

INSPECTION REPORT

St Columba's Roman Catholic Primary School

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique Reference Number: 105220

Inspection Number: 181945

Headteacher: Mrs N Collins

Reporting inspector: E Jackson

Dates of inspection: 8 - 11 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706754

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior, with nursery
Type of control:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ripley Street Bolton BL2 3AR
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father F McCauley
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Maureen Roscoe, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; support, guidance and pupils' welfare; partnership with parents and the community
Margaret Entwistle	English; history; geography; special educational needs	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Hilary Ring	Mathematics; Under-fives; information technology; design and technology	Curriculum and assessment
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REPORT CONTENTS

PARAGRAPH

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1-4
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 5-12
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 13-17
Attendance 18-19

Quality of education provided

Teaching 20-29
The curriculum and assessment 30-41
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 42-48
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 49-54
Partnership with parents and the community 55-63

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 64-71
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 72-78
The efficiency of the school 79-84

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five	85-96
English, mathematics and science	97-130
Other subjects or courses	131-169

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Results in the National Curriculum tests in English in 1999 were well above average; they were also above those in similar schools in mathematics, where the school's results are significantly higher than in 1998.
- The Headteacher provides very clear direction to the work of the school.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good, particularly in the early years and at upper Key Stage 2, where it leads to good progress in pupils' learning.
- Provision for the pupils' spiritual and social development is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work and their personal development are good, based on the good working relationships fostered by the staff.
- There is a good curriculum, which is broad and balanced, giving priority to the development of literacy and numeracy.

WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

- I. Implementation of the school's recently revised behaviour management policy is inconsistent between classes
- II. Teachers' expectations of the attainment and progress of higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 are too low

What the school does well far outweighs its weaknesses. These, however, will form the basis of the governor's action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good strides in almost all the areas nominated for improvement in the last inspection report, and in some other areas of its work, and is now better than it was. The area previously reported which still requires further improvement, however, is consistency in the management of pupil's behaviour, although the recently appointed headteacher has rightly emphasised this as a priority for development in her initial assessment of the school's needs.

Standards have improved in mathematics at Key Stage 2, as they have in information technology throughout the school, where the required curriculum is now fully covered. High attaining pupils are challenged to improve their mental arithmetic skills well by their teachers, particularly in classes in upper Key Stage 2. The headteacher provides clear and dynamic leadership, and has already helped staff with responsibility for aspects of the school's work, such as key stage leaders and subject coordinators, to take a more active role in the planning and monitoring of the curriculum and its delivery. The recommendations of the Code of Practice for special educational needs are fully met, and the coordinator has worked hard, with help from the local authority support services, to ensure that all documentation, record-keeping and reporting procedures are now in place. Challenging targets have been set for pupils to achieve in National Curriculum tests, and the school is now very well placed to implement its development plans, and to make further improvements.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		Key
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
English	A	A	<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
Mathematics	C	B	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
Science	D	C	<i>well below average</i>	

The information shows, for example, that while standards in mathematics are average, they are above those in similar schools.

These results show a big improvement on the results in National Curriculum tests in 1998 at the expected Level 4 and above, particularly in the number of pupils attaining higher levels. Overall, they are above the national average, and well above the average in similar schools, particularly at the higher Level 5. There is some evidence of further improvement in science for pupils now in Year 6, although the high standards attained in English in 1999 are unlikely to be maintained, as most of the current Year 6 pupils are attaining at expected levels. This is still above average in comparison to attainment in similar schools, based on previous performance. Pupils' competence in information technology has improved considerably, and is now about average. Progress is slow in

art across the school, and in some aspects of physical education at Key Stage 2. By five years of age, although children have made good progress in the nursery and reception classes, attainment overall is below average.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 11 years
English	Good	Satisfactory	Very good
Mathematics	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Science	NA	Satisfactory	Good
Information technology	NA	NA	Very good
Other subjects	Good	Satisfactory	Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is very good in 25 per cent of lessons, and it is good or better in over 50 per cent of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in less than one in ten lessons, but most often in lessons seen in physical education at Key Stage 2. The best teaching occurs in the nursery and reception classes and in upper Key Stage 2, where the teaching of the oldest pupils is almost always very good, leading to rapid and sustained progress.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. ‘Satisfactory’ means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Satisfactory overall, with good features. The headteacher and staff are working hard to implement recently adopted behaviour management strategies. These work well in some classes, but are not yet consistently applied.
Attendance	Satisfactory; similar to the national average.
Ethos*	Good; the headteacher has rapidly infused a sense of order and purpose throughout the school, supported well by the staff and governors; high expectations of pupils' progress and attainment in most areas; relationships good; most pupils enthusiastic about their work.
Leadership and management	Good; the headteacher has set clear and challenging targets for development and progress, instituted effective management procedures across the school; governing body more closely involved in monitoring the work of the school.
Curriculum	Good; effective strategies for Literacy and Numeracy; improved information technology. under fives experience a wide range of exciting activities; good procedures for assessing pupils’ attainment; assessment information could be better used in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 .
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory provision overall; pupils often make good progress in the early years, and at upper Key Stage 2.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good; improved provision for spiritual development since the last inspection; social development is good, particularly in the nursery and reception classes.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good levels of teaching staffing; other staffing provision satisfactory; accommodation unsatisfactory for early years children, particularly in the reception class.
Value for money	Good; improved since the last inspection.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards*

THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school

- III. that the school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children
- IV. that their children like school
- V. that it enables children to attain high standards of work
- VI. that they are encouraged to play an active part in the life

What some parents are not happy about

There were no issues of concern to a significant number of parents.

of the school

VII. that they would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with their children

The inspection confirms the parents' positive views of the school.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to further improve the quality of education provided, and pupils' standards of attainment, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- 1. raise teachers' expectations of the attainment and progress of higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, and use assessment information more effectively to plan work which provides them with challenging but achievable targets; (Paragraphs - 6; 12; 25; 26; 32; 98; 105; 110; 116; 117; 121; 125; 127; 129.)**
- 2. improve pupils' behaviour by:**
 - a. ensuring that all staff understand the principles of the discipline policy, and apply them consistently, as part of the school's current overall review of the management of pupils' behaviour;**
 - b. regularly discussing with pupils the framework of rewards and sanctions, in order to help all of them to behave appropriately in lessons, and around the school**
 - c. consulting with parents at the earliest opportunity about the principles and strategies to be employed by staff in the management of pupils' behaviour. (Paras - 15; 16; 27; 35; 121)**

In addition to the key issues outlined above, the governing body may also wish to consider the following additional areas for improvement in its action plan:

to ensure the implementation of the current plan to enable those with management responsibility, such as key stage leaders and subject coordinators, to monitor the work in their areas of responsibility; (paragraphs 31; 67)

to broaden the pupils' experience and skill development in art and design across the school; (11; 138; 139; 142)

to provide further training in the effective teaching of physical education at Key Stage 2, building on the specialist subject knowledge of recently appointed staff; (11; 163; 165; 169)

to develop all classrooms as stimulating and attractive learning environments for pupils, by identifying and sharing the current good practice in the school, and by seeking expert advice which can be adapted to this school's circumstances (78).

c. INTRODUCTION

c. Characteristics of the school

1. St. Columba's is a primary school for pupils of the Roman Catholic faith. There are 157 pupils on roll aged between four and eleven, and there are also 40 children aged three or four who attend the nursery part-time. The school is located next to the parish church, to the north of Bolton centre, and serves two large housing estates with a mixture of local authority and private housing.

2. Three per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is just above the national average. The figure of 21 per cent of all pupils being identified as having special educational needs (SEN) is slightly higher than the national average, as is the 2 per cent figure for pupils with statements of their need. At 27 per cent, the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average, and socio-economic indicators are below average nationally.

3. Admission to the nursery is open to Roman Catholic children from the local area, who attend part-time, either morning or afternoon. Admission to the reception class is in the September of the year the children become five, for Roman Catholic children, and the school's standard admission number is 25. The attainment of pupils at entry to the nursery covers a wide range, but is below average overall, with a significant minority of pupils being well below average in aspects of their development, such as speaking and listening, and early numeracy. Attainment at entry to the reception class also covers a wide range, but is below average overall.

4. The school's mission statement refers strongly to its Christian ethos permeating and informing all its work, stating that, "We educate for present happiness and achievement and for the establishment of firm foundations for future education, life and work." Its current priorities and targets include further development of behaviour management strategies to improve pupil behaviour, a review of provision for the under-fives, and continuing work in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science. There is an adopted plan to remodel the school, with particular emphasis on improvement of the facilities for the under-fives. This development has been approved in principle by both the Diocesan authorities and the local education authority.

c. Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	11	26

c. National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	9	8	8
	Total	19	18	18
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	73(91)	69(91)	70(91)
	National	82(80)	83(81)	87(84)

c. Teacher Assessments		Reading	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	10	9	10
	Girls	9	9	10
	Total	19	18	20
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	73(86)	65(91)	73(86)
	National	82(80)	86(85)	87(86)

.....

1

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
for latest reporting year:	1999	13	12	25

c. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	10	9	9
	Girls	11	9	10
	Total	21	18	19
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	84(81)	72(31)	76(69)
	National	73(65)	72(58)	83(69)

c. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	9	9	7
	Girls	11	10	9
	Total	20	19	16
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	80	76	64
	National	68	69	75

c. Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	4.7
	Absence	National comparative data	5.7
	Unauthorised	School	0.8
	Absence	National comparative data	0.5

c.

c. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	0
	Permanent	0

c. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	27
	Satisfactory or better	92
	Less than satisfactory	8

2

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

c. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

c. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

c. Attainment and progress

5. Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English were well above the national average at the expected Level 4, and at the higher Level 5. This maintained a rising trend over the last four years. In mathematics, attainment in the 1999 national tests was in line with the national average at both the expected Level 4, and the higher Level 5, results overall above those in similar schools. This represents a very significant improvement on the 1998 results, which had fallen considerably compared to the 1997 results. In science, results were below the national average, but in line with those in similar schools, improved on the 1998 results, but by less than the average national improvement. From inspection evidence, the attainment of the current Year 6 cohort is in line with the improved national average in English, mathematics and science, and above that in similar schools, based on 1999 data. If this level of attainment is achieved in the end-of-year tests, the school will have met very demanding targets agreed with the local authority for this cohort of pupils, whose attainment assessed by the school last year was below expected averages. These results show significant improvement overall since the last inspection, particularly in English and mathematics, where the requirement to raise pupils' attainment in mental mathematics has been fully met. However, caution is required in comparing current test results with those from 1995, when the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were relatively new, and not reliably comparable with current results.

6. At Key Stage 1, the results in the national tests in 1999 in English, for a cohort that had a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, show reading to be well below the national average, with significantly fewer than the average number of pupils reaching the expected Level 2. The number of pupils reaching beyond this, to Level 3, is also very low in comparison with national figures. Similarly in writing, fewer than average numbers of pupils reach the expected levels for their age, or beyond to higher levels. Results in both reading and writing lie below those of schools in similar circumstances. In mathematics, attainment in the 1999 national tests was also well below the national average at both the expected and higher levels, and also well below average compared to results in similar schools. The results of teacher assessment in science in 1999 were also well below the national average, and below average in comparison to similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that the current Year 2 pupils attain below the levels expected currently in English, mathematics and science, but in line with levels achieved in similar schools, based on previous data. These results show a fall in attainment at the end of the key stage compared with those at the time of the last inspection, particularly in mathematics and science.

7. Standards at Key Stage 2 have fluctuated over the past three years, but the picture is one of rising standards following a sharp fall in results in 1997, with results improving more than the national trend. At Key Stage 1, there has been a falling trend in literacy, with a sharp dip in reading standards from 1998 to 1999, and a fall in writing attainment that gives much lower standards in 1999 than were achieved in 1997. The fall in reading standards at Key Stage 1 is matched by below average results in mathematics and science statutory testing. The fall is in part accounted for by the difference in the attainment of different cohorts of pupils, and reflects a falling level of attainment at entry. It is also in part the result of expectations of the attainment and progress of higher attaining pupils that are too low.

8. The emphasis which teachers give to literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, supported by their skilled adoption of the National Strategies for both areas of learning, is good, although less effective at Key Stage 1 currently than at upper Key Stage 2. There is a broad range of writing for different purposes across subjects. For example, pupils write historical accounts and their conclusions about fair tests in science, and act as journalists when writing about an earthquake in California. They carry out measurements in science, geography and design and technology, analyse data and produce and interpret graphical representations to gain information about the best use of materials for specific purposes, favourite foods or the range of foot sizes within a class.

