

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST PATRICK'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Consett, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114250

Headteacher: Mr T Young

Reporting inspector: Mr J J Peacock  
25344

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> February 2002

Inspection number: 190621

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stanley Street  
Consett  
County Durham

Postcode: DH8 6LN

Telephone number: 01207 503982

Fax number: 01207 503982

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Dr D Westgarth

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This voluntary aided, Roman Catholic primary school caters for pupils from three to eleven years of age and is bigger than other schools nationally. There are 350 pupils on roll, 183 boys and 167 girls in 14 classes. Numbers have increased by the equivalent of one class since the previous inspection. Pupils come from 14 different wards in Consett, the former steel-making town, and all except five per cent have been baptised as Roman Catholics. In addition, there is a full-time nursery with places for 52 children on a part-time basis. When they start in the nursery most children have below average attainment.

About eleven per cent of pupils have free school meals but more are known to be eligible. This is below the national average. The school has 54 pupils with special educational needs, which is broadly average and eight have a statement of special educational needs. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Pupil mobility is not significant.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very effective school, with many strengths. The influence of the local church, which has one of the largest congregations taking Mass in the north of England, plays a pivotal part in the school's success. The day-to-day running of the school is in the very capable hands of the headteacher, who acts as the safe linchpin, holding everything together. His calm approach, guidance and expertise results in leadership and management of the highest quality. Aply supported by key staff, such as the deputy headteacher, he has succeeded in creating a very good climate for learning, which is much appreciated by staff, pupils and parents in the community. The knowledgeable governing body is extremely supportive and is becoming increasingly more involved in initiatives designed to raise standards further. The quality of teaching in all subjects of the broad and balanced curriculum is very good. As a result, standards have improved in English and mathematics since the previous inspection. All pupils love coming to school, show an excellent attitude towards their work and behave exceptionally well. When all these factors are considered, along with the below average level of funding for each pupil, the school is providing very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are excellent.
- The standards achieved in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are above those normally expected. Pupils also do well in information and communication technology.
- The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and largely responsible for the very good climate for learning which enables all pupils to achieve their full potential.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for school is readily apparent. All show an excellent attitude towards their work, enjoy excellent relationships with everyone and, in a mature way, willingly accept the many opportunities to take responsibility.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good, promoting successfully all pupils' academic and personal development.

#### **What could be improved**

- The library and computer facilities.

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

The level of improvement since the previous inspection has been good. This is reflected in pupils' attendance figures, which have improved significantly to match the national average. Five key issues were identified in December 1996. The school staff and governors have worked hard to bring about much improvement in each. Teachers clearly identify learning outcomes for all lessons, for example, often sharing them with pupils at the beginning of lessons. Detailed guidelines for all subjects ensure that activities are carefully planned to match what pupils need to learn and there are very good strategies to promote pupils' independence and a sense of responsibility. Pupils concentrate very well when working together in groups, for example, often without the direct supervision of their teacher. Clear strategies exist for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of school life, such as the quality of teaching and national test results. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have also been implemented well and these are helping to improve standards in English and mathematics. Standards in these two subjects in the previous inspection were in line with national expectations by the age of eleven but are now above average. The school is well on course to meet its own targets set for English and mathematics in the tests for eleven-year-olds in 2002.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	C	C	B
mathematics	C	D	B	B
science	C	E	B	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The above table shows clearly that standards are improving and that they are better than those of pupils in similar schools. This is largely due to pupils' excellent attitude towards their work and the very good quality of teaching they receive. Girls and boys do equally well. Pupils are set individual targets for English and mathematics following an early assessment of their potential and their progress towards these is carefully tracked each term.

A detailed scrutiny of pupils' completed work and lesson observations confirms pupils achieve well throughout the junior department of the school. Standards in English, mathematics and science and in information and communication technology are above those normally expected by the time pupils are aged eleven. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good with all achieving as well as they can.

By the time children are at the end of their reception year, all make good progress and achieve the early learning goals in the six areas of learning which make up the Foundation Stage curriculum. Inspection evidence shows that standards of attainment for seven-year-olds are in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science, showing pupils have achieved well since joining the nursery when their attainment was below average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils enjoy being at school and show a genuine commitment and desire to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. This was also the case in the previous inspection. No oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. This accurately reflects the school's aims for good behaviour from all pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are widespread. The relationships between pupils and with teachers are excellent, helping to create a very effective and caring climate for learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and most are punctual. There have been no exclusions and no unauthorised absence is recorded.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

In the 1996 inspection, the quality of teaching was good. Much work has been undertaken to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and improve the quality, with staff working very well as a team. As a result, the overall quality of teaching is now very good. This represents a significant improvement and it has a noticeable impact on the standards pupils achieve in the classroom. In the Foundation Stage, which covers the time children spend in the nursery and reception classes, the overall quality is very good. This is giving children a good start to school and helping all to make good progress towards the early learning goals.

