They know the difference between right and wrong and understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Where a small number of pupils have shown challenging behaviour this is quickly dealt with and causes minimum disruption to the lesson. This positive picture would bear out the view of parents and show the school has maintained the level of behaviour since the last inspection. Pupils play together amicably, share resources and collaborate sensibly. They are genuinely happy to celebrate each other's achievements. Pupils with special needs have positive attitudes to their work and are happy to attend school. They work hard and enjoy the attention derived from small group work. They like to show adults and other children the work they have done and successes are applauded. Those pupils who experience behavioural difficulties are given positive encouragement and reinforcement for good work and helpful behaviour, in line with the school's behaviour policy. The children in the special needs unit clearly enjoy school and mix well with their peers in the playground, at lunchtimes and in assemblies. Some of the unit's pupils join mainstream classes for some lessons and three children will be transferring to their local school in September.
14. Although pupils have class monitor roles there are few occasion when they can show their maturity and sense of responsibility in other areas. Pupils' personal development is good and enhanced by the extremely positive relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves. They are polite, friendly and enjoy talking to visitors about their school. Even the very young children manage their personal needs confidently. They are eager to please their teachers and get on well with each other. The improved attendance levels are around the national average, but the number of unexplained absences is too high and detracting from the overall improvement. Punctuality is still a problem for some pupils, but for the majority they arrive on time ready to begin their lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. In nearly seven out of ten lessons teaching is at least good with many lessons being very good. Some are excellent. The majority of teaching is satisfactory or better with only four per cent of lessons being unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved dramatically since the last inspection, particularly in the juniors, where one in every four lessons was unsatisfactory. Now 33 per cent of teaching is at least very good with eight per cent being excellent. There is also some very successful teaching in the infants, but the quality of teaching remains satisfactory overall, just as it was at the time of the last inspection, because of the differences in the quality of teaching within the infants which sometimes has a detrimental effect on the progress of the youngest pupils. Unsatisfactory teaching, in the infants, amounts to 12 per cent which is exactly the same as it was during the last inspection. However, this is now matched by 19 per cent very good teaching and six per cent excellent teaching, mainly occurring in Year 2.
16. The main weaknesses in teaching have been overcome in the majority of cases. Now teaching has a strong impact on learning. Lessons have a definite purpose which is communicated well to the pupils and teachers pursue their aims in a very organised fashion, making sure that pupils understand as they go along. These improvements have been systematically monitored and supported by the headteacher and governors.
17. Teachers, throughout the school, usually show a good understanding of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The effect of the school's adoption of these methods is more marked in numeracy where results, for mainstream pupils, have improved very quickly because the school had introduced a similar style of teaching before the actual start of the numeracy strategy.
18. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is satisfactory overall in the infants and good in the juniors, where there is a greater consistency amongst the staff. Satisfactory teaching occurs throughout the school in religious education, information technology, history, geography and design and technology. It is good overall in music and in Years 1 and 2 in physical education and art. In the juniors it is very good in physical education and art. Teaching in information technology in the juniors is satisfactory despite the lower standards because developments are in place to ensure better standards in time. The new computer suite, which is very well used, is so new that the effect of the teaching has not had time to be realised. There are some examples of successful teaching taking place in information technology, particularly when pupils are being given direct instruction in computer skills.
19. Teaching of children under five is good. There is a difference between the teaching in the reception classes and the nursery in that the majority of very good and excellent lessons are in the reception classes. Most of the teaching in the nursery class is satisfactory with one in five lessons being good. The teaching of physical development, in both year groups is limited by the lack of outside play facilities. The strength of the teaching for the under fives is typified by literacy lessons where the very good teaching compensates successfully for pupils' low attainment on entry to school. For example, in one reception class the very good teaching of letter sounds enabled children to apply their existing knowledge in new situations and offered higher attaining children challenging activities that helped them achieve standards more associated with pupils in Year 1. Planning for nursery lessons is satisfactory, but is not as comprehensive as that produced by the reception teachers. It is this lack of consistency in the work for children under five that prevents similar standards of teaching.

20. The quality of teaching in the infants is satisfactory. It is most effective in English and mathematics in Year 2. The National Curriculum tests show that pupils attain very low results when compared to the national average. This is partly due to the fact that children enter the school at five with very low levels of attainment, but the inconsistency of teaching between classes in the infants is also a contributory factor in pupils' slower progress with too much being left to the teaching in Year 2. In order to raise standards the school has grouped lower attaining pupils in Year 1 and 2 into a separate mixed-age class. This was an effective decision that has been slightly thwarted by staff changes. However, the teaching is now having a positive effect on pupils' learning particularly when the teacher is supported by the learning support teacher and trained classroom support assistants.
21. Teaching in the juniors is good. Some very good and excellent teaching occurs in several subjects, but mainly related to the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. For example, in one lesson for Year 5 and 6 pupils, they were busy using their knowledge of percentages to work out VAT figures for various items. The teacher was most effective in helping the class to produce their answers and pupils made very progress in understanding these financial matters and using calculators to check their answers. Generally, teachers plan purposeful lessons that move along at a good pace. Pupils are well challenged and interest levels are high. Some very good and excellent teaching also occurs in the special needs unit where teachers concentrate on the small steps needed to be made by pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. The planning of these small steps and the way in which the teachers maintain motivation through direct, practical involvement in the pupils' learning is very good.
22. Any relative weaknesses in the teaching in the juniors are connected to teachers not being sharp enough with the timing of their lessons and letting the whole-class component go on for too long. Some pupils have not been trained well enough to wait their turn and still call out answers that prevent other pupils from forming their own views, opinions and answers. In this respect behaviour management still needs to be tightened up in some lessons.
23. The teachers in the special needs unit are very effective. Most of the teaching was at least good, and very good and excellent teaching was also seen in the class for older pupils. Consistent classroom management and adherence to the school's assertive discipline policy ensure that the children remain on task and achieve high levels of achievement.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes is very well managed by the co-ordinator and well provided for by the learning support teacher and the support assistants. Teachers plan well for all the children in their class including those with special needs and are particularly skilled in trying a range of strategies and using a variety of materials to ensure high quality learning takes place for this group. However, daily or weekly lesson plans do not always show what is expected of pupils on the register of special educational needs and this prevents a systematic monitoring of these pupils' progress.
25. Extra classes for the oldest pupils who were thought likely to underachieve in national curriculum tests have successfully helped to raise attainment. Teachers have also successfully focused on the underachievement of boys in order to raise standards. The same opportunities are available to girls should the need arise. The use of homework to reinforce or extend learning is good in some classes, but the system is unevenly applied across the school and some parents, rightly, comment that they are unhappy about their child's progress in this respect.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

26. There are strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, but it is satisfactory overall. A key issue in the last inspection was the lack of planning and co-ordination of the curriculum. Since this time, the senior management team, in partnership with the staff and governors, has undertaken a comprehensive audit of the needs of the school. This has enabled the school to develop a curriculum with satisfactory breadth, balance and relevance. The programmes of study in the National Curriculum are now fully taught and there are policies and schemes of work for all subjects. The mixed-age teaching and its impact on standards of attainment and progress have not been evaluated and this remains an area for development. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the last report.
27. The curricular provision for children under five in the nursery and reception classes is good. The planning for their learning is very good in the reception classes where it appropriately addresses the six areas of learning, providing well-structured and meaningful links between areas. This enables pupils to make good progress towards attaining the nationally prescribed desirable learning outcomes. However, lesson planning is not jointly managed by the nursery and reception teachers. The satisfactory nursery plans are not yet influenced by the quality and detail of the planning undertaken in the reception classes. In this respect, these classes are not yet operating as one cohesive unit in providing for children in their early stages of education. Appropriate attention is given to learning through play, but the outdoor area is insufficiently developed to enable good quality learning to take place. Nevertheless, the teachers make good use of the local environment to develop simple mapping and awareness of place.
28. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The school has worked hard to effectively implement the national literacy and numeracy strategies and an action plan for raising standards in both areas. Extra time has been allocated to these subjects to improve standards. Particular emphasis has been given to mathematics, and junior classes are arranged into smaller groups for two sessions each week enabling more structured teaching to occur. The emphasis placed on English and mathematics has resulted in less time for design and technology and geography, and barely sufficient time to cover the teaching of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The provision for information technology is inconsistent between classes and results in the under-use of computers as a tool for learning by many pupils. There are agreed policies in place for all subjects. Detailed schemes of work taken from published schemes or national guidance enable pupils to learn in a consistent way. Sex education and drugs awareness are appropriately taught, with good contributions from the school nurse. The pupils receive good support from teachers and support staff in their personal and social development, and health education is taught through the science curriculum. Whilst there is a draft policy in place for personal, social and health education, the school acknowledges the need to develop a detailed curricular plan for this subject.
29. The effectiveness of the school's long-term curricular planning varies between subjects and across year groups. Planning for English and mathematics adheres closely to the national strategies, and in science relates effectively to the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. For the other foundation subjects, the curriculum is planned on a yearly cycle using the nationally prescribed schemes of work. The school does not address the issue of those pupils taught in a mixed-age group class who may meet the same curriculum content a second time. There are some gaps in the interpretation of the schemes for information technology and design technology which result in some strands not being fully taught nor taught in a balanced way. The quality of teachers' medium-term planning is good overall in the juniors and satisfactory in the infants. A range of pertinent topics is planned which gives interest to the pupils' learning and ensure that the curriculum is broad and relevant. Teachers' weekly and daily planning for

literacy and numeracy is very thorough and specifically caters for the differing levels of attainment within the class. This contributes significantly to the pupils' attainment and progress and to the increase in standards of attainment in national curriculum statutory tests.

