

INSPECTION REPORT

THE HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111321

Headteacher: Mrs Linda Mellor

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jan Spooner
18489

Dates of inspection: 19th - 22nd June 2000

Inspection number: 197443

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary-aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cotterill Halton Brook Runcorn Cheshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Barbara Burgess
Date of previous inspection:	15 th September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Names of team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Jan Spooner Registered Inspector	Mathematics Geography Physical education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed Equal opportunities
David Russell Lay Inspector		How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
Pat Richardson Team Inspector	Areas of learning for children under five Science Art Design and technology	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
Kathleen Campbell Team Inspector	English Music Information technology History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School is situated in Halton Brook, Runcorn, in the Borough of Halton. This is in the diocese of Shrewsbury. There are 78 girls and 83 boys at the school, four of whom are still under five. The school is smaller than average.

Children's overall attainment on entry to reception is below average when compared to other children of this age. Levels are below what could be expected, although most children have had pre-school experiences at playgroup, or nursery, before starting school.

The school is situated in an area of considerable disadvantage where there are high levels of social deprivation. The majority of pupils live in local trust housing homes on the neighbouring Halton Brook and Halton Lodge estates, both within the parish boundary. Over half its pupils travel some distance to attend the Holy Spirit School in order to be a part of its Catholic inspired ethos. The school has 70 pupils on the free schools meals register. This is above average. There are 84 pupils on the school's special educational needs register which is well above average. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils with English as an additional language. The school has a reasonably stable population, housed in a very attractive new building.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School is an effective school, with many strengths and few weaknesses. Although standards are below national averages in English and mathematics, pupils are making at least satisfactory progress as they move through the school and, currently, standards are broadly in line with those of similar schools. The identification and tracking of the most able pupils has raised the expectations that the school community has of its pupils.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. The school is very well led and managed and has been guided effectively out of serious weaknesses. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to school, the way in which they value others, and their own personal development, are all very good.
- The headteacher and key staff lead and manage the school very effectively.
- The school has a governing body who make a very real and well informed contribution to school life.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved.
- There is a shared commitment to improvement.

What could be improved

- A consistent approach towards the opportunities for reading, and support for spelling and handwriting.
- Some teachers' understanding of how to develop mental strategies and problem solving in mathematics.
- Pupils' experimental and investigative skills in science.
- Opportunities for pupils' learning in the non-core subjects.
- Planning the curriculum for children under five.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement overall, since the last inspection in September 1997. It has responded well to the challenges it faced. The school has addressed all of the issues raised at the last inspection, when it was considered to have serious weaknesses. There is, however, further work to be done on two of them. In science, the schemes of work have been revised, but these have still to make an impact on the way investigative and experimental science is taught in the upper years. In numeracy, pupils need to further extend their skills in practical and problem solving situations further. The school has improved standards in English and mathematics. All the non-core subjects now have schemes of work to support pupils' learning. Procedures to assess pupils' work have been introduced, but these need to be refined to assist with planning the curriculum more fully. The school's monitoring of subjects is much improved.

Overall, much has been achieved since the last inspection. In English at Key Stage 1, the overall trend is upward, with considerable improvement between 1998 and 1999. In mathematics, at Key Stage 1, standards remained little changed for two years, but inspection evidence indicates significant improvement this year. Standards in science at Key Stage 1 have improved year on year. By the age of eleven, the improvement in number of pupils reaching the average for English, mathematics and science is above the national trend, despite a dip in the 1999 tests. Standards are rising, and the school anticipates that it will exceed its targets in this year's National Curriculum tests.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning has improved further, with the proportion of good teaching increasing and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching being reduced by half.

The school's leadership has responded to the previous inspection very effectively. The headteacher has worked very successfully, in partnership with the local education authority, to structure and rigorously monitor action plans to target the school's priorities. The school continues to be managed cost effectively with careful, and resourceful, financial management.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E*	D	E	C
Mathematics	E*	E	E	D
Science	E	A	C	B

Key	
Well above average	A
above	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E
Very low	E*

The school's results in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 were well below average and in science they were average. When compared with similar schools¹, the results were average for English, below average for mathematics, and above average for science.

At the age of eleven, despite a lowering of attainment in 1999, the overall trend in the school's performance is greater than the rate of improvement nationally. For the year 2000, the school has set targets of 59 per cent being the percentage of pupils in Year 6 they expect to achieve the expected Level 4, and above, in English and mathematics. These were considered to be challenging targets for this group of pupils, however, it is anticipated that these targets will be exceeded.

¹ The school's results are compared both to the national average (ie the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 1) and to the average for similar schools (ie the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals).

There are weaknesses in pupils' abilities in some aspects of reading and writing across the school. In science, pupils, by the age of eleven, demonstrate satisfactory standards in their knowledge and understanding. However, their performance in investigative science is weaker. Throughout the school, pupils reach satisfactory levels in information technology and they make good progress. In art, geography, music, history and design and technology, pupils' progress is satisfactory. In physical education, pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 2. Dance and gymnastics are strengths of the school.

Standards are rising throughout the school. Considering pupils' level of achievement on entry to the school, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress, and the progress of some pupils is good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic, well motivated and interested in school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are courteous and well behaved in lessons and around the school. They show care and consideration for each other.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils of all ages are trustworthy and reliable. Older pupils show maturity and the School Council makes a strong contribution to school life.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance shows a noticeable improvement this year and continues to be broadly in line with national averages.

The pupils' attitudes and values are all strengths of the school. They are a part of the Catholic inspired ethos that lies at the heart of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory, with 42 per cent of lessons seen being good or better. Only five per cent of teaching is less than satisfactory.

The teaching of literacy throughout the school is good. In numeracy, teaching is good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2.

The strengths in teaching are due in particular to the detailed planning that takes place across the curriculum. Good classroom management, supports the very good behaviour seen in lessons. Where there are weaknesses in teaching, it is due, mainly, to a lack of subject knowledge. The literacy hour is well developed throughout the school, with good questioning techniques, and constructive marking, contributing to effective teaching. In mathematics, the numeracy strategy is also being taught well. There are particular strengths in Key Stage 1 where mental oral skills are being taught very well.

The school meets the needs of the most able pupils, and those with special educational needs, most of the time. Pupils make the best gains in lessons that are well taught and where their particular needs are well met. Pupils' learning in investigative and experimental science is not as good as it could be. Pupils are guided too much in what they do, instead of developing their own independent ideas.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Curriculum provision is satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils on the special needs register have targets for improvement that are reviewed regularly.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school's supportive approach helps pupils reach high standards in their spiritual, moral and social development. A strong sense of community pervades the work of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. This is a caring school with a strong family atmosphere. Every step is taken to ensure all aspects of pupils' welfare, health and safety are addressed sensitively.

The school's links with parents are satisfactory, even so, more could be done to nurture the contribution of parents to their children's learning at home. In some non-core subjects, and in planning the curriculum for children under five, aspects of the work are not always well developed through the different terms and year groups.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very successfully led by the headteacher and key staff. The school has very clear aims that are inspired by its Catholic ethos. It has clearly identified priorities and targets.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body has high levels of expertise that are used to good advantage. They actively support the school and, together with the headteacher, are committed to raising standards
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school evaluates its own performance thoroughly. This has been effective in supporting the drive to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school's developments are carefully funded and are linked to the strategic use of resources. Better use of the library is needed, and support staff could be used more efficiently.

Staffing is adequate. The accommodation is very good. The school is generally well supplied with books and equipment. However, there are insufficient resources for children under five to develop their physical skills and the library is inadequate in size and is under used. The leadership and management of the school is a strength of the school. The principles for ensuring that the school obtains the best value are practised effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching. • The school's high expectations of its pupils. • The attitudes and values that the school promotes. • No evidence of bullying. • Their children enjoy school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing of significance.

The inspection team endorses the views of the parents and recognises that standards in teaching, regarded as a strength at the last inspection, have improved further.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Although the majority of children have had pre-school experiences at playgroup, or nursery, when they enter school in reception, their attainment, overall, is below that expected for children of this age. In their literacy and language, and mathematical development, many children have skills well below what is expected for their age. Although improvements have been noted in children's personal and social development, standards are still low.
2. By the time pupils reach the age of five, only a small percentage achieve the targets set for them nationally in English, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils do, however, make satisfactory progress.
3. ***In English***, the 1999 National Curriculum tests showed that, at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2, or above, and the higher Level 3, in reading and writing was well below the national average. Achievement was close to the average when compared with similar schools. There has been some variation in the rate of progress over the past three years, but the overall trend is upward, with significant improvement in standards between 1998 and 1999. Inspection evidence indicates that a similar or slightly higher proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 should achieve average levels, or above, with most improvement being in the attainment of those pupils specifically targeted for extra support. The numbers of pupils reaching the national standards indicates that good progress has been made.
4. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests in English, at the end of Key Stage 2, showed that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4, or above, and the higher Level 5 was well below average when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, pupils' achievement was average. After considerable improvement in 1998, results dipped slightly in 1999, but standards are now rising. Inspection evidence supports the view that results for the pupils currently in Year 6 will be broadly similar to 1999, and that the school will achieve or exceed its target of 59 per cent for the Year 2000. Pupils' progress overall is satisfactory.
5. ***In mathematics***, the 1999 National Curriculum tests showed that, at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2, or above, and the higher Level 3 was well below the national average. Pupils' achievements were well below average when compared with similar schools. The 1999 National Curriculum test results, at the end of Key Stage 2, showed that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4, or above, and the higher Level 5, was well below the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, pupils' achievements were below average. However, although there has been some variation in progress over the past three years, the rate of improvement in the National Curriculum tests, from 1997 to 1999, at the end of Key Stage 2, is greater than the national trend.
6. At Key Stage 1, inspection evidence finds standards much improved this year. Almost two-thirds of pupils are now reaching a high Level 2. The more able pupils are achieving well, with over a quarter of the pupils reaching the higher Level 3. This is expected to be close to national averages and is a clear improvement since the last inspection, when no pupils were identified as working above the expected level. Starting from a low base at the end of the reception year, this demonstrates pupils' good progress.
7. At Key Stage 2, inspection evidence, and teachers' assessments and monitoring, show that the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 has increased considerably but that, overall, standards are still just below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. Inspection evidence supports the view that results for the pupils currently in Year 6 will be improved and that the school will exceed its target of 59 per cent for the Year 2000.