9. Pupils' attainment in information technology (IT) has improved considerably since the last inspection, when standards were below expectations at the end of both key stages: now they are in line with expectations towards the end of both key stages. This has been achieved through increased staff competence and confidence, and better equipment and resources, which is used efficiently to allow pupils to make what is often good progress. In the other subjects, attainment is largely as expected, except in art at Key Stages 1 and 2, and in physical education at Key Stage 2, where pupils do not make sufficient progress in all aspects of the subjects.

10. The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 identified at all stages of the Code of Practice is lower than average levels by the end of the both key stages in English, mathematics and science. However, it is in line with levels expected, and for some pupils by the end of Key Stage 2, above what might be expected. Progress of pupils with SEN is good overall, but is not consistent across the school, with most progress being made in the early years and at upper Key Stage 2, where progress is good overall. At Key Stage 1, progress of pupils with SEN at stages 1 and 2 of the register is sound, and sometimes good within individual lessons, when teacher intervention and support relates directly to pupils' individual education plans.

11. Progress at Key Stage 2 is good overall. It is satisfactory overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at lower Key Stage 2, where the variety of teaching pupils received by pupils in Year 4 during the week gives them opportunities occasionally to make more rapid progress. The youngest pupils in the key stage receive more structured teaching in the core subjects, and their progress here is more consistent than in some other subjects. However, at upper Key Stage 2, progress is rapid across the curriculum, except in PE, and it is very good for Year 6 pupils, reflecting the high quality of teaching, where both the teachers of the older pupils have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attainment. Progress in art and PE is unsatisfactory, resulting from insufficient coverage of the major elements of art and design, and inefficient use of time in PE. However, progress in IT is good across the key stage, and pupils in Year 4 made very good progress in one lesson in learning how to divide the screen with bold lines, in order to fill blocks of colour without leakage, in preparation for work in the style of Piet Mondrian.

12. Progress is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 1 in English, mathematics and science, but higher attaining pupils are sometimes given work to do which does not stretch them sufficiently. It is mainly satisfactory in the other subjects, although it is good in IT and aspects of music, where high attaining pupils in Year 2 create and perform their own compositions, using tuned percussion skilfully.

c. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, maintaining the good findings of the last inspection. They are ready to enjoy their work, and in most lessons observed during this inspection, they applied themselves to their tasks with enthusiasm. They recognise the value of contributing to class discussion, and do so responsibly. In most classrooms, levels of concentration are good, although some inattentiveness occurs at the end of over-long whole class sessions, which reduces some pupils' understanding of what needs to be done. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils show a good capacity for personal study, which contributes well to the rapid progress they make.

14. Pupils with SEN generally behave well in lessons and about the school, and develop positive attitudes and good social skills. The new policy for managing behaviour is effective in supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties when used consistently, with rewards and sanctions. However, some teachers do not operate the policy consistently, or with enough explanation for pupils, resulting in unsatisfactory behaviour on occasion.

15. Behaviour in the school is generally satisfactory, with many good features, although the picture is one of some variance across classrooms. Centrally, under the firm guidance of the recently appointed headteacher, pupils move about the school and playground safely and sensibly, and appreciate the value of a calm, cooperative environment in which to live and learn. In order to address a key issue from the last inspection, that of consistently applying the school's behaviour policy, the school has reviewed this policy and clarified procedures for implementing the 'sanctions' and 'reward' systems it contains. Now very firmly applied in the later stages of Key Stage 2, and well supported by the headteacher, the disorderly behaviour of a minority of older pupils, noted in the 1996 report, is no longer a problem. The result is that progress in learning here is good.

16. However, there remain occasional pockets of unacceptable behaviour in classrooms at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, where the behaviour policy is not always applied consistently, or made sufficiently clear to the pupils. Progress in lessons where this occurs is therefore reduced. A greater understanding and commitment on the part of all teachers to the application of the positive re-enforcement of good behaviour, as modelled in whole school gatherings such as assembly, would impact positively on behaviour and progress in certain lessons. Much of the unacceptable behaviour involves boys, and this has a negative influence on their learning. It also affects the girls' progress in some classes, as the teacher often has to spend time on control and behaviour management, which limits the time available to support other pupils in their work.

17. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are harmonious and happy, enabling pupils to share resources and work together collaboratively when required. There is evident respect for property, and a courteous attitude towards visitors and other adults working within the school. Pupils' preparedness to show initiative and take on responsibility is evident throughout the school, and currently being fostered by the newly introduced 'prefect system' for Year 6 pupils.

c. Attendance

18. Attendance levels are satisfactory and above the national average, levels maintained since the last inspection. Unauthorised absences are higher than the national average. The school is aware of this and is working positively towards alerting parents to the importance of regular attendance. Levels of authorised absence are satisfactory. Many parents know of and follow the procedures for notifying school when justified absences occur.

19. Whilst punctuality is satisfactory overall, a minority of pupils regularly arrive late. These pupils miss important introductions to lessons and the calm, orderly start to the day enjoyed by all other pupils.

c. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

c. Teaching

20. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is good in the early years, and often very good in the reception class. At Key Stage 1, all lessons seen were at least sound, and occasionally had good features. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching ranges from very occasionally having poor features, to often having very good features towards the end of the key stage. In the early years, all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory, in four out of five lessons it was good or better, and in one in four it was very good. At Key Stage 1, all the teaching seen was at least sound, and in one in ten lessons it was good. At Key Stage 2, almost nine out of ten lessons were satisfactory or better, in six in ten it was good or better, and in four of these it was very good. However, in slightly more than one in ten lessons at this key stage, teaching had unsatisfactory, or very occasionally poor, features.

21. The quality of teaching for children aged under five is good with some very good features. The nursery staff and the reception classteacher's knowledge of the six areas of learning, children's maturity and their individual stages of development are well understood. There are clear expectations of what pupils should be able to do, and planning identifies relevant outcomes. Resources are carefully considered, and methods and organisation are well suited to the different experiences provided. There is a good emphasis on encouraging pupils to use their initiative and develop their independence during the practical activities. Management and discipline are particularly good, and teachers are good at assessing the needs of pupils and asking specific questions to help them to gain an understanding. A friendly, but firm manner is apparent, and children are made to feel welcome and secure.

22. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good in literacy lessons in particular, as when targeted spellings are taught through ICT. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. It is most effective when individual education plans (IEPs) contain very specific targets, so that tasks can be exactly matched to need, and when pupils receive focused attention and effective questioning from classteacher or another adult, as in a science lesson in Key Stage 1. Support from the local authority support services is a satisfactorily managed blend of in-class and withdrawal teaching, with effective use of the latter to give Additional Literacy Support in Years 3 and 4. Procedures for identifying pupils with SEN are now clear and well understood by staff, and pupils are identified and placed on the register at an early stage, often in the reception class. However, the low number of pupils set IEP targets in Numeracy or science indicates that some non-linguistic needs may remain under-provided for. Teachers work effectively with the SENCO on a termly review basis to decide who moves up and down the register. Newly qualified teachers have received good support from the SENCO in writing IEPs for the pupils with SEN in their class.

23. A key issue relating to the improvement of standards in mathematics at the last inspection, which indicated shortcomings with regard to the teaching of strategies for mental arithmetic, has been fully addressed. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has reinforced and extended well the developments the school had implemented here.

24. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of pupils of primary age, and of the subjects they teach, is good. The two newly qualified staff have demanding tasks, working in the one case with a class with a higher proportion than is usual of pupils with SEN, and in the other with the added challenge of receiving a large group of Year 4 pupils into her class for three afternoons per week, some of her Year 5 pupils moving on to the next class. This arrangement appears to work successfully for pupils and staff, and it is to the credit of these relatively inexperienced staff, and the staff who support them, that this is so. Teachers understand the structure and purposes of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and have applied the inherent principles effectively, leading to increased specific class teaching, and discussion. This is having positive effects in oral work in both subjects, and the structure provided is helpful in setting targets for pupils' development, particularly for newly qualified staff.

25. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, but in some classes these do not translate into sufficiently high standards of behaviour from individuals and groups of mainly boys. Some teachers explain the rewards and sanctions system well to their pupils, referring to the agreed class principles underpinning the teacher's expectations. Others, however, administer sanctions without good reason, or without making it clear to the pupil why the sanction is being used. In one class, for instance, one boy was eventually sent to the headteacher for receiving five warnings in fifteen minutes, after he had been obliged by the teacher to sit on the carpet in whole class activity for more than forty minutes, which was far too long for his concentration level. Expectations of pupils' attainment and progress are good in the early years and at upper Key Stage 2, leading to good progress. For instance, in a lesson with the reception pupils on the Hindu celebration of Diwali, the teacher's high expectations of the children's concentration and involvement, linked to her good subject knowledge and good planning, led to good progress. In a science lesson with Year 6 pupils, the teacher's good subject knowledge and high expectations led to good cooperative group work, and good scientific behaviour in dissolving solids. However, whilst expectations of most pupils' progress and attainment are satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, high attaining pupils are often insufficiently challenged. For instance, some pupils are currently involved in mathematics work at a lower level than that which they were successfully attempting in September.

26. The methods and organisation used in lessons are good overall. They are very good in the early years, satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, and very good at upper Key stage 2. Both the nursery and reception classes are arranged well to allow pupils ready access to a number of structured learning opportunities, which promotes their independence successfully. At Key Stage 1, a science investigation outside led to good progress in pupils' knowledge and understanding of materials and their uses, but the management of the pupils in returning to their class was not well planned. Pupils in Year 2 were well organised in pairs and groups during a successful music lesson, and were enabled to compose their own tunes by the teacher's skilled management of time and resources. However, in other lessons, higher attaining pupils often tackle the same work as others, and are not stretched sufficiently. At Key Stage 2, there are very good examples of the careful planning of activities, with the learning objectives shared with the pupils, so that they understand the purpose of the activities. For instance, in a lesson with Year 5 pupils a good variety of group activities, pitched at the right level to interest and challenge pupils of differing levels of attainment, led to a plenary where the teacher asked pupils to describe their progress against the targets set earlier in the lesson. Similarly, an art lesson with Year 6 pupils built well on their previous work, and time and resources were outstandingly well organised to allow the pupils to make very good progress in observational and designing skills.

27. The management of the pupils is very good in the early years. It is satisfactory overall in the rest of the school. It is particularly good at upper Key Stage 2, but has shortcomings in some other classes, particularly for the younger juniors. In general, at playtimes, lunchtimes, and assemblies, pupils move round the school in an orderly and well-controlled manner. However, some teachers do not make clear to pupils how moving from one area to another can be most efficiently achieved; for instance, some teachers lead their class from the front, so that pupils behind them sometimes misbehave but cannot be seen.

28. Time and resources are used well overall, particularly during Literacy and Numeracy Hours. There are occasions when the playground and school field are underused, and problem behaviour leads to wasted time for the pupils. There are far more examples, however, of good pace in lessons, efficient beginnings and ends to sessions, and the resources required to complete the tasks being available, and used well. The use of the school's computers is good, for instance. The quality of day-to-day assessment is good overall, and its use to inform planning for lessons is good in some classes, but this whole area is improving strongly across the school at the moment, as it is a sharp focus in school development. There are some classes where the information the teachers have as to a pupil's prior knowledge and understanding in the subject is not used to plan appropriate work for

them, particularly for higher attainers. In some cases they do the same work as everyone else unnecessarily, and only move on to more appropriately challenging work after completing work that is too easy for them. Marking is often good, both through comments on pupils' work, and in discussion with them as they work. Occasionally, however, teachers write comments on pupils' work, intended to help them improve, which they cannot actually read.

29. Homework is set across the school, increasing in demand as pupils move through the school, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 it makes a good contribution to pupils' consolidation of their learning, and prepares them well for secondary school. Parents help their children at home, particularly with reading, and the school is seeking to increase this involvement to help pupils make greater progress, especially at Key Stage 1.

c. The curriculum and assessment

c.

c. 30. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It successfully promotes the aims of the school and assists pupils' intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral and cultural development. There is good curricular provision across the school. Provision for IT, which was an area of weakness at the last inspection, has been improved and the curriculum now meets the statutory requirements with regard to the core National Curriculum subjects. Religious education is taught according to the locally agreed Catholic diocesan syllabus. A programme of personal and social education is incorporated within the religious education scheme of work. Some aspects of health education, for example, dealing with the potential dangers of drug-taking, are included within the science curriculum at appropriate levels for the ages of the pupils. A policy for sex education has been agreed by the governors and a scheme called 'In the beginning' is used from Year 1 to Year 6 which introduces knowledge and understanding within an overtly Christian context.