30. Provision for special educational needs and the expertise of the teachers involved is one of the school's strengths. Pupils within the special needs unit receive an effective curriculum that is suitably adapted to their needs and differing abilities. They also benefit from being included in mainstream lessons such as physical education when applicable. The school follows the Code of Practice very well for pupils with special educational needs. Individual learning plans appropriately identify short-term achievable targets, to enable teachers working with them to meet their particular learning needs. Those pupils with special educational needs within the mainstream school also receive good support because of the prudent, targeted use of the special needs support teacher and the good provision of work closely aligned to their individual education plans. The special needs co-ordinator and learning support teachers work well with class teachers and support assistants to develop teaching materials to meet pupils' needs.
31. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good, despite the fact that a minority of parents are concerned about the provision of out-of-school activities. There is a wide range of activities on offer, which include a variety of sports, creative activities such as art and singing, and others that support the pupils' work in school, for example, story and handwriting. The school allows pupils to rotate between clubs so that all pupils can attend their choice of activity.
32. The curriculum is enriched through good links with the community. Pupils compete in many local sporting competitions, and good links are made with local clubs who provide additional sessions of rugby, baseball, football and cricket. Pupils take part in a good range of visits in connection with their work. They make good use of local facilities such as the Squirrel Sanctuary, Formby Beach and Delamere Forest and travel to a range of museums further afield in Manchester and Warrington. The school has some links with the local church, but there is scope for it to develop more links with places of worship and other faiths. Effective links exist with Norton Priory, the receiving secondary school. Pupils' experiences are also enriched through taking part in Christmas concerts which are well supported by parents.
33. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted satisfactorily. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to participate in acts of corporate worship which meet statutory requirements, but spiritual development is not always a successful feature on these occasions. Pupils particularly enjoy the celebrations assembly when pupils receive awards for good work or deeds. For instance, a reception class pupil showed perseverance when painting a beautiful picture of a cat, another child had found handwriting difficult, and worked hard to improve this. Hymns are enthusiastically sung, and contribute greatly to the assembly. Opportunities for personal reflection are under-developed and, in classes, opportunities to value the wonders of the natural world around them are limited. A record is kept of assemblies, but there is no overall planning of collective worship. The quality of assemblies varies between classes and is less effective, spiritually, when combined with the religious education lesson. Work in other subjects sometimes makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. For instance, in a Year 2 lesson in English, pupils were visibly upset when hearing of the demise of the children in the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.
34. The school is a very orderly community and pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils know the school rules, and most are well behaved. Teaching and support staff present very good role models to the children; as a result, pupils are respectful of them and each

other. Good opportunities exist for pupils to support each other, as when children from the unit visit assembly or join in play times. Pupils are encouraged to listen carefully when others speak. They also consider the needs of others. For instance, Year 2 pupils heard the story of the Good Samaritan, and considered ways in which they could help others less fortunate. Charitable fund raising is undertaken annually. The lack of a personal, social and health education scheme of work results in too few planned opportunities for pupils to regularly discuss and debate moral issues.

35. Pupils' social development is good. Opportunities in assembly are used to publicly recognise good behaviour in and around the school. Pupils are actively encouraged to relate positively to one another. Older pupils help younger ones in the out-of-school clubs. For instance, in the story club, a Year 6 pupil operated the tape recorder, and helped a reception child to keep up with the story. A residential field trip to Menai is organised for pupils in Years 5 and 6. This gives good opportunities to promote pupils' social development in a different setting and to develop independence. Good opportunities to learn the skills of sportsmanship are provided for older pupils as they compete in swimming galas and other local sporting events. Whilst each class has its own systems of monitors, there are few opportunities for older pupils to take on additional responsibilities around the school. There are also few opportunities for older pupils to contribute their ideas about the running of the school.
36. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Cultural aspects of art and music are in evidence in the many attractive displays. Visiting musicians from a range of cultures have visited the school and have provided a very rich stimulus for pupils' learning. Work in geography and history extends pupils' knowledge of other cultures. Visitors from the local community such as the nurse, doctor and representatives of the fire service effectively enhance pupils' awareness of their own culture. The school's provision for heightening pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural diversity of their own culture is appropriately developed through religious education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. All pupils are well cared for, their welfare, health and safety a priority. Medical and accident procedures are well established and cover every eventuality. Teachers know their pupils well and ensure their personal and emotional needs are well catered for. Pupils entering the school for the first time are positively supported and consequently settle quickly. Although there is no planned programme of personal and social education, the school effectively promotes healthy living and enlists the support of outside health professionals to deliver specific programmes. Child protection procedures support the school's welfare provision and are well known to staff. Promotion of good behaviour is a feature of the school and works best when the agreed discipline policy is used and applied consistently. The school takes a firm stance on aggressive or inappropriate behaviour and does not allow disruption of lessons. The school is working hard with the Educational Welfare Service to improve levels of attendance and punctuality and has made good progress in a short space of time. Parents particularly like the reward systems introduced to promote improvements in these areas. Pupils themselves enjoy receiving recognition for the progress that they make. The school follows a health and safety policy and ensures pupils are free from hazards in the school. All pupils are well supervised at work and play and enjoy a bright, clean environment enhanced by quality displays of their own work.
38. There is a caring ethos throughout the school with pupils with special needs being particularly well cared for. Teachers know their pupils and their individual needs well and ensure that they are included in all activities and given opportunities to succeed. Induction into the nursery and

reception is carried out sensitively. This ensures that all pupils settle in quickly. Staff are very aware of situations that may affect a child's response to school at any particular time.

39. Although pupils in the special needs unit are taught separately they are included in mainstream classes wherever possible. Children from the unit join in with pupils from mainstream classes at break and lunchtimes. Special Educational Needs is given a very high priority by the school and great care is taken to ensure that special needs are identified, addressed, monitored and evaluated. All class teachers with large numbers of pupils with individual education plans have time set aside to meet with the Learning Support Teacher. The school works well with the local educational authority to arrange extra support for pupils with special needs.
40. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The new, succinct assessment policy informs and reflects current practice. Baseline assessment of pupils' attainment on entry to school at the start of reception year is effective. It is used skilfully to ensure that planning matches pupils' needs. A similar baseline assessment for the start and end of the nursery is in the planning stages. The school believes that this will allow them to track children's progress more successfully and enable teachers to plan more effectively.
41. The school ensures that the statutory requirement to test pupils in mathematics and English, with the addition of science at the age of 11, are met. Staff use a range of additional tests, in mathematics, reading, spelling, and the optional national curriculum tests. The school is using the data obtained from these with increasing effect. Analysis of the English scores showed that standards in writing were very poor. This led to the decision to use a programme which systematically develops writing skills and results are better. The school uses the test results to organise pupils into sets. Staff report that this approach has been instrumental in lifting standards in mathematics. Further analysis of results has shown how much boys lag behind girls in their performance. The school uses its testing insights to track and target individual boys.
42. However, the use of assessment in the other subjects is not fully developed and is often inconsistent across classes. There is a brief reference to assessment in most policies but systematic ways of undertaking this, in a form relevant to different subjects, have not yet been developed. For example, in information technology although teachers can see what aspects have been introduced there is no way of ascertaining the individual's level of performance. This means that progress is not as good as it might be as teachers cannot use this knowledge in their long and medium-term planning.
43. Teachers make use of informal assessment effectively in their day-to-day work. In the best examples, such as in the reception classes, this is reflected in the quality and careful sequencing of learning in their short-term planning. Regular assessment opportunities are identified. Where assessment is well developed the insights are systematically noted in, for example, diagnostic reading records. The daily assessment of numeracy is also more systematic across the school and more coherently managed than it is in other subjects.
44. All the staff are well supported by the special needs team in their early identification of pupils who have particular special needs. Teachers are writing effective individual educational programmes, with clear short-term targets requiring regular reviews. However, the targets set on these are not yet regularly incorporated into the mainstream teachers' daily planning. By contrast, these individual education plans underpin the daily provision, in the special needs unit, and are a significant factor in ensuring the high quality of teaching and learning.