8. ***In science***, standards have risen significantly overall since the previous inspection, when the subject gave cause for concern. The results of the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2, or above, and the higher Level 3 was well below the national average. Inspection evidence indicates a significant improvement since then, with pupils' performance moving much closer to expectations, particularly in the strand of investigative and experimental science. Pupils are developing a satisfactory aptitude for scientific thought, as well as knowledge and understanding of scientific facts. Starting from a low base on entry to the reception class, this represents good progress.
9. The 1999 test results, at the end of Key Stage 2, show that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4, or above, and the higher Level 5 is close to the national average when compared with all schools. When results are compared with those of similar schools, pupils' achievement is above average. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of the pupils currently in Year 6 reflect these results, with a good number of pupils working at the higher Level 5. Trends over time show a very positive picture, with a sharp rise in standards since 1997 with a greater rate of improvements than the national trend. Progress is satisfactory overall.
10. ***In information technology***, at the end of both key stages, standards are close to national expectations and pupils make good progress. The rise in standards, and improvement in staff expertise and teaching, represents good improvement since the time of the last inspection.
11. At Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in geography and satisfactory progress in art, design technology, history and music. No judgement on pupils' progress was possible in physical education at Key Stage 1, as only one lesson was observed. At Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in physical education, with particular strengths in dance and gymnastics. They make satisfactory progress in art, design and technology, geography, history and music.
12. Pupils with special educational needs make steady progress and receive an appropriate level of well-targeted support. Younger pupils identified as needing help with reading, or additional literacy support, make good progress. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are usually appropriately met in numeracy lessons. The school has recently started to identify its gifted pupils from an early age. It is too early to judge whether this new initiative has had any positive impact on standards. At Key Stage 2, the identification and tracking of the most able pupils has raised the expectations that the school has of these pupils. At both key stages, pupils of higher ability achieve well. Although National Curriculum test results show that boys perform significantly less well than girls at Key Stage 1, this is not the case at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 2, test results show that the performance of boys and girls is very similar. The picture, throughout the school, shows the performance of boys and girls to be fairly even, with variations according to the group of pupils in each year group.
13. The school has a strong commitment to the total inclusion of all its pupils. The views and opinions of pupils with special educational needs are valued, and careful attention is given to ensure that these pupils contribute fully to class discussions. In addition, some pupils with behaviour problems are placed on the special needs register and careful monitoring and guidance have a positive effect upon their behaviour.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The children under five settle well into the reception class and the life of the school. They are happy, work and play co-operatively, and are very well behaved.
15. The provision for promoting pupils' attitudes, values and personal development is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are very good. The school provides a secure climate for learning and, in return, pupils love coming to school and want to achieve. Parents recognise the dedication and commitment of staff in their children's development. Extra-curricular activities are popular and well supported.

16. In discussion, pupils of all abilities are at ease with adults and talk with maturity and honesty. In lessons, pupils listen attentively, respond to instructions swiftly and are keen to learn. The development of care and consideration for others, praised in the last report, is still much in evidence. The youngest pupils work with a high degree of independence and, in Year 6, pupils, who will be leaving the school in a few weeks time, remain interested and involved in their work and talk with affection about their school experiences. Occasionally, concentration is not sustained when pupils have to sit through long introductions to lessons. Discussion time is used very effectively to develop pupils' confidence. The introduction of other initiatives to boost pupils' self-esteem, has had a calming effect on pupils who might otherwise find difficulty with learning or responding positively.
17. Standards of behaviour are very good. A home-school agreement has been introduced to encourage parental support for promoting good standards of behaviour. Procedures, which are known to all, are in place to prevent problems occurring. The dining hall provides opportunities for pupils to enjoy the company of their friends and the playground is lively, and sociable. Bullying is not in evidence and pupils forgive easily. They have a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. For example, a pupil in Year 1 is being teased. She does not become upset, but waits for an appropriate moment to offer her hand in friendship and her actions resolve the problem immediately. There have been no exclusions in recent times.
18. Relationships with all adults are very secure and pupils want to please. They are courteous around the school; they hold the door open for each other, and take pride in receiving various stickers and awards. They show care and concern for each other. The school is an orderly community, particularly as pupils move past other classrooms without disturbing them.
19. Pupils of all ages are trustworthy and reliable. They are given a wide variety of responsibilities in the classroom and around the school. Older pupils show maturity as they look after younger pupils. However, although there is some evidence that pupils undertake their own research to seek out information, when opportunities are offered, there is less emphasis on this aspect of personal development. The size and inaccessibility of the library does not encourage independent learning.
20. The school council makes a positive contribution to school life. Representatives from Year 6 not only bring issues to meetings, but also find possible solutions and organise events. Through the school council, older pupils organise fund-raising activities and involve other pupils. Regular meetings are held during lunchtimes so that matters can be reviewed and actions taken appropriately. The council takes its responsibilities very seriously and has already been heavily involved in fund raising events such as a 'sponsored spell'. It provides a very good opportunity for pupils to be part of the school's shared commitment to further improvement.
21. Attendance levels are satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. There has been a noticeable upward trend in attendance levels over the last few years. The progress being made in achieving higher attendance levels is good. Levels of unauthorised absence are above the national average, although they do show a downward trend. The educational welfare officer only visits the school on an annual basis, or more frequently, if requested, to give assistance with particular problems.
22. There is evidence of pupils arriving late each morning and, on some occasions, there is a certain amount of disruption to lessons that have started. These disruptions are unfair to both teacher and other pupils, and have a negative impact on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In 95 per cent of the lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory, or better. In 37 per cent of lessons, teaching was good, and it was very good in five per cent. The quality of teaching, regarded as a strength at the last inspection, has improved still further.

24. The reception teacher knows the children well and works hard to prepare them for the next stage in their learning. However, the planned curriculum for the children in reception does not always take into account the specific needs of children under five, and the experiences offered are sometimes inappropriate for them, with insufficient time allowed for them to learn through exploration and play.
25. The best teaching for children under five is in the area of language and literacy. Every available opportunity is taken to encourage the children to develop their speaking and listening skills. Skilful, open-ended questions encourage them to talk, at greater length, about their work and personal experiences. Clever strategies, such as asking the children to say 'j' in a jolly way are used to consolidate and extend learning. Resources, such as finger puppets, are used well. The teaching of mathematical understanding is less successful, as assessment is not used well enough to plan for the specific needs of the youngest and least able children. Too often, children sit for long periods of time attempting to understand numbers to 20, when some can only count numbers reliably to five. In the areas of creative and physical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Children gain good knowledge of knowledge about their world. In creative work, although there is a range of planned experiences, there are too few opportunities to explore two- and three-dimensional art, creatively and imaginatively. Limited outdoor equipment restricts opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. Planning is sometimes too general, for example, it is often more about what the teacher and child will do, rather than what they will learn and how they will learn it. The best learning takes place when the children are given opportunities to explore their world at first hand. Currently, there is limited support for the teacher in the classroom and this, together with the lack of clarity in learning outcomes, means working in groups is less effective than working as a whole class.
26. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy is good. Much of the teachers' recent professional development has focused on literacy and this has had a positive impact upon the quality of planning and teaching. The literacy hour is well developed through the school, with good questioning and constructive marking contributing to the effective teaching. Oral work at the beginning and end of the literacy hour, combined with the school's strong commitment to encouraging pupils to express their feelings and concerns orally, have a positive impact on improving skills. Several initiatives, for example, reading recovery, and the introduction of a programme for teaching phonics, have been effective in raising standards in reading of targeted pupils, but the progress of pupils, overall, is no more than satisfactory. At Key Stage 1, targets are identified for each group and pupils are beginning to check work for mistakes. In some lessons, however, the work set is not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils and best use is not always made of support staff who sit through lengthy introductions unoccupied. At Key Stage 2, in the best literacy lessons work is presented in a lively way and pupils are given every opportunity to contribute to discussions. Time at the end of lessons is used well to assess pupils' level of understanding. However, not all the teaching has high enough expectations, tasks set are sometimes undemanding, and insufficient attention is given to whether pupils understand what they are doing or whether they can remember previous work.
27. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy is good at Key Stage 1, and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. In the best lessons at Key Stage 1, the capability of pupils to work sums out mentally is well developed. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it. In these lessons, pupils are challenged to find out things for themselves and they begin to gain a good range of mathematical vocabulary. At Key Stage 2, mental strategies are not as well taught. Pupils are set targets at the start of the term and, sometimes, at the start of the lesson they will write down the objective to be understood. It is good that learning is shared with pupils and that they know what is to be the focus of the lesson, but this, in itself, does not ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them. In all numeracy lessons, the three-part framework of an introduction, main part, and whole-class session, is well developed. In all lessons, too, there is good classroom management ensuring that all pupils learn in a positive environment. The school's planning routines mean that teachers plan for the first two, or three, days of each week, then adjust planning in response to the assessment of pupils' learning. This is good practice.

28. Teachers' planning for literacy and numeracy lessons usually identifies pupils with special educational needs and these pupils make best progress in lessons where group work is matched to their ability well, and teachers cater for their needs. Occasionally, in large classes, it is difficult for teachers to offer the correct level of support to pupils in most need. The needs of the most able pupils are mostly met well, except in literacy at the end of Key Stage 2.
29. In other subjects, at both key stages, strengths in teaching are due, in particular, to the detailed planning that takes place and the effective way that teachers support and encourage the good behaviour seen in lessons. Homework often has a positive influence. In the best lessons in geography, science and art, a hands-on approach, where independence and independent thought are encouraged, ensures that pupils learn and make the most progress. This is particularly so in Key Stage 1. In science, for example, pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop scientific thinking through a series of explorations and investigations. This continues in lower Key Stage 2. In upper Key Stage 2, although science teaching effectively ensures that pupils have a good bank of knowledge and understanding, activities are too prescriptive, with insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn through first hand experiences. The use of assessment to inform day-to-day planning is inconsistent in science, and a weakness at Key Stage 2. Occasionally, work is pitched at too high a level for the youngest and least able pupils. In information technology, staff training has had a positive effect on teaching. Where there are weaknesses in teaching, it is due, mainly, to a specific lack of subject knowledge. This is so in music, where subject insecurity means that teachers are not always certain about the standards they should expect.