31. The school has improved curricular documentation since the last inspection, and there are policies and schemes for all subjects. Some of these are due for review, and these intentions are clearly laid out in the school development plan and the subject position statements prepared recently by subject coordinators. Teachers' planning to ensure that learning develops progressively is particularly good in English and mathematics, and in subjects where the school is using well-developed local authority schemes or Qualifications and Curriculum Authority documentation. The school has made a good effort to involve pupils in using computers through demonstration lessons by teachers, followed by pupils working on the computers individually or in pairs. Good progress with regard to curriculum review has taken place recently. Each subject coordinator has drawn up an action plan which includes timed targets for reviewing documentation, monitoring the development of the subject, providing support for other members of staff, identifying training needs, and auditing resources.

32. Since the new headteacher has been in post, she has ensured that there is a coherent whole school plan for the curriculum. Each class has a curricular planning file which includes a consistent format for long term and medium term plans. The work for each subject is produced half-termly, in advance. These are carefully written to identify what pupils are expected to learn and include some assessment opportunities to discover how successful the work has been. The daily plans often include effective work for different groups of pupils according to their abilities. Some of the work planned for the pupils in Years 1 and 2, and pupils at lower Key Stage 2, however, does not always provide sufficient challenge when it does not take full account of what they are already able to do.

33. The school is implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well. As the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Hours takes up a considerable amount of time during the week, the school attempts to provide pupils with a balanced curriculum by focusing on specific subjects in topics over a half term. For example art, and design and technology, history and geography are taught in this way. A good attempt is being made to maintain the recommended priorities for the foundation subjects, to monitor the time allocations and to teach the necessary skills in some classes. However, there is an uneven picture with regard to some subjects, such as art, where there is little evidence of pupils in some years learning about the work of famous artists, for example.

34. The curricular provision for children aged under five is good. Planning for learning in a progressive step-by-step sequence is clear and detailed. In the Nursery, children encounter a broad range of first-hand practical experiences and staff place good emphasis on helping them to develop their skills in language and to relate to others. The children have good opportunities to participate in organised activities, and to select their own in a play situation. These approaches are continued into the Reception class, and an appropriate effort is being made to introduce pupils to aspects of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies. Half-termly themes such as 'All about

me' and 'Celebrations' give a balanced, often exciting, curriculum, as was seen when the children in the Reception class were involved in the celebration of Diwali. Here they had the chance to hear Indian music, look at culturally representative fabrics, and make clay pots as Diwali lamps. The children in the reception class do not have their own easily accessible area for outdoor play adjacent to the classroom. Although the staff arrange for them to use the Nursery play area every day, there are limitations with regard to their chances to play with large wheeled vehicles in order to develop skills in large muscular movements.

35. The organisational features of the Literacy and Numeracy Hours provide well for pupils with SEN to be supported alongside other low attaining pupils during independent working time. The use of additional support time during whole class phases of the lesson is not always efficient or effective, however, particularly when support staff sit behind the pupils during whole class sessions. Careful planning of support teacher timetabling ensures that full curriculum access is not denied to SEN pupils through withdrawal teaching. Whilst there is generally equal access for all pupils to the full range of curricular opportunities, some pupils' poor behaviour interferes with other pupils' concentration on their work.

c. 36. Arrangements for extracurricular provision are satisfactory. Around forty pupils are involved in football and netball teams, helped by five members of staff and some parents. The football team plays league matches against other local primary schools, and the netball team plays friendly matches. Other sporting activities include

cricket and athletics in the summer. There is a book club, chess club, choir, recorder club and peripatetic tuition for pupils learning to play brass instruments. Twenty pupils regularly stay after school for choir practice.

37. The curriculum is enriched by visits such as the one to Chester for Key Stage 2 pupils as part of their study of the Romans, and Year 6 pupils participate in a geography field trip. A visit from a member of the Embroidery Guild has led the school to produce their own Millennium tapestry which will join a national display of work from schools all over the country at the Millennium Dome later in the year. The curriculum is further enriched by visits from a theatre company, and the Covenant Players who help the pupils to understand issues relating to religious education and personal and social education. The headteacher is seeking to broaden the curriculum by making links with Bolton Octagon Theatre, and by arranging for pupils to work with an artist in residence.

38. The school has useful guidelines for assessment, recording, reporting and marking which are under review. Good procedures exist for the accurate assessment of pupils' work with regard to the Literacy and Numeracy strategies. The recording of work for information technology is exemplary. Some of the work which is based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority schemes of work includes good assessment opportunities at the end of units and indicates what pupils of varying abilities are expected to achieve. This type of information is particularly useful to inexperienced members of staff.

39. Assessment is closely linked with planning both in the policy documentation and increasingly in practice. There is evidence of some very good practice in this respect, although in some cases, teachers are not always fully aware of the use of assessment in order to pitch work at the appropriate level. The use of assessment is satisfactory overall, but it is good at upper Key Stage 2. There are good examples where marking shows pupils how they might improve, and to provide thorough feedback on their performance. Some comments written in pupils' books are not appropriately targeted, however.

c. 40. The school methodically analyses national assessment test information, and carefully considers results from assessment procedures within school for each cohort to track trends in achievement. This productive work has led the school to set targets for year groups and also to plot individual targets for pupils so as to predict their likely attainment. These are good initiatives and with further experience should also lead teachers to predict pupils' likely attainment with even greater accuracy. There are no portfolios of assessed work at present to help teachers to judge the standards of attainment by examining pieces of work which demonstrate differences between levels.

41. There are a few examples of pupils making their own assessments of progress and identifying personal targets for development, but this practice is limited. The reporting of pupils' attainment meets statutory requirements at the end of the key stages. On entry to school, children are assessed according to the local authority's Baseline procedures, both at the beginning of Nursery and in the reception class. The information gained helps teachers to plan careful programmes for these young children.

c. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

42. The school's provision for the spiritual and social development of the pupils is good. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' moral and cultural development, and plans are in hand to improve these areas further.

43. At the time of the last inspection there were some shortcomings identified in spiritual and moral provision. These have been successfully addressed: for example some teachers are now developing their own ways of encouraging pupils to think about their behaviour, and the effect of their actions on others.

44. Throughout the school, from the Nursery to the end of Key Stage 2, the provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. In assemblies, pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings in response to stories and discussions about religious and moral issues. Work in English, mathematics, science and music also make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Work in art makes a limited contribution to pupils' appreciation of the beauty and splendour of the world. During the inspection pupils were given opportunities to understand the concept of loss, and skilfully and sensitively given opportunities to reflect on their own experience, and to recognise good memories as well as sad ones.

45. The school makes satisfactory provision for all pupils' moral development. The school has clear rules which govern behaviour, and in all classes pupils help to draw up their own class rules. Where pupils are reminded of these when standards of behaviour fall, they obey the teacher readily. In one class pupils demonstrated a sense of responsibility by committing themselves to keep their own set of rules. Almost all pupils are learning or developing a sense of what is right and what is wrong. The good standard of behaviour in almost all lessons and around the school reflects the school's substantial success in provision for all pupils' moral development. In the Nursery, for example, the teacher encouraged pupils to discuss how the Little Red Hen could be made happier.

46. The school's provision for social development across the school is good. The youngest pupils are encouraged to relate positively to each other when working and playing. Social interaction is promoted well by teachers, and all pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and groups in lessons. Pupils have opportunities to join together in assemblies and other whole school activities. A notable example of the development of personal responsibility and independence is the prefect structure, which makes a very good contribution to the older pupils' personal growth. Good opportunities are provided for the development of citizenship when the school choir sings at local festivals. There is good parish liaison, and the observance of the traditions and symbolism of Remembrance Day helps pupils to understand the history and traditions of their country.

47. There is an atmosphere of shared mutual respect in all areas of school life. Adults are good role models: they speak courteously to pupils, and share their own personal experiences of childhood on occasion to help the pupils to reflect on their own lives. The day-to-day exchanges between pupils and other adults are invariably good because careful attention is paid to developing respect and trust, to good effect.

48. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Effective opportunities are provided for all pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and also to learn about other cultural traditions. Pupils' understanding of the diversity of other cultures represented locally, nationally and internationally is underdeveloped, however. The school participates in the Bolton Music Festival, and pupils' cultural interests are served by the various educational visits and a range of extra-curricular activities. Some knowledge is gained of other cultures from work on African and Indian music, and from studying the work of artists. The school is aware of the need to provide further planned opportunities for improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions represented in Britain and elsewhere in the world.

c. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

49. The school provides good support and guidance for all its pupils and takes a responsible approach to their daily welfare. The strength in provision is the friendly climate existing in the school, which parents value, and the manner in which all adults work hard to help each pupil feel valued and important. The quality of relationships is good, and pupils are lively, confident and at ease in their surroundings. Children like this school, confirming the views of parents expressed at the meeting, and through questionnaires.

50. Teachers are very patient with pupils, and know them well. The procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are now good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Clear assessment systems are now in place, and records of pupils' attainment and progress are carefully maintained, which are discussed and passed on between teachers. Support is good for those pupils with SEN, and links with agencies and support services for SEN are satisfactory.

51. Teaching and support staff have a clear understanding of pupils' needs, and are generally effective in promoting self-discipline and good standards of behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are satisfactory, supported by the use of rewards and sanctions instituted by the recently appointed head teacher. The school's attitude to combating any incidents of bullying is firm and determined, and, according to parents, immediate: the approach taken is effective.

52. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The effect is that the school engages parental help in determining the causes of each absence and attendance rates show an upward trend as a result. Registers are well kept and provide an accurate picture of each pupils' attendance record.

53. The school is well placed to comply with child protection requirements. A general policy is followed, but it has not yet been adapted to this school's particular circumstances and practices. The head teacher plans to provide appropriate further training for all staff, who are all aware of the procedures to be followed. The prospectus includes information on this sensitive aspect of the school's work.

54. Pupils are looked after well both within school and in the playground. Day-to-day management of health and safety is satisfactory and an effective policy guides this work. Procedures for reporting and recording first aid treatments are not sufficiently well developed, however. This is also true of statutory risk assessments, because procedures for identifying hazards have yet to be established by the governing body. The inadequacy of toilet facilities for the children in the Nursery and reception classes is an area for concern, for instance.

c. Partnership with parents and the community

55. The school has recently taken a positive approach towards improving its partnership with parents and the community it serves, and overall it is satisfactory. The contribution made to pupils' personal development made by the community and the close links with the parish is strong.

56. Whilst the quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory in tone and regularity, its use in encouraging and supporting parental involvement in children's learning is limited. Parents report that lines of communication between home and school have improved recently, however, and they find all staff approachable. Some parents feel the headteacher is particularly positive and flexible in her approach in dealing with concerns as they arise. There are high levels of parental satisfaction with most aspects of the school and the work it is doing. Parents are appreciative of the improvements to the playgrounds and the recent improved tidiness inside the school, for example. The school has recently re-instituted the use of reading records to encourage parents to become more involved in hearing their children read at home.

57. Some parents, however, are critical of the information provided about pupils' progress. Inspection evidence supports these concerns, as insufficient opportunity has been provided for parents to discuss annual reports on pupils' progress. Additionally, some parents find the general organisation of the occasions when progress is reported to them formally by teachers insufficiently confidential.

58. Published information to parents is satisfactory. The prospectus provides a good overview of the curriculum. Some statutory information is missing from the governing body's annual report, however. For example, progress from the previous inspection has not been reported, nor are the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils into school, or ensuring equality of provision. Regular friendly letters and newsletters ensure parents are kept up to date with school matters and social events. Letters are well presented, and include a sample of coverage of the curriculum for each year group. Parents indicate that they find these informative and useful.

59. Few opportunities are presented currently for written dialogue between teachers and parents about the children and their work at home. For some pupils a process of home school books operate where behaviour falls below expected standards. Parents of these children may then monitor the process. Parents have not yet been

consulted about the behaviour policy, however, and the role they might play in support of the school. Parents of pupils with SEN are notified of progress on a regular basis and invited into school to participate in reviews of statements, and to discuss the targets set in IEPs, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

60. The school's work is enriched by good links with the community which have a positive effect on pupils' attainment, progress and personal development.

61. As a Catholic school, St Columba's is very much part of the parish community and these links are very positive. The chair of governors, who is also the parish priest, is a regular visitor and is well known to the pupils. A number of other visitors are welcomed into assemblies, and a theatre group and a local football club all help to enrich the curriculum. There are good links with the feeder high school to which most pupils transfer. Liaison with a wide range of specialists from the local authority is satisfactory, and benefits pupils' pastoral and educational progress.

62. A Parents' Group offers parents and local residents good opportunities to participate in social events. Government funding provides an extensive training course for parents as co-educators, the school is pleased to host and accommodate this initiative and also welcomes voluntary reading partners to help with pupils with a special educational need.