45. The school reports are satisfactory and indicate what pupils have done rather than the quality of the learning. They have yet to identify the targets appropriate for that child.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents and carers have a very positive view of the school and report there has been a marked improvement in the school as a whole in recent years. They feel their suggestions and any complaints are listened to and acted upon promptly. Behaviour, high expectations of the pupils and the support for personal development were also praised, as was the approachability of the staff. The work of the special educational needs unit was given wholehearted support by parents of pupils in the unit. The inspection team found parents' views to be wholly accurate in these areas. A small number of concerns were expressed which were followed up during the week of inspection. Inspectors agree with parents' concerns in these aspects. The school recognises parents' concern about the time given to individual reading practice and intends to introduce a planned programme during the first fifteen minutes of the afternoon. Although a homework policy is in place it was found to be inconsistent in its implementation. There are two opportunities a year for parents to enquire about their children's progress and many parents also make use of the school's willingness to see parents after school or by appointment. The annual report meets statutory requirements but does not give a clear indication where further development is needed or whether personal targets have been met.
47. The inspection team did not share parents' concern for the provision of extra-curricular activities. The school has made extremely good progress since the last inspection in strengthening the partnership with parents and involving them in their children's learning. This has been a top priority for the school and, after careful planning and consideration, is now bearing fruit. A home and school agreement has been introduced to consolidate this partnership. There are strong lines of communication through regular newsletters and day-to-day information, not just on the workings of the school but on community projects and opportunities for learning. Parents are made aware of the school's initiatives on attendance and punctuality for example and the role they are expected to play. They also receive updates on these initiatives and the 'success stories'. Reviews of pupils with special educational needs are held at the bi-annual parents' evenings when parents are given an opportunity to discuss individual education plans and their child's progress separately.
48. Parents are co-operating with the school in raising levels of attendance and punctuality but the need to give written explanations for periods of absence, however short, is still a priority. The school encourages parents to support their children's education by inviting their help within the classroom but there is as yet no regular group involved. Where they can, parents have been particularly helpful organising specific projects and events and fund-raising activities. Support for the older pupils with the school magazine has been a particularly valuable contribution as was the help given to making Millennium calendars and fans with numerals on to be used in the daily numeracy lesson. The relationships and exchange of information with the parents in the nursery and reception classes is good. The improved links with parents have had undoubted benefits not only to the pupils and their families but also in raising the profile of the school in the local community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The school is led in a most effective way. The governors, headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff with management responsibilities all work in concert with a real concern for raising standards and improving even further the ethos of the school. The headteacher is particularly

effective at setting the tone for raising standards, relationships, behaviour and improving the quality of teaching. The deputy headteacher has been very influential, among other things, in managing the project designed to raise attainment of boys. Many parents now comment on the positive atmosphere in the school and how well their children respond to it.

50. The governors have assured themselves that standards are improving year-on-year. They regularly monitor the school's results and understand that 11-year-olds in the mainstream classes are now performing at the national average in mathematics and science and have made significant advances in English. They, rightly, recognise these achievements in the context of pupils who entered the school seven years earlier with attainment well below national expectations.
51. The previous inspection report contained some substantial areas for development and the school has made some significant changes in order to tackle these issues. At the centre of these developments was the need for strong leadership. In the last two years the senior management team has been greatly strengthened to include a newly appointed deputy headteacher with a major role in school improvement and two other senior staff. This team meets regularly to make decisions that have a strong impact on raising standards and improving teaching. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically since the time of the last inspection and this is directly attributable to the systematic monitoring and support given by the headteacher and other senior managers. In 1996, one in every four lessons was taught in an unsatisfactory way, while in 2000 the amount of unsatisfactory work is very small, though not yet eradicated. Other important improvements from the time of the last inspection include planning and co-ordination of the curriculum, developments in information technology that have raised attainment in the infants and in some areas in the juniors, and a greatly improved partnership with parents.
52. The leadership of the headteacher has made a significant contribution. There is a sense of urgency in the school about raising standards that emanates directly from the headteacher. The clear educational direction given is excellent. Everyone connected with the school realises how well they have been encouraged to work together as a team. Equal opportunities is a strength of the school. For example, the pupils and staff in the special needs unit are made to feel an integral part of the school. Equality of opportunity is implicit in all that the school seeks to achieve and there is an effective policy understood by all staff. Teachers acting as co-ordinators are very well encouraged and supported. They have been guided and supported in their task of monitoring their subjects, for example, with the help of some effective systems instigated by the headteacher.
53. During the course of the school's development from the last inspection certain national initiatives have been launched, for example the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and the headteacher and staff have responded well. These have resulted in some new and effective methods to teach reading, writing and arithmetic. The impact of the literacy strategy is taking longer to show in the school's results because so much needed to be done to raise standards in writing, for example. However, the staff consider, as a result of the intensive work undertaken to improve pupils' writing, that pupils in Year 6 will achieve the national average in writing, for the first time, in this year's national curriculum tests. Pupils' reading is well developed in the literacy hour, but they have too few opportunities to read more widely in the context of research and more extended comprehension. The work in numeracy is very successful and pupils in mainstream classes scored above the national average in the 1999 national curriculum tests.
54. Standards in information technology, which has taken on greater national importance since the last inspection, are lower than they should be at 11, but the headteacher and governors have

treated this subject with the utmost concern and have created a very well equipped computer suite that has meant that pupils can now experience the full curriculum. This work has begun well and already pupils have reached an acceptable standard in some aspects of their work, for example in spreadsheet production.

55. Provision for the under fives is well managed. Children are well assessed on entry into the reception class and teaching is geared to making sure that children make the best progress possible. The quality of work undertaken in the two reception classes is very good. The nursery provides a satisfactory induction into school, but is only just working fully in unison with the reception classes to implement the nationally recommended areas of learning. The school has already recognised this lack of close working as an area of relative weakness and has plans to place the two year groups more closely together, thereby creating the context for a closer working relationship.
56. The governing body, and the way it exercises its responsibilities, is now a strength of the school. Governors are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and gather a great deal of first-hand experience through regular visits which helps them to take effective decisions. They make sure that proper systems of support exist for pupils with special educational needs. The management of this work by the co-ordinator, headteacher and other staff is very good. This is a major improvement in the school's provision since at the time of the last inspection provision was judged to have been appropriate and received no special mention. The work undertaken in the special needs unit, under the guidance of the special needs co-ordinator, is of a high quality. Moreover, the special needs co-ordinator and learning support teacher, for mainstream classes, work closely with class teachers to define clear achievable targets to improve standards for all pupils with special educational needs. Funding for special educational needs is used well to address priority areas identified by the whole staff. Governors fulfil other statutory responsibilities very well including providing for a collective act of worship.
57. The school is in a very good position to capitalise on its strengths and tackle its weaknesses. The governors work very well to ensure that the school's finances are used effectively to support their educational priorities. The school building, which is very well used by the community as an educational and leisure resource, is full of high quality displays of pupils' work. The headteacher and governors make sure that all resources are used to the best advantage in order to have an impact on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. In this respect, for example, the secretary, cleaning staff and site manager play a very strong part in the school's success. The school's spending on pupils is relatively high and given the achievements of the pupils which are good in mathematics and science, but could be improved in English and information technology, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The headteacher, staff and governors, with support from the local education authority, should:

Improve, even further, pupils' achievements in English. To do this they should (Paras 2,7,68,73,74):

- sustain the developments in pupils' non-narrative writing and extend their proficiency in narrative writing; and
- ensure that attainments in reading are advanced through a wider development of research skills, guided and individual reading.

Raise standards in information technology. To do this they should (Paras 9,119,122,123):

- improve the knowledge and expertise of all staff; and
- ensure that the new computers are used to cover the full range of requirements of the National Curriculum in the juniors.

Increase the rate of progress made by pupils in the infants. To do this they should (Paras 10,20,73,76,84,88,103,108):

- ensure that children in the reception classes continue their progress at a good pace in Year 1; and
- monitor and assess pupils' achievements more regularly in Year 1 to judge progress and identify areas for development.

Devise a system of long-term curricular planning for pupils in mixed-age classes to guarantee access to the full National Curriculum (Paras 29,113).

Other weaknesses identified during the inspection are:

- the organisation of collective worship to promote spiritual development (Para 33);
- the lack of a policy and programme for personal, social, health and emotional development (Para 28);
- the lack of a fully developed early years department for the nursery and reception classes (Para 59);
- outdoor play facilities for children under five (Para 64).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	28	32	30	4	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	296
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	115

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	26
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7	95

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	94.6
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	16	15	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	14	14
	Girls	13	14	11
	Total	25	28	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (81)	90 (79)	81 (85)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	11
	Girls	13	13	8
	Total	26	28	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (83)	90 (85)	61 (86)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	22	19	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	15	14
	Girls	8	13	13
	Total	20	28	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	49 (43)	68 (31)	66 (57)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	13	13
	Girls	7	7	7
	Total	17	20	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	41 (39)	50 (34)	51 (54)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	296
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	128

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	0.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	16

Number of pupils per FTE adult	26
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	552294
Total expenditure	546275
Expenditure per pupil	2093
Balance brought forward from previous year	15762
Balance carried forward to next year	21781

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	323
Number of questionnaires returned	48

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	31	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	44	13	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	42	4	2	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	25	35	2	6
The teaching is good.	60	35	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	38	19	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	33	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	33	48	10	8	0
The school works closely with parents.	33	48	10	8	0
The school is well led and managed.	50	38	4	6	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	42	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	38	13	2	2

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

59. Children are admitted to the nursery in the September when they are three and the majority transfers to the reception classes the following September of the year of their fifth birthday. Attendance is mornings only in the nursery and full-time in the reception classes. Half the children entering the reception class have had no pre-school experience. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class is well below that typically expected for their age. Furthermore, boys lag behind the girls in attainment. Children in the reception class make good progress and achieve satisfactorily though standards remain slightly below the levels expected for five-year-olds, overall. Notwithstanding the typical attainment discovered in all areas of learning by the last report, children are now making good progress from well below expected levels when they enter the school. The part-time nursery was identified as a major strength of the school. The reception classes now provide the strength in provision. The school has plans to relocate the nursery and reception classes more closely together, a move which is designed to allow the sharing of good practice between the early years classes, particularly in the planning where reception class planning is more comprehensive than that in the nursery.

