

INSPECTION REPORT

ST WULSTAN'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stourport on Severn

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116915

Headteacher: Mr. A. Kinsella

Reporting inspector: Mrs. C. A. Field
9479

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th February 2000

Inspection number: 192096

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elmfield Walk Stourport on Severn Worcestershire
Postcode:	DY13 8TX
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father John Cross
Date of previous inspection:	13 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs. C. A. Field	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Teaching and learning
			Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mrs. J. Butler	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Mr. D. Carrington	Team inspector	Mathematics	Leadership and management
		Information and communications technology	
		Geography	
		History	
Mrs. P. Patterson	Team inspector	English	
		Physical education	
		Equality of opportunity	
		Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
Mr. G. Warner	Team inspector	Science	
		Art	
		Design and technology	
		Music	
		Areas of learning for children under five	

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated to the northwest of Stourport on Severn and is of average size. The majority of pupils who attend the school live within the locality, but some travel from further afield to receive a Catholic education. There are 204 pupils on roll: 110 boys and 94 girls aged between four and eleven years. At the time of the inspection 16 children were under five years of age. The profile of pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. Four per cent of pupils are eligible for free-school meals, which is well below the national average. Twenty-four pupils have special educational needs, a figure below the national average. The school provides for three pupils from travelling backgrounds. There were no pupils in school who speak English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Wulstans' is an effective school and very popular with parents who hold extremely positive views about the quality of education provided. The ethos is warm and caring and puts children at the heart of the school. Values shine through, and result in excellent relationships at all levels that underpin effective learning. Teachers know how to teach and do this to good effect. Because most lessons are interesting and motivating, this results in most pupils' learning moving on at a good pace. The school has a good track record over recent years for the standards achieved and there is commitment to strive to raise these further to better those found in similar schools. The systems in place to analyse with accuracy what works best in the school are not as effective as they should be. This is because they do not have the formality, consistency and rigour to provide detailed analysis of how the school can be made even better. Nevertheless the school has good capacity to make sustained improvements.

What the school does well

- Ensures the under-fives get a good start to their education.
- Through good quality teaching enables pupils to make good progress in English. Mathematics and science throughout the school.
- Enables pupils to achieve above average standards in English, mathematics, science and information technology at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Provides very worthwhile experiences for pupils in music and swimming; these are strengths in the school.
- Makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, and pupils from travelling backgrounds, who make good progress in learning, especially in their basic skills.
- Makes very good provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Promotes a caring, tolerant and respectful ethos that ensures that the needs of individuals are well met, and encourages personal talents to be recognised within a family atmosphere.
- Has been successful in building a team of staff and governors led very effectively by the headteacher, that is working hard to give the best education to the pupils.
- Provides good value for money.

What could be improved

- School evaluation and improvement are not underpinned sufficiently well by systematic and rigorous ways of finding out what could be better and what is done well.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well organised to ensure that there is sufficient time to teach all of the things the school wants to give attention to nor to ensure that time spent by some pupils in undertaking independent study out of main lessons is planned and assessed. Additionally, in some lessons, not enough is demanded of high attaining pupils.
- Lesson planning lacks precision in stating what skills, knowledge and learning gains are to be made by the range of pupils in the class or group. This affects assessment and target-setting that is not as sharp as it could be.

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

The quality of education is good and the school is a happy place to be. Strengths far outweigh those areas for improvement identified above.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since 1997 the school has made good progress in responding to most of the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection. The provision made for the under-fives unsatisfactory before is now good. Teaching has improved significantly and is of consistently good quality throughout the school. Standards in mathematics and writing have been lifted and are still receiving attention. Subject management roles have been re-distributed and clarified, although the role of co-ordinator still requires developing in terms of monitoring and its impact on improving quality and raising standards. The school development plan is now a more useful tool for setting out and guiding the priorities of the school. More people need to be involved in its production and in monitoring how successful developments are in terms of the impact they have on improving curriculum, teaching and learning. A useful start has been made in collecting data to help in forecasting how well pupils are likely to achieve. This information is usefully supporting the realistic targets set for English and mathematics results between now and 2002.

