

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10 OF
SCHOOL INSPECTIONS ACT, 1996**

MOUNTAIN LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Knowle Lane
Buckley
Flintshire, CH7 3JA

School Number: 664/2063

Date of Inspection: 21st – 25th February, 2005

MRS. EIRWEN GRIFFITHS

REGISTERED INSPECTOR: WO50/17562

18th March, 2005

UNDER ESTYN CONTRACT NUMBER: T/102/04P

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Mountain Lane Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their children's school. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Mountain Lane Primary School took place between 21st and 25th February, 2005. An independent team of four inspectors, led by Mrs. Eirwen Griffiths, M.Phil., M.Ed., undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgments in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings.

Year-Groups and Key Stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year-groups from the start of compulsory schooling to eighteen years age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local education authorities.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year-group of pupils in a primary school who attain the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year-group of pupils who attain the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year-group of students who attain the age of eighteen during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key Stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key Stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key Stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key Stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Mountain Lane is a large primary school serving the small town of Buckley in Flintshire. The local community has historically been very stable but, in recent years, large new housing estates have attracted families to the town, with consequent effects upon the school population.

2. The school currently has a total roll of 464 pupils aged three to eleven years, including fifty-eight nursery children who attend on a part-time basis. Applications for nursery places each year exceed the standard number for the school, with many parents seeking admission for their children from outside the defined catchment-area.

3. Most pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds, with highly supportive families, although there are also children from socially-deprived homes who, on admission, have underdeveloped social, linguistic and numerical skills. Overall, 3.6% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure well below the average of 18.5% for Wales as a whole. Some 15% are considered to have some form of special educational need, including one with a formal statement. This percentage is also well below the national average for Wales.

4. English is the sole or predominant home language spoken by almost all pupils. No pupil comes from a Welsh-speaking home. A very small number come from ethnic-minority families. In general, the pupil population is very static and stable.

5. The school was last inspected in January, 1999. No significant changes have been made to the age-range or character of the school since that time. The present headteacher has been in post since May, 1988.

The school's priorities and targets

6. Overall, the school's main priorities and targets for 2004-07 are the following:

- to investigate manageable systems for identifying common requirements and key skills in medium-term and short-term plans and standardise the process for all curricular plans;
- to further develop the links between the local high school to ensure continuity in the delivery of specific areas of the curriculum;
- to further involve pupils in self-evaluation and personal target-setting processes for literacy, number work and inter-personal skills at the appropriate developmental stage;
- to ensure that the school is fully conversant with the new requirements of the foundation phase and to implement the

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foundation phase strategy for reception and nursery pupils and eventually for pupils in Years 1 and 2;

- to explore the benefits of school councils in helping pupils understand and appreciate their role in the democratic process;
- to attain “healthy school” status which will include a strategy for involving the school in “sustainability initiatives”.

Summary

7. This is a happy, well-led, properly-managed school which lays strong emphasis on the pursuit of excellence and equal opportunities for all.

8. In respect of the seven key questions, the inspection team agrees with the school's own judgments in six cases and, in the other one, considers the overall grade to be higher than that assessed by the school.

Table of grades awarded

9. The team judges the work of the school to be currently as follows:

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	1
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

Standards

10. Work observed during the inspection indicates that pupils' standards of achievement are currently the following:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	57%	4%	-	-

11. Figures are well above the targets of the Welsh Assembly Government which expects 95% of pupils to achieve standards which are satisfactory or better and 50% to achieve standards which are good. Percentages in this case are 100% and 96% respectively.

12. The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs, and pupils make very good progress towards the desirable outcomes for learning. In comparison with other schools in Flintshire, the majority of children generally enter the school with above-average attainments for their age. Good progress is made in the key skills of speaking, listening, writing,

number, and information and communications technology at both nursery and reception level. Standards of achievement in the six areas of learning are currently as follows:

Area of Learning	Nursery	Reception
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills	Grade 1	Grade 2
Personal and Social Development	Grade 1	Grade 1
Mathematical Development	Grade 2	Grade 1
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Grade 1	Grade 1
Physical Development	Grade 2	Grade 2
Creative Development	Grade 2	Grade 2

13. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the following standards were achieved in the subjects inspected:

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	Grade 1	Grade 1
Science	Grade 1	Grade 1
History	Grade 1	Grade 2
Physical Education	Grade 1	Grade 1
Religious Education	Grade 2	Grade 2

14. Standards in key skills at Key Stages 1 and 2 are good in number and very good in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Skills in using information and communications technology across the curriculum are currently underdeveloped at both key stages. Bilingual competence is developing very well.

15. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and largely achieve the targets set for them in individual educational plans.

16. National Curriculum assessment conducted by teachers last summer indicated that, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainments in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well above the average for the county and for Wales as a whole. Percentages achieving the higher grade of Level 3 exceeded the national average in mathematics and English and were in line with the average in science. There were no significant differences between the performance of girls and boys, although girls achieved better results at Level 3 in English.

17. At the end of Key Stage 2, National Curriculum test results indicated that attainments were well above the county and national averages in English, mathematics and science. Boys generally outperformed girls, although not by a particularly significant margin.

18. When compared with other schools in Wales with a similar percentage of free school meals, overall results were around the median at both key stages. Standards, although consistently good, have fluctuated somewhat over the last three years.

19. Pupils throughout the school show very good attitudes to learning. Their ability to sustain concentration over an extended period is one of the outstanding features of the school. Almost all pupils work hard in lessons, display enthusiasm for learning and readily join in a range of activities. Many give very good responses to questions and participate well in debates and discussions.

20. Behaviour on all occasions is of a very high standard. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion and exercise a high degree of self-discipline. This is especially noticeable in assemblies and physical education in the school hall. Pupils are courteous to adults and relate well to each other.

The quality of education and training

21. Lessons observed during the inspection indicate that the quality of teaching is the following:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
33%	45%	22%	-	-

22. The percentage of satisfactory or better lessons (100%) is well above the Welsh Assembly Government's target of 95%, whilst the percentage of good or very good lessons (78%) considerably exceeds the target of 50%.

23. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Pupils work and play in an orderly, structured, positive, supportive environment that is highly conducive to learning. Very good discipline enables pupils to concentrate well on their tasks. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and actively engage them in the objectives of lessons. Care is taken to ensure that work is properly differentiated and carefully matched to individual needs. Good use is made of an appropriate range of methods and strategies. Explanations and instructions are generally clear and precise. Strong emphasis is placed on developing and building upon language skills to encourage pupils to become articulate and confident. Ongoing development in this area constitutes one of the major strengths of the school.

24. A comprehensive policy has been established for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements and progress, with detailed records collated by an assessment co-ordinator. Very good use is made of school, county and national standardised tests to identify strengths and weaknesses, whilst school profiles serve as valuable benchmarks for teachers. Progress is tracked as pupils move through the school.

25. Annual reports to parents comply with statutory requirements and provide appropriate information on pupils' progress and standards. Parents are encouraged to discuss the contents with class teachers, although not all avail themselves of the opportunity.

26. The school responds well to pupils' needs and provides equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Schemes of work are very good and provide staff with valuable guidance to secure the progressive development of knowledge, understanding and skills.

27. Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual and moral development, particularly during acts of collective worship. Assemblies are mainly Christian in character and are reverent, meaningful occasions that fully involve pupils and offer time for quiet reflection. Class assemblies are a particular strength of the school.

28. Due attention is paid to the history, heritage and culture of Wales, as well as the cultural richness of other countries and societies. An effective programme of personal and social education has enabled pupils to gain an awareness and understanding of sustainable development and the concept of global citizenship.

29. Staff provide a wide range of extracurricular activities, which help to support the strong lifelong learning ethos of the school. Particular emphasis is placed on sport and culture. A thriving gymnastics club offers opportunities for pupils to achieve excellence and to gain recognition at national level. Groups from the school have been chosen to demonstrate good practice at a number of county and national events.

30. Highly-productive and well-managed links have been forged with local industry, with the school taking full advantage of the expertise and resources they provide.

31. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils, particularly those with special needs. Pupils enjoy attending school, where they feel happy and secure.

32. Very good information is provided for parents. A weekly newsletter contains progress reports on action plans and gives details of forthcoming events and dates for the diary. At the commencement of each term, parents receive an outline of the curriculum taught in the relevant year-group so that they can be fully involved in their children's learning. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents both comply with statutory requirements. Parents feel a strong partnership with the school, based on mutual trust and confidence.

33. Attendance is good overall and is regularly monitored to enable the school to identify individual and group trends of absence. Details of the few pupils who arrive after the commencement of lessons are recorded, together with the reasons put forward. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with bullying or any other form of unacceptable behaviour, although there is no evidence to suggest that pupils' conduct is anything but exemplary both in the classroom and playground.

34. Due attention is given to the promotion of equal opportunities, social inclusion and race relations. Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils have opportunities to explore a range of cultures, particularly through religious education and personal and social education.

35. All members of staff are fully aware of the procedures to be followed in child-protection cases.

36. Good provision overall is made for pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that needs are identified at an early stage and that a suitable educational plan is drawn up for each pupil. Targets are precise, relevant and achievable. Plans are regularly reviewed in consultation with parents. Pupils are well integrated into classes and benefit from setting arrangements at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and English. Work in withdrawal groups provides effective reinforcement of basic skills. Insufficient use, however, is currently made of information technology to enhance and extend pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and strategic management are exemplary. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on high expectations and the pursuit of excellence. Purposeful management, coupled with a strong sense of commitment and dedication, enables aims to be largely fulfilled. Clear procedures are in place to ensure effective delivery and monitoring of the curriculum. The headteacher is a very good role model for teaching, which he undertakes on a regular basis.

38. The senior management team functions efficiently and effectively, and has been temporarily reconstituted to cover the duties of the former deputy headteacher who has taken up an appointment with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

39. School governors are highly committed and work closely with the headteacher in providing strategic direction and purposeful management for the school. Regular committee meetings enable members to receive curriculum reports, deal with matters of import and exercise proper financial control. Statutory duties are well performed.

40. A positive, self-critical culture promotes effective self-evaluation. The process is systematic, cohesive and comprehensive, and based upon first-hand experiences and evidence contributed by all members of staff. Clear priorities and targets, coupled with well-defined action plans, enable aims to be achieved.

41. The headteacher meets the chairman and vice-chairman of the governing body each month to discuss progress in achieving the targets set in the school development plan. Performance management further supports the drive for excellence, although regular monitoring of standards of teaching and learning has long been established as a way of moving the school forward.

42. The school development plan is a very comprehensive working document, covering the period 2004 – 2007. Priorities are clearly set out on a subject, departmental and whole-school basis, together with estimated costs, staff responsibilities, timescales for completion and expected outcomes. All members of staff and the governing body are fully involved in the process.

43. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of achievement in English and science continue to be very good. Standards in physical education are now very good at both key stages and

constitute one of the major strengths of the school. Standards in history are very good at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2, whilst standards in religious education remain good at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Appropriate action has been taken to develop the good practice in assessment and curriculum procedures, review the quality of annual reports to parents, and ensure that all schemes and policies are fully implemented. Shortcomings, however, remain in the use and application of information technology.

44. Efficient use of resources ensures that the school is adequately staffed to deliver the curriculum. Very good collaboration takes place with nursery nurses and classroom assistants. A strong team spirit is another of the major strengths of the school. Effective support is provided by the school secretary, caretaker, midday supervisors and canteen staff. Day-to-day administration is smooth and efficient.

45. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The building is generally in good condition, although there are parts requiring urgent attention. Many of the classrooms are relatively small, resulting in cramped conditions, especially where pupil numbers are high. Whilst the size of classrooms does not prevent the full delivery of the curriculum, it often limits activities, restricts organisation and impedes the movement of pupils. A large, well-equipped hall is used for physical education, dance, music, assemblies and dining, but also serves as a means of access from one end of the building to the other. Passage through the area sometimes causes minor disruption to activities. Displays of pupils' work, objects, artefacts and books associated with classroom themes are very attractive and help to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. A school library is situated in a main corridor used by pupils at Key Stage 2.

46. Outdoor facilities fully meet requirements for sports and play, and include spacious hardcore areas and a large playing-field. Pupils also have access to a nature garden, which offers opportunities for observation and investigation, and make regular use of Wepre Park, Buckley Library, the Heritage Trail, the Schools' Library Service and facilities at the local high school.

47. Learning is well supported by a good range of resources which are thoughtfully used in most areas of the curriculum, with the exception of information technology where current provision is insufficient to develop pupils' skills to the full.

48. Good efforts are made by headteacher, staff and governing body to use resources wisely and efficiently. Regular reviews are made of subjects to identify requirements and to determine priorities for spending. Expenditure is generally well linked to targets in the school development plan.

49. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

Recommendations

It is recommended that action is taken to:

- R1. maintain the high standards and very good practice identified in the report;
- R2. make further improvements, where necessary, particularly in the development of pupils' investigative skills and the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum;
- R3. improve and extend the resources provided for information technology so that pupils' skills in this area can be fully developed;
- R4. develop further strategies for involving pupils in the evaluation of their personal and academic achievements.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within forty-five working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features
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50. The findings of the inspection team differ from the judgment of Grade 2 in the school's self-evaluation report. In the team's opinion, standards in this area are higher than those assessed by the school.

51. Work observed during the inspection indicates that pupils' standards of achievement are currently the following:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	57%	4%	-	-

52. The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs, and pupils make very good progress towards the desirable outcomes for learning.

53. In comparison with other schools in Flintshire, the majority of children generally enter the school with above-average attainments for their age. Good progress is made in the key skills of speaking, listening, writing, number, and information and communications technology at both nursery and reception level. Standards of achievement in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Area of Learning	Nursery	Reception
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills	Grade 1	Grade 2
Personal and Social Development	Grade 1	Grade 1
Mathematical Development	Grade 2	Grade 1
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Grade 1	Grade 1
Physical Development	Grade 2	Grade 2
Creative Development	Grade 2	Grade 2

54. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the following standards were achieved in the subjects inspected:

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	Grade 1	Grade 1
Science	Grade 1	Grade 1
History	Grade 1	Grade 2
Physical Education	Grade 1	Grade 1
Religious Education	Grade 2	Grade 2

55. Standards in key skills at Key Stages 1 and 2 are good in number and very good in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Skills in using information and communications technology across the curriculum are currently underdeveloped at both key stages. Bilingual competence is developing very well.

56. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and largely achieve the targets set for them in individual educational plans.

57. National Curriculum assessment conducted by teachers last summer indicated that, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainments in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well above the average for the county and for Wales as a whole. Percentages achieving the higher grade of Level 3 exceeded the national average in mathematics and English and were in line with the average in science. There were no significant differences between the performance of girls and boys, although girls achieved better results at Level 3 in English

58. At the end of Key Stage 2, National Curriculum test results indicated that attainments were well above the county and national averages in English, mathematics and science. Boys generally outperformed girls, although not by a margin of particular significance.

59. When compared with other schools in Wales with a similar percentage of free school meals, results were around the median at both key stages. Standards, although consistently good, have fluctuated somewhat over the last three years.

60. Pupils throughout the school show very good attitudes to learning. Their ability to sustain concentration over an extended period is one of the outstanding features of the school. Almost all pupils work hard in lessons, display enthusiasm for learning and readily join in a range of activities. Many give very good responses to questions and participate well in debates and discussions.

61. Behaviour on all occasions is of a very high standard. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion and exercise a high degree of self-discipline. This is especially noticeable in assemblies and physical education in the school hall. Pupils are courteous to adults and relate well to each other.

62. Very good progress is made in personal, social and moral development. Pupils are aware of the rights of others and show respect for different beliefs, customs and cultural traditions.