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

30. Curriculum provision is satisfactory in both key stages. The curriculum is broad and meets statutory requirements. However, in some non-core subjects, and in planning the curriculum for children under five, aspects of continuity and progression are not always well developed. Sex education is taught through religious education, and a 'health-safety week' ensures that pupils are aware of the dangers of misuse of drugs and how to keep themselves safe.
31. There have been significant improvements in the organisation and planning of the curriculum since the last inspection. The school has addressed the key issues of the previous report satisfactorily by implementing the national literacy and numeracy projects, and ensuring that sufficient time is allocated to the core subjects of English, mathematics and information technology; although, pupils' access to information technology is still somewhat limited. Provision for investigative science at Key Stage 2 was an area for concern at the time of the previous inspection and evidence shows that insufficient progress has been made since that time. The literacy strategy has been implemented effectively, and good practice from these lessons is extending into other areas of the curriculum, for example, oral sessions at the beginning and end of lessons. The numeracy strategy is less well established, but is contributing to raising standards in the school.
32. The school has sought and followed professional advice to strengthen provision in the non-core subjects of art, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education. Rather than offer all of these subjects on a weekly basis, and risk very thin coverage, the school has incorporated them into termly topics, which are then covered in some depth. Although teachers prefer this way of organising the curriculum, and feel that it provides pupils with a deeper knowledge and understanding, it does have its disadvantages. For example, pupils will only study geography once a year, which makes it hard for them to retain information and to build on skills, such as mapping, systematically. The school is aware that curriculum time in the summer term is often shorter, because of the different events that take place, and is looking for more flexible ways of organising the curriculum timetable. In order to make more time for literacy and numeracy, and to accommodate this planning, subjects such as music are not taught sufficiently frequently to have a positive impact on standards. Physical education lessons are limited to one session per week for pupils in Key Stage 1, which is below the time suggested for young pupils.
33. The curriculum for children under five is broad and balanced and provides opportunities for them to make good progress, particularly in their literacy and language development. However,

the rich and varied curriculum, noted in the last inspection, was not as evident this time. The curriculum is not yet well planned to the targets set nationally for children under five and the assumption is often made that these children are ready for the early stages of the National Curriculum. The school acknowledges a need for a closer look at curriculum provision for these children especially as a new key stage, called the foundation stage², will be introduced in September 2000.

34. The school pays careful attention to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to take a full part in school life. They are encouraged to think of others, both in school and in the wider world, and to consider the results of their thoughts and actions.
35. The curriculum is relevant to pupils with special educational needs and the requirements of the Code of Practice for these pupils are met fully. Pupils on the special needs register have targets for improvement that are reviewed regularly. Although individual education plans contain realistic, attainable targets, they are not used on a daily basis by class teachers, and this lack of use in lessons sometimes leads to pupils being given work that is not best suited to their needs. Pupils who are identified as in need of extra help with their reading or literacy development, are making particularly good progress.
36. Provision for personal development is very good. There is a strong programme of work for promoting this aspect of school life. Pupils are given many opportunities to respect and appreciate the beliefs, values and cultural traditions of others through subjects such as religious education, art, music and dance.
37. Long term planning ensures full coverage of the curriculum. The school has adopted government guidelines for planning in all subjects, and schemes of work clearly identify what pupils should know, do and understand from year to year. Teachers evaluate their topics in terms of their success and implement any changes they need to make. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. As it may be two years until many of the topics will be taught again, further consideration could be given to the detail in which non-core subjects are evaluated. The two-year rolling programme addresses the needs of the mixed-age classes, to prevent these pupils from repeating work. The school is currently developing their own website, and makes full use of the Internet in curriculum planning.
38. Planning for pupils of different abilities is less strong, with the exception of literacy and numeracy. Whilst some teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of individual pupils, scrutiny of work in other subjects shows that pupils of different abilities often complete the same work. This is unsatisfactory.
39. The school offers a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, such as sport, craft, gardening and the library, which are well attended and contribute well to pupils' social development. Visitors to school, such as live theatre groups, visits to museums, other places of interest, and a residential centre, significantly enhance the curriculum. Local businesses and industry support the school well, for example, by sponsoring football training, and by a local college loaning computers to the school.
40. Community links are good. The contact with the local community is strong. The appointed community worker visits the school regularly and can readily identify with the needs of the school and the local community. There are strong links with the local parish church and an Anglican priest, who is an ex-governor, regularly visits from his parish in Daresbury. The Runcorn Family Advice Centre has good links with the school. These initiatives benefit both pupils and parents and contribute to the family atmosphere at the school.
41. The links with other educational establishment are particularly good. There is a playgroup adjacent to the school, and a Link Club, and this is supported well by pupils from this and other local schools. This facility is available during holidays. Halton College has provided a suite of computers to run their courses at the school. The school takes full advantage of this facility. St Chad's High School has formed good links with the school. The effective liaison between the

² The foundation stage applies to children from three years of age to the end of the reception year in primary school.

Year 6 teacher and Year 7 link teacher is very beneficial to pupils transferring school. A transition questionnaire enables the High School to have good information about their prospective pupils. This helps them to know how best to settle pupils into their new environment. The parents of pupils in Year 5 are also invited up to St Chad's to discuss matters, prior to making a choice of secondary school. Close links with the local playgroup, and secondary school, provide good opportunities for the early identification of children with special educational needs and helps to ensure a smooth transition in each new step in their education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

42. Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and a strength of the school. The high standards, praised in the last inspection, have been maintained. The Catholic-inspired ethos and aims are very real contributors to the high quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
43. Spiritual development is very good. Acts of collective worship make a strong contribution to the total sense of community that pervades all the work of the school. In Year 6, pupils provide a deeply spiritual dance interpretation of 'Forgiveness' in their parents' assembly. Assembly times are used very effectively to interact with pupils to develop inner feelings. For example, in a Year 6 class, when the spirituality of hand prayer was used to discuss caring for others. Pupils in the Year 3/4 class express spontaneous delight as they watch the dye move up the celery stem and change its colour. There are many other good examples of ways in which the school promotes pupils' spiritual development. Moments of reflection and prayer are set aside and discussion of feelings is openly encouraged. Older pupils take advantage of the voluntary Eucharist, and look forward to visiting Tattenhall for reconciliation and retreat.
44. Provision for moral development is very good. Teaching, support and ancillary staff are excellent role models for pupils. They encourage pupils to behave responsibly and pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils do not want to disappoint or upset others. The school's policies for promoting good behaviour, and its home-school agreement, provide a secure framework of expectations for pupils, staff and parents. Less than acceptable behaviour is monitored, and pupils who need to improve are given a high level of support. Rewards and sanctions are known to all and teachers make constructive use of praise. The structure for rewarding good behaviour, kindness or effort, makes a very positive contribution towards promoting good behaviour. The school's supportive approach is very successful in helping the vast majority of its pupils to become responsible for their own behaviour.
45. Social development is also very good. Very secure relationships underpin the work of the school; pupils undertake an increasingly wide range of responsibilities as they become older and extra-curricular activities are very popular. Break-times and dinner-times are good, social occasions and pupils relate positively to each other. They display good humour and a genuine sense of fairness.
46. The provision for cultural development is good. Effective use is made of visits to places, such as Norton Priory and Liverpool Museum to enrich pupils' learning. Greater attention is now given to pupils' awareness of other cultures and provision for this aspect has improved since the last inspection. Pupils study one other world religion each year and art and music are used to ensure pupils gain insight into other cultures and traditions. In Key Stage 1, pupils recall their experience of Australian and African music, and displays attractively reflect pupils' work in the style of artists such as Breugel, Matisse, Degas and Munch.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. Children under five are happy and cared for well. The school's induction procedures are caring and sensitive to the children's personal and social needs. For example, they do not join the older pupils in the playground at playtimes, but play in the inner courtyard, where they feel safer and can develop the confidence to venture further. Children are encouraged to take on responsibilities, such as washing cups after 'drinks time', but the school needs to evaluate this, involving adults more to improve hygiene.
48. This is a caring school with a strong family atmosphere. Every step is taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety and child protection are suitably addressed. There are good procedures to carry out risk assessments around the school. Two members of staff, fully trained in first-aid, are available in each of the key stages. Lunchtime supervisors are diligent in ensuring that any injured pupil gets the proper attention and treatment. Accidents are recorded in the accident book.

49. The school implements appropriate child protection procedures very well and staff are fully aware of the requirements. The staff have full awareness of abuse matters. The trust and openness, between pupils and teachers, allow important welfare matters to be discussed. The use of 'circle time'³ to allow pupils to express their concerns and aspirations is a particularly good characteristic.
50. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The allocation of 'attendance' and 'punctuality' weeks, throughout the year, and the corresponding reward systems, make a major contribution towards maintaining good attendance levels. Follow-up procedures are used effectively, and the monitoring of latecomers is an important feature.
51. The monitoring and promoting of good behaviour, and eliminating oppressive behaviour, are very good. The assertive discipline programme is used well by staff, and the pupils take great delight in getting reward stickers for good behaviour. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are good. Pupils' needs are carefully assessed and appropriate support and guidance is given during lessons, using additional learning support resources. Almost half of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs.
52. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. They are comprehensive, and arrangements for monitoring and assessing pupils' performance are detailed and systematic. The initial assessment of children, on entry to the reception class, provides precise information about their language, numeracy and personal and social skills. It is used effectively to identify those with special educational needs, to predict end of Key Stage 1 levels of attainment and, more recently, to identify and track progress of the highest attainers. The highest-attaining pupils have been tracked at Key Stage 2, for a while now, and this has succeeded in raising the schools awareness of the potential of pupils. Procedures for monitoring attainment in literacy are thorough, and the information is used to guide future planning effectively. Monitoring and tracking of pupils is developed well in numeracy. This raises the teacher's awareness of the standards the individual pupil has reached, but the information is not always used well enough to guide future planning. At both key stages, assessments are carried out regularly through assess and review sheets. However these are not matched sufficiently to the pupils' ability so do not give the valuable information the teacher needs to provide the right learning experiences. More appropriate, is the usual practice, within numeracy, to plan for the first two or three days in the week and then adjust planning in response to the assessment of pupils' learning.
53. Strong emphasis on the analysis of data, target setting, and the importance of 'value added' information, is used well to identify areas of most need for the school's monitoring process. Portfolios of work, with some selected by pupils, are kept as a valuable record of achievement and progress.
54. Assessment procedures for the non-core subjects were found to be weak at the time of the last inspection, and are still in need of further refinement. Formal records for reading are maintained within literacy. There are, however, no home-school diaries for pupils to record their own personal reading. The important link between home and school in using records to establish good reading practices and monitor progress is not , therefore, developed as effectively as it could be.
55. Day-to-day assessment of how well pupils have understood their work is inconsistent. Teachers' planning recognises the need to build assessment into daily routines, but these assessment opportunities vary in quality. This is particularly so in literacy. Some are well focused and demonstrate a clear understanding of what is being assessed, and why. Others are vague and lack purpose and precision. Sometimes, as in the Year 3/4 class, the teacher demonstrates good practice by modifying the content of the lesson because pupils have not understood sufficiently well. More often, however, pupils do the planned work, with insufficient attention being given to whether it fits their needs or abilities. K1.5

³ Circle time is an activity where pupils are able to discuss certain matters as a class, following strict rules about listening to others and taking turns to speak