63. Educational visits occur to places of interest linked to the curriculum, pupils also participate in sporting events and activities which enhance their personal and social development. Good examples are participation in the Crucial Crew event with the emergency services, and the making of a Millennium Tapestry together with ex-pupils of the school. Pupils' understanding of the needs of others is well developed through fundraising for various charities.

c. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

c. Leadership and management

64. The effective aspects of management identified at the last inspection have been maintained or strengthened, and areas of weakness have recently been addressed, and much improved. The headteacher is now fully involved in monitoring the curriculum, and classroom practice: she teaches for one and a half days across key stages 1 and 2, for instance. The school development plan (SDP) now has target dates for the achievement of priorities, and success criteria by which to judge them.

65. The leadership and management of the school are good. The recently appointed headteacher has set out clear but demanding priorities for further school improvement, building well on issues raised in a school review by the local authority in March of this year. Good progress has already been made in a number of areas, and raised staff morale and determination have been harnessed by her to create a whole team approach to securing the required developments nominated in the redrafted SDP. Parents are already impressed by the improved quality of the information they receive, and by the better appearance of the school recently.

66. A particularly impressive recent development is in the growing use of assessment data to monitor the school's work, and to set targets for pupils' further progress. There is now a sharp focus on making sure that teachers' lesson planning takes account of what pupils already know and can do, in order to set them challenging but achievable targets in their work. This is particularly effective in the early years and at upper Key Stage 2. The skilled implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Hours has had good impact here, particularly for newly qualified staff. There is still work to be done here, particularly at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, and the headteacher has instituted regular key stage staff meetings where the overall agreements reached in full staff meetings can be worked out in detail.

67. The deputy headteacher is also the SEN coordinator, leader of Key Stage 1, with overview of the Foundation stage for the under-fives, and mathematics and music coordinator. She has been very supportive of the headteacher, and is fully involved in the school's major developments, particularly the improvement of procedures and practice for pupils with SEN. Having only recently transferred to Key Stage 1 from Key Stage 2, as has her Year 1 colleague, she is beginning to work with the headteacher to take stock of what needs to be done to raise

pupils' standards of behaviour and attainment here. The Key Stage 2 coordinator, who is also English and science coordinator and mentor for newly qualified staff, has had strong impact on the standards attained by the end of the key stage, and on the development of the two teachers at this key stage who are in their first year of teaching. Subject coordinators oversee their colleagues' work through their planning, and staff meetings, but there are firm plans to release them from their class teaching duties to observe the work in their subjects in classrooms. A number of these roles have only recently been adopted, so that there has been little opportunity for a major impact to be made, for instance in art, design and technology, and PE.

68. Good progress with regard to curriculum review has taken place recently, however. Each subject coordinator has drawn up an action plan which includes timed targets for reviewing documentation, monitoring the development of the subject, providing support for other members of staff, identifying training needs, and auditing resources.

69. The governing body has a committee structure to help it in its work, and fulfils its statutory duties effectively. There were some minor omissions in the annual report to parents, which the governors have already planned to rectify. The governing body has a clear sense of mission, founded in its Roman Catholic status, which permeates the school's work appropriately. Named governors for aspects of the school's work, such as literacy, numeracy and SEN, keep the other governors well informed, and the chair of governors regularly visits the school, and is kept closely informed of developments by the headteacher. The action plan drawn up following the last inspection has been carefully worked through, and the governing body has been kept informed of progress towards its targets. There has been accelerated progress in a number of areas recently, and almost all the issues raised have been satisfactorily dealt with. The main outstanding issue concerns the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy by all staff, in order to ensure that all pupils understand and follow it. The headteacher and governors have rightly identified this as a continuing priority for the school in the revised SDP, which provides a good agenda for the school to work through.

70. The school has significantly improved the management of SEN since the last inspection, and the requirements of the code of practice are now fully met. A new SEN coordinator has held post for a year, and there is a revised special needs policy in draft form, which sets out in detail the processes for the identification of pupils with SEN, IEP preparation, and the monitoring and review processes. The coordinator is not able to work with SEN pupils in her role as SENCO currently, so that on-going monitoring to give an overview of progress is limited to review discussions. The use of this time is under review, however.

71. There is a positive ethos for learning, which promotes good levels of achievement by the end of Key Stage 2, and good progress overall for the pupils. The school's values and policies are clearly evident in the positive attitudes of all members of the school community. The mutual support which teachers provide for new and established members of staff is a strong feature of the school, and has a good effect on the working relationships between adults and pupils. The headteacher is a dynamic force in encouraging all those associated with the school to give of their best. This was demonstrated in an assembly attended by parents, where she calmly but determinedly ensured that the pupils complied with her insistence on a quiet exit from the hall; this reinforced effectively to pupils, staff and parents the standards she expects. There is a real concern to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all, but the behaviour of a minority of pupils in some classes detracts from this.

c. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

72. There are sufficient teachers qualified for the full range of the primary curriculum to ensure small classes in the main, in accordance with the governors' policy to provide as much support as possible for pupils with SEN. The staffing, resources and accommodation for pupils with SEN is satisfactory. Effective use is made of support staff designated to individual pupils with SEN, particularly when the pupil is part of small group of pupils who also benefit.

73. The school is awaiting the new guidelines on teacher appraisal before re-instituting an appraisal system. However, the headteacher has put in place an induction system for the two recently appointed newly qualified teachers. She is acting as their appraiser, to complement the good work of the nominated mentor teacher. In order to meet the demands of recent initiatives, most teachers have had regular training, either at local authority or school level. This has included demonstration lessons and feedback from lesson observations, which has added to staff confidence in implementing the new Literacy and Numeracy frameworks successfully.

74. The school has recently reviewed its entire range of resources and books, retaining mainly those currently appropriate for contemporary curriculum needs. This has highlighted gaps in provision in some areas, but the school is aware of this and has action plans for the updating of resources as funds become available and priorities determined. Geography remains insufficiently resourced, and although there are sufficient print resources for history, with the addition of loans from the local library education service, there is a serious shortage of artefacts and other first hand source material that pupils can use in historical investigations. Resourcing for ICT shows a marked improvement since the last inspection, with an equivalent rise in staff expertise and pupil learning. Music and science are well resourced. Literacy at Key Stage 1 has been resourced adequately. However, teachers often make good use of overhead projectors and flip charts, which are well supplied in each classroom, for demonstration, and full pupil involvement. Resources are well organised and accessible to pupils and staff, and the disposal of outdated materials has increased staff awareness of what is and is not available, and has indicated clear targets for replacement and up-dating.

75. The library continues to provide a pleasant, tidy working environment. Books are attractively arranged, but the cataloguing by topic or curriculum area does not encourage the learning of advanced library skills. The more usual Dewey reference system would be more helpful.

76. The accommodation is generally adequate for all but the youngest pupils' needs, and the school continues to be well maintained and kept very clean by the hard-working cleaning staff. Classrooms are of a size to accommodate present class sizes. The hall acts as a dining room, but is sufficiently large for PE and for dining purposes. The school has been designated for remodelling, and provisional approval for the necessary building work has been given by the Diocesan and local education authorities.

77. Accommodation for children in the early years presents some problems, however, in that reception class pupils have to use toilets a good distance away from the class area. This creates difficulties for supervision as the teacher is often on her own with the class. An outdoor play area, with a large storage cupboard for outdoor play equipment, has recently been provided adjacent to the nursery. However, there is a steep ramp to access it from the nursery base, and reception pupils have no direct access to this area. They do use it, but sometimes this is at the same time as the nursery children use it, which reduces its effectiveness in encouraging their physical development. The planned remodelling would deal with these issues for pupils in the early years effectively.

78. Classroom displays are used to reinforce curriculum targets and newly instituted policies on behaviour, but the amount of pupil work on display is limited in all but a few classrooms. Indeed, whilst the quality of display is good in some classrooms such as the nursery and the reception class, many classrooms are not set out as sufficiently stimulating and interesting places for pupils to see their own work celebrated, or where they might learn from, or be motivated to learn by, their interactions with a well-thought out visual and tactile workplace.

c. The efficiency of the school

79. Financial planning is good. The governing body keeps a close watch on spending through reports from the headteacher to its finance committee, and has maintained small classes, one of its chief priorities, whilst ensuring a legal budget with a small surplus. There was an unfortunate misunderstanding regarding the amount available for staffing when the new headteacher took up her post, but this has been skilfully resolved to keep separate age groups for most of the week, with mixed age groups for Years 4, 5 and 6 on three afternoons. Spending on resources has risen since the last inspection, and is now broadly average for a primary school of this size.

80. The deployment of teaching and support staff is good overall. Teachers are appropriately assigned to age groups of which they have some experience. The recent redistribution of coordination and management roles has already begun to take effect, and has helped to clarify areas for further development in the curriculum, for instance. Support staff, including trained nursery nurses and classroom assistants, are assigned to work with groups and individuals well, and offer good support to pupils with SEN. Occasionally, they are insufficiently involved with pupils during the whole class phases of the Literacy and Numeracy Hours. However, one notable exception is in the time given by the nursery nurse from the nursery, after the morning nursery children have gone home, to support a child at Key Stage 1. The teacher skilfully briefs the nursery nurse on the tasks to be attempted without disruption to the work of the rest of the class, and the time is very efficiently used. The headteacher takes classes to release her deputy, and to maintain separate age group teaching in the mornings for the Year 4 class. The rearrangement of pupils in Years 4,5, and 6 for three afternoons per week is effected skilfully by the two staff who teach them.

81. The use made of learning resources and the accommodation is satisfactory. Good use is made of visual aids in whole class sessions, and a wide range of resources and activities is available for children in the early years which support their learning effectively. The recent revisions, including clear labeling, to the storage and accessibility of resources has been useful, as staff are now fully aware of what is available, and where there are gaps in provision. Some classrooms, however, are not organised in such a way as to allow pupils ready access to resources that might support their learning, and occasionally older pupils are not encouraged to use practical apparatus sufficiently to support their mathematical development. The classrooms, hall and playgrounds are used effectively, although the playgrounds and field were under-used for games during the inspection.

82. The efficiency of financial control and school administration is very good. The school secretary and headteacher work closely together to ensure the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis, and the secretary has very good systems in place to manage the administration of the school's finances, which she deals with very efficiently.

83. The school presently manages the resources allocated to it for SEN well; the provision of extra staffing for supporting pupils with special educational needs is effective and has a positive effect on their progress. Funding for staff training is targeted effectively to agreed priorities.

84. The attainment of the children at entry to the school is below average. They make good progress overall by eleven, reflecting the good quality teaching, and attain at least in line with the national average, and above average compared to similar schools. The quality of education offered is good, with good teaching of a good curriculum, and good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All other areas of the school's work are at least satisfactory. Given the broadly average unit cost per pupil, the school gives good value for money.

c. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

c. AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

85. At the time of the inspection the children in the Nursery were aged three and four years old and attended part time. Those in the Reception class were full time. Only five children in the reception class were five years old, and none were of statutory school age. On entry to the nursery, children's attainment is below average nationally, but a significant minority is well below average with regard to language and mathematical skills.

86. They make good progress during the early years and by the time that they are five many are nearing the expected levels as recommended nationally in the Desirable Learning Outcomes with regard to their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their personal and social development. Overall, attainment is still below average with regard to their skills in the areas of language and literacy and mathematical experiences, and in physical skills with regard to fine motor movements when handling pencils and manipulating small constructional equipment. Some of the work in the creative areas of music and art is in line with what would be expected for their age, although at times the art work is too prescriptive when pupils do not have a chance to prepare such activities as collage materials for themselves.

87. Some of the higher attaining children recognise words and read simple books. They pick out the initial letters in their names and tell stories from looking at the pictures in a book. They recognise numbers up to 10 and are beginning to count with accuracy. By five, most children are developing an eagerness to explore new things and have the confidence to speak in front of others, and offer answers to questions. With regard to their knowledge and understanding of the world, many are adept in using a computer and know how to operate a mouse to access programs. In this respect they are already working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

88. The quality of the teaching is good with some very good features. The nursery teacher and nursery nurse work well as a team and provide good support for pupils, including those with special educational needs. The reception class teacher does not have daily support from a classroom assistant, but still provides a very broad range of imaginative experiences for the children. Without frequent adult support, however, she is limited in the time that that she can spend with each group when she is trying to promote language skills during practical activities. The quality of teaching and curriculum provision has improved well since the last inspection.

89. Assessment procedures are good and are conscientiously undertaken when children enter these two classes, enabling work to be pitched at challenging levels. A recent initiative has been individual target setting linked to the areas of learning and this is impressive in its detail. Information is gathered from parents, which helps to give a broad picture of the children's emotional needs, and any problems concerning their health.