There is strong commitment to give all pupils the best possible education, and the basic skills for all subjects are taught very well by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. Computers are used effectively in all lessons. Most aspects of teaching are very good, promoting very effective learning. The management of pupils is excellent, helping to ensure that they are fully included in all activities and can work in a calm, orderly environment. As a result, the climate for learning is very good in lessons. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Higher attaining pupils are well provided for throughout the school.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Statutory requirements are met. French lessons, personal, social and health education and citizenship together with a programme of visits and visitors, effectively enhance the quality of the curriculum and enrich pupils' lives. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and covers all nationally agreed areas. Extra-curricular provision, especially for sporting activities, is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school has invested heavily in additional staffing this year and this has helped to bring about an improvement in provision. Individual targets are clearly defined, and detailed planning ensures pupils are well supported to achieve them, either in class or when withdrawn for individual help. Gifted or talented pupils are suitably challenged.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Provision for their cultural development is very good. Opportunities to study a wide range of other world religions are planned each term, ensuring pupils understand and appreciate the similarities and differences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good procedures exist for ensuring pupils' personal wellbeing. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are particularly effective.

The school actively develops the partnership with parents and they are very supportive. Parents' views of the different aspects of the school are very positive.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher demonstrates an exceptionally high level of professional expertise when carrying out his duties. He delegates responsibilities to key staff wisely and succeeds in inspiring all staff to work very effectively as a team, leading by example.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Led by a knowledgeable and hardworking chairman, all governors carry out their duties well with the best interests of pupils in mind.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Standards of attainment and the quality of teaching are closely monitored. Decisive action is taken to bring about necessary improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The finances are managed efficiently and best value is sought in all expenditure. The school makes good use of new technology.

Staffing is good, with support staff making a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Aspects of the accommodation, in the building dating from 1926, are unsatisfactory by modern day standards. Space for the library and computers, for example, is inadequate. Displays of pupils' work are outstanding.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like school and they make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Pupils get the right amount of homework.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Parents are well informed and feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and the school works closely with parents.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school helps pupils to become more mature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' many positive responses. Compared to similar schools, there are good opportunities for pupils to take part in activities outside normal lessons but these are very much sport orientated at present. A choir and Spanish speaking club are available for anyone interested each week and the school is aware of the need to diversify further to cater for all pupils' interests. An Irish dancing club is planned.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are excellent.**

1. The quality of leadership and management has further improved since the previous inspection when leadership was described as giving clear educational direction. The headteacher has conscientiously addressed all the issues raised in the previous inspection and shown a strong determination to raise standards in all aspects of school life. His excellent leadership and extremely capable management are largely responsible for the school's success and growing reputation in the area. Overall, leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher has a clear picture of what he wants to achieve for the benefit of the pupils and the community. As a direct result of his vision, experience, calm approach and leadership of the highest quality, the school has made a good level of improvement from the high standards reported in many aspects previously. The quality of teaching, attendance and standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are some examples. Staff and governors share his very strong commitment to the school and work hard in partnership with him to meet the clear and specific aims set out clearly in the school's prospectus. These aims and values are strongly reflected in all aspects of school life such as the pupils' excellent attitudes to their work and their excellent behaviour. In the previous report Inspectors were equally impressed with the excellent ethos in the school.
2. The carefully considered delegation of responsibility to staff and governors is a strong feature. It promotes a feeling of unity as all work together very effectively as a team. All share responsibility to evaluate the school's performance and to plan for its future. The system for monitoring and evaluating teaching is a prime example of co-operation and teamwork to effect improvements. Staff work closely together to co-ordinate the development of subjects within the curriculum, giving much support to one another. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The experienced and talented deputy headteacher carries out her responsibilities very efficiently and effectively. It was noticeable that during the inspection the headteacher included her in all meetings between himself and the registered inspector. The newly formed Foundation Stage for reception aged children is also managed well by a designated co-ordinator with much experience in teaching this age group. Non-teaching staff feel part of the 'school team' and value the guidance and support they receive from teachers. The quality of their work for pupils with special educational needs, or in the practical room in the infant department, adds significantly to the success of pupils' learning experiences. Their contribution to the smooth running of the school, described as excellent, was also recognised in the previous inspection.
3. The governing body carries out its statutory duties extremely well and works hard to support the school. The knowledgeable chair of governors has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through regular weekly meetings with the headteacher. Individual governors accept responsibility for areas such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. This gives them a clear overview of learning in these areas. All approach their duties conscientiously and are proud to be associated with the school. Importantly, all appreciate the level of improvements brought about by the headteacher and express confidence in him. Minutes of the governing body's meetings indicate that these are well attended and business is

conducted efficiently. The statutory requirements for the special educational needs Code of Practice are met.

4. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a key issue in the previous inspection, are carried out regularly for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and all other subjects, and are effective. In response to a recent national initiative, the school has very good procedures and documentation for assessing the quality of teaching and rewarding those who perform highly. The headteacher constantly strives for high standards and has a regular programme for analysing national test results and monitoring pupils' completed workbooks to evaluate the standards being achieved. Last year, for example, the highlighted need for improvements in standards in writing has already borne fruit.
5. In the previous inspection, the school had five key issues to address. All have been tackled rigorously. Very effective procedures to monitor and evaluate teaching are helping to raise standards in all subjects. Each subject now has a detailed policy and defined programme of work to be followed each year. Improvements to teachers' planning ensure learning objectives are clearly defined and that pupils' learning needs are met. Additional support for pupils with special educational needs, for example, has been provided by the appointment of a full-time special educational needs co-ordinator and this ensures that all are well supported, helping pupils to attain all the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Very good strategies exist for promoting pupils' sense of responsibility and their independence. However, teachers have to work hard in some areas to compensate for the restraints imposed by the aged school building. The small library situated in a converted toilet area, for example, is well below acceptable modern-day standards and restricts pupils' opportunities for independent research.
6. The school office is run efficiently. Administration staff are friendly and welcoming, giving visitors an excellent first impression of the school. Pre-inspection concerns about the amount of administration support for a school of this size have been answered with the appointment of an additional person, bringing the school in line with others. It is a testament to the devotion and commitment of the current administration staff that they have managed so well for so long. Satisfactory use is made of new technology in the office, with an electronic mail facility and computer programs for managing the finances. Government grants are used effectively and correctly. Compared to other schools, the ratio of computers to pupils is broadly average with one computer for every 15 pupils. Plans are well advanced to add more new computers and the school is exploring the possibility of creating additional space to replace the computer room, the former now being used as a classroom. The headteacher, ably supported by the chair of the finances committee, is meticulous in making sure that funds are applied to the best effect. Overall financial control is very good. The very low contingency budget, amounting to 1.4 per cent of the total, reflects the governors' policy to spend all available funding each year for the benefit of pupils. A few minor items for improvement found at the last audit by the local education authority auditors were promptly dealt with. The school buys its resources at the most competitive prices and pays careful attention to quality.
7. There are no weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school. Teaching staff levels are average, with a teacher to pupil ratio of 24 to 1. The level of provision for non-teaching support staff is also about average for a school of this size. However, the accommodation in a building dating from 1926 does cause difficulties. Regular upgrades, such as the addition of a new classroom and inventive use of space in the two small upstairs rooms for teaching groups of pupils with special

educational needs, mean that all available space is used imaginatively. In spite of this, without a major improvement to the size of the building, teachers will have to continue to compensate for the limitations it imposes. The staffroom, for example, is situated in a corridor area, giving staff little privacy and facilities generally are inadequate by modern standards for a staff of this size.

8. The displays of pupils' work throughout the school, reported previously as providing a stimulating learning environment, are still strikingly good. They serve to celebrate pupils' achievements and brighten up corridor areas. This is a very successful school, growing in popularity. Taking into account the exceptional way in which the school is led and managed, the standards achieved, the very good quality of teaching and pupils' excellent attitudes, along with the below average costs for each pupil, the school provides very good value for money.

**The standards achieved in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are above those normally expected. Pupils also do well in information and communication technology.**

9. All pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and parents appreciate what the school is doing for their children. Virtually all those who responded to the questionnaire agreed that pupils make good progress and every parent agreed that pupils have to work hard. Inspectors found evidence for this in:
  - the well-planned lessons which covered a wide range of learning experiences;
  - the enthusiastic teaching which effectively motivated pupils;
  - the way pupils enjoyed being in school and their keenness to learn.
10. Attainment on entry to the nursery class is below average. This is most likely due to the fact that relatively few attend pre-school groups and the nursery is the first time that many children have been away from their parents. Children benefit from the detailed lesson planning which effectively covers the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. The quality of teaching is very good and as a result, most make good progress in language and literacy, mathematics, in their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and in their personal and social development. For example, children listen well to all adults, respond well to instructions and work well on the tasks set for them. In their physical development, progress is also good. Good use is made of the outdoor play area with equipment such as a large climbing frame and wheeled toys for children to push or ride. Plans are well advanced to further develop this facility, which is also used by children in the two reception classes. By the end of their reception year, all children achieve the early learning goals in the Foundation Stage curriculum. This gives them a good start for the next phase of their education.
11. Pupils' performance in the national tests for seven-year-olds varies from year to year depending on the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in each year group. In 2000, for example, pupils achieved standards that were in line with national expectations in reading and writing but well below average standards in mathematics. However, pupils' performance in the national test results for 2001 was below average in reading and mathematics and well below in writing. In comparison to pupils in similar schools, pupils' performance is well below average. This comparison, based mainly on the number of pupils taking free school meals, is affected by the many who are entitled in this school but choose not to apply. The comparison would be more favourable if these pupils were included.

12. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2001, pupils' performance shows a distinct improvement on the previous year's results. In comparison to all schools, pupils achieved above average results in mathematics and science and their results were in line with the national average for English. When compared to similar schools, pupils' performance in all three subjects was above average. This shows that pupils make good progress throughout the school, but particularly in the junior department.
13. Inspection evidence, based on a scrutiny of pupils' completed work, displays in classrooms and discussions with pupils shows that attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is in line with the national average for seven-year-olds and above average for eleven-year-olds. This represents a good level of improvement for both age groups. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and a marked improvement in the quality of teaching is helping to ensure that standards for eleven-year-olds since the previous inspection have remained above average in science and have improved in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence also shows that the standards pupils achieve in information and communication technology are above average for seven- and eleven-year-olds. In this subject, standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, despite the loss of the computer suite. At their meeting prior to the inspection, parents expressed concern about standards in music, but unfortunately insufficient evidence could be gathered in this short inspection to determine overall standards. However, the school uses the expertise of teachers who are talented in music very well and, along with a useful programme of study, all teachers do their best to include music on their class timetable. Junior pupils have the option of learning to play a musical instrument. The choir sing impressively in assembly and all pupils join in with hymns or songs tunefully. A good example of the willingness to sing and the enjoyment it brings was seen in a Year 2 class when pupils sang songs in French.
14. In English, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to express themselves in class discussions. Most make good progress in their speaking and listening as a result. Reading is taught effectively, allowing pupils to develop their technical skills well. All have good strategies, for example, to try and read unfamiliar words. Most read with understanding. The close liaison between home and school, with parents regularly hearing their children read and then writing their comments in reading diaries, is helping to improve standards.
15. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to write in most subjects. For example, in science pupils record their results following investigations into sound or plant growth and record findings from research about their topic on rocks and soils. The daily literacy sessions successfully introduce skills that pupils can use when writing in other subjects. For example, Year 1 are taught when to use capital letters and in Year 2, pupils use punctuation accurately, most recognising question marks and exclamation marks. Junior pupils produce quite lengthy pieces of writing and their work covers a wide range of writing styles and topics. They write reports about model making, poems about an animal of their choice in Year 4 and research historical information from books or the Internet which requires them to make notes. All retell stories, write new beginnings for some and create their own imaginative stories. The standard of their spelling is above average.
16. The formal structure of literacy and numeracy sessions is having a beneficial effect on standards throughout the school. Detailed lesson planning, well chosen texts and teachers' skills in teaching reading, supported by parents at home, helps most pupils to reach nationally expected standards. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to write in a wide range of contexts and styles, often using computers. Pupils,

for example, record the results of science experiments into the insulation properties of materials, write imaginative stories and list the key incidents from traditional stories such as Little Red Riding Hood. All pupils demonstrate a fluent joined style of handwriting when completing handwriting exercises and remember to use the same style neatly in their exercise books.

17. Pupils do well in mathematics. This is mainly because of the clear structure of lessons which closely follows the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy, the quality of teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes. All pupils enjoy the challenge of finding answers to number problems and most can competently explain how they worked out an answer. By the age of seven, pupils successfully count in twos, fives and tens, halve and double numbers and competently add and subtract numbers to fifty. Pupils in the junior classes are quick to calculate the answers to number problems involving two- and three-digit numbers. They calculate perimeters of mathematical shapes and can measure and draw angles accurately. By the end of Year 6, all show a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and negative numbers. Pupils collect, record and process data well, producing graphs showing the results of science investigations or favourite foods.
18. Much of the work in science is of a practical nature. By the time they are age seven, pupils have studied electricity, magnets, sounds, light, materials and living things such as plants. Pupils in the junior classes have many opportunities to investigate and conduct experiments independently of their teacher, for example measuring the temperature as liquids cool and growing plants in different conditions. All are well motivated and work hard in lessons to complete a copious amount of work in their books. Some examples of topics covered include: monitoring how materials such as baking powder, sugar and salt dissolve; separating solutions; plant growth; healthy lifestyle; sound; light and electricity. Year 5 pupils in a lesson on the structure of the heart demonstrated a good understanding of the heart's function and used technical terms such as circulation and artery confidently. Year 6 pupils were able to give examples of changes to materials such as wax, chocolate or ice, describing which were reversible or irreversible. Girls and boys of all abilities achieve equally as well in science, as they do in English and mathematics.
19. Teachers' expertise in information and communication technology helps pupils to achieve above average standards. Pupils of all ages use computers confidently and competently. Year 2 pupils were able to load programs into the computer unaided and were familiar with the functions of the various keys. They could change font size, use capital letters and print their work. All demonstrate good control of the mouse when selecting options in mathematics programs. All pupils make good use of a digital camera to take photographs of school events and are able to select and scan these into the computer. All use data gathered on pupils' pets or temperatures recorded from thawing experiments and present it accurately in a variety of graphical forms. Year 5 pupils demonstrate advanced skills when creating tables for younger pupils to record information about the movement of a programmable toy.
20. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It means that every pupil is well supported and is fully included in all classroom activities. The skilled support provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator, special educational needs staff and the extremely conscientious classroom assistants helps all pupils to achieve the challenging targets set for them. All pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life, with teachers ensuring equality of opportunity for all. As a result, by the time they are ready to leave at the end of Year 6, these pupils achieve

well in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress towards the targets set for them.