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Parents' and carers' views of the school are good. All parents who attended the parents' meeting were very proud of the school and highly satisfied with the education provided by the school. The home-school agreement is well structured and fully accepted by parents.
57. A series of meetings are arranged with parents, in advance of their children starting school. This gives them opportunities to learn about the work of the school and to share information regarding the well being of their children.
58. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. Two parents enthusiastically organise the 50/50 Club, and detailed records are kept of contributions made by parents. The funds raised by this activity can amount to up to £150 per month which is donated to the school to purchase items of equipment identified by the headteacher. The staff are appreciative of these generous contributions. A limited number of parents help around the school. They are given guidelines from staff so they know where their efforts can be best deployed.
59. The arrangements for collection of pupils, from the rear of the school, effectively means that parents do not readily enter the school and the tendency is for staff members to take pupils out to the playground. The school have recently developed a parent-toddler lending library to encourage more parents to come into the school. There are, however, some missed opportunities in allowing more pupils to take books home in order to develop further the contribution of parents to their children's learning at home. Some parents are keen to support their children with homework and there appears to be sufficient homework allocated to all pupils, including those in reception.
60. The quality of information provided for parents about the school, including topic work, is satisfactory. The governors' annual report to parents, and the school prospectus, are presented in an easy to follow style. Information about pupils' progress and achievements is satisfactory. Meaningful comments are made in pupils' reports and these allow parents to have a full understanding of the progress their child has made.
61. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have an opportunity to discuss their child's work and progress, in more detail, with special needs' staff during parents' evenings.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The leadership and management of the school are very good. Together the head, staff and governors have a very strong shared commitment to improvement, and the capacity and will to succeed.
63. The headteacher provides very effective leadership. In difficult circumstances, following the school's categorisation into serious weaknesses, the headteacher has led the school in its drive to raise the quality and standards of education. The school has very clear aims that are inspired by its Catholic ethos. It provides an 'oasis', where each individual child is valued and respected and their individual talents and gifts nurtured.
64. The school has a very thorough school improvement and action plan that is carefully thought through. There is a clear monitoring and evaluation process before appropriate priorities and targets are identified, and then subsequently reviewed. In evaluating the school's needs, there is wide consultation with governors, staff, parents, the auditing of curriculum areas, and careful analyses of test results. In literacy, numeracy and information technology, there are detailed supplementary action plans, to complement the main action plan. The school has worked very closely and successfully, in partnership with the local education authority, to rigorously monitor and evaluate pupils' performance in order to achieve higher standards. In targeting individual pupils to achieve higher levels in literacy and numeracy, the school needs to ensure that the needs of the pupils are met within the day-to-day assessment and planning of lessons.
65. Staff development is closely linked with the development plan and has been a key feature of the successful implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, and the school's clear

improvement since the previous inspection. As the school moves forward still further, staff development will continue to be very important.

66. The school now has a successful management structure, where senior staff play their part in the effective management of the school. The senior staff team meet regularly to discuss the school's priorities and the most appropriate ways forward. The deputy headteacher has a clearly defined role and, together with the headteacher, ensures good communication, the smooth running of systems, and the day-to-day management of the school. This is supported effectively by high quality secretarial administration. Staff within each key stage work well together in a professional and supportive way. Subject co-ordinators have been responsible for leading their subjects and providing capable support for their colleagues, providing assistance with newly-introduced schemes of work and guidelines. All co-ordinators monitor planning in their respective areas, and formal monitoring opportunities for science, information technology and the non-core subjects are planned in the next year. This will provide co-ordinators with an insight into the quality of teaching and learning experiences offered to pupils, which should enable them to provide support for staff even more effectively.
67. Unlike the remainder of the school, there is no-one with overall management responsibility for the curriculum for children under five. In some aspects, this has led to a curriculum which is, sometimes, not as appropriate as it could be for these young children.
68. Collectively, the governors provide very strong and capable support for the headteacher and the school. Within the membership of the governing body, there is a wealth of experience and expertise. There are, in addition, a number of recently-appointed governors who look forward to sharing in the aspirations of the school. Governors are aware of the needs of the school and work together, with the headteacher, to shape the direction of the school. The governing body is strategically involved in development planning and contributes significantly to financial planning. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities very effectively.
69. The principles of obtaining the best value are practised effectively at the school. The concept of 'value added analysis', and its use in achieving improvement are considered well. For example, Key Stage 2 tests results are compared with other primary schools within the local borough. This has been a useful management tool in determining how to raise standards of education. In comparison with other schools, expenditure per pupil is much higher, however, in spite of these higher costs, the school gives satisfactory value for money.
70. Governors are keen to evaluate whether they are successfully providing what is needed, and attempt to understand the local community. Financial planning and judgements are good. For example, sensible decisions are made about the allocation of funds, in preparation for the potential downturn in the number of pupils on roll next year, so that current levels of staffing may be maintained. For this reason, the school currently operates with a substantial surplus of funds.
71. The school is very proactive in their strategic use of resources. For example, the school has access to the Halton College computers, and maximises the use of this valuable resource. Consideration is now being given to upgrading existing computers in the classrooms further, because of the limitations in timetabling of the computer suite. A realistic allocation of funds has been made for the maintenance of the new building. Funding to provide additional literacy support has been used effectively to provide reading recovery for pupils. Funding for special needs is well targeted at pupils in most need.
72. Overall, staffing is adequate. Induction arrangements to support new staff have proved highly effective. Each member of staff has two curriculum areas of responsibility and every effort is made to ensure that co-ordinators, operating outside their speciality, attend courses to develop their subject knowledge. However, more recent changes in subject responsibilities, a new National Curriculum from September 2000, and a new foundation stage, for the youngest children, have created a need for the school to review its plans for staff development. Support staff make a good contribution to the progress of pupils with special educational needs, although this resource could be used more effectively. In some lessons well-trained support staff spend too large a proportion of their time observing, rather than supporting, the pupils to

improve their opportunities to learn. For example, in a year 6 science lesson, a member of support staff spent half the lesson controlling the behaviour of pupils with special needs, rather than engaging them in work at a more appropriate level. During the whole-class elements of some literacy and numeracy lessons, support staff are also not used as well as they could be.

73. The school takes a very positive attitude towards creating a pleasing learning environment and is very successful in this, both within the new building and outside. Displays are attractive and a calm atmosphere is created by music, wind-chimes, artefacts and plants. An open-plan design provides accessibility to all parts of the building for wheelchair users, and encourages purposeful interaction between staff and pupils. Classrooms are well designed and open onto an attractively landscaped courtyard that provides an additional rich and varied learning environment. A good-sized playing field and hard play surfaces further enhance the accommodation. A computer suite provided by the local college offers good opportunities for pupils to develop their information technology skills. It is, however, not always available to the school as time, quite correctly, has to be shared with the college. A beautiful prayer room acts as a 'quiet room' for reflective times and also serves as a music room. The school has, generally, sufficient books and equipment, and the development plan for information technology indicates the planned purchase of further resources. However, there is insufficient large equipment with which children under five can develop their physical skills, and the library is too small and under used.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. To improve further the quality of education, the governors, in partnership with the headteacher and staff should:
- Continue to raise standards in reading and writing, across the school, by:
 - extending, further, the opportunities for reading at school and at home, (*paragraphs 26, 54, 59, 95, 96*);
 - progressively broadening pupils' vocabulary, (*paragraphs 78, 100*);
 - introducing a systematic structure for learning to spell, (*paragraphs 78, 100, 102*);
 - having a more consistent approach to handwriting, (*paragraphs 78 102*);
 - ensuring greater consistency in day-to-day assessments, (*paragraphs 26, 35, 55, 64, 106*).
 - Continue to raise standards in mathematics, across the school, by:
 - developing the awareness of staff to the teaching of mental strategies, problem-solving, and number work, (*paragraphs 111, 115*);
 - extending, further, the opportunities at school, and at home, for pupils to learn their tables, (*paragraphs 111, 112, 114*).
 - Create more opportunities for older pupils to develop their independent scientific thought, through the use of experimental and investigative science, (*paragraphs 29, 31, 121, 124, 135*).
 - Improve the opportunities for learning in the non-core subjects by:
 - evaluating the effectiveness of the current organisation and provision, (*paragraphs 30, 32, 38, 127, 131, 133, 135, 141, 143, 157, 159, 162*);
 - continuing to refine procedures to assess pupils' progress, (*paragraphs 29, 54, 122, 124, 138, 144*).
 - Plan a curriculum for the children under five, in line with the most recent government guidelines, (*paragraphs 24, 30, 33, 47*).
75. In addition to the issues above, the following less important areas for improvement should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- the siting and use of the library, (*paragraph 19*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

65

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	5	37	54	5		

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

YR – Y 6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	165
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	72

FTE means full-time equivalent

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	77

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	11	14	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	9
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (42)	76 (42)	68 (76)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	9	9
	Girls	10	9	9
	Total	20	18	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (43)	72 (71)	68 (57)
	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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	6	15	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	3	4
	Girls	8	8	12
	Total	12	11	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	57 (60)	52 (48)	68 (92)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	10	8	13
	Total	14	12	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (60)	57 (64)	81 (96)
	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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	139
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.0
Average class size	27.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	343,480
Total expenditure	328,763
Expenditure per pupil	1,847
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,738
Balance carried forward to next year	39,455

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	161
Number of questionnaires returned	39
Percentage of questionnaires returned	24

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	31	3	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	0	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	36	3	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	28	18	8	0
The teaching is good.	64	31	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	18	18	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	10	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	13	13	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	13	13	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	69	26	5	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	36	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	33	15	8	3

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents' and carers' views of the school are good. All parents attending the parents' meeting were very proud of the school and very highly satisfied with the education provided.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Personal and social development

76. Children's personal and social development is close to expectations by the time they are five and they make good progress in the reception class. They have settled well into school routines and they take on simple responsibilities such as tidying up after lessons sensibly, often volunteering to help adults to put away awkward toys like jigsaws more quickly. However, many still lack confidence when expected to think for themselves. They co-operate well together to play simple games, learning to observe the rules, take turns and share. Many are beginning to work independently to complete worksheets and to use the computer. They concentrate well and listen carefully to adults and each other. They are beginning to express their feelings during class discussions, although limitations in their language skills prevent them from doing this well. They show respect for each other and for school property. The children are still in need of a great deal of support in their learning.
77. The quality of teaching for this aspect of learning is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Standards in teaching, overall, have been maintained since the last inspection. The children are encouraged to talk about their experiences and feelings, to take on simple responsibilities and to get on well together. Well-chosen activities encourage the children to share, take turns and to help each other, for example, when working on the computer. The positive nature of children's personal and social development was also recognised at the last inspection.