Personal and social development

60. Children make good progress and are broadly in line with expectations for children of this age by the time they are five. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. Learning is satisfactory in the nursery but much better in the reception classes where children are expected to be more independent when working on their own. In both the nursery and the reception classes the children are happy to come to school. They quickly make a choice of activity in the nursery or eagerly join the circle for sharing ideas and register in the reception class. However, there are a number who still find it extremely difficult to come to terms with the routines of sitting still and listening or standing ready to move around the building. They are learning to share, but quite a number of the youngest children still have some problems sharing the three watering cans in the water or taking turns on the slide. Many find it very difficult to sustain their concentration for any reasonable length of time in both nursery and in the reception class. In the nursery the best results are achieved when working with an adult although sometimes the adults spoke for too long and the children lost concentration. In both nursery and reception classes the more practical activities hold children's attention better. Children clearly make progress when playing at being in a café or a garage. Older children were better able to play very well together whereas the younger ones found it much harder. Staff work hard to help the children understand what is appropriate behaviour and it is clear that most children have an understanding of what is right and wrong and increasingly act on this understanding. Teachers plan the work carefully in a way that enables children to behave well most of the time and children's respect and care of living things and of the resources they use develops well. Opportunities such as snack time are not always used to encourage initiative and responsibility and consequently children's social and personal development is not as advanced as it could be. The reception children experience a stimulating and relevant introduction to other faiths and cultures. In both year groups, staff work systematically to develop children's independence in dress and in their personal hygiene.

Language and Literacy

61. By the age of five standards in language and literacy are slightly below those expected nationally. The children have made good progress, from a very low starting point, as a result of the good teaching they have received. The careful structure ensures that children learn the basic skills in language. In both age groups, many children are confident talkers although their speech is not always very clear and the range of vocabulary is often limited. All the staff work consistently to introduce and develop a much wider range. Older children have many opportunities to relate their own experiences to stories and investigations, making use of their newly acquired vocabulary to express their ideas and explore meanings. The role-play amongst the older children is sustained and extended through their use of language. In all the classes children enjoy stories and listen increasingly carefully. They appreciate books, hold them correctly and interpret the illustrations distinguishing between these and text. The older children have a reasonable recognition of individual letters and their sounds but many are still struggling to use this knowledge in a meaningful way in their exploration of the most frequently used, simple words. The planning for literacy lessons in the two reception classes provides a good context for exploring elements such as rhyme and noting patterns in words and syllables. From an early age, children see adults writing. They tell their nursery teacher what news to write each day and this helps them understand the purposes of writing. They experiment with early writing in the café area, for example. In the reception classes opportunities continue for children to write independently as well as in more structured, but engaging tasks. Progress in this aspect has quickened recently owing to the influence of the national literacy strategy.

Mathematics

62. Children are on course to reach the expected levels by the age of five as a result of the good teaching they receive, particularly in the reception classes. They make good progress. In both age groups there are many opportunities to count and in the reception classes the recognition and sequencing of numbers is a daily focal point. The teachers are very effective in finding many practical and exciting activities for class, group and individual work that consolidate their knowledge of number, recognition of money and an understanding of its numerical value. For example, the older reception children were able to work through a sequence of practical steps to establish the equivalence of five 1p coins to that of a 5p coin. The work followed on from their enjoyment of the rhyme 'Five Currant Buns'. Teachers ensure that the mathematical experiences are practical and involve discussion. Children are encouraged to explain their thinking and the strategies they use. The children can solve simple everyday problems and have begun the process of addition and subtraction. In both nursery and reception year groups mathematical language is used well, patterns are explored and shapes and other materials compared, sorted and sequenced. The children enjoy their mathematics and many of the small group activities motivate the children to concentrate and persevere. The reception staff plan in very great detail, making careful provision to extend children according to their different levels of understanding. They assess the outcomes and keep careful records, which further enhances the next stage of planning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

63. Children explore new science, geographical and historical ideas but their attainment is still slightly below that expected of children on reaching the age of five. The quality of teaching is particularly good in the reception classes, generally good overall. Children under five have a lot of opportunities for discussion and investigation and they make good progress from quite low levels of understanding. For example, the nursery children are exploring a theme about gardens. This involved the children in much questioning, discussion and understanding about gardens and

how different people have created them. In both age groups they put forward their own ideas and check them. Teachers celebrate their efforts by presenting their work very effectively on the walls or in carefully made, attractive books. In the reception classes this work is then used as a teaching resource, giving the children a chance to think further about what they have found out. The staff in the reception classes are particularly skilfully at linking the areas of learning. Thus 'The Train Ride' was the starting point for drawing, model making, and a source for inspiration for the use of a graphics programme on the computer, as well as the enjoyment of language. This approach enables children to explore an idea from many different perspectives and adds greatly to the overall richness of their experience.

Physical development

64. Children make satisfactory progress and attainment is broadly in line with expected levels by the age of five. They have access to some climbing equipment in the indoor hall, but the opportunities for regular, challenging outdoor play are limited for nursery children and even more so for those in the reception. This lack of outdoor play causes attainment to be lower than it could be. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but lessons are limited by the resources available. The outdoor space is attractive, but small and not very practical for managing wheeled toys and developing an awareness of space. The climbing frame has to be set out with safety mats. This is not on offer in the afternoon when the reception children use the area for their playtime. Thus whilst children are taught to move, using their bodies appropriately in the hall sessions and in music and movement, their progress is limited by physical constraints. They have some experience of balancing and climbing equipment and the opportunity to think carefully about how to develop skills with small equipment. In the reception classes, the programme and planning for this aspect of work is far more detailed, building on the systematic acquisition of skills. In both age groups the staff work hard with the children in order to teach them how to hold and use a range of tools appropriately. In this aspect children make good progress. In the reception classes, in particular, they use and handle materials very well, often at a level beyond that expected for their age.

Creative development

65. Good teaching ensures that children have many opportunities to express themselves creatively and that their levels of achievement are good. Many are on course to achieve a level beyond that expected of children at the age of five. The strength of the provision and in the achievements is in children's graphic and painting skills. Nursery children were fascinated with their observation and study of fish and extended this with some extremely fine observational drawing of a dead fish. Reception children have studied book illustrations with care and looked carefully at a model engine. They have learnt to reflect on the significant part of the object that they are going to draw and discussed with the class teacher how to improve their drawings further. Children enjoy music. Different types of music, played at key times of the session, signal clear up time in the nursery. They are learning a number of songs and are increasingly able to hold a tune. This accomplishment is extended in the reception classes with well-planned programmes encouraging a growing understanding and appreciation of music, with attention to rhythm, pitch and ways of using instruments. The children are confident about the range of materials at their disposal. They are imaginative and creative in their use. The quality of their role-play is good. The reception children collaborate and together build up imaginative, but also highly realistic, scenarios.

ENGLISH

66. Standards achieved by 11-year-olds in the national tests were:
- well below the national average in 1999;
 - below the average in comparison to similar schools in 1999; and
 - well below the national average over the last four years.