STANDARDS

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

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

The above National Curriculum test results for eleven year olds indicate that, in comparison with all schools, the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels was well above average in mathematics and above average in English and science. Compared to similar schools, results are broadly average in all the tested subjects. Findings from inspection show that most children enter Reception with broadly average skills. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in learning in English, mathematics information technology and science so that by the time they are eleven standards are above average. The school is successful at enabling more pupils than in most schools to attain the

expected levels for their age, but has room to boost the proportion of those who have the potential to reach higher levels. Writing has been given extra attention over the past year and the strategies in place to lift standards are beginning to pay off. Teachers are very effective at supporting the development of pupils' language and literacy skills and good attention is paid to promoting their numeracy skills. Through worthwhile experiences pupils are making sound progress in design and technology, and geography, and good progress in art, history and physical education. Pupils make very good progress in music and swimming and these are strengths.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show high enthusiasm for learning and try hard to do their very best work for their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils get on extremely well together and follow the expected code of behaviour to the letter. Behaviour is as good at lunch and play as it is in class.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The quality of relationships is a strength of the school and is successfully underpinning the good learning taking place. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to take a lead in organising appropriate aspects of school life and this is preparing them well as responsible future citizens.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of unauthorised absence is lower than in most schools but too many parents take their children out of school in term-time for holidays.

Pupils benefit from a good all round education. They are confident to take full advantage of the good educational opportunities afforded them.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has much improved since the time of the previous inspection. In every one of the 61 lessons observed during this inspection teaching was of satisfactory or better quality. In three-quarters of lessons teaching was of good or better quality and in nearly a third of very good quality. These proportions are better than are usually found in primary schools. Teaching of the under-fives, pupils with special needs and pupils from travelling backgrounds is good. Teaching is consistently good for pupils throughout the school, but there is potential for it to be better focused on ensuring that all pupils make the maximum amount of progress over their time at school, especially the high attainers. The teaching of music and swimming are strengths and result in very good progress in learning. Skills of literacy are very well taught. The teaching of numeracy is good. The very best teaching practice in the school has yet to be shared sufficiently.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The pupils benefit from interesting and exciting experiences. However, the organisation of the curriculum is not set up to deliver to best advantage all of the subjects planned.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Early assessment is thorough and there is good team effort to ensure that individual needs are well responded to, especially in basic skills learning. Occasionally when some pupils are withdrawn for additional support they miss out on what others are doing in the class.
Provision for pupils from travelling backgrounds	Good. Pupils are given good support to enable them to learn effectively and make the most of their time at school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school is secure, friendly and caring and attends well to pupils' spiritual growth. Very good attention is paid to pupils' moral and social development, and good opportunities are made available for their cultural awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for ensuring the health, welfare and safety of pupils are effective. Teachers know pupils well and provide good guidance to enable good progress for most. Assessment is insufficiently used to set challenging targets to enable teachers and pupils to focus on improvement.

The school has a good partnership with parents who see the school in an excellent light. Very good impact results from the high quality support parents and volunteers give to supporting both teaching and learning. The quality of the curriculum is good and the strategies for teaching literacy skills are particularly effective. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. Monitoring of pupils' academic performance and the procedures for monitoring attendance, pupils' progress and the use of assessment, though satisfactory, are not as effective as they could be if more structure and rigour was built into practice.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has a successful approach to management and he motivates others well. Co-ordinators are effective as subject managers but have yet to extend their roles to gain complete oversight of quality and standards throughout the school. The very positive team ethos amongst staff makes a powerful contribution to driving the school forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed and give good support. They are developing well their role as critical friends of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Ways of checking the strengths and weaknesses of the school are sound, but more staff should be involved and there should be a greater degree of analysis of the information gathered to enable a clear view of how and where to put the investment to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finance, staff and accommodation are put to good use in the interests of the pupils. Time could be managed more efficiently.

There is a good sufficiency of staffing, accommodation and resources. The school is making sound progress in its pursuit of Best Value principles but could make monitoring and evaluation practices more rigorous.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good leadership and management. • Good teaching leading to pupils doing well. • Staff helping pupils to be well behaved, mature and responsible. • Levels of homework are just right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about the progress pupils make.

Just over eighty per cent of all parents completed questionnaires and thirty-eight parents attended a meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection started. This is an excellent response rate. Parents hold extremely positive views about the quality of education at the school. There are no significant aspects they would like to see improved, but a few would like more details about progress. The team agrees with parents' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds indicate that, in comparison with all schools, the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels was well above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools, results are well above average in reading, above average in writing but below average in mathematics. Results have been close to the national average and fairly stable in mathematics since 1996, but show a rising trend in reading and writing. The percentage of pupils reaching higher levels was well above average in reading and writing and close to the national average in mathematics. There was no significant variation in the performance of boys and girls. Teacher assessments in science show well above average results in all attainment targets.

2. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds indicate that, in comparison with all schools, the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels was well above average in mathematics, and above average in English and science. Compared to similar schools, results are broadly average in all the tested subjects. Results have been above the national average for the last four years in all subjects, although slightly better in mathematics. At Key Stage 2 there is a pattern over the last three years for boys to attain at higher levels than girls in English but in 1999 the situation was reversed. The school is not aware of an explanation for this. The inspection did not reveal any difference in the attainment between boys and girls in either key stage.

3. Findings from inspection show that attainment is well above average in English at Key Stage 1 and above average at Key Stage 2. Attainment in mathematics and science is above average at the end of both key stages. Attainment in information technology is average at Key Stage 1 and above average at Key Stage 2.

4. The school is particularly successful at ensuring that those pupils who are potentially capable of gaining a Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2, do so. A key advancement has been in enabling pupils with special educational needs to succeed and the good results are testament to the good provision made for these pupils.

5. The school has yet to identify any talented or gifted pupils specifically but has participated with other local schools in organising days aimed at extending the key skills of high fliers for example. There is more attention needed to ensure that those pupils capable of achieving higher levels make the very best progress over their time at the school.

6. The better results in English at Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2 are because opportunities for writing are not as well structured at Key Stage 2 and the very good skills that pupils acquire are not extended to the maximum of their potential. English is the main priority in Key Stage 1 and more time is given to it than mathematics for example, this is another reason why standards are well above average. The co-ordinator's influence at the end of the key stage is very tangible. The range of approaches to mathematics, the time given to promoting numeracy and the subject coordinator's influence at the end of Key Stage 2, are key reasons why results in mathematics are so much better at Key Stage 2

than Key Stage 1. The school is aware of the need to track pupils' progress and evaluate who does best in the school and why, as part of its continuing development priorities.

7. There has been a huge investment in technology in recent times. Standards are better at Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1 because of the amount of time that pupils have had to sharpen their information technology skills. The oldest pupils have embraced the opportunities to access the technology to carry out research, or to word process work across the curriculum for example. The development of the information and communications technology curriculum and staff training associated with its introduction, indicate a good capacity to boost standards in the near future.

8. Since the time of the previous inspection good attention has been given to raising standards, and improving school results. Pupils' achievements in English and science are now better than they were, and rising standards are testament to the school's success. Standards have been sustained in mathematics and information technology. Writing has been given extra attention over the past year and the strategies in place to lift standards are beginning to pay off. Teachers are very effective at supporting pupils' language and literacy skills development and good attention is paid to promoting their numeracy skills. The school tries hard to deliver the full range of foundation subjects, and worthwhile experiences are provided for pupils in art, history and physical education leading to good progress in learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress in design and technology, and geography, throughout the school. Rates of progress are not always the best they could be however, because of the way the curriculum is organised. Music a strength at the time of last inspection is still a strength today. The school makes very good provision for swimming; this leads to very good progress, and standards are high as a result.

9. Children under five enter school with broadly average attainment. Through good quality teaching that promotes effective learning, most children make good progress and are enabled to reach, and in some cases exceed, the levels expected in all six areas of learning by the time they are five. Noteworthy is the good grasp on language and vocabulary which these pupils have by the time they move into Year 1 and the good access this gives to learning across the curriculum. Children's personal and social skills also develop well through the good opportunities extended for them to plan and manage relevant aspects of their own learning and then to assess how they might do better next time. The provision for children under five was identified as a weakness last time the school was inspected and now good provision is made. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to make improvement.