The Quality of Education and Training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features

63. The findings of the inspection team match the judgment of Grade 1 in the school's self-evaluation report.

64. Lessons observed during the inspection indicate that the quality of teaching is as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
33%	45%	22%	-	-

65. The vast majority of teaching varies between good and very good. As a result, pupils are well stimulated, motivated and challenged and seek to attain high standards of achievement.

66. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Pupils work and play in an orderly, structured, positive, supportive environment that is highly conducive to learning. Very good discipline enables pupils to concentrate well on their tasks.

67. All teachers display very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. Lessons, in most cases, maintain an appropriate balance between explanation, activities and a plenary session.

68. In the small number of lessons where teaching is less effective, long introductions cause pupils' interest to wane and reduce the amount of time available for the completion of tasks.

69. Planning for teaching and learning is comprehensive and cohesive, and undertaken collaboratively within parallel classes. Long and medium-term planning is based on policies and schemes of work across the curriculum. Short-term planning clearly identifies lesson objectives, key skills, common requirements, differentiation and resources, and is monitored weekly by the headteacher and team leaders.

70. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and actively engage them in the objectives of lessons. Care is taken to ensure that work is properly differentiated and carefully matched to individual needs. Good use is made of an appropriate range of methods and strategies. Explanations and instructions are generally clear and precise.

71. Very good questioning techniques promote higher-order learning skills and, in the best practice, enable pupils to explore issues with increasing maturity and in appropriate depth and detail. Strong emphasis is placed on developing and building upon language skills to encourage pupils to become articulate and confident.

Ongoing development in this area constitutes one of the major strengths of the school.

72. Learning resources are generally well employed across the curriculum, although information technology is not yet used to maximum advantage.

73. Nursery nurses and classroom support staff make an important contribution to learning. Very good liaison with teachers results in the joint planning of work and ensures an informed insight into the needs of each pupil.

74. Good attention is paid to bilingual competence, with regular incidental use of Welsh in all classes, including lessons such as physical education.

75. Staff freely give of their time to provide pupils with a very extensive programme of extracurricular activities and visits, some of which are undertaken on a residential basis. Activities promote social interaction and inclusion outside the classroom and enhance pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide variety of areas. Co-ordination is undertaken by an appropriate member of staff.

76. A comprehensive policy has been established for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements and progress, with detailed records collated by an assessment co-ordinator. Very good use is made of school, county and national standardised tests to identify strengths and weaknesses, whilst school profiles serve as valuable benchmarks for teachers. Progress is tracked as pupils move through the school.

77. Effective strategies are currently being developed to involve pupils in setting targets for improvement and assessing the progress they make.

78. Work is regularly marked, with good use of praise and encouragement. Although guidance is given on ways of making improvements and raising standards, teachers do not always make full use of the process to provide feedback for pupils and to agree targets for further attainment.

79. Annual reports to parents comply with statutory requirements and provide appropriate information on pupils' progress and standards. Parents are encouraged to discuss the contents with class teachers, although not all avail themselves of the opportunity.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features

80. The findings of the inspection team match the judgment of Grade 1 in the school's self-evaluation report.

81. The school responds well to pupils' needs and provides equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Schemes of work are very good and provide staff with valuable guidance to secure the progressive development of knowledge, understanding and skills.

82. Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual and moral development, particularly during acts of collective worship. Assemblies are mainly Christian in character and are reverent, meaningful occasions that fully involve pupils and offer time for quiet reflection. Class assemblies are a particular strength of the school.

83. Due attention is paid to the history, heritage and culture of Wales, as well the cultural richness of other countries and societies.

84. Staff provide a wide range of extracurricular activities, which help to support the strong lifelong learning ethos of the school. Particular emphasis is placed on sport and culture. A thriving gymnastics club offers opportunities for pupils to achieve excellence and to gain recognition at national level. Groups from the school have been chosen to demonstrate good practice at a number of county and national events.

85. Highly-productive and well-managed links have been forged with local industry, with the school taking full advantage of the expertise and resources they provide. Further links are being developed through the Consortium Group. The science co-ordinator has recently undertaken a placement in a large aircraft manufacturing company, with the result that technology workshops to enhance pupils' skills in science and design technology are to be held in June.

86. An effective programme of personal and social education has enabled pupils to gain an awareness and understanding of sustainable development and the concept of global citizenship. Pupils in Year 5 have presented a well-planned assembly focusing on the effects of global change and the importance of recycling waste. As part of the geography curriculum, older pupils compare the natural resources available in this country with those of other parts of the world and evaluate the effects which different resources have on the environment.

87. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to show initiative and to develop their entrepreneurial and decision-making skills. Pupils in Year 6, for example, have worked with the British Council to establish a European library as part of the Comenius project.

88. Pupils feel happy and secure in what is a very caring community where everyone's efforts are valued. Teachers and support staff serve as good role models in promoting excellence and diversity.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features
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89. The findings of the inspection team match the judgment of Grade 1 in the school's self-evaluation report.

90. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils, particularly those with special needs. Pupils enjoy attending school, where they feel happy and secure. Very good relationships have been established with all members of staff.

91. Parents feel a strong partnership with the school, based on mutual trust and confidence. The school regularly holds 'positive-parenting' initiatives to help parents understand how their children grow and develop. An active parents' association arranges regular social events and provides valuable financial and other support for the school.

92. Very good information is provided for parents. A weekly newsletter contains progress reports on action plans and gives details of forthcoming events and dates for the diary. At the commencement of each term, parents receive an outline of the curriculum taught in the relevant year-group so that they can be fully involved in their children's learning. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents both comply with statutory requirements.

93. Nursery children receive effective care and support from a team of experienced staff. The school works closely with the main feeder playgroup to gain knowledge of each child's personal, social and dietary needs prior to entry. An informative booklet, coupled with opportunities for parents to meet the teacher, helps children to settle in quickly and happily. Induction as a whole is very well managed.

94. Attendance is good overall and is regularly monitored to enable the school to identify individual and group trends of absence. Details of the few pupils who arrive after the commencement of lessons are recorded, together with the reasons put forward. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with bullying or any other form of unacceptable behaviour, although there is no evidence to suggest that pupils' conduct is anything but exemplary both in the classroom and playground.

95. A highly responsible attitude is taken towards all aspects of health and safety, with risk assessment and routine tasks handled in an extremely practical and conscientious manner. Records are kept of all out-of-school activities and regularly reviewed to comply with requirements. During the inspection, security of the building was of a high standard. There are no outstanding safety issues which might constitute a hazard to pupils, although the external fabric of the nursery and reception area raises a certain amount of concern. The local education authority has been informed of the situation.

96. Appropriate arrangements have been made to deal with child-protection issues. All members of staff are fully aware of the procedures to be followed and

have been given guidance on recognising signs such as unexplained changes in personality or behaviour.

97. Due attention is given to the promotion of equal opportunities, social inclusion and race relations. Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils have opportunities to explore a range of cultures, particularly through religious education and personal and social education. Pupils accord dignity to the values and beliefs of others, with many older pupils showing good knowledge of a wide range of cultures.

98. Good provision overall is made for pupils with special educational needs. Due account is taken of the recommendations of the national Code of Practice. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that needs are identified at an early stage and that a suitable educational plan is drawn up for each pupil. Targets are precise, relevant and achievable. Plans are regularly reviewed in consultation with parents. Pupils are well integrated into classes and benefit from setting arrangements at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and English. Work in withdrawal groups provides effective reinforcement of basic skills. Insufficient use, however, is currently made of information technology to enhance and extend pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Key question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features

99. The findings of the inspection team match the judgment of Grade 1 in the school's self-evaluation report.

100. Leadership and strategic management are exemplary. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on high expectations and the pursuit of excellence.

101. Relationships are very good at all levels, with care and respect underpinning the daily life and work of the school. Purposeful management, coupled with a strong sense of commitment and dedication by the headteacher and staff, enables aims to be largely fulfilled.

102. Clear procedures are in place to ensure effective delivery and monitoring of the curriculum. The headteacher is a very good role model for teaching, which he undertakes on a regular basis.