**The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and largely responsible for the very good climate for learning which enables all pupils to achieve their full potential.**

21. The overall quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. It has improved since the previous inspection in December 1996 as a direct result of the headteacher's leadership and a shared determination by all staff to raise standards.
22. The quality of teaching observed during this short inspection was either good, very good or excellent in 31 of the 37 lessons seen. It was either very good or excellent in 12 of them, which reflects the high quality overall. Staff are guided effectively in their lesson planning by detailed teaching programmes for all subjects, improved following the previous inspection when this was an issue for the school. As a result, the quality of their lesson planning is very good with learning objectives clearly defined. All other aspects of teaching such as teachers' high expectations of pupils, their relationships within the class and use of resources are very good. The most effective element, however, is the management of pupils. Praise, strict time targets given to finish tasks, humour and teachers acting as good role models result in excellent class discipline. In a Year 6 science lesson, for example, the teacher asked who was going to be the first to spill their water. Needless to say, pupils were extra careful not to be the first and no accidents occurred! This enables pupils to work sensibly and independently of their teacher when necessary in a quiet orderly learning environment. As a direct consequence, pupils work conscientiously in their lessons, concentrating well until they finish their work.
23. There is a very strong determination by all staff to raise standards, and pupils are playing their part by showing an excellent attitude towards their work. As a result of this, an extensive amount of pupils' completed work was available to the inspection team for their scrutiny. Teachers' enthusiasm, their very good knowledge of the curriculum and ability to make learning challenging and exciting, helps to keep all pupils fully motivated and extremely busy. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed estimating the weight of different objects by comparing them with the known weight of a 500-gram bag of pasta. In a French lesson in Year 2, the teacher's enthusiasm successfully encouraged pupils to answer questions in French and attempt to order items of food for their breakfast.
24. All teachers demonstrate a very good subject knowledge and level of expertise. As a result, basic skills are taught very effectively and very good links are made between different subjects. In a Year 5 computer skills lesson, for example, skills in English, design and technology and in using computers were all well utilised by pupils to complete their task: a set of instructions for pupils in Years 3 and 4 on how to use a mobile programmable toy. In a Year 4 physical education session in the hall, pupils drew from their knowledge of weather conditions to create a dance sequence as they matched their movements to thunder and lightning and different types of rainfall. Overall, expectations of pupils are high and they respond by behaving extremely well and working conscientiously. Pupils of all abilities are given suitably challenging tasks, which is why they achieve so well.
25. Following criticism in the previous inspection over the lack of independence for pupils, teachers now plan more opportunities for pupils to work on their own or as part of a small group. This encourages pupils to use their initiative and resolve any difficulties they come across without being too dependent on their teachers. The excellent attitude pupils have towards their work means that they can be trusted to work

diligently, whether they are supervised by an adult or not. In Year 3, pupils worked well in pairs to carefully collect and record data on the frequency different numbers on a dice appeared when it was thrown 30 times, whilst their teacher concentrated on a group who needed additional help to understand previous work. Early in the inspection, inspectors were aware of the close supervision and high level of support for pupils in class. This approach reflects the care and support shown for individual pupils throughout the school and it was not readily apparent at first just how much freedom pupils were actually being given. Praise is used well throughout to motivate or raise pupils' self-esteem, as shown in the supportive written comments attached to pupils' marked work.