10. Good investment in training has raised both the confidence and the level of teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve. The quality of teaching is significantly better than it was and this is a key reason why standards of attainment are rising. There is less consistent use of targets in lesson planning and in setting targets that pupils can then use to assess their own progress and know clearly what they need to do next to improve. The school has made a useful start on tracking pupils' progress but has not yet given sufficient emphasis to the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, teaching and learning to analyse what works best in the school and why. The role of subject co-ordinators and senior managers requires strengthening in this respect. Together with the Local Authority, the school uses forecasts of what pupils achieved at seven years in National Curriculum tests to set realistic targets for English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 for between now and 2002.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils at St Wulstans' want to learn and have very positive attitudes to study. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate a high level of interest in lessons, and a willingness to take on roles of responsibility. Relationships in the school are excellent and are ensuring that the school is a caring, happy and tolerant Catholic Christian community. Through prayer and times of reflection pupils show empathy for others, and know well the difference between right and wrong. Bullying instances are few but are taken seriously and responded to effectively. One temporary exclusion made last year was very untypical but justified. Pupils at the school feel safe and secure. Parents very much appreciate the ways in which the school fosters pupils' confidence and maturity. Positive features identified in the previous report have been successfully sustained.

12. Children in reception show good attitudes to the responsive way in which the team of staff is ensuring that individuals are well settled, and enabled to grow as people. Children show interest in what they are doing and work purposefully alongside one another for prolonged periods. They co-operate well when making ice cubes as part of practical science, for example. Children demonstrate good levels of motivation, and good perseverance when working with clay to make nightlight holders. By the time that they are five, most are confident to make choices, understand well the way in which to behave, and get on well with others.

13. In all years pupils show positive attitudes to their studies and most enjoy learning. Pupils with special educational needs show real enthusiasm and try hard to do their very best for the teacher, especially when working in small groups on literacy or numeracy work. All pupils are eager to learn, have very good motivation and work with very good application. In some lessons, in music and art for example, they are encouraged to take initiative and show good levels of creativity and self-expression as a result. In Year 2 some particularly positive responses were observed when pupils were challenged to improve on the art work of Year 6 pupils in painting reflective pictures of the Great Fire of London.

14. Behaviour in lessons and out at play is very good. Pupils respond well to the clear code of conduct expected of them. Older pupils show mature and responsible attitudes, for example when helping the dinner ladies look after the youngest pupils or when fund-raising for chosen charities. Pupils have a good grasp of how their actions affect others. For example, in an assembly about 'selfishness', pupils reflected well on why the giant's garden became devoid of life in response to his selfish nature in trying to keep enjoyment of it to himself. Pupils show good levels of self-esteem and are confident to take full advantage of the good experiences provided for them.

15. Levels of attendance in the school are average, and are contributing positively to the generally good standards achieved. However, too many parents take children on holiday in term-time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching quality has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. Teachers know how to teach and do this to good effect. Teaching is good overall and results in pupils learning effectively, and making good progress in most subjects, by the time they leave at eleven years. The teaching of children under five is good and gets them off to a good start in education. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those from travelling backgrounds is good. This enables these pupils to make good progress. There are no weak aspects of teaching, but some skills such

as day-to-day assessment and the use of clear objectives in lessons could be refined to target accelerated rates of learning, especially for high attaining pupils. The school has not identified any talented or gifted pupils but there is clear recognition of the more able who are grouped to work together for some lessons and often given more challenging work to do, especially in English. Pupils' personal talents are encouraged, and numerous opportunities are provided for all to show these off to good effect through school concerts, sports days and charitable fund-raising events, for example. Parents hold very positive views about the quality of teaching, and how it is helping their children do well at school.

17. Teaching is consistently good for pupils throughout the school, but there is potential for it to be better focused on ensuring that all pupils make the maximum amount of progress over their time at school, especially the high attainers. The teaching of music and swimming are strengths and result in very good progress in learning. Skills of literacy are very well taught. The teaching of numeracy is good. Pupils' achievement in basic skills is very good because of the emphasis teachers' place on "the 3R's". Teachers share their planning and as a staff have evaluated the quality of work in English and mathematics. There has been little opportunity for teachers to observe one another teach and the very best teaching practice in the school has yet to be shared sufficiently.

18. During the week of inspection in 100 per cent of the 61 lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. In 44 per cent of lessons teaching was good and in 31 per cent of lessons the teaching was very good. Teaching is of much higher quality than typically found in primary schools.