103. Frequent staff meetings, corporate planning, accurate assessment and target planning, together with a long-established culture of self-evaluation, contribute to high standards of achievement in academic, sporting, musical and other activities.

104. Performance management is firmly embedded in school practice, with outcomes which benefit both pupils and staff.

105. The senior management team functions efficiently and effectively, and has been temporarily reconstituted to cover the duties of the former deputy headteacher who has taken up an appointment with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

106. School governors are highly committed and work closely with the headteacher in providing strategic direction and purposeful management for the school. Regular committee meetings enable members to receive curriculum reports, deal with matters of import and exercise proper financial control. Statutory duties are well performed.

Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features

107. The findings of the inspection team match the judgment of Grade 1 in the school's self-evaluation report.

108. Observation and discussion of practice clearly indicate that the headteacher, staff and governing body are working conscientiously and are fully committed to the continual raising of standards.

109. A positive, self-critical culture promotes effective self-evaluation. The process is systematic, cohesive and comprehensive, and based upon first-hand experiences and evidence contributed by all members of staff. Clear priorities and targets, coupled with well-defined action plans, enable aims to be achieved.

110. Formalised structures are in place for monitoring standards of teaching and learning. All team leaders are members of the senior management team and effectively co-ordinate planning and assessment, having a devolved responsibility for curriculum delivery within their areas.

111. Curriculum co-ordinators undertake the majority of classroom observations and scrutinise pupils' work. Roles are well organised to promote co-operation and provide high-quality support for teachers. Written feedback is provided to staff, whilst open discussions are held to establish agreed developmental targets.

112. Regular reviews of the work of each department, led by the team leader and curriculum co-ordinators, ensure the effective delivery of all subjects.

113. The headteacher meets the chairman and vice-chairman of the governing body each month to discuss progress in achieving the targets set in the school development plan. Performance management further supports the drive for excellence, although regular monitoring of standards of teaching and learning has long been established as a way of moving the school forward.

114. Very good use is made of a wide range of test results and other associated data to identify areas for improvement and to guide future planning. Targets are set for senior management, staff, pupils and the school as a whole, although the targets given to pupils vary in consistency and quality.

115. The school development plan is a very comprehensive working document, covering the period 2004 – 2007. Priorities are clearly set out on a subject, departmental and whole-school basis, together with estimated costs, staff responsibilities, timescales for completion and expected outcomes. All members of staff and the governing body are fully involved in the process.

116. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of achievement in English and science continue to be very good. Standards in physical education are now very good at both key stages and

constitute one of the major strengths of the school. Standards in history are very good at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2, whilst standards in religious education remain good at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Appropriate action has been taken to develop the good practice in assessment and curriculum procedures, review the quality of annual reports to parents, and ensure that all schemes and policies are fully implemented. Shortcomings, however, remain in the use and application of information technology.

117. In producing its self-evaluation report, the school mainly followed the format suggested by Estyn. The inspection team agreed with the judgments in six of the seven key questions, but considered the other one to be higher than the grade awarded by the school.

Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

118. Overall, the findings of the inspection team match the judgment of Grade 2 in the school's self-evaluation report.

119. Efficient use of resources ensures that the school is adequately staffed to deliver the curriculum. Teachers are appropriately qualified and suitably deployed. Good arrangements are in place for the mentoring of newly-qualified teachers, the induction of new staff, and support and guidance for teachers engaged on a supply or occasional basis.

120. Very good collaboration takes place with nursery nurses and classroom assistants. A strong team spirit is another of the major strengths of the school.

121. Effective support is provided by the school secretary, caretaker, midday supervisors and canteen staff. Day-to-day administration is smooth and efficient.

122. All members of staff participate in regular in-service training to ensure high standards of professional expertise.

123. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The building is generally in good condition, although there are parts requiring urgent attention. Many of the classrooms are relatively small, resulting in cramped conditions, especially where pupil numbers are high. Whilst the size of classrooms does not prevent the full delivery of the curriculum, it often limits activities, restricts organisation and impedes the movement of pupils.

124. A large, well-equipped hall is used for physical education, dance, music, assemblies and dining, but also serves as a means of access from one end of the building to the other. Passage through the area sometimes causes minor disruption to activities. Displays of pupils' work, objects, artefacts and books associated with classroom themes are very attractive and help to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. A school library is situated in a main corridor used by pupils at Key Stage 2.

125. Outdoor facilities fully meet requirements for sports and play, and include spacious hardcore areas and a large playing-field. Pupils also have access to a nature garden, which offers opportunities for observation and investigation, and make regular use of Wepre Park, Buckley Library, the Heritage Trail, the Schools' Library Service and facilities at the local high school.

126. Learning is well supported by a good range of resources which are thoughtfully used in most areas of the curriculum, with the exception of information technology where current provision is insufficient to develop pupils' skills to the full.

127. Good efforts are made by headteacher, staff and governing body to use resources wisely and efficiently. Regular reviews are made of subjects to identify

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requirements and to determine priorities for spending. Expenditure is generally well linked to targets in the school development plan.

Standards achieved by pupils in the subjects inspected

Children under five

128. The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs, and pupils make very good progress towards the desirable outcomes for learning.

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Nursery
Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Reception

Good Features

129. Nursery children listen attentively and show clear enjoyment of stories. All know that words and pictures convey meaning. They recognise characters in stories and often interject with relevant comments or questions. Speech is generally clear. Children sing action songs and rhymes with enthusiasm and show a good recall of words. In mark-making, many are learning to hold implements correctly. Frequent reinforcement successfully promotes recognition of Christian names, with good use of snack times as a forum for reinforcing the concept.

130. At reception level, children make confident use of speech and listen carefully to adults and each other. Good progress is made in reading and tackling simple text. Regular use of language stations helps to develop concentration and promotes listening and reading skills. Very good progress takes places in writing. Children can form letters and copy correctly, with many starting to write independently.

Shortcomings

131. No significant shortcomings were observed.

Personal and Social Development

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Nursery
Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Reception

Good Features

132. Nursery children have all settled well into the routines of the school. They respond well to instructions and tidy up quickly and efficiently after activities. They make good efforts to dress themselves and pay due attention to hygiene when eating. During snack times, they show very good manners, and readily help and talk to each other.

133. Very good progress is made at reception level. Children show care and respect for each other, and work and play harmoniously together. When required to undertake tasks independently, they do so with confidence and good concentration. Full advantage is taken of opportunities to display initiative and to investigate and explore for themselves.

Shortcomings

134. No significant shortcomings were observed.

Mathematical Development

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Nursery
Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Reception

Good Features

135. Nursery children have numerous opportunities to explore and develop mathematical concepts. Most can recognise simple shapes, sort and match objects according to colour and size, and count to five using number songs and rhymes.

136. At reception level, most children can count to thirty or beyond, have a good knowledge of number bonds to ten, and give quick, accurate responses during short mental agility sessions. Good recognition is shown of basic shapes. Regular role play in “McDonalds” reinforces work with coins. Skills at this level are developing very well.

Shortcomings

137. No significant shortcomings were observed.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Nursery
Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Reception

Good Features

138. Nursery children are developing a very good understanding of the world around them from experiences firmly based on their families, homes and daily life. During the inspection, work on growth and new life engendered much interest and excitement, promoting considerable discussion and enhancing oral skills.

139. Reception children show good recall of the numerous experiences the school has provided to extend their knowledge of the wider world. The majority speak confidently and express themselves clearly, using a good range of vocabulary.

140. A very good start is made in learning Welsh and developing an early awareness of the heritage and culture of Wales.

Shortcomings

141. No significant shortcomings were observed.

Physical Development

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Nursery
Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Reception

Good Features

142. Outdoor play is well organised at nursery level and helps foster the development of gross motor skills. Physical development is good overall, with children running, jumping, pedalling and balancing with confidence. Children are encouraged to set up their own apparatus in one area and do so with growing competence, co-operating well with each other. Fine motor skills are developing appropriately through a range of tabletop activities.