67. Factors to be taken into account are:
- the larger than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs;
 - the nature of their learning difficulties; and
 - the underachievement of boys.
68. Standards in writing are now similar to the national average for mainstream pupils as a consequence of:
- consistent and effective implementation of the literacy hour by all teachers;
 - effective analysis of pupils' writing;
 - very good teaching in Year 6; but
 - standards are still low in reading.
69. Standards achieved by seven-year-olds in the national tests were:
- below the national average in writing and well below it in reading in 1999;
 - above the average in writing in comparison to similar schools and below it in reading in 1999; and
 - well below the national average over the last four years, but with good improvement made in 1999.
70. Factors to be taken into account are:
- the attainment on entry to school which is well below expectations;
 - the high numbers of pupils that gain low levels and the few who reach higher levels influence the school's overall results;
 - attainment, in the past, which has been better in reading than in writing; and
 - the underachievement of boys.
71. Standards have been improved in writing as a result of:
- analysis of pupils' writing; and
 - the emphasis on imaginative and well-structured pieces of writing in Year 2.
72. Pupils generally have satisfactory speaking and listening skills. From the earliest age, they listen carefully to the teacher and each other. Their rate of progress is good given the generally low attainment on entry to the school. For instance, pupils in the Year 1/2 class listened attentively to rhyming words and successfully named others. A minority of pupils listen well, but contribute little. Pupils respond more effectively when teachers ask challenging questions of individual children. By the end of the Year 2, most children talk competently in an informal setting. For example, they describe their weekend news enthusiastically. Pupils in the juniors continue to make good progress. They listen respectfully to the views of others and show developing confidence as they describe their work. Pupils in Year 4 explained themselves well when giving reasons for a child's unhappiness in the 'Gregory C' story. By Year 6 the majority of pupils speak competently and converse appropriately in a relaxed way. They frequently use the correct terminology when talking about their work. For example, when discussing their design and technology work pupils were able to outline the processes they had used for building a shelter, using words such as re-enforcement and structure. They explained themselves well because teachers encouraged extended answers to questions.
73. Standards in reading for Year 2 and Year 6 are below average. The youngest children enjoy books and have positive attitudes to reading. Their ability to recognise a range of common words found in their books, and use of initial letter sounds is under-developed. Overall, they rely heavily on memory when reading. Lack of regular opportunities for children to learn new words

and letter sounds in a planned way for six-year-olds, is limiting their progress. Progress is slower in Year 1, but as pupils progress through the infants, they gain confidence when tackling new words and begin to use sound and letter relationships. By the age of seven, the highest-attaining pupils are confident readers. They read fluently and accurately and have satisfactory strategies for decoding words. The majority of pupils can read simple texts using a range of strategies such as letter sounds and picture clues, but struggle with comprehension of the text overall. They show interest and enjoyment when reading. Their inability to read all words accurately and fluently, to show an understanding of the main point of the story, and to locate information in books, precludes them from achieving the higher levels. Below average standards continue in most year groups in the juniors. Satisfactory standards were seen in Year 5 where pupils read fluently and were able to locate information within the text. High achieving pupils in all year groups are well motivated. They enjoy reading and frequently read at home. However, pupils of average and below average attainment are often reluctant to read; this affects their fluency and rate of progress. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop research skills and there is a lack of consistency in the development of pupils' library skills. Very few non-fiction books are available for use by younger pupils. Opportunities for pupils to find out information using computers are often missed.

74. The standard of writing of seven-year-olds is low, but by 11 pupils reach satisfactory standards. Older pupils have made very good progress as a result of some very good teaching. The attainment of boys has been improved by the identification of boys who could do better and the special attention given to them as a result of the school's project in this area instigated by the deputy headteacher. Seven-year-olds write for a range of purposes such as a diary, making comparisons, poetry writing and gathering information. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote about tadpoles, and made books about the life cycle of a frog. They used contents pages, title and author. In a religious education lesson, high attaining Year 2 pupils successfully sequenced a story about the Good Samaritan, extending ideas logically, selecting suitable, and sometimes adventurous, vocabulary. Throughout the infants, pupils make good progress in developing the length and structure of their stories and in their choice of more interesting words. The majority use letter sounds well to build up longer words, adding interest to their work. Pupils' ability to reach the higher levels by the age of seven is hindered by slow progress, in the infants, in the use of simple punctuation and their limited use of joined-up writing. A strength of the junior curriculum is the way in which pupils use writing to support their work in other subjects. For instance, Year 5/6 pupils satisfactorily wrote up science experiments on forces, showing good detail and organisation of information. Year 5 pupils produced well-illustrated word-processed limericks, and made good attempts at persuasive writing for and against school uniform. Pupils are taught specific skills such as note-taking and skimming and scanning. This good range of writing experiences for different purposes, practised regularly, results in pupils making good progress overall, and is the reason why attainment in writing is better than in reading by the age of 11. Whilst pupils in all classes regularly practise spellings, they frequently spell words wrongly in their writing, even when copying from the teacher's writing or a book.
75. Pupils with special educational needs in the juniors make good progress in reading and writing because of the good support they receive from the special needs teachers. Provision includes a good range of interesting, challenging activities and well-structured resources. Teachers know the pupils well and have a clear understanding of their needs. The support for pupils with special educational needs in the infants, whilst satisfactory overall, is less well planned, resulting in some pupils receiving limited support on some occasions.
76. The quality of teaching is good in the juniors and satisfactory in the infants. It is very good in Years 5 and 6, good in Year 2 and satisfactory in Year 1. Pupils make slower progress in Year

1 when compared to the rapid progress made in Year 2. The improvement in the quality of teaching, particularly in the juniors, has resulted in the good progress made in English since the time of the last report. A strength of the work throughout the school is the comprehensive teachers' planning that takes place based upon the national literacy strategy. Teachers are clear about what they are teaching and the results they wish to achieve, and most convey these aims effectively to their pupils. The good and very good lessons are characterised by effective introductions which engage pupils' interest, the maintenance of a brisk pace, high expectations, and good subject knowledge. Well-established routines give pupils confidence. Skilful questioning values pupils' contributions, checks their understanding and challenges those of different attainment to think clearly about the text. Clear instructions ensure that pupils mostly work purposefully, and the use of good quality, targeted resources gives pupils good support. Good classroom management creates a positive atmosphere in which pupils work hard. For example, in a very good literacy hour in Year 5/6, the teacher gave very effective recap on the previous lesson, and used relevant real-life experiences to capture the pupils' interest. This ensured a good start to the lesson. There was mutual respect between teacher and pupils that resulted in a good ethos and a very productive working environment. Realistic time scales frequently re-enforced, together with high expectations, resulted in pupils working with industry and completing the task very well. In some lessons, pupils work well in the teacher-led introductions, but do not concentrate or work hard in group activities. The quality of assessment of pupils' work varies between classes. Where assessment is planned, pupils' progress is also good. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher's planning included assessment of the guided reading activity, and the speaking and listening elements, thus ensuring first-hand information to guide future planning. Marking is a weakness and is not consistently carried out in accordance with the policy. It is often limited to a tick and praise with no suggestions for improvement. The school has begun to use a system of target setting that is inconsistently used. Where targets are reviewed regularly, pupils know how to improve their work, and make good progress.

77. The provision of classes for 11-year-olds to boost the attainment of pupils is effective. These classes are likely to help the school meet its own targets for English. The management of the subject is good overall. Much work has been done to analyse the under-achievement of boys, and their standards are rising. Despite the newly created computer suite, pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to use word-processing software and desk-top publishing techniques to improve their writing. Homework is having an effect on standards in some classes, but it is not consistently applied across the school, in line with the school's policy, and therefore the overall effect is not as good as it could be.

MATHEMATICS

78. Standards achieved by eleven-year-olds in the national tests were:
- below the national average in 1999;
 - above the average in comparison to similar schools in 1999; and
 - well below the national average over the last four years.
79. Factors to be taken into account are:
- the larger than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs; and
 - the nature of their learning difficulties.
80. Standards are now above the national average for 11-year-olds in mainstream classes as a consequence of:
- consistent and effective implementation of the national numeracy strategy by all teachers; and

- very good teaching in Year 6.

81. Standards achieved by seven-year-olds in the national tests were:
- well below the national average in 1999;
 - below the average reached by pupils in similar schools in 1999; and
 - well below the national average over the last four years.
82. Factors that influence standards are:
- the attainment on entry to school which is well below expectations;
 - the high numbers of pupils that gain low levels and the few who reach higher levels influence the school's overall results; and
 - the underachievement of boys.
83. By the age of seven the performance data and a range of evidence, including findings from this inspection, firmly show that, despite what was reported at the time of the last inspection, standards are below the national average though they have improved this year since the introduction of the national numeracy strategy.
84. The school's implementation of the national numeracy strategy has been good and this is contributing to the very good progress made, particularly in the juniors. The successful introduction of this has ensured that there is now a complete scheme of work for the whole school which is an improvement since the last inspection. The rate of progress made in the infants is good in Year 2, but slower in Year 1 where a lack of challenge in lessons is sometimes evident. The attainment of pupils in the juniors is being effectively improved through placing pupils in classes with others of similar attainment and by providing after school classes where pupils can practise work that they have not mastered.
85. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They are generally well supported by class teachers and classroom assistants and tasks are often matched to their learning needs.
86. By the age of seven pupils' attainment in number and algebra is in line with expected levels. Pupils can order numbers to 100 with the ability to count on and count back. They sequence numbers well and have a good understanding of place value of tens and units, but pupils of average attainment sometimes lack understanding of division by ten and multiplication by two and five. Digital timing causes problems for many and less able pupils struggle to write numbers correctly. When handling data, objects and basic information are ordered and sequenced with understanding, but there is insufficient emphasis on recording findings in a variety of ways. However, the oldest pupils in the infants confidently sort objects and numbers and record their results in diagrammatic form. Numeracy is naturally integrated into many class activities. In physical education, for example, pupils estimate distances in games and emphasise shape in gymnastics and dance. They use appropriate mathematical terms when discussing their work, but do not yet have sufficient approaches to solving problems and overcoming difficulties. However, standards are too low in shape, space and measures and there has been insufficient improvement made in these aspects since the last inspection.
87. By the age of 11 pupils are confident at working in both imperial and metric units. Their understanding of decimals, fractions and percentages is good and work on angles is developing well. Pupils can solve problems involving money well. Most pupils are familiar with a range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, their names and their properties. They are able to solve problems using the four rules of arithmetic. Since the last inspection there has been a greater focus on data collection and analysis in order to produce spreadsheets. Pupils are confident when it comes to explaining what they are doing and this is the result of careful,

systematic teaching. There is good understanding of measuring angles, calculating area and finding perimeter. Pupils show an increasing confidence as soon as they enter the juniors and they are not afraid to ask for help when it is required. They also take note of and act upon teachers' comments.