19. Teaching is consistently good because teachers have very good understanding of how pupils learn, and good subject knowledge that ensures pupils at the school have good quality learning opportunities which stimulate their sustained interest and enthusiasm. They hold high expectations of what pupils can do, and are supported by good planning, especially for teaching basic skills. This was well demonstrated in an English lesson in Year 2 where pupils were encouraged to produce their own descriptive writing having first read extracts from Roald Dahl's 'The Twits'. Pupils tackled the new text with relish, enjoying learning new words such as 'disgraceful, grumpy, grotty and spiky' and were given good encouragement to show equally rich vocabulary in writing their own descriptions. The lesson was well planned to stimulate purposeful learning for the range of pupils in the class, some of whom benefited from a writing frame developed by the teacher to help structure their work. The high attaining pupils were enabled to brainstorm ideas, use dictionaries to check spellings and then draft their own extended pieces that were exciting and imaginative. Good use of time targets ensured that learning was brisk and productive; resulting in very good progress for all.

20. Teachers manage behaviour very well, use a good range of interesting materials and largely structure lessons well to make best use of time, resources and the accommodation. Good use is made of homework to support learning and parents hold positive views about this. There are problems associated with the arrangements in place to deliver some foundation subjects, and too much is expected to be done with insufficient time available. This is impeding potentially very high quality teaching and learning. On occasions, teachers depart from the planned timetable in order to give pupils time to complete work in one subject and so leave too little time for the next. For example, in giving more time for creative writing at Key Stage 1 less time is available for mathematics.

21. Most teachers know full well what they want pupils to achieve but written lesson plans are not always specific enough to ensure that pupils' learning is as well targeted as it could be. There is limited use of time targets to aid the pace of individuals' learning. In some marking the teacher sets clear goals for the pupils to aim for but in others there is too much emphasis on effort and too little on targeting improvements. This means that pupils' knowledge of their own learning is under-developed.

22. The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good overall and often is very good in one to one, and in small group situations. Pupils from travelling families receive good input to enable them to make good progress too. This high quality reflects the good work of support staff and the way in which different teaching programmes are dovetailed to mutually reinforce an individual's progress in literacy and numeracy.

23. Children under five benefit from good teaching and are given a firm foundation to their education as a result. The staff work together well as a team. They understand the needs of young children well and provide a good range of experiences that help children develop good work ethics and enjoyment in learning.

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

24. Since the time of the previous inspection the school has made significant improvements to the curriculum for children under five, and it is now of good quality and very relevant to the needs of the children. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs was identified as a relative weakness. Today good provision is made and this results in children making good progress. The targets set out in individual education plans are not always very specific but the school's approach to meeting needs is clearly working, not least because of the good meshing of the various programmes of work these pupils receive to aid their basic skills development. Planning is much better than it was, and good use has been made of national strategies and nationally recommended (QCA) programmes of work to help structure the curriculum. The school is aware that time is an issue and in preparing for the introduction in September of Curriculum 2000 will need to be mindful of the key skills and concepts it wants pupils to have and plan accordingly. There are still some inconsistencies in the quality of short-term planning with practice being so much better than the paperwork in many instances. There has been insufficient monitoring of the curriculum, and this is identified by the school as a priority within its development plan. Very good overall provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this too is an improved aspect of school life. A major strength in the school are the excellent relationships which cement very effective working partnerships at all levels.

25. The school provides a broad range of worthwhile learning opportunities that are relevant to pupils, and that meet, statutory requirements. The school has very good strategies for enabling very good teaching and learning of literacy skills and good teaching and learning of numeracy skills. The curriculum attends very well to pupils' intellectual, physical and creative development, although higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged by the work set for them. This is because lessons plans do not always identify what the ability range of pupils in the class will know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Joint planning strengthens the delivery of the curriculum year-on-year but there is limited on-going assessment to 'back track or fast track' individual work as required. For example, some teachers are keeping to the National Numeracy Strategy plans as set out for the age group and time of year without assessing whether this is at the right level for all the pupils in the class. Very good attention is paid to promoting pupils'

personal; social and health education throughout the curriculum, and this results in pupils who are well prepared for the next stage of education and life. The Family Life programme in Years 5 and 6 which covers sex and drugs education is a positive feature.

26. The curriculum is very well organised to meet the needs of children under five, pupils with special educational needs and those pupils from travelling backgrounds. Less successful is the organisation to give experiences in foundation subjects in sufficient depth to ensure that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills acquisition is systematically built upon. Sound attention is paid to providing equality of curricular opportunities to all pupils, although occasionally pupils withdrawn for specific basic skills work miss out on what is going on in their class. Additionally, some pupils who benefit from extra help with reading may also miss parts of their main lessons. Some pupils who have not been selected for the choir spend the time pursuing independent enquiry into a range of things but this work is not sufficiently planned nor assessed. The very high standards in swimming stem from the school's investment in the time needed, but this is at the expense of the time for other subjects that follow the weekly visit to the swimming pool. There has been no specific monitoring to check what impact such curricular organisation has on an individual's learning overall.