Language and literacy

78. Children's attainment is below that expected, by the time they are five. Although some children express themselves clearly and confidently, the majority does not. Limitations in their vocabulary, act as a barrier to learning in other areas of the curriculum because the majority is unable to explain their ideas effectively. A large number of children have difficulty in pronouncing words correctly and this affects their ability to match letters to sounds. The children know that print carries meaning and they enjoy listening to stories and talking about their books. They know how books are organised and that pages turn from right to left and they talk enthusiastically about the characters, for example when making predictions about what will happen next. The children know a number of letters of the alphabet by their shape and sound, and a small number of children are beginning to use this understanding to communicate meaning in their own free writing. Higher-attaining children use their understanding of letter sounds to build simple three letter words. These children have a sight vocabulary of up to 20 familiar words. Writing skills are less well developed. A few children are beginning to write their names but many of these have learned to write in capital letters before coming to school and use these inappropriately, with little understanding of the sounds they represent. Pencil control is weak.
79. Teaching for this area of learning is good. The teacher takes every available opportunity to encourage the children to develop their speaking and listening skills and is very effective in developing their confidence to talk before a larger audience. Skilful, open-ended questions encourage them to talk at greater length about their work and personal experiences. The teacher takes care to ensure that all children are included in the discussions and shapes her questions well to meet the needs of individual children. Clever strategies to teach initial letter sounds, such as asking children to say 'j' in a jolly way, are successful in consolidating and extending their learning. Finger puppets and other resources promote enjoyment of learning. A well-ordered classroom, clearly established routines and expectations of behaviour ensure that children have good opportunities to develop their listening skills. The teacher's own enjoyment of literature is infectious and she is very effective in helping the children to 'read' with expression. Well-chosen activities that are carefully matched to the children's individual abilities enable them to build successfully on their previous learning. Children complete worksheets that support them in their writing and many opportunities are offered for them to write 'for themselves'. This good practice provides opportunities for the teacher to assess

individual progress and to move the children on to the next step. Homework, including reading practice, is used well to develop children's literacy.

Mathematics

80. The majority of children do not reach the targets set for them nationally by the time they are five. They make satisfactory progress overall, although planning does not always support the progress of children with different abilities as effectively as it might..
81. The children's understanding of number is about in line with expectations. They sort objects into groups, using given criteria, and recognise and use numbers to five and beyond. The most able count in twos and most understand that there are two objects in a pair. They match objects to numbers and play number games to reinforce and extend their learning. They know that number can be represented in other forms, such as graphs and, with much support, have made pictograms of their favourite foods. They are beginning to understand the concept of addition, but none are confident in this and their understanding of shape, pattern and measurement is also limited.
82. The teaching of mathematical understanding is less successful than for other areas of learning because assessment is not used so well to plan for the specific needs of the youngest and least able children. Too often, children sit for long periods of time attempting to understand numbers to 20 when some can only count reliably to five. The most able children benefit greatly from this level of challenge but a few would make better gains from activities more carefully designed for their needs. The reception teacher finds many activities outside the numeracy hour to reinforce and extend the children's understanding of number, such as computer and floor games and these types of activity are much more successful in developing understanding. Sand and water play is, occasionally, used well, such as when children search in the sand for counters to match a given number. However, too few opportunities are provided for them to use their mathematical understanding to solve problems. Discussions with teachers tell us that the children have a considerable repertoire of number rhymes and songs that help them learn concepts, such as one more and one less.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

83. Children's attainment is a little below that expected, by the time they are five. The majority of children have a limited experience of the world before coming to school and, despite satisfactory progress in gaining knowledge, limited opportunities for them to explore, experiment, and observe their world, slows their progress in learning.
84. They talk about their environment and family and are gaining an awareness of change by comparing baby's clothing and food with their own. They have observed flowers closely and attempted to represent them in their artwork. They know that there are different kinds of toys and group them, using their own criteria, although most do not have the language skills to explain such criteria effectively. They cut, join, fold and build from found materials to make models. For example, after researching lunchboxes, they designed their own, selecting materials from a limited range. They use the computer mouse, with increasing confidence and develop their language skills through controlling a remote toy forwards and backwards. The most able children extend their vocabulary to include, 'reverse' and 'aerial'.
85. Teaching ensures that the children gain a good body of knowledge about their world, for example in science, history and geography. However, planning is sometimes too general or loose in terms of what children are expected to learn. Daily planning is more often about what the teacher and the children will do, rather than identifying precisely what they will learn and how they will learn it. The best learning takes place when children are given opportunities to explore their world first hand, for example when making 'plans' of the school after walking round the building. Currently, there are a limited number of support staff and this, together with the lack of clearly defined learning outcomes, makes group work less effective than when children come together as a class.

86. The teacher takes every opportunity to extend the children's vocabulary in order to help them to gain a better understanding of the world, especially when talking about pictures in the 'big book'. For example the word 'blindfold' was fully understood by the children after talking about a picture of children playing a game.

Creative development

87. The children's attainment is below expectations and they make slow progress because there are too few opportunities planned for them to develop their creative imaginations through first hand experiences. When offered the opportunities to develop their creative imagination through activities such as art and role-play, they respond very positively but the planned curriculum limits such experiences. They print with their hands and fingers and experiment with the primary colours to make pictures of flowers and other subjects.
88. Teaching is satisfactory overall, in that children are provided with a range of planned experiences. However, these provide too few opportunities to explore two-dimensional and three-dimensional art creatively and in an imaginative way. These opportunities are not quite as effective as they were noted to be at the last inspection. A good range of costumes provides opportunities for the children to take on imaginary roles, such as a clown and a fireman, but, during the week of the inspection, many occasions were missed for the children to develop their creative imagination through structured play.

Physical development

89. Children's attainment is about in line with expectations and they make satisfactory progress, although opportunities for children to develop their physical skills through outdoor play and physical education lessons are restricted.
90. They are beginning to move with increasing control and co-ordination and are gaining an awareness of themselves and others. They are developing a sense of space and respond well to instructions. They move on different parts of their body, balance, run, jump and control small apparatus, such as balls and quoits, with increasing success. Their ability to work independently is less well developed. They develop their manipulative skills appropriately through the use of scissors and other tools, such as spatulas, pencils and brushes.
91. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with well-planned activities designed for them to develop their skills of co-ordination and dexterity. The narrow range and quantity of wheeled tricycles, and limited opportunities for climbing, means that children have few opportunities to develop their physical skills. The school needs to evaluate its procedures for physical education in very hot weather to ensure that the children are properly protected from the sun's rays in mid-afternoon.

ENGLISH

92. The 1999 National Curriculum tests indicate that, at the age of seven, the number of pupils attaining the expected levels, or higher, in reading and writing, is well below the national average when compared with all schools, but close to the average when compared with similar schools. There has been some variation in the rate of progress over the past three years, but the overall trend is upward, with significant improvement in standards between 1998 and 1999. Inspection evidence indicates that a similar or slightly higher proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 will achieve average levels, or above, with most improvement in the attainment of those pupils specifically targeted for extra support.
93. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests, at the age of eleven, show the proportion of pupils attaining both the expected and higher levels are well below the national average, but broadly in line when compared to similar schools. Although results dipped slightly in 1999, after considerable improvement in 1998, standards are rising. Inspection evidence supports the view that results for the pupils currently in Year 6 will be broadly similar and that the school will exceed its target for the Year 2000.

Speaking and Listening

94. On entry to the school, a significant number of pupils have speech problems and poorly developed language skills. Heavy emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to become confident speakers and good listeners. Oral work at the beginning and end of the literacy hour, combined with the school's strong commitment towards encouraging pupils to express their feelings and concerns orally, have a positive impact on improving skills. Pupils of all abilities feel confident enough to contribute in class discussions and good progress is made throughout the school. In Year 1, pupils laugh as they try to pronounce vegetable correctly and in Year 2 pupils read the story of 'The Donkey Who Sneezed', with humour and expression. By the time pupils are eleven, their speaking and listening skills are well developed. In Year 6, pupils are articulate and mature when discussing their work; they express preferences and give clear reasons for their likes and dislikes. Pupils in Year 3 speak clearly during the parents' assembly about 'Building Bridges'.

Reading

95. At the end of Key Stage 1, approximately three-quarters of pupils reach average standards, or above, in reading. Initiatives for supporting some lower-attaining pupils have had a positive impact on standards and the introduction of a programme for teaching phonics has been successful in developing secure strategies for reading unfamiliar words. Pupils of all abilities express real enjoyment of reading; they talk simply about their likes and dislikes and respond well to humour. However, despite this genuine love of books, pupils usually only take books home at the weekend and they do not have a home-school diary, or individual reading record, except in the reception class, or where children have particular difficulties with reading. Parents are not encouraged to support pupils with their reading and the important link between home and school in establishing good reading practices is not effectively developed. In addition, because pupils do not read regularly in school, on a one-to-one basis, they are often hesitant in their reading, and higher attaining pupils lack a breadth of knowledge about books and authors. For example, a higher attaining pupil in Year 2, who particularly enjoys reading long books, cannot name any favourite authors or stories, and finds great difficulty in expressing opinions about books.
96. By the end of Key Stage 2, approximately two-thirds of pupils reach expected levels or above in reading. Reading records are maintained within the literacy hour. Pupils offer mature reasons for their literary preferences. For example, a higher-attaining pupil in Year 6 particularly enjoys books where 'you have to read between the lines to work out the ending'. However, despite very positive attitudes towards reading, some pupils are unable to recall when they last read to an adult and some do not have a reading book.
97. Most pupils understand how to use reference books, but they do not have secure research skills. Although many understand the purpose of the contents page and index, they do not use the library often enough to improve these skills. The library contains a small range of good quality non-fiction books, but it is underused and frequently inaccessible because it is used for small group work. Currently, it does not make a strong contribution towards pupils' learning.
98. Although the initiatives introduced by the school have been effective in raising the standards of targeted pupils, overall, the progress made by pupils in both key stages is no more than satisfactory. Pupils' reading is not sufficiently well developed beyond the literacy hour. Insufficient attention is given to developing individual pupils' reading or research skills.

Writing

99. Attainment is below average at the end of both key stages. Overall, progress is satisfactory and even good in areas that have been targeted for improvement. Pupils are given opportunities to develop ideas through extended writing in other areas of the curriculum, such as geography.
100. At the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils write in simple sentences, although not all spell basic words, or use punctuation, correctly. There is a noticeable improvement in the use of phonic skills when spelling new words, since the introduction of a structured teaching

programme. In Year 2, a few pupils identify speech marks and commas, and are beginning to develop an understanding of past tense. Pupils have improved their range of writing since the last inspection, but do not yet have the confidence to use more adventurous vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs make steady progress and receive an appropriate level of support.