90. Resources are adequate and there is a useful, but not ideal, outside area for the Nursery children which enables them to develop their large muscular movements when riding bicycle and negotiating large wheeled vehicles. There is some agility apparatus for them to use in this area, but no fixed climbing apparatus. The Reception children do not have their own outside play area adjacent to their room. Although they use the Nursery area at playtimes they have restricted access to the large toys. Both Nursery and Reception children use the hall for some movement and physical education activities.

c. Personal and social development

91. The children make good progress and many reach the standard expected as a result of very good teaching in this respect. They show good attitudes to learning situations once they have settled in, and are happy and secure in their surroundings. They learn to listen attentively to their teachers. At first many do not relate to each other during role play but this improves as they grow in maturity, gain greater facility with language and become more confident. Children are eager to explore new learning, and during the inspection shared favourite books with an inspector and asked questions about the purpose of the visit. They were keen to show what they could do. Most children settle down quickly to tasks and become involved with what they are doing, for example, when exploring the properties of play dough or how to mould wet sand. Children behave well and know what is expected of them in terms of appropriate behaviour: this is very effectively promoted through the quiet, friendly but firm manner and approach of the teachers. Children treat school property as they should and clear away when asked. A large proportion of them are establishing effective relationships with other children and most are particularly good at taking turns and sharing resources. In the Nursery they learn to be independent from a young age and find their own name card when they choose to sit at the table to have milk and a snack. They show good independence when visiting the toilet and dealing with their clothing. They are beginning to develop sensitivity towards others, for example by giving a friend some pieces of poppadom at the lunch table. During the inspection, the Nursery children led an assembly to which parents were invited. They acknowledged God's wonderful world and His love, showed their own work, and sang songs and nursery rhymes. This opportunity gave them the opportunity to share their work with the whole school and all carried the experience off with aplomb. During the day, very good opportunities are provided by teachers for both Nursery and reception pupils to use their own initiative to sit quietly when they listen to music, and they know that it is time to gather as a class, or to engage in accompanying songs with musical instruments.

c.

c. Language and literacy

92. By the time that they are five, most children are unlikely to attain the relevant standards in language and literacy although the teaching is of good quality and children make good progress. This is because a significant minority of children has very low attainment in this respect. Some children lack fluency in speaking and the development of speaking and listening is recognised as an important part of the curriculum. Many opportunities are provided to promote this aspect, such as role play in the office in the Nursery or 'Ripley Street Post Office' in the Reception class. Subtle intervention by the teacher helps to extend their language when children are weighing parcels or selling birthday cards, for example. Pupils are learning to listen attentively and like to talk to each other but they are often tongue tied when asked to explain what they have been doing, to an adult. Children in both classes do not have the necessary vocabulary to describe their actions. Reading is sometimes slow to develop, especially with boys are often unused to handling books and pretending to tell the story from the pictures. Some particularly good progress was seen, however by higher attainers who could explain the development of a simple story line and identify some letters within the words. The school works hard to enable children to enjoy hearing stories and the tapes and headphones are readily available. Children enjoy joining in when they are encouraged to enact stories such as The Little Red Hen and take the parts of the characters well when supported by the teacher. Most of the Reception children know that print gives meaning and that words are read from left to right. Teachers work hard to provide opportunities for children to see the written word and encourage them to practise 'emergent' writing in play situations. Letter formation is developing slowly although children have made good progress with pencil control since starting school. They trace over letters in the Nursery which helps with their dexterity. In the Reception class they practise writing simple words such as dog when making invitations for the Little Red Hen's Tea Party.

c. Mathematics

93. The quality of teaching is good and children make good progress from a below average starting point. In a significant minority of cases, attainment on entry is well below what might be expected. Some of this is to do with children's limited skills in using mathematical language such as more or less, larger or smaller, empty and full. Mathematical vocabulary and knowledge of pattern structure are developing slowly therefore the expected standards are unlikely to be achieved by the time that children are five years of age. They are beginning to use mathematical language such as circle and when playing with play dough, they are encouraged to make comparisons to say which teddy bear's legs are thinner than the others, for example. They recognise many of the numbers below ten but accurate counting is not assured. They are able to sort plastic teddies for colour and size and place them in order, with support from an adult. When working on such tasks they make good progress when an adult is with them but find the task difficult when unsupervised. Often they are unable to keep on the task but are not badly behaved, preferring to create imaginary play situations and act them out with the animals. Many of the opportunities provided for them in the sand and water are good for developing concepts connected with capacity, size and shape and these are well planned. Higher attainers in the Reception class are able to make comparisons and add on one more to a number. These children are well in line to achieve what is expected. In the early years, there is particularly good reinforcement of number concepts through incidental activities, for example, children learn to sing about two blue pigeons and when they fly away children take one away followed by another. On their 'return' simple addition of one and one is demonstrated. Nursery rhymes such as Three Blind Mice and stories of The Three Bears help children to understand the concept of three things. Listening activities and computer programs in the Reception class are very productive in engaging pupils in number activities such as counting, matching, sorting, recognizing numbers and shapes. Very good progress occurs when children count to 20, use a 100 square above make comparisons about short and long snakes and trees. The teacher works hard to assess individual knowledge and understanding by giving time to work with children on imaginative tasks which involve soft toys and conkers.

c. Knowledge and understanding of the world

94. Pupils make good progress in this area of learning and are on line to attain the appropriate standard by the time that they are five. The quality of teaching is good. Children learn about their immediate environment and Reception children practise being shopkeepers in the post office. They go outside and look at autumn trees and the changes in the seasons. In the Nursery they make books about themselves in their topic 'All about me; and learn about their own families and likes and dislikes. They think about the rooms in their houses and which furniture goes in each room. When learning about colour, light and shape, they explore the effects of looking through transparent papers which show the world as red and then focus on making a table all about red things. In the Reception class, children learn to use program about 'My World' and have the chance to decide which clothes teddy will need for a hot or rainy day. They 'dress' teddy by using the mouse and directing the arrow appropriately then clicking. They know how to move items, make choices and this helps them to access further pages. The staff provide good first hand experiences which help children to begin to develop early scientific skills in observation and prediction. For example, they plant crocus and daffodil bulbs, and learn what is required for growth. They begin to reach conclusions about the properties of living things. In their topic on 'celebrations' their cultural development is promoted when they learn about the customs associated with Diwali. Within their own class, they engage in a mass to which parents are invited and they are beginning to understand the importance of prayer within the Catholic faith.

c. Physical development

95. Physical development is variable but many children are not adept at using pencils and controlling their fine movements when they first begin school. Progress is good in this area with regard to the promotion of fine, muscular developments. The quality of teaching is good with a good emphasis being given to helping pupils to trace accurately and hold small pieces of equipment. Children are taught how to cut with scissors and to spread glue although in some instances the materials are already prepared for them and they would benefit from being involved with their preparation. The provision for developing gross motor skills is good in the nursery when children have daily access to an outdoor area and learn how to coordinate their bodies when riding bicycles and driving vehicles. Within the Reception class, pupils move about freely and can manipulate materials such as clay and play dough, and handle construction equipment and jigsaws, and operate a keyboard and mouse. They do not have free access to a safe outdoor play area directly from their classroom and the necessary agility apparatus and wheeled toys so as to strengthen their skills in climbing, balance and coordination. They do have a hall time

and outdoor physical education lessons when they practise jumping, striding, throwing and catching and become appropriately aware of the space around them. Overall, however, their gross motor skills are not well developed.

c. Creative development

96. The quality of teaching is mainly good in this respect. Children are making good progress from a well below average starting point but indications are that they are unlikely to reach the expected standards by the time that they are five years of age. Children enjoy hearing music and sing along well with adults. They particularly like to hear music on the headphones and put on their own tapes. In the reception class, the teacher sets up good opportunities for children to engage in music making when they accompany songs with musical instruments on an incidental basis. They clap with accuracy when joining in with the Little Red Hen rap and know songs such as Miss Polly had a dolly. They paint pictures from stories and learn to mix paints to make new colours. Some of the work on the walls does not reflect all the good artwork which is occurring in the nursery. Some of the displays are too prescribed by adults, with children filling in colours with paint or collage materials. Children print using their hands and feet and play imaginatively with toys in sand and water play. They make sparkly firework pictures and have a go at representing themselves with a variety of materials. Role play and drama opportunities enable pupils to play out imaginary situations and dress up accordingly. This is usually well structured by the staff, and is most productive when adults intervene to give the children further ideas.

c.

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

c. English

97. At Key Stage 2, results of national testing in 1999 show that there are above average numbers of pupils reaching the expected levels for their age and going on beyond this to achieve at Level 5. These are very high results when set against schools in similar circumstances. Standards at Key Stage 2 have fluctuated over the past three years, but the picture is one of rising standards following a sharp fall in results in 1997, with results improving more than the national trend. Currently, attainment towards the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with the standards expected of pupils towards the end of primary schooling.

98. Currently, attainment in literacy towards the end of Key Stage 1 is below the national average for pupils of this age. The results of statutory testing for seven-year-olds in 1999 show reading to be well below the national standard, with significantly fewer than the average number of pupils reaching the expected Level 2. The number of pupils reaching beyond this, to Level 3, is also very low in comparison with national figures. Similarly in writing, fewer than average numbers of pupils reach the expected levels for their age, or beyond to higher levels. Results in both reading and writing lie below those of schools in similar circumstances. At Key Stage 1, there has been a falling trend in literacy, with a sharp dip in reading standards from 1998 to 1999, and a fall in writing that gives much lower standards in 1999 than were achieved in 1997.

99. At Key Stage 2, speaking and listening is characterised by confident, lively presentation of ideas and task outcomes to other pupils in the class and to wider audiences. Such opportunities are generated across the curriculum, such as small group presentations about Roman Britain in history lessons. In whole class discussion about text during the Literacy Hour, pupils communicate their ideas well, attempt to explain their thinking and frequently use appropriate subject terminology in order to make meanings clear.

100. Current attainment at Key Stage 2 in reading and writing is sound, with a realistic school target set at just above 70% to achieve Level 4 in the year 2000 statutory tests. Inspection evidence shows that good progress towards the end of the key stage should be instrumental in achieving these targets by the end of the year.

101. In reading, pupils at the end of the key stage read aloud effectively to their peers, make predictions about text, and use suitable technical vocabulary such as metaphor and alliteration to discuss linguistic forms, and share interpretations. However, the range of personal reading is narrow, often limited to a few well-known authors, restricting recognition and appreciation of quality literature. In information retrieval, most pupils have the skills to use the index, contents lists, and use skimming and scanning skills. However, selecting, editing and synthesising skills are not yet secure.

102. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils are given a good range of stimulus for their writing, perfectly in line with National Literacy Strategy objectives for each year and term and in tune with their interests. For example, writing a biography of an England footballer, so that boys and girls equally show an intense interest in words and their impact. Towards the end of the key stage, pupils produce sustained and often sensitive, empathetic pieces of writing in preparing curriculum vitae for family members. The more able writers use complex sentence structure, and punctuate accurately; spelling is generally sound. Handwriting is well formed, legible and becoming more fluent, with good standards of presentation across the key stage. Pupils understand the purpose of drafting their work, using pencilled entries for stage directions for instance, and planning sheets for selected tasks, often linked to homework.

103. Speaking and listening are satisfactorily developed by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils listen attentively to stories and poems read by the teacher, and to instructions and explanations, but they are less skilled at listening to each other and in justifying and explaining their ideas. Some lower attaining pupils lack confidence in communicating their ideas to adults other than the teacher.

104. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils read competently from simple, familiar texts, including screen text on the computer; they meet national expectations in terms of understanding story themes, and are able to make simple inferences and respond to characters and events. They show appropriate expression when reading together as a class, and enjoy listening and responding to stories in whole class sessions. Enthusiasm for reading independently is less marked, and only the more fluent and able readers are able to make comparisons, or simple inferences by referring back to the text. Few pupils use the full range of reading strategies, relying mainly on picture cues and word recognition or upon adult help in applying phonic knowledge and contextual cues.

105. In writing, pupils practise the range of forms required at Level 2 of National Curriculum, writing simple captions, instructions and lists satisfactorily. Narrative writing such as a story about "Aliens" undertaken in one class shows that the majority of pupils can produce a logical sequence of simple sentences and attempt to spell frequently used words accurately. However, there is little sense of audience other than the teacher, and the output of narrative writing is low and unimaginative. The more able pupils use capital letters and full stops accurately in their own work, but for the majority, understanding of basic punctuation is not secure. The handwriting of the majority of pupils is not yet consistently well-formed or regular, with some untidy presentation in books. Spellings are attempted using knowledge of sound/letter relationships, but there is little evidence of self-checking.

106. Most pupils at Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress, and progress for pupils with SEN is also sound. Girls progress faster than boys, but higher attaining pupils make the least progress because tasks for independent working are not sufficiently challenging in relation to earlier work and achievement. In reading, pupils' sound level of letter sounds on entry is not extended sufficiently in terms of the required phonic skills, and their systematic application to independent reading.. However, through the structured word level work of the Literacy Hour, pupils are beginning to build on their knowledge of sound-letter relationships to improve reading and spelling skills. There is a good choice of home reading books, and reading diaries are used effectively in one class to communicate between home and school, although in another class there is evidence of pupils remaining on one book for too long.