143. Growing body control and developing physical skills are evident at reception level. Children are able to obey instructions and make sensible use of space. They transfer weight successfully from one part of the body to another and demonstrate movements confidently. Lessons are characterised by good behaviour and careful listening.

Shortcomings

144. Some lessons at reception level are insufficiently rigorous and do not always allow enough time for children to practise and experiment for themselves.

Creative Development

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Nursery
Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Reception

Good Features

145. Nursery children are given daily opportunities for drawing, painting, printing and collage work. Items on display in different media show that creative abilities are developing well. Good progress is made in this area of learning.

146. Reception children paint, colour, cut and paste, and show good hand-eye co-ordination. When painting, they hold brushes correctly and concentrate well on their tasks. Particularly good progress is made in drawing, with children developing an appropriate sense of shape and space.

147. Children in both age-groups enjoy singing. A good sense of rhythm is shown by those at nursery stage.

Shortcomings

148. Some of the paints used by reception children are unsuitable for their age and do not encourage colour mixing. The range of brushes is also too narrow and the paper too small on occasions.

English

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 1
Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 2

Good Features

149. At Key Stage 1, pupils listen carefully in lessons and show good understanding of explanations and instructions. Close attention is paid to each other's contributions during plenary sessions.

150. Oral skills are very good, with pupils speaking confidently and articulately, and making use of full sentences. Vocabulary is mature for their age.

151. At Key Stage 2, pupils make effective use of language to describe events and to express thoughts and opinions. Very good use is made of subject-based vocabulary in discussions and debate.

152. Reading at Key Stage 1 is of a very good standard, with pupils tackling text with fluency, expression and confidence, and effectively applying their knowledge of phonics.

153. At Key Stage 2, pupils read a variety of literature, including poetry and plays, and are able to express their opinions about books and authors. Higher reading skills are well used to search and scan for information.

154. Pupils at both key stages show a thorough enjoyment of books.

155. Appropriate attention is given to writing from the outset, with pupils at Key Stage 1 using their emerging skills to express and develop their ideas. Work, in some cases, is characterised by creativity and effective use of imagination. Steady progress is made in applying simple punctuation.

156. At Key Stage 2, pupils write for different purposes and occasions, and plan, draft and revise their work. Competent use is made of dictionaries and thesauruses to achieve accuracy in spelling and to extend use and knowledge of words. Many examples of well-organised extensive writing are to be found throughout the key stage, particularly at the top of the school.

157. Work, in general, is neatly presented at both key stages.

158. Visits by poets, story-tellers and theatre companies have made a significant contribution to standards of achievement and pupils' enjoyment of literature.

Shortcomings

159. Information technology is not used consistently throughout the school to support and extend learning in the subject.

Science

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 1
Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 2

Good Features

160. Throughout both key stages, pupils make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science. They use subject-specific language accurately and appropriately, have good recall of previous learning and are able to share this knowledge with other pupils and adults.

161. Pupils are able to articulate what is meant by a 'fair test' and can make accurate predictions of what might happen if certain variables are altered. Good understanding is shown of the processes of prediction, exploration and evaluation.

162. Early at Key Stage 1, younger pupils name parts of the body with confidence. They are aware of their senses, can explain a simple human life cycle, and know the functions of the heart and the effect of exercise on it.

163. In Year 1, pupils conduct an investigation to discover whether older children in the class are the tallest and, following accurate measurements, examine and discuss the outcomes as a class in order to relate findings to predictions. Pupils work together, and then individually, to sort pictures of a range of animals into groups, using their own criteria such as 'fur' or 'no fur', and are able to support their knowledge of the value of a healthy balanced diet by discussing and grouping foods that should be eaten more and less often.

164. Older pupils in Key Stage 1 display a good knowledge of materials and understand that some materials are magnetic whilst others are not. By sorting a set of objects, they conclude that objects made of iron or steel are magnetic and attach themselves to the magnet whilst others such as those made of plastic do not.

165. Pupils in Year 2 further develop their understanding of materials when they examine how quickly ice melts when placed in various locations in a classroom. From observations they learn that some materials can be changed by heating or cooling, understand the differences between solid and liquid, and realise that some changes are reversible whilst others are permanent.

166. Pupils at Key Stage 1 link a battery to a bulb to complete a circuit and have a good understanding of the use of electricity in the home and of its dangers.

167. At Key Stage 2, younger pupils have a good understanding of life processes and are able to classify objects into living and non-living categories and explain the

basis for such groupings. From discussion they derive definitions of what all living things need to do to survive.

168. Pupils know that different teeth are used for specific purposes and identify them as molars, incisors and canine. They investigate the effect of a range of sugary drinks on eggshells in order to underpin their predicted knowledge of dental health and compare their results with their predictions.

169. Pupils at Key Stage 2 build upon their prior knowledge of forces and explore the forces of gravity, air resistance, upthrust and friction by means of a number of investigations. They understand that force is measured in Newtons and learn that, when one or more forces acts upon an object, they can make it move, stop, change its shape or speed. In Year 3, pupils undertake and investigate a practical series of floating and sinking experiences and, by observation and collaborative working, embed their knowledge of forces.

170. Across the key stages, pupils have a very good knowledge of electricity and circuits. They know that circuits need to be complete and unbroken for electricity to flow and can identify the range of possible reasons why a particular circuit fails. They record and construct simple circuits making good use of diagrams.

171. Pupils show a good awareness and understanding of the different properties of materials which they classify according to their degree of suitability for particular purposes. In Year 4, pupils investigate the suitability of various stone samples to make a memorial plaque or headstone by discovering their degree of durability and resistance to scratching. Pupils also construct their own 'Rock I.D.' following observations of a range of rock samples and use this as a 'key' to identify rock types by their properties. They investigate the composition of soil and, as a result, understand that some materials are permeable and others are not.

172. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 develop a good knowledge of magnets and magnetism. By investigation, they discover that magnets have poles and that like poles repel and unlike poles attract, that not all metals or materials are magnetic and that the size of a magnet does not always indicate its strength. By experimentation, pupils understand that the north pole of a magnet moves towards the earth's magnetic north when used as a compass, so enabling direction to be indicated.

173. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are aware of the names and location of many parts of the body such as the heart and lungs and are able to indicate their function. In year 5, they consolidate their knowledge of what constitutes a balanced diet and its importance for healthy living by constructing their own balanced meals using clip art and pie charts in the classification of foods. Information technology is then used to record the data. Pupils understand that a balanced diet provides the sustenance for energy, growth and repair.

174. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can label all the parts of a flowering plant with authority. They know the functions of the root, stem and leaves and understand the process of photosynthesis. Pupils in Year 6 understand the process of pollination and seed dispersal and identify and name the parts of a flower needed

for successful reproduction. They conduct controlled experiments when they investigate the factors affecting plant growth, and observe and accurately measure the effect of different amounts of water on a broad bean seed. Pupils plot their results and are able to draw valid conclusions.

175. Pupils at this level recognise that animals are adapted to different habitats, and that there are food chains in which there are predator and prey. They are able to classify animals into carnivore, herbivore and omnivore and understand their particular characteristics.

176. Pupils explore the properties of light and discover that it travels in straight lines, can be reflected and blocked to cause shadows. By the use of light sensors, pupils understand that light can pass through objects in varying degrees and understand the terms of transparent, translucent and opaque. Pupils are aware that there are primary and secondary sources of light and that objects can be seen because of light reflecting from them.

177. In their study of the solar system, pupils at the end of the key stage understand that the earth is one of nine planets that orbit the sun and that the moon orbits the earth and turns on its own axis. Pupils are thus able to draw conclusions about the nature of day and night and the seasons. Good use is made of a mnemonic to remember the order of the planets in orbit.

Shortcomings

178. There are no significant shortcomings.

History

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 1
Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings	Key Stage 2

Good Features

179. There is progressive development of chronological awareness. Time lines form a significant feature of the work in most classes, and pupils are able to comment on key events in their studies.

180. Pupils at Key Stage 1 show very good recall of previous work. Those in Year 1 can talk informatively on the life and work of Florence Nightingale and the conditions of the time.