101. In Key Stage 2, the introduction of the literacy hour has helped pupils to develop previously weak literacy skills. For example, during a very good Year 6 lesson, higher-attaining pupils rewrote the 'Jabberwocky' poem in narrative, average pupils extended their vocabulary, and lower-attaining pupils successfully wrote and illustrated their poems with a good level of support. In this lesson, the effectiveness of the teachers planning and high expectations enhanced the learning that took place. Although the school encourages the development of literacy skills across the curriculum, progress is not always as good as it could be in subjects such as science, because pupils are held back by their lack of basic skills. Information technology is used regularly to support pupils' learning.
102. Although there is a whole-school policy for handwriting, there is no consistency in how it is taught. The quality of handwriting varies considerably and higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 have not yet progressed to a joined style in their daily work. In Key Stage 2, some pupils join their writing whilst others print and some write using a ruler as a guide. The general level of presentation is unsatisfactory and does not always reflect pupils' ability. In addition, there is no consistent approach towards the teaching of spelling. Some pupils use dictionaries and wordbooks, others spell difficult words correctly but get simple spellings wrong. Pupils' learning is not sufficiently supported through the teaching of spelling or handwriting.
103. Attitudes towards English are very positive throughout the school. Pupils want to discuss their work, even though some younger pupils have difficulty in expressing themselves. Behaviour is generally good and pupils look forward to their literacy hour. They are attentive, enthusiastic and keen to get on with their work. They help each other and work with a high degree of independence. Occasionally, when the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory or work set is undemanding, pupils lose interest and produce very little work.
104. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 is always at least satisfactory and frequently good. For instance, a good reception class lesson, demonstrated detailed planning, and the teacher made effective use of 'Fluffy', the hand puppet to sustain pupils' interest. In Year 1, the teacher cleverly used deliberate mistakes to focus pupils' attention on their 'What's Underneath?' story. Targets are identified for each group, and pupils are beginning to check work for mistakes. In some lessons, however, the work set is not sufficiently challenging for the most able and best use is not made of support staff, who sit through lengthy introductions unoccupied. In both Years 1 and 2 there is good evidence of marking being used well to help pupils improve their work. Homework is used effectively to extend vocabulary and improve spelling.
105. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is more variable. In the vast majority of lessons, teaching is satisfactory or good and, occasionally, very good, but there is also a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, work is presented in a lively way, and pupils' learning benefits from the frequent opportunities to contribute to discussions. Time at the end of lessons is used well to assess pupils' level of understanding. There is a feeling of mutual respect within the classroom and pupils' ideas are valued. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, through skilful questioning, the teacher incorporates pupils' suggestions and effectively guides them to a greater understanding of the nonsense poem 'Mean Song'. However, not all teachers have high enough expectations, the tasks set are sometimes undemanding, and insufficient attention is given to whether pupils understand what they are doing or whether they have remembered previous work.
106. The headteacher, as English co-ordinator, has been instrumental in successfully implementing the National Literacy Strategy. She provides strong leadership and has a very clear sense of direction for the subject. All staff have a shared commitment towards raising standards further and English work is meticulously monitored and results analysed. Numerous assessment procedures are now in place, and target-setting is being developed. Portfolios of work are

maintained to support decisions about attainment and progress. However, current day-to-day assessment varies in quality. It, frequently, lacks precision and does not always accurately assess the progress and level of understanding of individual pupils. Literacy funding has been used well to provide an adequate range of good quality reading materials. Much of the school's recent professional development programme has focused on literacy. This training has had a positive impact upon the quality of planning and class teaching.

MATHEMATICS

107. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken towards the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2, and the higher level 3, was well below average. It was also well below average when compared to the achievements of pupils in similar schools.
108. However, at Key Stage 1, inspection evidence finds standards much improved this year. Although pupils' achievements are still below the national average, indications are that four out of five pupils are reaching the expected Level 2. The more able pupils are achieving well, with over a quarter of the pupils reaching the higher Level 3. This is close to national averages and is a clear improvement since the last inspection when no pupils were identified as achieving above the expected level. Starting from a low base at the end of the reception year, this represents good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the progress made at Key Stage 1 was satisfactory.
109. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken towards the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4, and the higher Level 5, was well below the national average. It was below average when compared to the achievements of pupils in similar schools. At Key Stage 2, improvements in the National Curriculum tests since the last inspection have been above the national trend. At Key Stage 2, inspection evidence, and teachers' assessments and monitoring, show that the numbers of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 has increased considerably but that, overall, standards are still just below national expectations. In Year 6, a group of high-ability pupils are achieving well and attaining above the nationally expected standard. Pupils with special educational needs work at level appropriate to their ability. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are making satisfactory progress although it is uneven through the key stage. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the progress made at Key Stage 2 was unsatisfactory. Indications are that the school will exceed its target of 59 per cent for mathematics.
110. Through Key Stage 1, the National Numeracy Strategy is having a real impact on the ability of the pupils to work orally and mentally. By the end of the key stage most pupils can count on in ones and tens from any two-digit number. The most able can confidently add 9, 19, 11 and 21, by adding the appropriate number of tens, then adding or subtracting the correct number. Most other pupils can do this with support. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are able to break down numbers into tens and units, combining the tens then the units together to find the total of two two-digit numbers. Pupils can find change to 20 pence and add three amounts together. Pupils have a good understanding of odd and even and patterns in numbers. Pupils know the names of common two- and three-dimensional shapes and describe some of their features, such as corners, sides and faces. Pupils are becoming more confident through Key Stage 1 in problem solving. Pupils in Year 1 were challenged to find out what number they would get to when they had written down 17 digits. Working together, in pairs of different abilities, many reached the correct answer.
111. By the end of Key Stage 2, the National Numeracy Strategy is also having an impact on the way pupils manipulate and understand numbers. However, through the key stage pupils' ability to work mentally and solve problems is not well developed. In Year 6, most pupils have a good understanding of place value and can multiply and divide numbers by ten, a hundred and a thousand. Many pupils use a range of strategies, for example, when they multiplied a two digit by another two-digit number. Knowledge of decimals is, however, not as well developed. Pupils are able to carry out investigations and discover rules to link mathematical numbers. They have a fair understanding of negative numbers, through their work on temperature, most being able to find the difference in temperature between two points above and below the zero line. Approximately half the pupils are able to read timetables well and use them to find out

how long they would wait, for example, to catch a bus or a train. Pupils have a good understanding of the use of different metric measures and can convert, for example, from centimetres to meters and from metres to kilometres. Too few pupils, however, have a good knowledge of their tables to 12, and this prevents them from solving mental oral questions quickly. A small number of the highest-attaining pupils work out the multiplication tables beyond twelve quite quickly.

112. In Year 3, pupils have little quick mental recall even with numbers to 20. They do, however, have a good understanding of shape and data handling, and are able to interpret tallying on bar graphs. Information technology is used well to support data handling. In Year 4, only the most able are able to multiply by 10 and a 100. Most are not able to add two two-digit numbers together and have little knowledge of mathematical language beyond the very basic. Many pupils find it difficult to explain their reasoning. In Year 5, pupils are gaining a good understanding of shape; they know how to recognise and draw symmetrical shapes and identify lines of symmetry. A computer programme is used well to further develop pupils learning. Tables are however only known well by the highest attainers. These pupils are gaining an understanding of the relationship between decimals and fractions.
113. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is usually good and at Key Stage 2 it is satisfactory overall, with some teaching that is good. In the best lessons, the mental strategies that pupils use are developing well and pupils have a clear understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it. In these lessons too, pupils are challenged to find out things for themselves and gain a good range of mathematical vocabulary. At Key Stage 2, pupils are set targets at the start of the term and sometimes they write them at the start of lessons. This is good practice but in itself does not ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them. The needs of both boys and girls are appropriately recognised and provided for. In most lessons, the pace of learning varies for pupils of different abilities. Lower-attaining pupils are, sometimes, particularly well supported by the class teacher or the classroom assistant. In the larger classes at Key Stage 2, this proved more difficult to achieve as the teacher focus was more about the overall management of the lesson than supporting the needs of pupils' particular abilities. In all lessons, the three elements of a numeracy lesson of an introduction, main part, and whole-class session, are well developed. In all lessons, too, there is good classroom management ensuring that all pupils learn in a positive environment. At both key stages, assessments are carried out regularly through the use of assess and review sheets. However, these are not matched sufficiently to pupils' prior learning, so are unable to provide the teacher with the exact information they need to provide the right learning experiences. Assessments that focus more closely on the objectives being taught within the numeracy framework would help ensure that, when key objectives are revisited, teaching and learning is more highly focused to the learning needs of the pupils. Monitoring and tracking of pupils is developed well in numeracy, particularly in relation to the standards that pupils attain. This raises the teacher's awareness of the standards the individual pupil has reached, but the information is not always used as effectively to guide future planning. Lesson planning is organised effectively with lesson plans being written for the first two or three days in the week, and then adjusted in response to the assessment of pupils' learning.
114. At Key Stage 1, good teaching ensures that pupils are learning effectively. Pupils are gaining a good understanding of early mathematical language, for example, that four plus four makes eight, and they can say 'double four makes eight'. At Year 2, they effectively question their teacher to find out what number she is thinking of by asking questions, for example, 'Is it an odd number?' 'Are there five tens?' 'Is it less than 50?'. Pupils are learning to work independently and are being encouraged to work problems out in their own way. In the earlier stages of Key Stage 2, pupils are being encouraged to investigate numbers and number puzzles. They are being hampered in their efforts by a lack of understanding of basic number. Before they reach Year 6, pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn the different ways that number operations can be carried out. This is not encouraging them to think and reason around numbers. The oldest pupils are beginning to learn a wide range of strategies when they are adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing numbers. They carry out a wide range of investigations to discover more about numbers. The needs of pupils with special educational needs in numeracy are usually appropriately met in lessons.

115. The school development plan has incorporated numeracy as a high priority. This has meant that, over the past year, teaching in numeracy has been carefully and systematically monitored by the co-ordinator. Targets have been set for every pupil at Key Stage 2 to reach by the end of the key stage, and pupils' progress towards them is being carefully monitored by the co-ordinator. In Years 3 to 5, the knowledge that teachers have about pupils' mathematical understanding is not sufficiently well developed to ensure that, when numeracy aspects are revisited, learning is at an appropriate level. There has been training for all staff in the implementation of the numeracy strategy. There is still a need to support staff, for example, in their understanding of how addition should be taught using the numeracy strategy as their guide. Without this consistent approach, the learning gains made by pupils in Key Stage 1 will not be sustained. All pupils have homework in numeracy and this benefits their learning. Opportunities are, however, missed for parents to support their children's learning of tables. Pupils have multiplication cards but they are not taken home to learn. Parents are involved in supporting younger pupils with their number bonds, as they take these home to learn.
116. There is little evidence of numeracy being developed across the curriculum. Science, in particular, does not incorporate as much numeracy as might be expected.