26. The quality of teaching in the literacy hours and during numeracy sessions is very good throughout the school. When teaching other subjects, all teachers use the skills that pupils have learned in these sessions effectively. The written instructions prepared by Year 5 in their computer lesson is a typical example. Pupils are frequently provided with the opportunity to use computers as part of their work in all subjects and this invariably involves them practising their literacy or numeracy skills. In English and mathematics, all achieve the targets set for them by the time they are ready to leave the school. This is a direct result of the quality of teaching and the successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In information and communication technology, pupils' above average achievements reflect the improved level of resources and quality of teaching. Teachers have a considerable level of expertise and provide pupils with a wide range of challenging experiences. However, the loss of the computer room as an additional classroom means that pupils have fewer opportunities than they used to have to practise computer skills or to work independently on computers. In most classes a rota exists so that individual, or pairs of pupils, can use the computer. Parents, at their meeting prior to the inspection, reported that they were concerned about the limited opportunities for pupils to use computers. Inspectors agree that this is not as good as it should be. It is a credit to teachers' planning and expertise that standards by the age of eleven are above those normally seen.
27. All teachers work hard to establish a good working atmosphere and promote effective learning. Pupils obviously enjoy the calm, orderly atmosphere in lessons and behave exceptionally well. This results in a productive working environment in all classes and sustained levels of concentration. Pupils of all ages are keen to work. The close support available from the class teachers, clear instructions and carefully structured tasks ensure that all are fully involved. As a direct result, effective learning occurs in virtually all lessons. Children entering the nursery, for example, have a very good start to their education. The class teacher is supported brilliantly by the classroom assistant, parent volunteers and, on occasions, students. All work effectively as a team for the benefit of the children. Planning of children's work meets the new requirements of all six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum.
28. The very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs shows that the school is determined to help all to do well. Those on the register for pupils with special educational needs in each class are provided with much individual attention. Staff use expert advice and very good assessment information to ensure that individual learning plans identify precise and achievable targets in relation to literacy, numeracy and social behaviour. Teachers take full account of these individual targets in their lesson plans. The full-time special educational needs co-ordinator and classroom assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that the best possible use is made of their time when teaching pupils in class or withdrawing them for short sessions to work on a one-to-one basis in the two small well-equipped upstairs

rooms. As a result, all pupils with special educational needs consistently receive the help they need to make good progress in relation to their personal targets. Teaching is of a high quality, characterised by well-planned activities and a sensitive and caring approach, which successfully builds pupils' confidence. As a result, pupils with special educational needs are able to take a full part in all activities in this school.

29. Almost every parent who responded to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection agreed that teaching was good at the school. Most were also happy with the amount of homework their children were expected to do. At the meeting for parents, all felt that the tasks set were well matched to pupils' capabilities. Inspection findings support parents' views. The school's policy statement gives clear guidance to teachers and parents on homework. Teachers make good use of homework as part of their strong commitment to raising standards, and the amount and quality effectively supports pupils' learning.

**Pupils' enthusiasm for school is readily apparent. All show an excellent attitude towards their work, enjoy excellent relationships with everyone and, in a mature way, willingly accept the many opportunities to take responsibility.**

30. The previous inspection found that pupils applied themselves very well and maintained their concentration for impressively long periods. Today's pupils are equally impressive in class, showing an excellent attitude towards their work. Pupils are keen to take part in the wide range of activities available and willingly engage adults in conversation about their work. They love coming to school and approach their work with a genuine commitment and desire to learn. In lessons their attitudes and behaviour are usually either good, very good or excellent. The one striking example of excellent attitudes and behaviour occurred in a Year 6 science lesson as pupils worked in groups to dissolve different household powders such as baking powder, salt or sugar. Interest was so high, particularly when observing the effervescent reaction of the baking powder, that no one wanted to go out for playtime!
31. Almost every parent who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their child likes coming to school. Virtually all agreed that the school is helping their child to become more mature. This confidence is well placed. During lessons, pupils of all ages quickly settle down to work and persevere with things they find difficult. They usually listen carefully to their teacher and are proud of their completed work. For example, in a history lesson, Year 3 pupils were keen to show their name written in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters, remembering the right to left format. In a Year 5 English lesson, everyone wanted to read aloud their changed version of the story of Little Red Riding Hood, which they were preparing for younger pupils, for others in their class to evaluate.
32. Pupils' behaviour is excellent during the school day. They are friendly and outgoing and get along exceptionally well with members of staff and with each other. Pupils of all ages mix freely and during lessons are well mannered and polite. All members of staff lead by example and address the pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve. Pupils respond similarly and their excellent attitudes to learning help to create a lively and vibrant working atmosphere. Pupils listen carefully during lessons and usually wait their turn to answer their teacher's questions. Their behaviour during break-times is every bit as good and there is a pleasant family atmosphere in the playground with older pupils looking after younger ones. The school has a very successful policy of social and educational inclusion and all pupils play energetically and happily together. Bullying, racism or other anti-social behaviour is extremely rare and any such incidents are dealt with firmly and very effectively. Teachers, whenever

possible, encourage pupils to resolve their own differences. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of community, and relationships between pupils and with members of staff are excellent. There have been no fixed-term exclusions during the last school year.