181. In lower Key Stage 2, teachers use Roman artefacts to prompt pupils to ask pertinent questions and to comment sensibly on the purpose of items. At upper Key Stage 2, pupils show very good levels of knowledge and talk confidently about their studies.

182. Pupils make thoughtful use of primary and secondary sources. In Year 6, they make good use of information from World War II to find out about people who

lived at the time, their occupations and the significant changes which the conflict caused in their lives. During the inspection, good skills were displayed in historical enquiry when producing questions for visiting speakers about the problems of rationing, working and supporting the war effort.

183. At both key stages, pupils' historical knowledge and understanding are enhanced through effective use of visits to places of particular interest. Pupils clearly enjoy local history and show a good recall of their experiences.

184. Writing skills are employed throughout the school in a variety of forms. Work shows a good range of ways of communicating historical knowledge and understanding.

Shortcomings

185. Sufficient use is not yet made of information technology to support and extend learning in the subject.

186. On occasions, worksheets at Key Stage 2 are not well suited to the understanding of pupils.

Physical Education

Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 1
Grade 1: good with outstanding features	Key Stage 2

Good Features

187. Pupils at both key stages are immaculately dressed in suitable clothing for lessons. They listen attentively and with understanding to instructions and know the benefits of warm-up and cool-down sessions prior to and following vigorous activity.

188. At Key Stage 1, pupils steadily develop good sequences of movement. In Year 1, they investigate different ways of travelling on hands and feet, balance on different small body parts, develop an appreciation of body shape and become aware of personal space. They make effective use of hoops, benches and mats to interact with and develop their sequences of stretches, balances, twists and bridges and the skills of jumping and landing.

189. Pupils in Year 2 co-operate in pairs and then in teams when catching, throwing and bouncing medium-sized balls. When investigating different methods of passing the ball, they collaborate well with each other and receive very good teaching points so that they can develop their skills to a higher level, particularly when moving into a team-game situation.

190. Throughout Key Stage 2, participation in gymnastics is progressively developed so that, by the end of Year 6, they are capable of devising and exploring complex gymnastic sequences in floor work and on apparatus. Opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and refine sequences of travel, balance, roll, stretch,

twist and curl and to enable them to evaluate, compare and contrast such sequences and offer constructive suggestions for improvement.

191. Dance is a well-established aspect of the programme, and a range of activities is introduced in order to develop pupils' understanding of the various genres. In Year 4, boys and girls participate enthusiastically in folk dancing and understand the different terminology used. Pupils listen to and keep in time with the music and skip, walk and change direction to the beat of 8. They dance in small mixed groups, and analyse and evaluate each other's group performances before dancing to the music of 'Y Jac y Do'.

192. Very good development takes place of a broad range of ball skills as pupils move through the school. By Year 6, pupils have a first-class awareness of the concept of games of invasion and movement. They develop very good skills in catching, throwing and bouncing balls and demonstrate their abilities when they feint, dodge, throw and catch with increasing accuracy and activity.

193. Very good use is made of local facilities for teaching pupils how to swim, beginning in Year 3. At the pool, pupils are very well behaved and organised, with a very good ratio of teaching staff ensuring that groups remain small. The vast majority of pupils are able to swim with confidence by the end of Year 6 and all receive achievement awards. The school regularly participates in competitions and galas.

194. Pupils regularly and successfully take part in local inter-school leagues, competitions, and tournaments in hockey, rugby, netball, football, cricket, rounders, athletics and cross country running.

195. The gymnastics programme is very well established throughout the school and is well supported by staff under the excellent tutelage of the headteacher. Apart from its obvious physical aspects, equal value is provided by the associated elements of confidence, self-esteem, poise, posture and challenge. Individuals and mixed teams from the school have performed with credit in recent Welsh and British school gymnastic finals. In addition, pupils are currently the *Urdd* champions.

196. Pupils have opportunities to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities including hockey, rugby, gymnastics, netball, cricket, dance, cross-country running and football. There is also a sports and running club. A member of staff co-ordinates the programme, which pupils support with interest, appreciation and enthusiasm. Skills are further enhanced through close links with parents, professional coaches, local sporting clubs and national initiatives such as Dragon Sport.

197. Older pupils develop a good range of additional skills as a result of attending residential courses in activities such as abseiling and orienteering.

198. In recognition of its all-round outstanding success and contribution to physical education and sport, the school became the first primary school in Wales to receive the Sports Mark Wales Award.

Shortcomings

199. No significant shortcomings were observed.

Religious Education

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings	Key Stage 1
Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings	Key Stage 2

Good Features

200. Pupils at both key stages generally understand the importance of caring for and respecting each other and are actively involved in supporting charities, thus helping to extend their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves.

201. At Key Stage 1, good understanding is progressively acquired of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other faiths. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 were able to interpret their own acts of kindness when compared to the parable of the Good Samaritan, and were very responsive when discussing their visit to the local church.

202. Knowledge of Christian teachings is further developed at Key Stage 2. Pupils show a sound understanding of the moral significance of stories and their bearing on their own feelings and lives.

203. Understanding of Christian festivals is enhanced through studies in other areas of the curriculum and celebrations during well-presented collective worship.

204. Visits to places of worship extend pupils' awareness and understanding of faith. Pupils at Key Stage 2 visit a synagogue and can talk articulately about Judaism. Good knowledge is shown of the festivals and beliefs of Hinduism by pupils in Year 6.

205. Pupils at both key stages show respect for the practices and beliefs of others.

Shortcomings

206. Although teachers throughout the school use a wide variety of stimuli to assist children in their spiritual and moral development, insufficient emphasis is placed on personal interpretation and enquiry.

207. Too heavy a reliance is sometimes placed on the completion of worksheets at the expense of more extended writing.

School's response to the inspection

The inspection findings recognise that, in all subject areas, we have maintained very high standards since our last inspection and improved standards in Physical Education. The standards of achievement grades are well above the standard target set by the Welsh Assembly – 96% of lessons observed were good with no important shortcomings (39% of which were good with outstanding features). We are pleased that the inspectors found that pupils' attitudes to their learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to sustain concentration are outstanding features. In addition, the care and support systems we have in place and that underpin our curricular provision are recognised as a major strength of Mountain Lane School.

We shall continue to give school discipline the highest of priorities – identified as a very strong feature of our school. This will ensure that the respect generated between all staff and pupils / pupils and all staff will continue to help all involved understand the role we all have in today's ever changing society. The strong links we have with our parents – another major strength of the school – identified in the report will further be developed to ensure that all pupils maximise their potential as they grow through our school.

The skill and dedication of teachers and the care and talent of support staff are duly acknowledged. Most importantly, the inspection report makes clear the elements that make our school what it is. The report confirms that we are achieving our aim to make our school a happy and secure place in which pupils grow in confidence and independence. The school ethos enables all to realise the school motto of "living and learning together" through Commitment, Co-operation and Consideration.

An Action Plan will be put in place to address the minor recommendations in the report. We are already aware of the need to develop our resources in respect of IT and ICT in supporting all areas of the curriculum. We shall further develop our strategies for involving pupils in assessing and evaluating their own learning and in setting targets for improvement. We also intend to further explore the benefits of School Councils where pupils are party to decision making at school. A school council will be established by September 2005. All members of staff and governors are confident that we can plan for and address all the recommendations identified in the report effectively.

Where it is possible to do so, staff and governors will address the recommendations before the end of the school year. Raising pupils' standards of achievement in information & communication technology will be a priority for us, even though great strides have been made recently in this area of the pupils' learning. Funding from the P.A. has enabled us to purchase many new laptops and PC's to implement our IT curriculum and ICT across all subject areas. We will make sure that this subject is included in our school development plan. In addition we will provide opportunities for our KSI and Early Years staff to further their understanding of the New Foundation Phase in readiness for its implementation in 2005. The report identifies that the school is pro-active in respect of training and development of all staff and the report will give us the impetus to continue developing our skills to ensure that

the pupils at Mountain Lane School only receive the best provision across all areas of learning.