SCIENCE

117. Evidence shows that, overall, standards have risen significantly since the previous inspection, when the subject gave cause for concern.
118. The results of the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2, or above, and the higher Level 3, was well below the national average. Inspection evidence indicates a significant improvement since then, with pupils' performance moving much closer to expectations, particularly in the strand of investigative and experimental science. Pupils are developing a satisfactory aptitude for scientific thought as well as knowledge and understanding of scientific facts. Starting from a low base on entry to the reception class, this represents good progress.
119. Pupils in Year 2 understand the benefits of exercise and can name sources of light. They know that some things need electricity to make them work. They name different materials and talk about their properties and uses. They have investigated magnetic and non-magnetic materials, and show a satisfactory understanding of the forces of push and pull. They make predictions, test their theories, measure their results and talk about their findings. For example, in an open-ended investigation of toy cars, they pose their own questions, devise their own methods for finding the answers, evaluate and refine these methods, measure their results and explain their findings. Recording of work is less well developed and their limited vocabulary often masks what they know and understand.
120. The 1999 National Curriculum test results, at the end of Key Stage 2, showed that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4, or above, was average when compared nationally. When pupils' results were compared with those of similar schools, their performance was above average. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainments of the pupils currently Year 6 reflect these results, with a good number of pupils working at the higher Level 5. Trends over time show a very positive picture, with a sharp rise in standards since 1997 that is greater than the national trend, and which reflects improvements in the school's provision since the previous inspection.
121. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding. They have a good understanding of some aspects of science, such as electrical circuits, where they learn from 'hands on' experience, and their knowledge of the life cycle of plants and animals is secure. Pupils know what is meant by a food chain and the importance of plants to all living organisms. They know that light travels in straight lines, and explain terms, such as, opaque, translucent, gravity, and up-thrust. However, their performance in investigative science is weak, and they have not developed the capacity to become independent learners. Their understanding of a fair test is very limited and they have little experience of selecting their own methods for solving problems. Their ability to measure and record their findings in

different ways is well below average. This is partly because of limitations in their language skills, but also because this aspect of science is neglected in Key Stage 2.

122. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and their progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall. The highest-attaining pupils make good progress at both key stages, but progress is a little slower for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 2. This is because work is not always appropriately matched to their specific needs. However, these pupils are often well supported in lessons by well-qualified support staff.
123. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. There is a good focus on factual knowledge and scientific vocabulary throughout the school. The best teaching is seen in Key Stage 1, where a practical approach provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their scientific thinking through a series of explorations and investigations. Teachers are less concerned with formal recording at this stage, encouraging pupils to develop their language skills and scientific ideas through talking about their work.
124. Teachers in upper Key Stage 2 work hard to provide pupils with a wealth of knowledge and understanding, but activities are too prescriptive, with insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn through first hand experience. The use of assessment to inform day-to-day planning is inconsistent and a weakness in Key Stage 2. Occasionally, work is pitched at too high a level for the youngest and least able pupils. For example, in a Year 4/5 lesson, the youngest pupils, and those with special educational needs, were working at an inappropriate level, learning about balanced forces. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, although in Key Stage 1 there are good examples of comments that are designed to help the pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. Pupils take a pride in their written work, which is very well presented. They are well behaved at all times in science lessons even though, for some pupils, science is not a favourite subject and they find it hard.
125. A whole-school approach, which is closely linked to government guidelines, ensures that all aspects of the subject are covered satisfactorily. A two-year rolling programme and a scheme of work, which clearly defines what pupils will learn, enables pupils to consolidate and extend their learning appropriately as they move through the key stages. This is a strength and marks a significant improvement since the previous inspection. However, a weakness lies in the limited opportunities for pupils to develop independence and scientific thought through a more practical approach to science in upper Key Stage 2. This was a criticism in the previous report and there has been unsatisfactory progress since that time. There is some evidence of pupils repeating work and discussions with pupils confirmed this. The inspection recognised that repeating work, especially in Year 6, helps pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding. The school is aware of the need to address weaknesses in planning for investigative science.
126. The recently appointed co-ordinator for science is not a specialist in the subject, and there have been no opportunities for her to attend professional training. Opportunities to monitor the subject more effectively are built into the school development plan but are not currently a priority. Resources for science are generally satisfactory and easily accessible. The school's natural environment is rich in opportunities for learning and educational visits provide good first-hand experiences. The subject supports literacy, with recording of work, and there are good links with other subjects such as geography. More use could be made of numeracy and information technology to support the subject.

ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127. Although very few lessons were observed during the inspection, scrutiny of pupils' work, class displays and teachers' planning, together with discussions with pupils and staff, show that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in both subjects. Detailed schemes of work make provision for pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding from year to year, as they move through the key stages. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The new planning procedures have only recently been introduced and, although they are currently leading to sound progress, evidence shows

that there has not been time for them to make a significant impact upon standards by the time pupils leave school.

128. In art work, pupils are developing good experiences of using a wide range of media in both key stages. Collage work is produced to an appropriate standard in lessons and to a high standard on visits to a local residential centre. Pupils in the reception class print creatively with their hands and fingers, and with vegetables. They paint colourful pictures of flowers in the style of Van Gogh and explore malleable materials such as play dough. In Year 1, pupils produce attractive colour wash pictures in the style of Rosina Wachtmeister. They are gaining an appropriate understanding of perspective, through exploring and experimenting with images of different size. They use charcoal with confidence, understanding its potential for shading and they experiment with sketching and aqua-pencils. In Year 2, pupils develop this understanding of perspective through pen and wash landscapes in the style of Turner.
129. At Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 6 have produced an exciting range of wallpaper designs based on the work of William Morris. They use a range of techniques to make their designs, such as wood blocks and string, stencils and impressed polystyrene. They draw in the style of Lowry, using a range of graded pencils and make observational drawings of musical instruments and themselves. However, their drawing skills are below expectations for pupils of this age. Frequent use is made of sketchbooks but these are not annotated or used sufficiently as a reference for further work. Pupils occasionally use the computer to support their artwork, but this is less common. In design and technology, they have experienced a good range of materials and techniques, including, for example, the use of tools when making musical instruments.
130. It was not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in design and technology, as no lessons were observed. Teaching in art lessons was satisfactory overall, with some good practice observed. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan to give pupils thoroughly worthwhile experiences. In the best lessons, pupils are provided with opportunities to select their own materials and to work independently. However, many lessons are too teacher directed. Pupils enjoy the lessons, co-operate well and concentrate for long periods of time. Their good behaviour underpins the sound, and sometimes good progress that they make. However, few show imagination in their work.
131. Whole-school planning for these subjects ensures coverage of the curriculum and some depth to the pupils' studies, but, in design and technology, there are long periods of time between their blocked lessons that lead to poor retention of knowledge.
132. The unusually long lessons provide opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills and to reinforce learning in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in design and technology, pupils in Key Stage 2 produce books for younger children, where different mechanisms move images across a page. In links with their science lessons, they investigate the different ways in which sounds are produced before making models of musical instruments. The subject is managed satisfactorily, although the role of the co-ordinator is limited in terms of monitoring.

GEOGRAPHY

133. At the time of the last inspection geography pupils' progress was judged satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2. Since then, a scheme of work has been written which has gives more structure and guidance for geography. This is clearly an improvement since the last inspection. However, following recent recommendations from a monitoring report, the school is teaching the subject in greater depth, but only in one school term each year. Within this structure, and the current freedom that the school has to devote less time to the non-core subjects, the pupils make good progress through Key Stage 1, and satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2. This, too, is an improvement since the last inspection. There are, however, aspects that particularly need further developing and the development of the Curriculum 2000 guidelines is recognised as an appropriate way forward by the school.
134. At Key Stage 1, the youngest pupils are developing good knowledge of the immediate environment, as they make a design for the playground. They are developing their thinking

and the ability to form an opinion as they discuss their likes and dislikes, and suggest improvements. This is a good start to the work in geography. This continues through the key stage. By the end of Year 2, pupils are aware of similarities and differences between Runcorn and Struay, an imaginary island off the Scottish coast.

135. At Key Stage 2, the current study units of weather, settlement and rivers are well understood by pupils. Pupils express and extend their understanding of settlements through dance very well. Information technology is also used very effectively. In Year 6, more able pupils scan a CD-ROM, very skilfully, to find out information about ox-bow lakes, as a part of their lesson. Pupils understand how the features of a river, such as waterfalls and flood plains are made. Pupils' knowledge of the world, and map work skills, are, however, insufficiently well developed. These particular aspects are at risk when there is a long time between study units and when the aspects are not carefully planned as a part of the whole-subject development.
136. Teaching is good overall at both key stages. Teachers' knowledge and understanding, their planning, and effective management of classroom learning all contribute in a positive way. Pupils' learning in geography is also enhanced by the cross-curricular links that have been established. Literacy uses geography as a tool to further develop pupils' thinking, for example, in Year 1, when pupils write to parents about the safety issues of cars at the school entrance. Science is a key element in Year 3 when pupils consider survival in a desert. Role-play is used well in Key Stage 1, especially for pupils with special educational needs. Residential visits to Tattenhall in the upper years of Key Stage 2 also add value to the curriculum. Much of the geography that is observed is set at different levels to match the understanding of pupils. This means that learning is more appropriate to the individual pupil. If this process is continued through the programmes of study, matching learning to the development of the pupils, it sets a good example for other subjects of the curriculum.
137. Good teaching excites pupils' learning, particularly at Key Stage 1, where learning is very active. In most lessons pupils' behaviour is good. It is only in the larger classes at Key Stage 2 when, occasionally, a small minority of pupils find it difficult to listen. Pupils concentrate well on their tasks and most enjoy presenting work well.
138. Assessment is included in the medium term planning where evaluation is a part of the planning framework. There is a need, however, for more clearly structured assessments at the end of the topics that will assist in planning the curriculum for the future. This is needed especially as topics are currently taught in a two-year cycle to cater for the mixed-age classes.
139. Geography as a non-core subject is included in the school development plan for this coming year, however, to meet the needs of Curriculum 2000, more fully, the geography curriculum needs to be considered as a whole. Educational visits, that support learning, need to be planned for, as do opportunities for map work. The school grounds are used well, especially in the early years. More could be done to utilise the large field, for example, to develop orienteering studies. The geography co-ordinator has been very effective in the work that has been done so far.

HISTORY

140. No teaching was observed during the inspection. Evidence is drawn from discussion with pupils, displays, observation of work samples and teachers' planning. It indicates that pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Despite a reduction in time for teaching history, the school provides a worthwhile learning experience for pupils and the standard of progress has been maintained since the time of the last inspection.
141. The subject is taught through a series of topics that take place in the autumn term of each year. A two-year rolling programme has recently been introduced and that has gone some way towards catering for the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. However, although pupils remember recent work with reasonable accuracy, they have difficulty retaining more detailed knowledge of past work, because there is such a long time span between each topic. Younger pupils in Key Stage 1 learn about the past through looking at old and new houses. In discussion, pupils in Year 2 remember their work about the Great Fire of London. They recall

dates accurately, and explain the cause of the fire and main events surrounding its spread. They retain information well and explain why water had to be carried from the River Thames to douse the flames. Some, but not all, show a sense of chronology.