88. The quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory in the infants and is good in the juniors. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection, particularly for the older pupils. In the infants, teachers' planning and preparation of resources is usually good. Pupils are well controlled and teachers help pupils to solve mathematical problems in a systematic way. This is a strength of the teaching in Year 2 where pupils are given a range of methods to use when solving problems. This has a positive effect on their confidence. When pupils are engaged in their own investigations there is a marked improvement in their enthusiasm for their work. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, in the infants, leads to inappropriate behaviour and pupils losing concentration. The over-dependence on worksheets deprives pupils of becoming familiar with procedures for correctly setting out their work, since this is almost always done for them.
89. In the juniors there is a high level of commitment to raising standards. Teachers' secure subject knowledge and clear delivery enables pupils to have a good understanding of what they have to do. Many transfer their own enthusiasm to their pupils and as a result pupils respond well and enjoy their work. Overall, teachers' lesson planning is good and takes account of the varied needs of pupils, but there is no written focus which clearly identifies targets for those pupils with individual education plans.
90. Teachers use both formal and informal assessment in mathematics to decide class groupings.
91. Formal procedures, whereby assessment is carried out at the end of each unit of work, is good and is well recorded. It clearly identifies pupils who have difficulties and those who do very well. This information is used when teachers are planning the next series of lessons. New class assessment records have recently been introduced though are not yet used with any degree of consistency. Marking in pupils' books is inconsistent with few teachers giving clear indications of how pupils might improve. This was an issue at the last inspection and is one area that has not been satisfactorily dealt with. When homework is set it generally makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress.
92. Co-ordination of mathematics is satisfactory and a lot of work has gone into raising standards. Computers are used well, in a limited way, to teach mathematics. For example, Year 6 pupils are using formulae when producing spreadsheets. However, there is not yet enough use of computers for mathematics. Teaching has been well monitored by the headteacher, but the co-ordinator has not yet had the chance to see teaching in progress.

SCIENCE

93. Standards achieved by 11-year-olds in the national tests were:
 - well below the national average in 1999;
 - average in comparison to similar schools in 1999; and well below the national average over the last four years.
94. Factors to be taken into account are:
 - the larger than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs; and
 - the nature of their learning difficulties.

95. Standards are now about average for 11-year-olds in mainstream classes as a consequence of:
- consistent and effective teaching in the juniors; and
 - some excellent teaching in Year 6.
96. Standards achieved by seven-year-olds as assessed by their teachers were:
- well below the national average in 1999; but
 - current attainment of seven-year-olds is below average.
97. Factors that influence standards are:
- the attainment on entry to school which is well below expectations;
 - the high numbers of pupils that gain low levels and the few who reach higher levels influence the school's overall results; and
 - the underachievement of boys.
98. The strength that lies behind pupils' current attainment in Year 6 is the way that they have systematically developed their knowledge, skills and understanding and their breadth of scientific vocabulary. Teachers have managed the learning well. For example, in learning about the major organs of the human body, pupils can explain their function very well. They also have a clear understanding of solids, liquids and gases. Moreover, they are able to predict what might happen in a fair test and offer sensible explanations at the end.
99. Pupils have achieved well throughout the juniors to reach these standards by Year 6. Scientific learning is managed well in each class so that pupils build up their knowledge in a coherent fashion. For example, in Year 3 pupils make good progress in finding out about those electric circuits that will work and those that will not and in Year 4 pupils have successfully made circuits with bulbs in series and in parallel.
100. The current attainment of seven-year-olds is below average, but the achievement of the oldest pupils is good and attainment in some lessons is at the average. For example, they have gained a sound knowledge of what is likely to happen when mixing ingredients together in food preparation. They use the correct words to describe the changes they observe and can talk well about changes that can be reversed and those that cannot. Unlike previous years when the number of pupils achieving beyond the national expectation was small, this year there are a few pupils who are working at the higher levels. They can talk about fair testing, showing success in the skills of observing and recording. This improvement in standards has been brought about by more systematic teaching in Year 2.
101. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They can also describe simple scientific ideas and can record the changes that they observe. They make a good effort to record their results in sentences when required.
102. Generally, pupils respond well and attitudes to learning are positive. For example, in the Year 5 and 6 lesson on solutions there was an atmosphere of complete dedication and hard work in the classroom. It is not always as excellent as this and in some cases pupils call out answers in their enthusiasm or their attention drifts a little when they are conducting their tests.
103. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors. This represents an improvement since the last report. Teaching in the juniors is far more consistent and organised across the classes. All teachers make good use of the national scheme of work to guide their lessons, but some methods of teaching it are more successful than others. For example, pupils' achievement in Years 3 and 4 is greatly enhanced by the very purposeful teaching they receive.

Work is presented very well to the pupils and pupils' work is marked very well with useful pointers about how it could be improved. Teachers in these classes ask pupils supplementary questions about their work and often make reference to the original purpose of the lesson in order to concentrate pupils' thinking. Progress is not so consistent in the infants. For example, in one, generally satisfactory, lesson for six-year-olds on forces, pupils' achievements were not so secure as they are in Year 2 because the teacher misjudged the time and did not allow enough time for all pupils to complete the written work. Despite the teacher's lively questioning techniques, pupils sat around the teacher for too long and several lost interest.

104. The subject co-ordinator has a clear idea of what needs to be improved in the subject and the school's development plan contains measures to tackle these issues. Teachers' plans and pupils' work are well monitored, but the co-ordinator has not yet seen lessons being taught, so issues about the differences in teaching style, having an impact on pupils' performance and achievements, have not yet been recognised. Insufficient use is made of computers in scientific learning.

ART

105. By the time they leave school pupils have made very good progress and reached standards well above those typically expected for their age. Standards and the quality of teaching have been maintained since the last report in the infants, but drastically improved in the juniors to a point where it has overtaken the results being achieved by seven-year-olds. Teaching is now good in the infants and very good in the juniors and it has a strong influence on the standards achieved. As a result of the teaching, pupils are interested in art lessons. They listen carefully to the class teacher and behave well. They talk happily while they work, discussing difficulties and offering suggestions to each other for improvement.
106. By seven pupils have made good progress and their standards are above those typical for their age. They reach particularly high standards in drawing. Successful teaching has introduced the pupils to the sketches of Leonardo Da Vinci. Pupils have studied these in depth and they can produce their own sketches using his pencil techniques. They have acquired a feel for bold, definite lines as well as fine, wispy ones. They can also smudge their lines to good effect, giving the impression of depth and tone. They can produce large-scale three-dimensional pieces like the very colourful Chinese dragon and can make successful artwork using computer software.
107. By the time pupils are 11, standards are very high, in particular in painting, drawing and three-dimensional work. The highest standards are achieved when pupils make full use of the stimulus given by the works of well-known modern artists, for example Mondrian and Picasso. Some Year 6 pupils have studied a painting by Kandinsky and produced their own large-scale work based on his ideas using three-dimensional techniques as well. They took a digital photograph of their work to place in their sketchbooks and then wrote about the production of their piece. Teaching has a great impact on learning across the classes in the juniors. Teachers do not necessarily know more about art, but they are successfully using the school's scheme of work and the new national guidance on art to create purposeful and effective lessons. For example, older pupils tried out ideas associated with Mondrian's thoughts on sketching, when drawing trees in the school grounds. Teaching was successful because it helped the pupils to concentrate on the shapes between the branches and not worry about the literal interpretation of what they saw.
108. Pupils' achievements are very good in the juniors. They succeed very well whatever their previous attainment has been. For example, pupils in the two special needs classes have

undertaken large-scale leaf printing, using leaf shapes made out of paper straws. This work is based on the material designs of William Morris and was part of their Victorian project in history. The results are bold and colourful showing good levels of control. Achievement is good in the infants particularly for higher attainers in Year 2 where they not only use their sketchbooks effectively to record ideas in visual form, but also to write about the artist's work, communicating their likes and dislikes related to that style of art. Pupils' achievements in Year 1 are lower when compared to the high levels attained in the reception classes. It is not until pupils are in Year 2 that they start to make rapid progress again. Teaching is less successful for the six-year-olds because art work takes a lower profile in the classroom and there is no evidence that sketchbooks play a central role in the production of work. The pupils have produced some effective interpretations of water lilies in the style of Monet, but their work shows that they have not been taught about his use of colour daubing to create the visual effect. The better teaching in the infants is in Year 2 where pupils receive good direct assistance when producing sketches or working with clay. Resources, in the form of artists' work, are very well gathered and presented and pupils' work is well developed through the use of sketchbooks.