It is reassuring to realise that the report acknowledges the commitment and high level of expertise amongst all the staff connected with Mountain Lane. This, together with the full support of a dedicated Governing Body, is what makes the school so successful – and again this has been highlighted as a major strength of our school.

A copy of the school's action plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be sent to all parents. The governors' annual report to parents will report on the progress we are making on the inspection recommendations.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of School	Mountain Lane Primary School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	3 – 11 years
Address of school	Knowle Lane Buckley Flintshire
Post code	CH7 3JA
Telephone Number	01244 550688

Headteacher	Mr. O. H. Parry
Date of appointment	May, 1988
Chairman of Governors	Mr. Russell Pritchard, M.B.E.
Registered Inspector	Mrs. Eirwen Griffiths, M. Phil., M.Ed.
Dates of inspection	21st – 25th February, 2005

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	29	57	59	60	52	60	62	56	435

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	16	2	17.8

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	25.7 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	12 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	29
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1.1 : 1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	Nursery	Reception	Rest of School
Autumn, 2004	89.1	91.5	94.6
Summer, 2004	91.8	92.1	95.5
Spring, 2004	93.9	95.4	96.3

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	3.6%
Number of pupils excluded during twelve months prior to inspection	2

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 1:

National Curriculum Assessment KS 1 Results 2004			Number of Pupils in Y2 49					
Percentage of Pupils at Each Level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	6	65	29	0
		National	0	4	14	63	20	0
ENGLISH: Speaking and Listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	8	57	35	0
		National	0	3	12	63	22	0
English: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	8	57	35	0
		National	0	4	14	55	27	0
ENGLISH: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	92	8	0
		National	0	5	14	69	11	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	8	67	25	0
		National	0	2	11	63	24	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	80	20	0
		National	0	2	10	66	22	0

Percentage of Pupils Attaining at least Level 2 in Mathematics, Science and English (or Welsh as a First Language) according to Teacher Assessment			
In the School:	92%	In Wales:	79%

D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

National results relate to 2003, as figures for 2004 have not yet been published.

**National Curriculum Assessment Results
End of Key Stage 2:**

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2004			Number of pupils in Y6						60			
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	10	30	58	0
		National	0	0	0	0	1	6	16	45	31	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	10	30	58	0
		National	0	2	1	0	0	5	12	38	40	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	50	43	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	4	19	46	30	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	50	43	0
		National	0	2	1	0	0	4	18	42	33	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	60	37	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	49	35	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	60	37	0
		National	0	2	0	0	0	1	9	48	39	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
By Teacher Assessment		By Test	
In the school	87%	In the school	87%
In Wales	70%	In Wales	71%

- D Pupils who are excepted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
- A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
- F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
- W Pupils who are working towards level 1

National results relate to 2003, as figures for 2004 have not yet been published.

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors over a period of 4.5 days.

- Pre-inspection meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and governing body.
- Thirty parents attended a pre-inspection meeting with two members of the inspection team.
- 212 questionnaires were returned, analysed and summarised.
- All documentation submitted by the school was analysed and discussed, including the school development plan, policy and curriculum documents and teachers' planning files.
- Pupils were observed as they arrived and departed from school and during the midday and other breaks.
- At various times during the day, inspectors took the opportunity to talk to pupils and to discuss their work.
- Forty-nine lessons or parts of lessons were observed.
- Pupils were heard reading and were examined in their knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics, science and other subjects.
- A wide range of pupils' written and other work was examined in each class.
- Inspectors discussed pupils' work with class teachers and examined assessment records.
- Discussions were also held with the headteacher, curriculum co-ordinators and other staff.
- The work of pupils with special educational needs was examined.
- Minutes of meetings and documents relating to the financial management of the school were discussed.
- Budget figures were examined and discussed with the headteacher.
- Attendance and pupil records were inspected.
- Inspectors attended acts of collective worship.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities	Subjects
Mrs. Eirwen Griffiths Registered Inspector	Context Summary and recommendations Key Questions 4 and 5	Children under five English
Mr. Selwyn Roberts Lay Inspector	Contributions to key questions 1, 4, 5 and 7	
Mr. Martyn Davies Team Inspector	Key Questions 2, 6 and 7	Physical Education Science
Mr. Glyn. Scott Team Inspector	Key Questions 1 and 3	History Religious Education

Name and address of contractor

E.G.I.S.,
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Acknowledgment

The inspection team would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils of the school for their courtesy and co-operation throughout the inspection.

MOUNTAIN LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL
BUCKLEY

INSPECTION

21st – 25th February, 2005

SUMMARY REPORT FOR PARENTS

REGISTERED INSPECTOR:
MRS. EIRWEN GRIFFITHS
(WO50/17562)

Inspection under Section 10 of
School Inspections Act, 1996

18th March, 2005

Mountain Lane Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their children's schools. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. **The full report can be obtained from the school.**

The inspection of Mountain Lane Primary School took place between 21st and 25th February, 2005. An independent team of four inspectors, led by Mrs. Eirwen Griffiths, M.Phil., M.Ed., undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management, and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgments in this report is as follows:

- Grade 1** good with outstanding features
- Grade 2** good features and no important shortcomings
- Grade 3** good features outweigh shortcomings
- Grade 4** some good features but shortcomings in important areas
- Grade 5** many important shortcomings.

Summary

1. This is a happy, well-led, properly-managed school which lays strong emphasis on the pursuit of excellence and equal opportunities for all.
2. In respect of the seven key questions, the inspection team agrees with the school's own judgments in six cases and, in the other one, considers the overall grade to be higher than that assessed by the school.

Table of grades awarded

4. The team judges the work of the school to be currently as follows:

KEY QUESTION	INSPECTION GRADE
1 How well do learners achieve?	1
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

Standards

5. Work observed during the inspection indicates that pupils' standards of achievement are currently the following:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	57%	4%	-	-

6. Figures are well above the targets of the Welsh Assembly Government which expects 95% of pupils to achieve standards which are satisfactory or better and 50% to achieve standards which are good. Percentages in this case are 100% and 96% respectively.

7. The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs, and pupils make very good progress towards the desirable outcomes for learning. In comparison with other schools in Flintshire, the majority of children generally enter the school with above-average attainments for their age. Good progress is made in the key skills of speaking, listening, writing, number, and information and communications technology at both nursery and

reception level. Standards of achievement in the six areas of learning are currently as follows:

Area of Learning	Nursery	Reception
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills	Grade 1	Grade 2
Personal and Social Development	Grade 1	Grade 1
Mathematical Development	Grade 2	Grade 1
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Grade 1	Grade 1
Physical Development	Grade 2	Grade 2
Creative Development	Grade 2	Grade 2

8. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the following standards were achieved in the subjects inspected:

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	Grade 1	Grade 1
Science	Grade 1	Grade 1
History	Grade 1	Grade 2
Physical Education	Grade 1	Grade 1
Religious Education	Grade 2	Grade 2

9. Standards in key skills at Key Stages 1 and 2 are good in number and very good in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Skills in using information and communications technology across the curriculum are currently underdeveloped at both key stages. Bilingual competence is developing very well.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and largely achieve the targets set for them in individual educational plans.

11. National Curriculum assessment conducted by teachers last summer indicated that, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainments in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well above the average for the county and for Wales as a whole. Percentages achieving the higher grade of Level 3 exceeded the national average in mathematics and English and were in line with the average in science. There were no significant differences between the performance of girls and boys, although girls achieved better results at Level 3 in English.

12. At the end of Key Stage 2, National Curriculum test results indicated that attainments were well above the county and national averages in English, mathematics and science. Boys generally outperformed girls, although not by a particularly significant margin.

13. When compared with other schools in Wales with a similar percentage of free school meals, overall results were around the median at both key stages. Standards, although consistently good, have fluctuated somewhat over the last three years.

14. Pupils throughout the school show very good attitudes to learning. Their ability to sustain concentration over an extended period is one of the outstanding features of the school. Almost all pupils work hard in lessons, display enthusiasm for

learning and readily join in a range of activities. Many give very good responses to questions and participate well in debates and discussions.