27. The pupils benefit from interesting and exciting experiences that draw well on local community resources, and a well-organised programme of visits and visitors to extend opportunities. For example, a visit to Harvington Hall has been used successfully to extend pupils knowledge in history. There is a satisfactory programme of extra-curricular opportunities provided that over the course of the year includes a range of sporting and musical activities. Year 6 pupils spoke very enthusiastically about visiting their MP at the Houses of Parliament in London and are looking forward to the residential visit to Wales in the Summer term.

28. Parents have very positive views about the curriculum and most have signed up to support the home-school agreement recently developed to promote a partnership in learning. There are useful links with local schools and strong links with other Catholic schools in the district that involve the sharing of information through regular meetings of staff. There are very good links with the local high school to which most pupils transfer and these help the transfer at eleven years go smoothly. The school has good links with local teacher training colleges, and a number of students undertake placements during the year. The school has strong links with the parish that support positively the Catholic Christian ethos so prevalent in the school's work.

29. Spiritual development is very well fostered and provision has been improved since the last inspection. Acts of collective worship follow planned themes and assembly times make a strong contribution towards the sense of family that pervades the work of the school. In Year 2, a display shows the sacrament of baptism and includes pupils' personal writing about their own christening. In a Key Stage 1 assembly, pupils firstly looked at a map of Galilee to set a context to the story about Jesus and the fishermen, and then gasped with awe and wonder as the teacher drew up an empty net and produced a large fish, as if from nowhere, to represent the full net. The pupils responded with all of the emotions the fishermen might have shown, 'delight, amazement and joy ' as the story became quite real to them. Pupils show empathy, for example when finding out that one of their friends is ill, and take time to go to the chapel in school to pray. They raise considerable funds for those less fortunate and have special links with Guatemala. Pupils gain good knowledge and understanding of their own, and other people's beliefs, and feelings through subjects, such as art and music. The school makes specific provision for

pupils to reflect upon their own lives through periods of prayer and quiet contemplation.

30. Provision for moral development is very good. Within the curriculum there are good opportunities provided for pupils to consider moral dilemmas. For example, in an English lesson in Year 5, the pupils considered what the moral was in the story 'The boy who cried wolf'. They expressed their ideas confidently and with good self-expression demonstrating quite clearly that they know exactly the point of the fable. The school's behaviour policy and the recently introduced home-school agreement, provide a secure framework of expectations for pupils, parents and staff. Pupils have very good understanding about rights and wrongs as a result. Rewards and sanctions are known to all, and teachers make constructive use of praise. The structure for rewarding good behaviour, courtesy, kindness or endeavour through stickers, badges and certificates, in addition to celebration assemblies, makes a very positive contribution towards promoting good behaviour. Through well-planned opportunities such as the woodland walk in Year 6, pupils are enabled to consider environmental issues and how to take care of the world in which we live. The school's supportive approach is very successful in helping the vast majority of its pupils to become mature and responsible and parents are in strong agreement that the school's approach is effective.

31. Social development is very well promoted. Excellent relationships underpin the work of the school. The house system is a positive feature in promoting corporate endeavours. Pupils undertake an adequate, though not extensive, range of responsibilities and duties in the classroom and around school, for example older pupils helping younger children at lunchtime. School systems help pupils to relate positively towards each other and there are particularly good examples of social development during paired work and group activities in mathematics and music. In most classes high profile is given to social development, for example in Year 5 a display is headed 'Class work agreement', and promises are written beneath by both the teacher and pupils giving various undertakings to try hard, work well and do their best. In Year 3 a similar message is proclaimed 'To be united we will...', be caring, kind, work together and help each other'.