109. The subject co-ordinator has produced a policy of good quality that is closely linked to the excellent published scheme of work. These influence very positively the work that takes place. The co-ordinator is aware that assessment and the use of information technology are areas for further development. Art work makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development. The visual environment created within the school has a powerful impact on the kind of work that takes place and the impression that visitors receive. The school also makes very good use of volunteer parents to help with the teaching.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most aspects of the subject throughout the school and standards are typical for their ages. Standards have improved for older pupils and have been maintained for younger pupils since the last inspection. However, pupils' achievement is limited in controlling the movement of different models that they have made. Teaching overall is satisfactory and pupils achieve satisfactorily, given the somewhat limited range of skills that can be applied in the time allowed, the lack of evaluation by the pupils in the infants, and the limited opportunities to control models that pupils have made in the juniors.
111. Pupils in the infants are taught to join materials using a variety of fixings such as glue and tape. For example, Year 1 pupils applied paper hinges to make simple door openings and successfully cut out windows from within a piece of card when making cardboard carton houses. They use construction kits effectively to make a range of models. By the end of Year 2, teaching has ensured that pupils are able to follow simple instructions. For instance, they successfully used a work sheet when making lanterns and money envelopes in their topic on the Chinese New Year. They are developing an appropriate range of skills. They are able to successfully draw round a template, cut out circles from within a piece of card and use techniques such as curling to add interest to paper sculpture. However, teaching provides too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and say how it could be improved.
112. By the age of 11, pupils are able to talk about their work with confidence. They have a good vocabulary to describe the design process, using words such as structures, tessellations, and strengthening materials. They talked knowledgeably about the items they had previously made and ways in which these were adapted. For instance, when making a musical instrument using a frame and bottles containing differing quantities of liquid, one boy described how he had adapted his design by strengthening the structure. Some good teaching of older pupils occurs

where teachers plan effectively and exhibit good organisational skills. In these lessons, teachers provide activities that are entirely relevant so that pupils are able to add their ideas and relate their work to previous experiences. For example, pupils in Year 4 were engaged in studying pop-up mechanisms in order to make their own books. They were able to talk about their ideas confidently and made suitable suggestions of how to extend their design intentions. Many were thinking how their initial ideas could be refined to give a satisfactory finished product. Teachers often show a good subject knowledge. Discussions with pupils are well led, and effective questioning enables pupils to refine their ideas. In the best lessons, pupils concentrate well and persevere with their tasks. They generate good ideas, and show positive attitudes to their learning when evaluating their work. For example in one lesson, the sandwiches designed by the pupils were to be made and eaten in a future lesson. These Year 3 pupils were able to evaluate their favourite type of sandwich filling, and gave marks out of ten for appearance, taste, smell and texture.

113. The long-term plan is in the initial stages of development. It consists of some aspects of a nationally published scheme, together with teachers' suggestions for work to be covered. This results in a plan containing *ad hoc* provision rather than the systematic development of a range of skills. There is, for example, very limited coverage of food technology and of controlling the movement of models and an over-emphasis on construction work. Three design projects are planned for each year group. Due to the limited time available to the subject, some of the work planned is not happening in a few junior classes. This results in a curriculum that does not have proper balance. However, pupils do make good progress in the work undertaken. Additionally, the long-term plan caters for individual year groups and does not address the issue of mixed-age group classes. Assessment opportunities are not identified, resulting in a lack of information of what pupils know and can do when they transfer to the next class. The co-ordinator is aware that the curriculum needs attention.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

114. Standards in geography and history are typical for pupils aged seven and 11. This is an improvement since the last inspection for the older pupils because standards were low in both subjects. The teaching of geography and history is satisfactory with some good features.
115. In history seven-year-olds use investigative skills well to find out about a range of characters from times gone by such as Guy Fawkes. They increase their understanding of the passage of time and how people lived many years ago. In geography much of the study, for the infants, revolves around exploring and thinking about the area near to the school. Pupils are helped to identify key features, think about the functions of buildings and the relationship between places as they develop their mapping skills. Year 2 pupils have extended their map interpretation skills further by using an atlas and globe. They were interested in places in Africa after a visiting speaker introduced them to South African music, explored traditional art through the patterns on fabrics and shared African stories with them. Now they can name and identify these places on maps. This interest in places, and an increased awareness of their similarities and differences is greatly enhanced by the journeys of Barnaby Bear, who accompanies them on their holidays. Pupils collect pictures and information and write about the places visited on his behalf. These journeys are presented as attractive books. This personal approach enables staff to begin to teach pupils how to use first-hand and secondary sources.
116. Much of the approach to geography in the juniors revolves around the careful weighing up of evidence found from books, photos and videos. For example, pupils seek to identify the similarities and differences between an Indian and an English village. The emphasis is on why

these differences occur. The pupils are learning to ask geographical questions, for example, on world climate and the water cycle. Year 6 pupils frequently work at their geography in a collaborative way. They are currently involved in a study of rivers. They found information from books, listened carefully to the class teacher's explanations and got to grips with the technical vocabulary related to the description of a river's particular structure and development. For the most part their hypotheses were well substantiated. In history pupils apply their investigative skills well when they sequence events and discuss invaders and settlers such as the Vikings and Romans.

117. Some good teaching of history occurs in the special needs unit where work is skilfully adapted and made very practical for these pupils. Teachers in mainstream classes also plan their lessons carefully. It is quite clear what the pupils are expected to learn and how the lesson will be organised. Where the lessons are good the pace is brisk, but with time for pupils to recall and review their previous knowledge. They are presented with a challenge, expected to think for themselves and shown how to use source material thoughtfully. Most lessons end with a review of the understanding acquired and pointers towards the next stage in the topic. The lessons that are only satisfactory, lack the kind of pace and challenge found in the more successful lessons.
118. Since the previous inspection, teachers have adopted the new national guidance for these subjects. Resources to support this work are limited, but the co-ordinators have ordered what is needed. For example in geography, good local maps and sets of photographs are the first priority. The school values the potential of field trips and makes effective use of the area around the school. Pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 have a chance to go on a residential trip to Menai. This provides useful opportunities for them to extend their geographical knowledge, particularly of a contrasting locality. It enhances pupils' learning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

119. Standards achieved at the end of Year 6 are below those expected of this age group because these pupils, although proficient in several aspects, have not experienced all the required elements to an appropriate depth during their time in school. The standards of seven-year-olds reach the expected levels. Although the school has not eradicated the weaknesses identified at the last inspection, it has made good progress in addressing the problems. The school has recently invested heavily in resources, establishing in the last three months an extremely effective suite of computers. The software is carefully selected and in most cases easily accessible. The older pupils have made good progress since they have had access to the teaching suite, benefiting from much more frequent access.
120. By the age of seven, pupils achieve satisfactorily. They are beginning to write text for different purposes using the space bar, shift key and delete function appropriately. Some pupils are gaining confidence in using the mouse to move the cursor in order to make simple changes. Many pupils can write their own programme instructions so that they have a frame of reference to return to if they get stuck. Pupils in Year 2 are confident in their knowledge of how to program a robotic toy. They were so enthusiastic at the challenge to write their own simple programs, check and modify them, that they were loath to stop to go to a physical education lesson. Throughout the infants pupils are introduced to various graphics programs and are taught from the start how to access programs and follow simple instructions for printing. The progress is quick when pupils have regular access to computers.
121. By the age of 11, pupils have made up some of the missing ground. They are competent in using spreadsheets and are able to work out what should be placed in each column and the

number of columns needed. They applied this knowledge very successfully to the calculation of perimeters and then began to consider areas of rectangles. The pupils were able to use their mathematical understanding to appreciate the value of applying formulae in order to achieve totals quickly. They were confident in applying the newly learnt routines and, working in pairs, were able to look back and spot where they had entered something incorrectly, if the answer arrived at seemed inappropriate. As a result of everyone regularly using the program, the progress made and the learning accomplished was good. Pupils greatly appreciated the efficiency and power of the machines.