107. Progress in literacy at Key Stage 2 is good overall for pupils at all levels of attainment. Boys respond as well as girls to the impact of strong, direct teaching, particularly towards the end of the key stage, as do pupils with SEN from well focused teaching in small groups. Pupils are set targets at the start of each term, displayed in the classroom and in workbooks, which aid progress when referred to regularly in teaching, as observed in a Year 5 plenary session on adverbs, and in teachers' marking . Marking is thorough across the Key Stage, closely related to lesson objectives and individual targets, and pupils respond to advice and criticism in subsequent pieces of work, although little time is set aside for a considered pupil response to teacher comments. The National Literacy Strategy is being used effectively to ensure progress from year to year, so that pupils in Year 4 write playscripts, effectively considering the role of the narrator, characterisation and the needs of a younger audience, whilst in Year 6 playscripts are used to teach drafting skills and the purpose and form of stage directions. The limited range of support readers in the library contributes to a limited knowledge of children's authors, and the classification of books by topic impedes the development of library research skills. However, by the end of the key stage, pupils are deeply interested in the power of text and in the craft of writing, use newly acquired subject terminology with confidence, and are making good progress in all aspects of literacy. Throughout the school, there is no evidence of any significant variations in the attainment and progress of pupils of different ethnicity, gender or background.

108. Pupils' attitudes towards English are good overall, and very good in some classes in Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 they are keen to join in whole class activities, enjoy sharing Big Books together, and answer questions eagerly. They cooperate in pairs in phonic activities, such as when using phoneme fans to blend together segmented phonemes. Behaviour during literacy lessons often shows some inattention towards the end of whole class sessions, and off-task talk during independent work in one classroom. At Key Stage 2, all pupils show interest and behaviour is generally good, and very good in some lessons and classes. By Years 5 and 6, pupils show intense concentration and a strong sense of shared commitment to self-improvement. They cooperate well in pairs, but as yet find collaborative group work a difficult challenge in some classes.

109. The quality of teaching is sound at Key Stage 1 and good overall at Key Stage 2, although with variations between teachers and classes, being very strong at the end of Key Stage 2, showing marked improvement since the last inspection. All teachers have a secure knowledge of English and of the Literacy Strategy Framework, which has been adopted across all classes, providing for continuity and progression of pupils' learning. Medium term planning is good: weekly planning grids are comprehensive, setting out clear objectives and intended progress through the week. All teachers are able to implement whole class and independent working competently, and management of the hour is generally good, with a clear structure to lessons and an appropriate pace.

110. However, although assessment and record keeping systems are in place, assessment does not sufficiently inform day-to-day planning. This results in low expectations for average and higher attaining pupils, so that work is insufficiently challenging, posing too low a level of intellectual effort from the pupils, who do not, therefore, always work as productively as they should. Whilst the Literacy Hour word level sessions have given a sharp focus to phonics teaching, teachers do not always recognise the need to emphasise the link between reading, writing and spelling, or consistently promote the use of phonic strategies in independent reading.

111. Where teaching is at its best in upper Key Stage 2, it is highly interactive, with good use made of flip-charts placed on carpeted areas, to confirm and consolidate teaching points. Teacher expectations in these classrooms are high for both concentration levels and the quality and extent of pupil response in discussion and writing. Teachers' questioning is of a high standard, probing pupils to explain and justify their ideas, to check for understanding, and is well targeted at individual levels of attainment. In years 4, 5 and 6, assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are made on a daily basis. This covers the marking of previous work, and using pupil explanations to diagnose misconceptions, such as the rule for creating adverbs, as well as recognising when pupils have grasped the main idea and are ready to move on, as in a fast moving lesson on developing playscripts from the story of 'Cinderella'.

112. Group tasks at Key Stage 2 are devised creatively to match the below average, average and high attainers' needs, whilst fulfilling the lesson objectives. For instance, high attaining pupils are asked to precis a newspaper story whilst pupils of average attainment highlight the key points, and low attainers select the main ideas from individual complex sentences, and practise connecting them. Homework is used effectively, for instance to help the learning of spelling lists, or to prepare for as well as to extend classroom learning.

113. In summary, the school's strategy for literacy based upon the National Literacy Framework, is having a good impact upon the teaching and learning of literacy, which is secure across all classes. Overall, attainment has been maintained since the last inspection, and in some aspects, such as reading, it has been improved by the time the pupils reach eleven.

c. Mathematics

114. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment was in line with the national average at both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. The percentage of pupils who reached Level 4 and above was above the average when compared with the results of schools in similar situations. The percentage of pupils who reached Level 5 was well above average when compared with similar schools. In 1997, results were above average, fell steeply in 1998 to well below average but show sharp improvements in 1999. There were no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls at this key stage.

115. The findings of the inspection indicate that most pupils attain standards at the level of the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 2 and there is evidence of above average attainment. This is in agreement with this year's end of key stage national tests and is an improvement on the school's last OFSTED inspection

when standards were below the expected levels. By the age of eleven, pupils develop strategies for problem solving and begin to make generalised statements based on their own evidence. The previous weakness, which was concerned with pupils' lack of effective strategies to help them to solve mental arithmetic problems, has been addressed. Pupils have the skills to work out simple calculations using the four rules of number and to make estimations to see if they are right. Most pupils have a good understanding of place value when multiplying and dividing by 10 or 100 and when adding and subtracting decimals. Higher attainers know how to carry out long multiplication with decimals, change fractions to percentages and make accurate approximations when working with numbers in the thousands. Pupils measure accurately, recognise shapes such as a rhombus or a trapezium and calculate perimeters of rectangles. Higher attainers convert metric units into imperial ones and explain how to calculate the perimeters of compound shapes. When investigating ratio, pupils work out the probability of pulling out every colour from a bag of marbles where there are 7 yellow, 9 blue and 2 green ones. They make lifestyle surveys and often put the information gained into graphical or tabular form with the use of information technology. Most pupils interpret diagrams and draw simple conclusions from the data which they find.

116. In the end of Key Stage 1 1999 tests, the percentage of pupils who attained the nationally expected levels was well below average at both Level 2 and at Level 3. Attainment was also well below average when compared to schools in similar situations. Over the three years from 1996 to 1998, the mathematics results were below the national average and dropped further in 1999. In some respects this reflects the particular cohort for the year which had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Statistics for the last three years show that boys outperform girls in mathematics at this key stage.

117. The findings of the inspection are that by the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is below national expectations. There are some notable exceptions of average attainment by individuals who also have the potential to work at higher levels. By the age of seven, pupils carry out simple calculations, which involve addition and counting back to represent subtraction. They recognise number sequences and with support, many can place numbers accurately on a number line up to 100. Higher attainers can work out where numbers fit up to 150. They are beginning to understand the place value of digits and explain the differences between 14 and 41, for example, but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to practise using their developing knowledge of numbers in everyday situations. Higher attainers easily give the value of coins to £1 and others can give change from 10p. They are able to say which items are longer and shorter than a metre and they use co-ordinates accurately, in a simple form, to locate buried treasure on a map.

118. The progress which pupils make, including those with special educational needs, is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 1 but higher attainers do not always make sufficient progress. They sometimes revisit work on simple addition and subtraction up to 20 when they are capable of working with much higher numbers. Some of the work which Year 1 pupils are able to do is not vastly different from the work that they have been covering in the Reception class. Good progress often occurs in the introductory work during the Numeracy hour in both Years 1 and 2 especially when the subsequent work follows the theme and provides a clear challenge and continuity of learning. Progress is slower when there is a reliance on inappropriate worksheets.

119. Good progress at Key Stage 2 is evidenced by the fact that pupils enter the key stage at below average levels and reach the national expectations by its end. Pupils with SEN make good progress overall. The rate of progress is uneven, however, with much more rapid progress being seen in the upper part of Key Stage 2. Progress in Year 3 is sometimes limited by the inattention of pupils and the teacher's attempts to establish routines. Year 3 pupils benefit from the structure of the Numeracy hour and have some good opportunities to consolidate their learning of the 5x multiplication table, for example, in a 'Follow Me' game. In Year 4 there is an attempt to raise standards but at times the work provided is too difficult. There is a good emphasis on practice and consolidation as was seen when pupils worked on halving and doubling numbers up to 100. In Year 5 and 6 there are clear explanations and high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve when working on measurements of shapes. In Year 6 particularly the work is pitched at achievable but challenging levels, for example, pupils were encouraged to work out formulae for calculating perimeters.

120. Pupils generally respond well to the teaching of the subject at both key stages but show greater powers of concentration when the teaching is lively and purposeful and when activities are interesting and well organised. The majority of behaviour is good, especially when clear expectations are consistently conveyed to the pupils and praise and encouragement are given. Many pupils across the school persevere well when working on tasks and try hard to complete them to the best of their ability. When given the chance to work in pairs they are sensible and often very supportive of each other. Younger pupils are learning to take turns when playing number games and using equipment. Older ones are very willing to show their work to inspectors and explain politely

how they have found the answers. Pupils of all ages readily access the equipment and materials they need for their work and help to clear away without fuss.

121. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The previous inspection found that teaching at Key Stage 1 was at least sound and at Key Stage 2, teachers' knowledge was sound but lesson objectives were not always achieved and some teachers did not manage disruptive pupils effectively. In the upper part of Key Stage 2 there are now particularly good strategies in place for the management of pupils, but there are inconsistencies in practice at the beginning of both key stages when pupils are not always made aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Strengths in teaching relate to clear planning and a good balance of activities in lessons with useful reviews at the end to clarify points and to help pupils to realise what they have learned. Very good teaching seen in Year 6 was characterised by high expectations of what pupils of all abilities could achieve, excellent questioning which probed understanding and built on what pupils already knew, and very competent organisation of activities. In a lesson on perimeters, the teacher worked with a group of pupils with special educational needs for part of the time but never lost sight of the needs of all the pupils. No lessons were regarded as unsatisfactory but shortcomings relate to expectations, which are sometimes too low especially with regard to the higher attainers at Key Stage 1.

122. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Although there are some good examples, the area concerned with investigative approaches is the least represented across the school. There are good procedures for assessment and individuals are targeted by teachers so that the school can measure their rates of progress. Thorough work has occurred on the analysis of different year groups and their subsequent expected levels of achievement and this effort is contributing to the rise in standards at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 the information gathered from the procedures is not always used consistently to guide the planning so that higher attainers can be challenged sufficiently. Throughout the school, extension activities are sometimes given to higher attaining pupils only as an extra after they have completed the core work of the lesson which they find easy to do.

123. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is good and staff fully understand its principles. Useful numeracy targets are prominently displayed in classrooms to give pupils a sense of purpose. Overall standards in numeracy are improving but there is still some lack of knowledge on the part of the lower attaining pupils when referring to multiplication tables. Good application of numeracy occurs in science when pupils learn to analyse graphs based on evidence they gather during experiments and in design and technology. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils practised their mathematical skills when they carefully planned Roman villas and had to work out accurate measurements for the materials they would need. Similarly they had to rotate the frontal image so as to provide a side view plan. Resources have been improved since the last inspection, and are adequate for the demands of the curriculum.

c. Science

124. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999, the school's results at the end of Key Stage 2 were below the national average, but in line with those in schools in similar circumstances. These results show a big improvement on the previous year's results. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment towards the end of the key stage is in line with the national average, and that a few pupils are working at higher than expected levels for their age. This maintains the levels of attainment in general since the last inspection, but there have been significant improvements recently for high attaining pupils.

125. Pupils' attainment as assessed by teachers in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 1 was well below the national average, and below that in schools in similar circumstances. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment towards the end of the key stage currently is below the national average, and in line with that in similar schools, based on previous data. This is lower than that reported at the last inspection, accounted for by changes in the prior attainment of the cohort of pupils, and also by the expectations of staff.

126. Pupils in Year 6 know how to conduct a fair test and some understand the need to control variables, including changing a variable, such as the amount of a substance added, and gauging its effect. Many know that some solids dissolve in water, and that others do not. For instance, they predict correctly that coffee will dissolve and change the colour of the solution, sugar will dissolve and form a clear solution, and that tea leaves will change the colour of the water by infusion, but not dissolve. Most of them show good understanding for their age of forces, including that balanced forces operate on a stationary object, and have tested air resistance on

"spinners" they have made. Pupils in Year 2 describe simple properties of a range of common materials, such as wood, plastic and metal. The majority understands that twisting or squashing will permanently affect some materials, but not others, and that applying heat can cause permanent change in such things as clay and dough. They perform simple tests with help, such as for magnetic attraction, and begin to understand that different materials are useful for different purposes. For instance, a high attaining pupil wrote, "I chose this metal bowl because it is shiny and smooth, light and hard."

127. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 across the subject, and it is good overall at Key Stage 2, being rapid for Years 5 and 6. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, but good progress at upper Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 1 investigated the range and type of materials used in the construction and furniture of their school playground, making satisfactory progress in learning to classify them under simple headings. Year 2 pupils also made satisfactory progress in recording their findings in grouping materials, and testing them for change of state. All pupils, however, do the same work, and the difference in teachers' expectations of their attainment and progress is through their recording of their findings, rather than the level of challenge in the work. The same is true at Key Stage 2, and results in just satisfactory progress at the lower key stage, where the standard of presentation of work on healthy eating falls from September to November. However, satisfactory progress was made in a lesson on what plants need to thrive, although some high attaining pupils finished their work quickly, and had no extension activities to pursue. There is good work, however, showing satisfactory progress in pupils' understanding of light, and there are good test records for shadows, transparency and opacity. One higher attaining pupil sets the question to find out how far light will travel, and the teacher wryly comments, "I think that you might find this difficult." At upper Key Stage 2, pupils develop their understanding of the human body, and the work of the heart in pumping blood, all correctly locating and reading their own pulse. Good numeracy reinforcement was built in to this lesson, as pupils had to average from three tests, having first multiplied their findings in a fifteen second count by four. Older pupils work in deliberately organised mixed ability groups, so that all ideas can be tested, and pupils can help each other. They learn to follow a logical sequence of prediction, testing in practice, and evaluation, and the teacher's approach allows them to develop independence in testing their own ideas, as well as specific facts about solutions.

128. Pupils' attitudes are generally good, and very good towards the end of Key Stage 2. Behaviour is good, and pupils enjoy their work. They cooperate well in paired investigations, and handle equipment and resources carefully and safely. They make good strides at both key stages in personal development, being encouraged to raise and seek answers to their own questions.

129. The quality of teaching overall is good; it is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and good, occasionally very good, at Key Stage 2. Between them, teachers have good knowledge of the aspects of the subject they teach, and apply this knowledge well in questioning the pupils in the main. Their termly planning ensures full coverage of the subject requirements, and they are beginning to adapt new national guidance to their own situation. Usually, teachers plan that all pupils will tackle the same work, with higher attainers expected to develop their work further than others. This works well in some cases, such as testing for air resistance, but the nature of the activity often restricts higher attainers, particularly when there is no extension or open-ended activity after completion of the main task. Lessons are well-organised, and have good pace in the main, with a good blend of discussion of possible outcomes, investigation in pairs or groups, making good use of resources and space, followed by summary discussion, evaluating findings, and comparing them with predictions. This was especially well done in a lesson on the heart, where the teacher skillfully built on pupils' existing knowledge by questioning them about their findings, and encouraging them to relate them to the lesson objectives. There is good ongoing assessment in many lessons, where teachers discussions with pupils keep them up-to-date with their growing understanding. Sometimes, however, teachers do not use this information in planning the next steps.

130. The resources for the subject have been recently overhauled, and they support the teachers' work well, aiding pupils' progress, for instance in using force meters to test for friction.

Information Technology

131. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 and evidence has been gained from the work on display and in record files which include examples of the work achieved. By the end of both key stages, standards are at the level of the national expectation. This finding is an improvement on the last inspection when standards were below the expected levels. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils generate, organise, amend and present ideas using information technology. They know how to gather information and present it in graphical form. They analyse the data collected to discover which cartoon characters are favourites. They know how to design a banner, create

text boxes, enter images add a border, change style of text and position features on the banner. They are adept at saving and printing their work. They edit and organise text on screen and know how to highlight specific words. Some pupils know that simulation programs can present real and imaginary situations and respond accordingly and can enter numbers, labels and simple formulae into a spreadsheet when using the program EXCEL.

132. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils generate and communicate information using different forms, for example, graphs and simple word-processing. Evidence showed that pupils had experienced experimenting with different fonts, altering the size of print and making graphs to show their favourite colour. All pupils had the experience of entering text, choosing an illustration and saving and retrieving work. They also had the chance to apply dictionary skills and are starting to use the spell checker. Keyboard skills are developing well and pupils can direct a mouse with accuracy, use arrows, put in capital letters and recognise the print icon.

133. The progress which pupils make, including those with special educational needs, is good at both key stages. Although there is a limited number of computers and the ratio of pupil to computers is worse than the national average, all teachers are focusing on the teaching of skills and giving pupils the chance to work on computers during lessons across the curriculum. Sometimes this involves research as was seen when pupils were shown how to insert a CD-ROM so as to find out about the lifestyles of the Romans and create a Roman mosaic.

134. In Year 1, pupils get off to a good start when they learn to move the mouse across the screen and produce graphs which show the findings of their research into eye colour, favourite meals and foot sizes among members of the class. They use a word processing program to type their name and print it and use the arrows and erase keys. Pupils of this age are used to responding to programs which reinforce the recognition of numbers and sounds as there is a good emphasis on this in the Reception class. Year 2 work builds on the skills in Year 1 and these are again reinforced in Year 3 when pupils use the same program of 'Talking Write Away' and learn to highlight text and make changes to fonts size and colour. In Year 4, pupils continue to practise their developing skills and also improve research skills, for example, when finding out about light in the program 'Science explorer'. They learn to insert headlines, for example when writing a sports report. Editing skills improve in Year 5 and pupils use cut and paste, justify work and learn to save their work into different files. They know how to enter information on a database and produce a graph of results. Much of the curricular work allows pupils to develop their skills. Displays about a Californian earthquake show several good examples of developing skills such as letter and report writing.

135. Pupils are enthusiastic, concentrate well and share the computer appropriately when working in pairs. They enjoy demonstrating their skills and willingly help others. Behaviour is particularly good in the upper part of Key Stage 2 where teachers have strong class management skills. In a Year 5 lesson, which included 33 pupils from both Year 4 and Year 5, pupils listened attentively and watched carefully during a good demonstration by the teacher.

136. The quality of teaching seen in Key Stage 2 was very good. Examination of work suggests that the overall quality of teaching across the school is good. Planning is carefully carried out and focuses on the required elements wherever possible. Strengths in lessons relate to subject knowledge and expertise, clear organisational skills and good ongoing assessment to judge what pupils were able to do. In a lesson in Year 6, the teacher involved pupils from all abilities to come out and demonstrate and chose appropriate tasks for their capabilities. A Year 5 lessons was very well planned with short achievable targets which built on pupils experience and enabled them to take on board a new skill. Questioning in all the lessons seen was an important feature and gauged pupils' understanding well.

137. The subject now meets statutory requirements, an improvement since the last inspection. There is a good emphasis on communicating information in text and graphical form. Opportunities exist across the school for pupils to develop word processing skills and enter data sometimes connected with mathematics and science. Skills in research are developing so that pupils know how to access the necessary information which they need. Progress has been particularly rapid in recent times due to the introduction of the scheme and the improved resources. There are no programmable toys although the school uses LOGO for control purposes and makes use of simulation programs for monitoring. The school does not yet have a scanner or probes for measurement of temperature, for example. The responsibility for the subject has been shared in the past and is now assigned to one person. It is evident that a good lead has been given and this is continuing to be the case. Assessments are conscientiously undertaken and there are good procedures and comprehensive record files in each class with examples of individual work.

c. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

138. Lessons were only observed at Key Stage 2. From a scrutiny of displays and work saved across the school, progress is unsatisfactory in most aspects of the subject, and pupils' attainment is below what might be expected for their age towards the end of both key stages. In lessons during the inspection, however, progress varied from being unsatisfactory to being very good. This does not reflect the findings of the previous inspection, when attainment was broadly in line with expectations, and progress was reasonable. However, changes to the national requirements for the teaching of the subject since then make direct comparisons unreliable.

139. From displayed work, pupils towards the end of Key Stage 1 have rudimentary skills in drawing, where their drawn shapes and figures are as expected of much younger pupils, or in painting with brushes. However, as part of a science lesson, they created salt dough shapes showing reasonable control of the medium.

140. In one lesson at upper Key Stage 2, pupils made very good progress in observational skills, and in developing a patterned design, involving careful choice of colours. Good progress was also seen in the use of a design program on the computer by Year 4 pupils, when they were experimenting in the style of Mondrian. They were also learning good IT skills here. These pupils uniquely in the school use a sketchbook, where they practise with pastels and charcoal, and learn to experiment with line and form. They have also made observational drawings of a church window, with some success. However, progress for younger pupils at Key Stage 2 was unsatisfactory in a lesson seen, when they actually achieved the effect outlined and demonstrated by their teacher, but what they were asked to do in copying the teacher's creation of a historical figure in the foreground of a landscape did not allow them to make progress in other than basic cutting and sticking skills.

141. The pupils' attitudes to the subject in the lessons seen, and in discussion, are good. They are keen to make, draw, and paint, and Year 6 pupils sustain their interest in a design project over a number of weeks. They respond well to the teacher's lively, creative approach, which helps them to make very good progress in choosing appropriate colours, and in designing printing blocks. Younger pupils are also enthusiastic, and sustain their concentration well in the main for a computer demonstration of techniques required for the construction on screen of a Mondrian style design, or to copy a teacher's picture.

142. The quality of teaching seen varied from that which had unsatisfactory features, to being very good at the end of Key Stage 2. However, the standards that pupils currently achieve, and the progress across the school evident in displayed work, show that there is no systematic teaching of skills and techniques from one class to another. In the teaching seen, teachers' preparation was thorough, and in the best lesson it was outstanding, building very well through the skilled use of teaching aids on the previous week's work. Here, the teacher's knowledge of pattern, colour and shape helped her to focus her questions to the pupils sharply, to stretch their own understanding of how a pattern is created, and allowing them to reflect and try out their own ideas. Pupils' general skill development in such aspects of the subject as observational drawing, painting, or printing is not systematically built up from class to class, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 many pupils work at a level expected of much younger pupils, although they made very good progress in a lesson seen. There is also little evidence of sustained development of three-dimensional work such as weaving, or with, for instance, wet clay. There is also little evidence of a systematic approach across the school to the study of famous artists and their work, with a view to pupils learning about them, and experimenting to adapt their styles to their own work.

143. The recently appointed coordinator recognises the weaknesses, and has reorganised the scheme of work, making a copy available for each of her colleagues, and intends to monitor the subject across the school in order to set targets for improvement. She has also invited a member of the Embroiderers' Guild to work with older pupils, and they have created, with her help, a Millennium Tapestry, which is rich and varied, to display as part of a national exhibition in the Millennium Dome. The quality of this work, however, reinforces the judgement that in general the pupils do not, and are not generally expected to, produce work of a standard which matches their potential.

Design and Technology

144. During the inspection there were only limited opportunities to observe the teaching of design and technology as the subject is taught in blocks, and in Years 4 and 6 the subject has not yet been in focus this year. Evidence gained from discussion with pupils, the scrutiny of work, teachers' plans and photographs has been used as the basis of judgements. Towards the end of both key stages, the majority of pupils attain as might be expected for their age. This finding is slightly different from the last inspection when standards were considered to be above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in line with the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 2. The amount of time which the school is able to spend on the foundation subjects has been reduced because of the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies.

145. Pupils, including those with SEN, make at least satisfactory progress at both key stages. There is some evidence of good progress leading to individual higher attainment, especially in Key Stage 1, when pupils in Year 1 explain how to construct winding mechanisms so that they can make 'Incy Wincy Spider' rise and fall, and when Year 2 pupils design and make toy vehicles from a variety of materials and demonstrate how to attach wheels by using axles. They select materials and know that the quality of a product depends on how well it is made, and meets its purpose. In Year 3, pupils look at objects from the Viking period and produce 'warriors'. They make menus and progress is satisfactory when they learn how to evaluate a product. When the subject is not featured for a period of time, pupils obviously do not have the chance to systematically develop and practise skills on a regular basis. Progress is good in Year 5 when pupils learn specific skills and take account of appearance, function, safety and reliability of a product. They learn to join and combine materials in order to make structures stronger, for example, when making Roman shelters. Their developing skills are reinforced when they record their findings with sketches and notes. Year 6 pupils do not encounter this subject until next year. Last year's work for this age group shows that progress is often good when they make puppets with paper, wood and fabric. They learn how to plan, design, refine and evaluate their work and the quality of some individual examples of 'sports accessories' shows that they can combine a range of materials such as clay, wood, wire and paper well and can attach complex fasteners.