33. Pupils' personal development is excellent. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are widespread, helping them to become mature and confident. Personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons effectively teach pupils about growing up, healthy foods, sex and drugs. The healthy tuck shop, run by pupils, is a good idea and helps reinforce information in lessons about a healthy diet. The school council is an excellent forum for all pupils to discuss problems and collectively make decisions on any aspect of school life. The 'Pals' system, which operates at break-times is very effective, helping to ensure that no pupils are lonely or excluded from games in the playground. All pupils are fully included in any special activities such as trips to France or visits to places of interest like the local crisp factory or Roman wall. The school provides a regular weekly programme of extra-curricular activities but these are mainly of a sporting nature. Clubs, such as those for art, chess or country dancing, have been discontinued, mostly due to the increasing additional workload on teachers. However, a choir is formed each year, adding some variety and catering for pupils' different interests. Within each class, pupils willingly undertake a wide range of responsibilities, such as acting as monitors and helping to tidy away equipment. Pupils are independent and work very well on their own and in small groups. When required to do so, pupils can be relied upon to get on with their work and to complete any homework which is set.
34. At the time of the previous inspection, attendance levels were well below the national average. Decisive action by the headteacher, with individual letters being sent to parents, brought about an improvement. Attendance is now satisfactory. The school's procedures for following up absences are thorough and so no unauthorised absences occur. All pupils arrive punctually and lessons start on time.

**The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good, promoting successfully all pupils' academic and personal development.**

35. The key factors responsible are:
- the headteacher's excellent leadership coupled with his vision and strong determination to give all pupils the best possible education;
  - teachers' level of expertise and their enthusiasm for teaching.
36. A very good curriculum is being provided and pupils respond with interest, invariably working hard in class. This represents an improvement from the previous inspection when the curriculum was judged to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. Since then many aspects have been developed by the deeply committed, knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching staff. All pupils benefit greatly from:
- the personal, social and health education programme leading to an award for the healthy living curriculum;
  - the excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
  - the very good special educational needs provision;
  - the school's involvement in the Comenius Project which, amongst other things, gives pupils the opportunity to learn to speak French and Spanish.

37. All pupils enjoy coming to school and show excellent attitudes towards their work. Children in the reception class are very well provided for with interesting and exciting learning experiences covering all the early learning goals in the six areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. A wide range of activities is planned, and there is a suitable balance between teacher-directed tasks and self-initiated activities. Children are well prepared to begin work on the National Curriculum by the end of their reception year.
38. The quality of planning ensures that infant and junior aged pupils spend enough time on each National Curriculum subject, religious education, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Interestingly, given its Roman Catholic status, the school was given the approval of the governors to reduce the amount of religious education on the timetable to include more time for the PSHE programme, because this regularly addressed religious and moral issues. In addition, a range of other experiences is provided. For example, pupils in the junior classes receive tuition until they are able to swim 25 metres to a high standard, all have French lessons and junior pupils have the option of learning to play a musical instrument. Detailed planning means that lessons are very carefully structured so that no time is wasted and all pupils work at the right level. On the occasions when pupils are withdrawn from class for additional help, either individually or in small groups, care is taken to liaise with the class teacher so that the work links seamlessly.
39. Much emphasis is placed on teaching literacy and numeracy. Mathematical skills are used very well to support other subjects, for example when Year 5 pupils made graphs from their results after investigating favourite foods as part of a healthy eating project, and recording temperatures using a sensor linked to a computer as ice thawed. Opportunities to use literacy skills are also planned in all other subjects. For example, pupils write about the lifestyle of the ancient Egyptians or record the step-by-step instructions on how to use a mobile programmable toy. The use of computers to support work in different curriculum subjects has improved since the previous inspection, due to the increasing expertise of all teachers and better resources. However, the school is keen to add further to these, which are broadly in line with the level found in most schools, by creating the accommodation to restore a computer suite, lost when the room had to be used as a classroom. It means that teachers have to waste valuable time teaching new skills to small groups using the few computers available to them in the classroom. Pupils use computers well to help them with their work in most lessons, for example by using the Internet for researching information and sending e-mail messages. By the time they are ready to leave the school at age eleven, all show an advanced level of skill.
40. There is an appropriate sex education policy. Pupils are taught about drugs as part of their science lessons when studying healthy eating. The quality of the school's work on healthy eating was recently recognised with a Healthy Schools award from the Durham local education authority in partnership with the National Health Service. It recognised among other things the value of the healthy tuck shop run on a daily basis by pupils. From an early age, pupils are being taught most effectively how different types of drugs are misused.
41. Other opportunities are taken to broaden and enhance pupils' learning. Through the British Council, links with France and Spain are maintained through the Comenius Project, and sporting activities with neighbouring schools are regularly held each term. An extra-curricular activity where pupils can learn to speak Spanish is also held each Wednesday lunchtime. Sessions after school, seen during the inspection, covered athletics training and netball practice and were well supported. Visits to

places of interest are also used well to improve pupils' first-hand experiences wherever possible. Overall, a good range of extra-curricular activities is provided, although most are sport orientated at present. These are provided throughout the year adding to the breadth of learning experiences for pupils. Opportunities are also taken to involve pupils with outside expertise in art, dance, music and games. Frequent visitors, such as the local fire brigade, and a range of interesting visits, effectively add further interest for pupils.

42. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. This was also the judgement of the previous inspection team. There is a strong Catholic Christian ethos readily apparent in every aspect of the life of the school with the gospel values being promoted most effectively. Excellent moral and social values are implicitly communicated to pupils in such a natural way that all pupils respond to the very high expectations of them and behave impeccably in school. This has a direct impact on the quality of learning in every class as pupils display excellent attitudes to one another and to their work. Their cultural development is very good. All show a clear understanding of other world religions. A Section 23 inspection, conducted by inspectors employed by the local Diocesan Schools Commission, will visit the school later this academic year and prepare a separate report for parents on this aspect and the school's provision for religious education.
43. The school is committed to the principals of equality of opportunity, and no pupils are excluded from any activity by reason of race, gender, social circumstance or ability. Care is taken, for example, to make sure pupils with special educational needs do not miss out on the same lessons when they are taught for a short time out of the classroom by the special educational needs staff. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum on offer is an outstanding feature of this school and largely responsible for every pupil achieving their full potential.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The library and computer facilities.**

44. The only area of weakness found on this inspection is associated with the lack of space provided by the accommodation and this is technically out of the control of the headteacher and his staff. The building, which dates from 1926, has been continuously improved since then, the latest addition being a new classroom in 2000. Although the school makes the best possible use of the internal space, parts such as the staffroom situated in a corridor, remain below acceptable modern-day standards and others have a direct impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The classrooms in the infant department, for example, are small compared to the norm. To enable essential practical activities to take place, such as sand and water play or artwork requiring large work surfaces, a practical room has been created out of one of the classrooms in this area of the school. It is staffed by a teaching assistant and groups of pupils from the two reception classes are timetabled to work in this room. The quality of teaching provided by this talented member of staff is very good and all pupils thoroughly enjoy the practical art or supervised play sessions in this room. However, timetable constraints restrict access and, as a result, limit the opportunities for pupils to engage in these essential activities.
45. In the junior department rising numbers meant that the school had to use the room designated as a computer suite as a classroom. The computers from this room were spread out around the various classrooms, making it difficult for teachers to teach specific skills to other than small groups. Good use is made of all computers during

lessons by pupils working individually or in pairs. One teacher actually brought her own computer to school, to enable more access for those in her class when she introduced new computer skills which required pupils to create tables and add text to the boxes. The school is in the process of trying to gain additional space to reinstate its computer room so that pupils can be more easily taught necessary skills. That standards in information and communication technology are above those normally seen by the time pupils are age eleven is a credit to the planning by teachers and their teaching.

46. The library is unsatisfactory for a school of this size. It is situated in a former converted toilet block and is far too small to allow books to be displayed imaginatively or for pupils to conduct independent research. There are no seats or tables and the low ceiling and small windows make it look dull and unattractive, in spite of attempts by willing parents to brighten it up with painted stencils. In addition, many of the books are dated and need to be removed.
47. The quality of pupils' work on display is outstanding. This was also noted as a strong feature by the previous inspection team. The imaginative and colourful displays brighten up the corridors and classrooms creating an attractive and stimulating learning environment. They help to mask the age of the accommodation. In such a very successful school, providing pupils with a high standard of education, it is a testament to both staff and pupils that they have to constantly compensate for the limitations imposed by the internal accommodation's lack of space.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

48. The school has conscientiously tackled the key issues from the previous inspection and generally made a good level of improvement on the high standards reported in many areas. As a result, the inspection team found no major weaknesses which would affect the management, efficiency or smooth running of the school. However, parts of the internal space in a building which dates from 1926 are inadequate by modern-day standards. In order to improve the quality of education and raise standards further, the governors should therefore:
  - (1) Explore ways to provide pupils with better opportunities to work independently in the library and on computers.

(paragraphs 6, 7, 39, 44-47)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	11	19	6	0	0	0
Percentage	2.7	29.7	51.3	16.3	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	350
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	54

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	26	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	24
	Girls	25	22	25
	Total	44	40	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (89)	77 (89)	94 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	22	22
	Girls	23	25	25
	Total	42	47	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (89)	90 (89)	90 (89)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	33	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	18	24
	Girls	30	27	30
	Total	49	45	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (70)	76 (78)	92 (78)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	22	23
	Girls	33	28	33
	Total	55	50	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (68)	85 (64)	95 (84)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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



### **Ethnic background of pupils**

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

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.1
Average class size	25

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	111

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.0
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	37
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	630,260
Total expenditure	626,542
Expenditure per pupil	1,645
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,025
Balance carried forward to next year	12,743

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	402
Number of questionnaires returned	269

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	39	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	45	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	44	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	56	9	2	5
The teaching is good.	57	40	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	46	11	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	29	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	36	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	44	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	59	38	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	41	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	41	13	1	9