122. The e-mail link is literally just getting going. The school does not have an adequate supply of CD-ROMs and because of its very recent installation, pupils have not yet become confident and efficient in accessing information from the web. Year 6 pupils have not had appropriate experience of control technology or adequate opportunity to use programs designed to develop decision making. They do not use word-processing as a regular tool for learning in their English work.
123. The quality of teaching is sound overall. It is good when lessons are taught in the suite or when time is set aside to teach in the classroom. In these instances planning is good and learning objectives are clear. As a consequence pupils make good progress. There are shortcomings in the teaching at other times because computers are not used regularly enough during other subject lessons and on the majority of occasions computers remain unused. Thus opportunities, for example, to develop familiarity and speed with the keyboard and the use of functions such as cut and paste or spell checking are not maximised. This results in pupils making less progress than they could. It also means that skills acquired are quickly forgotten through lack of practice. The pupils' enthusiasm for the computer and their rapid development of skills, when they have regular access, are not yet harnessed as a tool for learning across the whole curriculum. Throughout the school staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs are given appropriate support, often from other children.
124. The enthusiasm and knowledge of the recently appointed co-ordinator is the key factor in enabling pupils and staff to make the strides forward of late. A focus on staff training, immediate support to colleagues and a well thought-out scheme of work, is impacting positively on pupils' progress. The flourishing computer club is also playing a significant part. The school has yet to develop a system for assessing and recording pupils' achievements. Though the quality of teaching has been monitored it has not been sufficiently rigorous to identify the under-use of computers in the classroom.

MUSIC

125. Standards of pupils' attainment are typical for their age at seven and 11. They have a positive approach to the subject, particularly the appreciation and composition elements. The improvements made in this subject since the last inspection are good.
126. Pupils in the infants enjoy a well thought-out programme of musical experiences and make good progress in their learning. They are helped to listen and respond to music of many different types and representative of other cultures. The good teaching shows them how to begin to understand particular elements such as pitch, by identifying high and low notes, and tempo, by distinguishing fast and slow from the dynamics, relating to loud and quiet. Pupils are able to extend this initial introduction to new ideas through a range of opportunities to compose. They perform both their own efforts and those of others. This well-balanced mix enables pupils to increase their understanding by applying their knowledge in different contexts. For example, the

Year 2 pupils began a lesson in which the teacher challenged them to compose, initially by adding and sustaining sounds to create an accompaniment to a very short descriptive paragraph. At first, they did not understand that, cued in by a key word, they should begin to make their 'given sound' and continue to sustain it until the last words of the paragraph had been spoken. So at the start, the accompanying sound was thin and disjointed. Skilful teaching helped pupils listen to themselves, questioned further what they needed to do and as a result they were quite thrilled when they heard the richness of what they were creating. At other times infants make music with a range of instruments, including those from other cultures. All pupils have many opportunities to sing together. In their class music lesson and in the singing practices, in the hall, pupils are enthusiastic, attentive and willing to expend effort to achieve good outcomes. They achieve tuneful and expressive results and sing with real feeling.

127. This well-balanced approach to developing an understanding and appreciation of music is continued in the juniors. The teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers plan carefully, and share with the pupils exactly what they want them to achieve in the lesson, ensuring that they understand and appreciate how this might be done. Pupils enjoy discussing music from different cultures. This knowledge helps them with their composition, which they tackle with interest and confidence. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed the chance to sing some popular animal songs again. They were then set a challenge to create a musical accompaniment, composed by themselves for performance to the whole school at a later date. First they had to decide which songs might be the best, and then considered a range of untuned percussion instruments, evaluating the type and quality of sound that they would produce, before deciding on three or four that they felt were the most appropriate. This task drew together a number of the elements that they had been studying over the previous two terms. Good teaching enabled them to recall and reflect on previous knowledge and skills and through careful questioning, help them see how they could use these aspects in new contexts. They listened carefully to the effects that they managed to achieve towards the end of the lesson, and were happy to consider ways of modifying this to make it better still. At other times pupils recalled a story and listened to a previously unknown piece of music, stopping to reflect on the mood, the instruments used and considering whether they could associate the music with the events in the story.
128. The co-ordinator is updating the scheme of work. A system for assessing and recording pupils' progress is not in use. The open-plan nature of the school restricts what can be undertaken. The school does not have generous stocks of musical equipment but the money allocated has been carefully prioritised and spent wisely. The pupils enjoy the benefits of listening to different types of music groups that visit the school, and have some opportunity for peripatetic music lessons. They greatly enjoy performing in both the local music festival and in concerts at the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Standards throughout the school are above levels typical for the seven- and 11-year-olds. Standards have been maintained in the infants and have improved in the juniors since the previous inspection. By the time pupils are 11, they have experienced a wide range of activities, with games, in particular, being a strong feature of their work. They have developed good hand and eye co-ordination and are able to field balls that are both coming towards them and going away from them. The throwing skills of boys are particularly good despite the tendency for them to deteriorate initially when the pressure of competition is applied. Pupils have learnt to swim from an early age and the majority are competent swimmers on their fronts and on their backs. Most have good stamina in this activity and can swim much further than the

recommended 25 metres. By the age of seven pupils have acquired good skills in gymnastics and are able to work at a variety of levels on apparatus. When working with others they produce interesting group shapes. Most pupils are able to join several movements together to form a sequence, controlling their movements well and demonstrating good shoulder girdle strength. In dance, the majority of pupils respond well to rhythm and interpret movement ideas, such as the flames of a fire, very well. Throughout the school pupils are aware of safety procedures and they understand the importance of warming up and cooling down muscles before and after exercise.

130. There has been good progress in physical education since the last inspection, particularly in relation to pupils with special educational needs. In this subject, those who are not always academically inclined can achieve their full potential. This is largely due to a combination of good teaching and the provision of tasks that enable pupils to work at the level of their own capabilities.
131. Teaching is generally good in the infants where pupils make good progress in their learning and it is very good in the juniors and this is matched by very good learning and a fast rate of progress. Teachers' competence and secure subject knowledge has a good impact on learning and motivates pupils to perform well. All pupils are now given sufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas. Demonstrations are used effectively to develop pupils' awareness and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to observe and comment constructively on the performance of others as well as making judgements about their own efforts. This is helpful in developing their own knowledge and understanding. Most teachers are able to recognise when activities are unsuccessful and are able to make suggestions to put this right, for example by suggesting how a body position can be altered in order that a long throw can be more accurate. Teachers' planning is done well and it clearly outlines what pupils should achieve in a lesson. Pupils' high level of commitment and enjoyment is the result of teachers' enthusiasm. The very good range of resources, together with very good indoor and outdoor facilities, is used well to support pupils' learning in a variety of situations. There is, however, a tendency for teachers to use too much apparatus in gymnastics with younger pupils. The practice of having all the apparatus out at the start of a gymnastics lesson should be discouraged as this is unsafe. It also denies pupils the opportunity to develop their skills in handling apparatus. In all other respects, safety is considered to be of great importance and all teachers emphasise dangers and encourage pupils to be responsible.
132. There is good, experienced leadership in this subject and an appropriate policy is now in place. Full attention is now given to National Curriculum requirements and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' learning experiences continue to be supported by a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities which are well supported by teachers and parents.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. The standard of attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the Chester Agreed Syllabus for pupils of seven and 11. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when standards were below those expected. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress as a result of the satisfactory teaching they receive.
134. Pupils in the infants know about the main festivals and symbols of the Christian faith. They understand the significance of water when used in Christian ceremonies such as baptism. They listen to a range of Bible stories, and sometimes make good connections with their own lives. For example, Year 2 pupils heard the story of the Good Samaritan. They identified the caring

person and thought of ways they could care for others. There is some very good teaching in Year 2. The teacher used her voice very effectively to encourage empathy with the injured person in the story. Pertinent questioning enabled the teacher to assess pupils' understanding of the story and to make links with their own actions. Pupils listened carefully and were able to complete a short piece of writing, enhancing their work in literacy, and showing that they had understood the lesson and the concepts involved. Pupils know about the Jewish faith. Year 1 pupils have made scrolls, and led a class assembly about the Jewish festival of Purim. Teachers make good cross-curricular links which add relevance to the work. For instance, Year 1 pupils, learning about the Jewish faith, made artefacts in design and technology.

135. Pupils in the juniors know about the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism and are developing a satisfactory knowledge about the beliefs, festivals and artefacts important to these faiths. Year 6 pupils speak knowledgeably about the life and work of Buddha. They have studied this religion in good detail, and use words such as re-incarnation with understanding. Throughout the juniors, pupils continue to build up their knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Pupils know about the early church and the significance of John the Baptist. They understand the significance of the major Christian festivals. There are no opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning through visits to places of worship, or by questioning visitors from faith communities. Whilst good comparisons are made when pupils learn about religions and practices, they have few opportunities to learn from religions. Opportunities to learn about the implications of a faith and how this affects some peoples' lives are limited.
136. The school appropriately uses the Chester Agreed Syllabus to provide guidance and the co-ordinator has adapted this to provide a very comprehensive scheme of work. Topics are allocated to the age groups, enabling pupils to learn about religions and to build up knowledge of faiths in a consistent way. Whilst offering good guidance to the non-specialist, the plan does not address the issue of those pupils in mixed-aged classes who may meet the same band of knowledge a second time. However, there are no arrangements for assessment. The time allocated to religious education is below that normally seen in many schools. Teachers sometimes incorporate religious education lessons with the class assembly. This arrangement is less effective, because the boundaries between religious education and worship become less well defined. Resources to support the learning of world religions are barely adequate, and there are too few information books to support pupils' study skills.