15. Behaviour on all occasions is of a very high standard. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion and exercise a high degree of self-discipline. This is especially noticeable in assemblies and physical education in the school hall. Pupils are courteous to adults and relate well to each other.

The quality of education and training

16. Lessons observed during the inspection indicate that the quality of teaching is the following:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
33%	45%	22%	-	-

17. The percentage of satisfactory or better lessons (100%) is well above the Welsh Assembly Government's target of 95%, whilst the percentage of good or very good lessons (78%) considerably exceeds the target of 50%.

18. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Pupils work and play in an orderly, structured, positive, supportive environment that is highly conducive to learning. Very good discipline enables pupils to concentrate well on their tasks. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and actively engage them in the objectives of lessons. Care is taken to ensure that work is properly differentiated and carefully matched to individual needs. Good use is made of an appropriate range of methods and strategies. Explanations and instructions are generally clear and precise. Strong emphasis is placed on developing and building upon language skills to encourage pupils to become articulate and confident. Ongoing development in this area constitutes one of the major strengths of the school.

19. A comprehensive policy has been established for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements and progress, with detailed records collated by an assessment co-ordinator. Very good use is made of school, county and national standardised tests to identify strengths and weaknesses, whilst school profiles serve as valuable benchmarks for teachers. Progress is tracked as pupils move through the school.

20. Annual reports to parents comply with statutory requirements and provide appropriate information on pupils' progress and standards. Parents are encouraged to discuss the contents with class teachers, although not all avail themselves of the opportunity.

21. The school responds well to pupils' needs and provides equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Schemes of work are very good and provide staff with valuable guidance to secure the progressive development of knowledge, understanding and skills.

22. Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual and moral development, particularly during acts of collective worship. Assemblies are mainly Christian in

character and are reverent, meaningful occasions that fully involve pupils and offer time for quiet reflection. Class assemblies are a particular strength of the school.

23. Due attention is paid to the history, heritage and culture of Wales, as well as the cultural richness of other countries and societies. An effective programme of personal and social education has enabled pupils to gain an awareness and understanding of sustainable development and the concept of global citizenship.

24. Staff provide a wide range of extracurricular activities, which help to support the strong lifelong learning ethos of the school. Particular emphasis is placed on sport and culture. A thriving gymnastics club offers opportunities for pupils to achieve excellence and to gain recognition at national level. Groups from the school have been chosen to demonstrate good practice at a number of county and national events.

25. Highly-productive and well-managed links have been forged with local industry, with the school taking full advantage of the expertise and resources they provide.

26. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils, particularly those with special needs. Pupils enjoy attending school, where they feel happy and secure.

27. Very good information is provided for parents. A weekly newsletter contains progress reports on action plans and gives details of forthcoming events and dates for the diary. At the commencement of each term, parents receive an outline of the curriculum taught in the relevant year-group so that they can be fully involved in their children's learning. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents both comply with statutory requirements. Parents feel a strong partnership with the school, based on mutual trust and confidence.

28. Attendance is good overall and is regularly monitored to enable the school to identify individual and group trends of absence. Details of the few pupils who arrive after the commencement of lessons are recorded, together with the reasons put forward. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with bullying or any other form of unacceptable behaviour, although there is no evidence to suggest that pupils' conduct is anything but exemplary both in the classroom and playground.

29. Due attention is given to the promotion of equal opportunities, social inclusion and race relations. Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils have opportunities to explore a range of cultures, particularly through religious education and personal and social education.

30. All members of staff are fully aware of the procedures to be followed in child-protection cases.

31. Good provision overall is made for pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that needs are identified at an early stage and that a suitable educational plan is drawn up for each pupil. Targets are precise, relevant and achievable. Plans are regularly reviewed in consultation with

parents. Pupils are well integrated into classes and benefit from setting arrangements at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and English. Work in withdrawal groups provides effective reinforcement of basic skills. Insufficient use, however, is currently made of information technology to enhance and extend pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Leadership and management

32. Leadership and strategic management are exemplary. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on high expectations and the pursuit of excellence. Purposeful management, coupled with a strong sense of commitment and dedication, enables aims to be largely fulfilled. Clear procedures are in place to ensure effective delivery and monitoring of the curriculum. The headteacher is a very good role model for teaching, which he undertakes on a regular basis.

33. The senior management team functions efficiently and effectively, and has been temporarily reconstituted to cover the duties of the former deputy headteacher who has taken up an appointment with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

34. School governors are highly committed and work closely with the headteacher in providing strategic direction and purposeful management for the school. Regular committee meetings enable members to receive curriculum reports, deal with matters of import and exercise proper financial control. Statutory duties are well performed.

35. A positive, self-critical culture promotes effective self-evaluation. The process is systematic, cohesive and comprehensive, and based upon first-hand experiences and evidence contributed by all members of staff. Clear priorities and targets, coupled with well-defined action plans, enable aims to be achieved.

36. The headteacher meets the chairman and vice-chairman of the governing body each month to discuss progress in achieving the targets set in the school development plan. Performance management further supports the drive for excellence, although regular monitoring of standards of teaching and learning has long been established as a way of moving the school forward.

37. The school development plan is a very comprehensive working document, covering the period 2004 – 2007. Priorities are clearly set out on a subject, departmental and whole-school basis, together with estimated costs, staff responsibilities, timescales for completion and expected outcomes. All members of staff and the governing body are fully involved in the process.

38. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of achievement in English and science continue to be very good. Standards in physical education are now very good at both key stages and constitute one of the major strengths of the school. Standards in history are very good at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2, whilst standards in religious education remain good at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Appropriate action has been taken to develop the good practice in assessment and curriculum procedures, review the quality of annual

reports to parents, and ensure that all schemes and policies are fully implemented. Shortcomings, however, remain in the use and application of information technology.

39. Efficient use of resources ensures that the school is adequately staffed to deliver the curriculum. Very good collaboration takes place with nursery nurses and classroom assistants. A strong team spirit is another of the major strengths of the school. Effective support is provided by the school secretary, caretaker, midday supervisors and canteen staff. Day-to-day administration is smooth and efficient.

40. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The building is generally in good condition, although there are parts requiring urgent attention. Many of the classrooms are relatively small, resulting in cramped conditions, especially where pupil numbers are high. Whilst the size of classrooms does not prevent the full delivery of the curriculum, it often limits activities, restricts organisation and impedes the movement of pupils. A large, well-equipped hall is used for physical education, dance, music, assemblies and dining, but also serves as a means of access from one end of the building to the other. Passage through the area sometimes causes minor disruption to activities. Displays of pupils' work, objects, artefacts and books associated with classroom themes are very attractive and help to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. A school library is situated in a main corridor used by pupils at Key Stage 2.

41. Outdoor facilities fully meet requirements for sports and play, and include spacious hardcore areas and a large playing-field. Pupils also have access to a nature garden, which offers opportunities for observation and investigation, and make regular use of Wepre Park, Buckley Library, the Heritage Trail, the Schools' Library Service and facilities at the local high school.

42. Learning is well supported by a good range of resources which are thoughtfully used in most areas of the curriculum, with the exception of information technology where current provision is insufficient to develop pupils' skills to the full.

43. Good efforts are made by headteacher, staff and governing body to use resources wisely and efficiently. Regular reviews are made of subjects to identify requirements and to determine priorities for spending. Expenditure is generally well linked to targets in the school development plan.

44. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

Recommendations

It is recommended that action is taken to:

- R1. maintain the high standards and very good practice identified in the report;
- R2. make further improvements, where necessary, particularly in the development of pupils' investigative skills and the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum;
- R3. improve and extend the resources provided for information technology so that pupils' skills in this area can be fully developed;
- R4. develop further strategies for involving pupils in the evaluation of their personal and academic achievements.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within forty-five working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Acknowledgment

The inspection team would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils of the school for their courtesy and co-operation throughout the inspection.