142. At Key Stage 2, pupils study topics such as Ancient Britain, the Greeks and Romans. In Year 6, pupils recall their most recent topic on Victorians well and display a good understanding of the contrasting lives of rich and poor. They remember their Victorian Day in school when they used slates and chalk. However, they do not remember important dates and, although they are familiar with using time lines, they are confused about the period in history when the Victorians lived. Although there is evidence of literacy and research skills being developed through history, pupils of all abilities cover the same work and some pupils demonstrate a lack of basic skills in the quality and presentation of their work.
143. In discussion, pupils from both key stages are interested and enthusiastic. They are keen to learn but are held back by the long gaps in between topics.
144. There is an adequate range of resources, although the school recognises the need to extend and improve the range for Key Stage 1. Artefacts are loaned from the local library to support learning and visits to places of interest, such as Chester, are used well to support pupils' learning. The curriculum co-ordinator is recently appointed and oversees medium term planning but is not involved in monitoring what pupils know and understand from their work. Assessments are informal and the school lacks a structure for recording work covered and standards achieved in a systematic way.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

145. Evidence taken from lesson observations, examples of previous work, and discussions, indicates that standards, at the end of both key stages, are close to national expectations, and that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The rise in standards represents good improvement since the time of the last inspection.
146. At the beginning of Key Stage 1, pupils gain confidence in computer mouse control when using a program in which they dress a teddy. They match letters, and link computer programs to their work on playground design. In Year 1, pupils learn how to make and follow symbol instruction cards when using the tape recorder, and pupils Year 2 use the word-processing program, and explore symmetry with an art program, using simple computer tools. Pupils use and understand the language of computers well.
147. As pupils move into Key Stage 2, they continue to develop their word-processing skills in a structured way so that, by Year 6, pupils cut and paste, highlight and underline. Work is frequently linked to other areas of the curriculum, such as Ancient Greece, rivers or graph work. In Year 3, pupils arrange their text in a circle and insert graphics into their work. Pupils in Year 4 change texts and graphics, and older pupils learn how to turn simple devices on and off, according to a set of instructions. In Year 6, pupils plan a database on holidays in preparation for putting the information onto a spreadsheet. Pupils work under teacher supervision when accessing information from the Internet, and make good use of the e-mail facility for sending messages to friends and family. At present, there is insufficient opportunity for the development of control skills but new resources for the next academic year should rectify the problem.
148. Progress in lessons is always satisfactory, and occasionally good, or very good. The systematic and well-structured progress is underpinned by a good balance of activities that ensures coverage of the full information technology curriculum. The rate of pupils' learning is closely linked to the quality of teaching. In most classrooms the computer is in use all day. Occasionally, progress is however slowed, when pupils in large classes have to wait to use one computer. For example, many pupils in Year 6 are ready to put their collected data onto the computer, but have to wait their turn. The very clear subject development plan has aided progress for both staff and pupils. High quality portfolios of information technology use in numeracy and literacy, in addition to samples of work from each year group, provide a clear insight into the variety of work and the pattern of progress throughout the school.

149. Teaching is good overall. In half of lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory, in the other half it was good, or very good. Information technology is firmly established on the timetable and is an integral part of school life. Through very good professional development, staff confidence and expertise has improved since the last inspection. Software is appropriately linked to topics and allocated to specific year groups. The programs used are very appropriate to the age and ability of all pupils. In the best lessons, teachers make very effective use of small time allocations at the beginning and end of the morning. Their work is well organised, they give clear instructions, use correct terminology and tasks provide challenge for even the most able. Occasionally, in some lessons, introductions are too long and pupils are left with too little time to complete practical activities.
150. As a result of good teaching pupils attitudes are good at both key stages. Pupils respond well to the systematic structure that lessons provide. Pupils enjoy working on the computer and regard their tasks as a fun part of the curriculum. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils co-operated, laughed with each other, and were totally involved in their work. In Year 6, pupils display good humour and genuinely enjoy working together. Occasionally, pupils' learning is not as good, and they lose interest when the teacher spends too long explaining work, or they do not get the opportunity to use the computer.
151. The subject co-ordinator is recently appointed and has had a major influence on raising standards, providing stability and a very clear sense of direction. The school continues to replace and upgrade computers, but has to rely heavily on Halton College who provide the technology suite computers. The joint use of its computer suite means that the computers cannot be accessed all the time. This arrangement is not ideal but the school is very grateful for the support and makes the best use of the resources currently available.

MUSIC

152. At the time of the last inspection, the standards achieved by pupils were as expected for their age at Key Stage 1, but below expectations at Key Stage 2. Progress was judged to be satisfactory, but insufficient attention was given to the music of other cultures. Although the time allocation for music has been reduced, satisfactory progress by pupils of all abilities has been maintained. The school has made some improvement by introducing an appropriate two-year rolling programme of work. Music is linked to class topics on other countries and is effectively used to create an atmosphere of calm within the entrance area and Prayer Room.
153. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection. Further evidence is drawn from discussion with pupils in Year 2, and Year 6, and photographic evidence of past concerts and performances. Younger pupils in Key Stage 1 have a clear understanding of slow music as they listen to the music of the elephant from the 'Carnival of the Animals'. In Year 2, pupils remember composing fast and slow music to create the effect of walking through the jungle. They talk about loud and soft as they mention the drums and maracas they used to make the sounds of the different animals. They do not always call instruments by their correct name, but are familiar with using them when they have their music lessons in the Prayer Room.
154. Pupils in Key Stage 2 develop an understanding of pitch and rhythm and most play instruments correctly. They know the names of some instruments but are not totally secure with the names of others, such as the glockenspiel and xylophone. In Year 6, pupils learn the words to 'Goodnight Sweetheart', with reasonable speed, and produce a satisfactory standard of singing, but they could not show how they refine or improve quality, and they pay little attention to breath control or posture as they sing. During the inspection, last-minute unavoidable arrangements, and the stifling weather, did not encourage pupils to perform at their best. In discussion, they recall a pupil writing a play with music that was performed for parents. They particularly enjoyed learning the songs from 'Bugsy Malone', and they have recently made their own musical instruments.
155. Pupils throughout the school have positive learning experiences. They enjoy music. Younger pupils are excited and display much humour but are never badly behaved. Older pupils

organise themselves into groups with a high degree of co-operation, and show respect for each other's work. Both boys and girls sustain an interest in music throughout their time at school.

156. Pupils express themselves, through music, without embarrassment and with maturity. They looked forward to their forthcoming visit to Tattenhall, and recall past performances and assemblies with enthusiasm.
157. The music scheme provides helpful guidance for non-specialist class teachers and goes some way towards ensuring a degree of continuity and progression. It is structured to ensure each element of the music curriculum is covered, but it does not ensure that skills are developed systematically as pupils progress through the school. Within the re-structured timetabling music is sometimes squeezed out of the curriculum. Information technology does not make a strong contribution to pupils' learning in music. No recent training has taken place, as courses have not been available for staff to attend. Partly as a consequence, class teachers show subject insecurity and are uncertain about the standards they should expect. In addition, although medium-term planning is monitored by the subject co-ordinator and topics are evaluated, no monitoring of class music teaching takes place, and no one has a clear overview of the subject. Currently, music does not feature strongly in the life of pupils within the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

158. At Key Stage 1, only one lesson was observed and, as this was not with the oldest pupils, it was not possible to provide a judgement about the progress pupils make. At Key Stage 2, however, although only two lessons were observed, these were both towards the upper end of the key stage and progress was observed to be good in these lessons. Taking into account other aspects of physical education, such as outdoor adventurous activities, progress is satisfactory through Key Stage 2. The progress noted at the last inspection has been fully maintained and the strengths in dance and gymnastics remain very similar.
159. In the Year 1 lesson seen, pupils' skills varied, ranging from those who had an obvious aptitude to games and ball skills, to those who found it quite difficult to throw and catch even at very limited distances. Performance for these younger pupils is limited by the amount of time allocated to physical education lessons. In gymnastics, at Key Stage 2, pupils practice and refine complex sequences of movement well. Their control in balance, jumping and rolling is particularly impressive in floor work. The high standards of some pupils were in part the result of attending a gymnastics club at the school. Pupils are very adept at putting out apparatus in a careful and sensible manner. In dance, which was used to extend a geography theme on settlement, pupils were able to rehearse ideas and movements effectively. Pupils had very good timing and co-ordination. In both lessons, pupils were able to evaluate performance sensibly and constructively. Pupils clapped the performance of their class-mates in genuine warmth and appreciation. In swimming, a survey revealed that nearly three-quarters of the pupils swim the required 25 metres by the end of Key Stage 2. There are opportunities for pupils to continue swimming in Years 5 and 6 if they have not yet learned to swim sufficiently well. The opportunities for pupils to experience outdoor adventurous activities are very limited.
160. The teaching of the lessons was satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. In both lessons, the management of pupils was highly effective and good subject knowledge evident. In dance, the structure of the lesson around discussion, individuals modelling ideas, group planning, performance and evaluation supported the good performance levels that were reached. Constructive comments by the teachers improved performance levels. Time was used particularly well in both lessons.
161. At Key Stage 1, pupils respond well to the teacher, and to the command, 'freeze'. They learn why they should listen in physical education. The standards that pupils achieve indoors are better than those achieved outdoors. This is due, in part, to the lack of familiarity of the pupils to games lessons, particularly those outdoors. At Key Stage 2, pupils learn effectively. They respond well. In gymnastics, pupils are engrossed in their activities. They enjoy lessons and have few inhibitions. In dance and gymnastics, pupils work constructively with each other and enjoy the relaxation the lessons offer.

162. Within the time allocated to physical education, following the review of non-core subjects, the subject is well co-ordinated. Published schemes are used well and visits to other centres have a positive effect on the quality of performance that pupils reach at Key Stage 2. There is good support from visiting students and other sports persons. Half-termly programmes are evaluated constructively. The physical ability of pupils in Year 1 does not appear to be developing as well as it could and this is being affected by the reduction in time allocated to the subject. The school is to take part in a 'Top Sports' initiative, later this year, to further develop planning. The co-ordinator has also identified the opportunity to monitor lessons next year. This has not been available previously and, together with the additional training, will continue to support continuity across both key stages.
163. The resources are good, with the indoor hall space very suitable for lessons. The playground and adjoining field are also very spacious and used appropriately.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

164. Religious education and acts of collective worship are inspected separately by a diocesan team.