146. Pupils' attitudes continue to be good, as at the last inspection. They work with enthusiasm and purpose and apply themselves well. They are friendly with each other and courteous with adult helpers. Once engaged on a task, they sustain interest in the practical work and respond to suggestions as to how they might improve their models. Year 5 pupils were seen working productively together in pairs on their designs for houses. Two boys in particular, showed considerable application to the task of making a side view plan of their Roman villa and were not deterred when they had initial difficulty in imagining how a ground floor roof would abut a first floor level. Pupils of all ages enjoy using their initiative when selecting materials and tools and happily respond to requests to clear up after themselves. Behaviour was good in the two lessons seen.

147. No judgement was given on the quality of teaching at the time of the last inspection. The indications from the scrutiny of work are that the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Good teaching occurs where there is a clear understanding of the requirements of the subject and techniques are taught to enable pupils to achieve success without restricting their inventiveness. In the lessons observed, teachers interacted well with the pupils and helped them to share ideas, reflect and consider. Organisational and management skills were of a high order in Key Stage 2. Effective questioning challenged pupils' understanding and progress was carefully monitored so that pupils did not become frustrated when they encountered problems in considering how their designs might become products.

148. The co-ordinator has only assumed responsibility for the subject this term but is making a good attempt to discover what is happening in the subject across the school. There is a clear curriculum map which indicates when the subject will be covered across the school and this attempts to build on developing skills. Termly plans are detailed and show the expected learning intentions but there have been no opportunities to monitor how successfully these are put into practice. The coordinator's own agreed targets indicate that this will occur over the next two years. Resources are accessible and adequate but there are limitations with regard to the numbers of constructional kits. A full audit of resources is planned.

History and Geography

149. The lessons observed during this inspection were historically based, because of a shared timetable slot for history and geography, and the positioning of blocked units of work across a six-term cycle.

150. Attainment in both history and geography is largely as expected, with most pupils attaining as expected for

their age. In history, by the end of the Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate factual knowledge about aspects of the past such as life in the 1930s, and note distinctive features of the more recent past, although they have difficulty in explaining how things have changed over time. Their understanding of chronology is as expected for their age, and they can sequence events on a simple timeline.

151. Towards the end of Key Stage 2, pupils work out their own lines of historical enquiry. For instance, following a visit to Chester, groups of pupils were able to raise historical questions and plan investigations into the characteristic features of life in Roman Britain, using a suitable collection of reference texts and other secondary sources to find answers. They are also beginning to select and combine information from different sources, although this historical skill is not yet secure. Pupils show good understanding of the characteristic features of historical periods studied, and answer questions and challenges raised by other pupils with a confidence gained from a good background knowledge of events and aspects. With encouragement, towards the end of Key Stage 2 they are beginning to give reasons for their interpretations and judgements. There is insufficient evidence to show that as yet pupils can identify or explain different interpretation of historical events.

152. In geography at Key Stage 1, there is evidence that pupils have begun to follow map directions and in the first year of the key stage they draw a simple plan of their route to school, and observe and draw a variety of house types, undertaken during fieldwork in the locality. Towards the end of Key Stage 2, pupils focus upon geographical questions, make maps and plans in a variety of scales, understand how places fit into a wider geographical context and relate these to historical change.

153. Pupils make satisfactory progress in history overall across the key stages. The greatest progress occurs in the later stages of Key Stage 2, when pupils take responsibility for their learning. However, progress in understanding chronology slows in the first years of Key Stage 2, and pupils' understanding of the reasons for change across and within periods of time progresses slowly. Overall, understanding of the key historical elements is less well developed than the ability to follow historical lines of enquiry and communicate findings.

154. Geographical progress is again satisfactory across the key stages, with early mapping skills being particularly well developed in Key Stage 1, and understanding of settlements well developed throughout. These are regularly consolidated through work in history, with connections between the subjects being made well. The residential trip at the end of Key Stage 2 remains a good means of consolidating knowledge, for example, of themes and localities, and of practising and extending skill development. The recent adoption by the school of the new national scheme for geography, and the integration of the new national scheme for history into the school's existing scheme should further secure progression through each subject.

155. Pupil's attitudes are sound at Key Stage 1, with good features evident when there is first hand stimulus or fieldwork. Towards the end of Key Stage 2, pupils show genuine interest in what they are learning, particularly observed in history during the inspection, and enjoy sharing new knowledge with other pupils. Photographic displays of the field trip to Chester are evidence of the interest and enthusiasm for personal research that this instigated. In a minority of classrooms, where the teaching is not well matched to the pupils' levels of understanding, attention drops, and tasks are not completed purposefully.

156. Teaching is sound overall, but good at Key stage 2. Medium term planning is securely in place, and led by the appointment of a coordinator since the last inspection, it shows good levels of teacher subject knowledge. Effective use has been made of new national guidance. Teaching is most effective when teachers provide a balance between giving pupils information and helping them to become active enquirers, as happens towards the end of Key Stage 2. The marking of work is regular and consistent in both subjects, and in some classrooms on-going assessment directly influences weekly planning, so that work is challenging and teacher support is directed where it can have most impact.

157. Limited resources, particularly of suitable maps, photographs, pictures, books, videos and CD-ROM source material hamper teaching of both subjects across the school, although the IT provision has recently been much improved. This poor resourcing lowers attainment of the full range of knowledge and skill in both subjects in geography more than in history. Inspection evidence for history indicates little use of historical artefacts, and fuller provision for the use of first hand resource material in the classroom, pitched at the right level, would help to raise attainment.

Music

158. Only two lessons were observed, both at Key Stage 1, but evidence is also taken from observation of brass instrumental tuition, choir rehearsal, singing in assembly, and scrutiny of pupils' musical appreciation notebooks.

159. Pupils make satisfactory progress in performance, particularly singing, creating and notating their own compositions, and listening to and appraising a range of recorded music, including from the classical range. At Key Stage 1, pupils learn a range of songs that they sing from memory. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 sang songs about animals, accompanying themselves using tuned and untuned percussion instruments. They learn to maintain a steady beat, and clap a variety of rhythms. Almost all pupils manage to perform the required activities. In Year 2, pupils also sing from an increasingly wide repertoire of songs, many tunefully. They compose short pieces in pairs, using chime bars with a third or fifth interval, performing them for other pupils and their teacher. They comment on one another's work sensibly. Pupils from Key Stage 2, mainly girls, who sing in the choir do so well, holding the tune successfully, and following the teacher's directions regarding diction and tone.

160. They have good attitudes to their work in the subject, and enjoy singing from a repertoire of known songs, and composing using tuned and untuned percussion instruments. They behave well, listening carefully to their teachers and to other pupils' playing of their own compositions. In assembly, they listen quietly to classical music played as they enter and leave, and also to other pupils singing, as when the nursery children presented their own assembly.

161. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and the coordinator uses her good knowledge and understanding to help her own class make good progress, and to teach the choir to sing tunefully and with good style. There is a good relationship with the pupils at Key Stage 1, which enables the teachers to help the pupils enjoy their lessons. Lesson planning shows progress between classes, and for Year 2 includes the development of simple notation to record their own composition. Pupils learning to play brass instruments, very new to it at the time of the inspection, are taught by a specialist who helps them form the correct lip and mouth positions, to breathe appropriately, and to recognise the notes in standard notation.

162. There is a good range of instruments and taped music available, but little that represents wider than a European cultural heritage. The choir sings in local festivals, and in school concerts.

Physical education

163. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, but in lessons seen at Key Stage 2, progress was unsatisfactory in gymnastics, although it was satisfactory in games. No swimming was seen, but it is reported that most pupils attain the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 2. Where progress was unsatisfactory, it was due to poor use of time and resources in one lesson, and poor behaviour management in another. Attainment is as expected towards the end of Key Stage 1, but varies across different aspects of the subject towards the end of Key Stage 2.

164. At Key Stage 1, in a Year 1 dance lesson, high attaining pupils made good progress in creating a mirror reflection of their partner's dance, using a range of intricate hand and upper body movements. Most pupils perform their dance as expected for their age, and they skip, jog, use space sensibly, and work well with a partner. A few find the mirror work difficult to coordinate. In Year 2, most pupils travel across the floor in a gymnastics lesson using their hands and feet in an expected variety of ways. Most pupils develop a good dynamic range, varying fast and slow movements. High attaining pupils use their imaginations well, and create a short sequence of moves that are above average for their age: one boy develops a close to the ground spin, lifting his hands skilfully to spin his legs through. Some pupils are rather clumsy, and use a very limited range of movements.

165. At Key Stage 2, progress and attainment vary across the elements of the subject. No dance lesson was seen at this key stage, however. In gymnastics, although some pupils show that they have the expected control of their movements in Years 3, 5 and 6, the scope of the lessons observed prevented the full expression of their abilities and skills. In one lesson with younger pupils, the lack of overall control and management by the teacher led to inappropriate carrying of simple apparatus such as mats and benches, and restricted pupils' progress as so much time was taken in dealing with silly and occasionally poor behaviour. In a lesson with older pupils, floorwork developing a sequence of jumps and landings was close to expected levels, although there was little high attainment, and the teacher did not sufficiently encourage variety in the style, direction, height or length of the jumps. In observing and commenting on each other's work, pupils offered good comments, but were observers for

far too long at a time. Pupils carried the mats as required, although there was no prior plan for this, but their further progress was severely restricted by the teacher's insistence that they sit in teams of fifteen, only being active when it was their turn to work on the line of mats. In games, pupils in Years 4 and 5 made satisfactory progress in sending and receiving a large ball, using hands and feet. The slope of the playground gave added complexity to this activity, but the pupils coped with it well. The lesson structure, and the teacher's skilful coaching, contributed well to their overall progress.

166. The majority of pupils attain in line with standards generally expected of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in swimming. They are able to swim 25 metres using different strokes. They are confident in entering the water by a variety of means, including a standing dive. They are competent in swimming underwater and have a sound knowledge of survival skills. The current Headteacher is developing comprehensive assessment and recording procedures for the future reporting of the pupils' progress in swimming.

167. Future swimming sessions are to be held at the neighbouring High School which will drastically cut down on the travelling time taken in the past to reach the public swimming pool situated across the other side of Bolton. The level and quality of instruction and supervision funded by the local education authority will continue to be available.

168. Pupils' attitudes to the subject vary from good to poor. Most pupils show enthusiasm for the subject, but their poor behaviour at lower Key Stage 2 occasionally interferes with their own and other pupils' opportunities to make satisfactory progress. Pupils at Key Stage 1, and upper Key Stage 2, generally behave well, and listen carefully to teachers' instructions, and have good regard for safe practice.

169. Teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, but at Key Stage 2 it varies from being satisfactory to having unsatisfactory and occasionally poor features, and is unsatisfactory overall. Most of the teaching comments have been woven into the progress commentary, but this does not give the full picture. The two newly qualified teachers are both specialists in the subject, and are being encouraged to develop their skills in teaching it. However, there is no clear guidance available as to the interpretation of the school's adopted scheme, nor yet from the experienced staff of the school. The headteacher has taken over the coordinator role for the subject, and it would be useful for her to consult the adviser from the local authority as to the best way to proceed in improving the teaching of the subject at Key Stage 2, in order to help pupils make appropriate progress. The school is well set for this, with inexperienced but keen specialists newly appointed, and a good hall, a large though sloping playground, and a good field.

c. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

c. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- a team of five inspectors spent 15 inspector days in the school
- 99 observations were made, of which 58 were of lessons or parts of lessons
- all staff were interviewed about their roles and responsibilities
- discussions were held with governors, parents and visitors to the school
- individual and group discussions were held with pupils about their work
- a representative sample of pupils' work was scrutinised, and over 10 per cent of pupils heard to read
- records and reports of pupils' attainment and progress were examined, as were teachers' planning and other school files and documentation
- minutes of staff meetings, and of the governing body's meetings, were examined
- photographic and other evidence was consulted
- a meeting was held for parents, attended by 9 parents, and the results of 41 returned questionnaires were analysed

. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with Statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR - Y6	157	3	34	38
Nursery Unit/School	40 p/t	0	0	NA

. **Teachers and classes**

. **Qualified teachers (YR - Y6)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	8.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.7

. **Education support staff (YR - Y6)**

Total number of education support staff:	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	42

. **Qualified teachers (Nursery school, classes or unit)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	40 p/t

Education support staff (Nursery school, classes or unit)	
Total number of education support staff:	1
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	32
Average class size	
Average class size:	22

Financial data	
Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	336,904
Total Expenditure	338,074
Expenditure per pupil	1,725
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3,131
Balance carried forward to next year	-4,301*

*The budget deficit has been turned into a forecast surplus of £4,999 in the current financial year.

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 154
 Number of questionnaires returned: 41

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	23	59	14	5	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	56	5	5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	12	47	34	7	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24	42	24	10	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	20	49	17	14	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	22	61	17	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	59	12	7	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	27	51	10	7	5
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	32	56	12	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	22	52	20	5	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	44	42	5	9	0