32. The provision for cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils have been given a range of writing and art opportunities to learn about different cultures, for example, Chinese New Year, a Hindu wedding and various aspects of some of the festivals celebrated by Muslims. Good selection of texts in English is providing pupils with good multi-cultural awareness, for example in Year 2 Ukrainian folklore is being used to stimulate pupils' learning across the curriculum. Through history studies pupils have learned about life in Roman times for example. Visitors have included artists and musicians who have shared their expertise and experiences with pupils. Quite a high number of pupils take part in drama, music and dance festivals in the county and the large number of trophies on display are a reflection of their success.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. Since the time of the previous inspection the school has continued to provide good support and guidance for the educational and personal development of its pupils, and has improved attendance-recording systems. There are within this provision some very good features, which are highly valued by parents who feel that the staff have high expectations of their children and support them well. Although there have been several improvements, there are still some areas for development, particularly in the use made of assessment information to guide planning and its impact on increasing rates of progress, particularly for high attainers. Marking previously identified as lacking in diagnostic comment is still in need of attention to help pupils understand what they need to do next to improve. Some parents

would appreciate more details about how well their children are doing at school. The inspection team agrees that this would be useful.

34. Pupils are happy to come to school, and this is a very positive feature because of the good impact it has on their all round development. Pupils at St Wulstan's are being well prepared for the next stage of education and are well on their way to becoming good future citizens.

35. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are a high priority, with adequate first aid procedures and careful monitoring of safety. All staff and helpers are aware of their health and safety responsibilities and appropriate risk assessments are carried out. Child protection procedures are effective and usefully follow local area guidelines.

36. When children prepare to enter the reception class they are given the opportunity to make several weekly visits which, together with a useful and encouraging package of induction information, helps to build their confidence, sense of security and eagerness to learn. Pupils who join the school in older age groups also receive very good support.

37. All staff know their children very well and have a clear picture of their abilities and personal development. Pupils in both key stages are given effective educational support and guidance, though much of it is informal and not kept as a written record in subjects other than English, mathematics and, to a lesser extent, science. Statutory requirements for assessment in English, mathematics and science are fully met. There is, however, less evidence of assessment in other subjects.

38. In lessons there is limited use of pupils' self-assessment or individual target setting, although good examples were observed in music and physical education. Often good use is made of plenary time in the literacy hours to evaluate how well the pupils have done but this is not always logged nor used consistently to guide the next lesson. In some numeracy hours teachers are slavishly adhering to the National Numeracy Strategy timetable for age and time of year without accurate assessment of how well this is suiting individual learning needs.

39. Assessment records are unwieldy and there is no agreed system for building on information by setting challenging targets for improvement which can be shared with pupils to further their progress. This limitation restricts the potential progress for some pupils, particularly the higher attainers. The best practice in using assessment to track progress is in the reception class and for those pupils with special educational needs and those from travelling backgrounds, where there is a clearer understanding of how individuals are making progress towards individual goals.

40. The procedures for assessing reading are very good and have been broadened since the last inspection to include the higher skills of enquiry. There is now a useful assessment sheet in science, but this good practice is not consistently used. When marking pupils' work, teachers are still not sufficiently clear in showing them how the work might be improved.

41. The recording and monitoring of absence is now satisfactory and attendance registers meet statutory requirements. However, in promoting better attendance the school does not emphasise the disruptive effects of family holidays in term time.

42. Procedures to promote pupils' personal development are very good. There is a strong ethos of developing self-esteem and confidence, and rewarding good behaviour and achievement. Discipline is quiet and unobtrusive with both staff and pupils showing high expectations of self-control and thought for others. Pupils are encouraged to apologise for any misdemeanours, and are then forgiven, within the Catholic Christian philosophy of the school. The personal, social and health education programme prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The school has maintained its very effective partnership with parents and pays tribute to the marvellous co-operation which enables them to contribute significantly to its life and work. Parents' views of the school are excellent and they support it extremely well.

44. The strong home-school links are formed early in the partnership, often even before the children start in reception, through contacts within the parish. The effectiveness of the partnership is demonstrated by the very high level of interest shown by parents in the inspection process, by the considerable support for Parent Teacher Association (PTA) activities, and by the significant number of parent and grandparent volunteers in the school.

45. In support of these links the school provides a range of printed and verbal information which covers induction, curriculum matters, school activities and pupils' progress. However, the quality of some of this information, particularly the prospectus and home-school agreement, has room for improvement as it is sometimes rather dry and unfriendly in style. A small minority of parents feel that they are not sufficiently informed about their children's progress. Pupils' annual progress reports are still not meeting legal requirements as some do not give progress in information technology. There are some suggestions for improvement in certain subjects, from certain teachers, but a more consistent approach towards sharing targets with parents would be beneficial.

46. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school and the contribution they make to children's learning, both at school and at home, are very good. This is best demonstrated by the high standards of reading achieved across the school, which are due in no small part to the regular support to extend pupils' reading skills both in regular homework and in the generally high quality support provided by parent volunteers in school. The headteacher also acknowledges the benefit of extra classroom helpers in freeing teachers for more specific teaching roles. Standards in other subjects like swimming, science and food technology also benefit from this additional support.

47. The family atmosphere of the school is made possible through the close and supportive relationships with all the families involved and through the warm welcome they receive. Parents feel that the school is very approachable and nearly all feel that it works very closely with parents. There is a very active PTA that arranges regular and frequent social events that are often very successful fund-raisers. Generous financial support has enabled the school to improve its resources, particularly the adventure play equipment for the younger infants, and educational resources for the numeracy hours, as well as support for clubs and teams.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The strength of management at St Wulstan's school was summed up by a parent at the meeting with the Registered inspector; "*Familiarity breeds respect*". The headteacher and most staff have been at the school for many years and together they have developed a pattern of management that builds on personal strengths and leads to considerable success. The evidence for this is to be found in above average standards, effective teaching and learning, very good standards of literacy and good numeracy standards, and a broad curriculum that provides interesting experiences for pupils. Governors serve the school well and with the exception of a few minor omissions in their annual report to parents, and the fact that in some pupil reports last year there was no specific reporting of achievements in information technology, meet their statutory responsibilities. Parents view the school as successful, popular and very well led.

49. In 1997 the quality of management was judged to be good overall, though there were three key issues that related to the way the school was run:

- Refine the school development plan so that it can be used to ensure that decisions and actions lead to improvement.
- Redistribute management responsibilities amongst the staff so that each has a fair workload.
- Devise more effective ways to check the strengths and shortcomings of standards, teaching and the curriculum.

50. Today, the school development plan is much improved and is used well to focus action and decisions to bring benefit for the pupils. In addition, management tasks are more evenly spread across the staff, though ways to monitor the effectiveness of the school are still rather informal and job descriptions are in need of updating to reflect agreed responsibilities. Since the action plan from the last inspection is only in its third year of completion, some issues remain. The school has identified the development of monitoring and evaluation work as part of performance review as a key priority for this year.

51. The visitor to St Wulstan's school is struck immediately by the hard working atmosphere, the friendly welcome and the happy, family ethos of the school that puts children at its heart. The school's Roman Catholic heritage pervades all aspects of school life, values shine through and its aims are very well pursued. The hard work and good standards are not achieved at the expense of the all-round development of the pupils. The school places high value on enabling pupils to develop personal talents and ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all. Everyone works to ensure that the pupils are good people who are a pleasure to know. They are successful in this quest.

52. The headteacher leads the school by example and has considerable strengths in managing people effectively so that they give their personal best. He is popular and respected by staff, governors, parents and pupils alike and brings calm, considered management that adapts well to change and sets clear educational direction. The partnership between the deputy head and the headteacher is good and together they have good insights into the work of the school. Other staff work hard and they manage their subjects successfully, although few have had the time or opportunity to observe teaching and learning in other classes to enable a more detailed understanding of quality and standards throughout the school. There is a good team spirit in school and everyone is committed to the same end, the best education and interests of the pupils.

53. The governors support the school's work well and are able to give good advice because of their individual experience. Many have seen their own children through the school and hold very high regard for the quality of education provided. They are very much in touch with the parents and use feedback to help gauge how well the school is performing. Their oversight of the finances and management of the budget are very good. Monitoring of the curriculum is undertaken by personal visits, the governors responsible for special educational needs maintain very close links. The Governing Body is currently looking to set targets for the headteacher as part of the new system of school performance and review soon to be introduced following a government initiative. They consider how well the school is doing in progressing priorities by looking at a range of data and the termly reports provided by the headteacher. Governors are increasingly asking the key questions: "*What do we need to improve? Why do we need to do this? What is the best way of doing it? How will we know we have succeeded?*" and "*What will be the impact on standards and teaching?*". In this way, they are growing well as critical friends of the school and they uphold the principles of *best value* effectively.

54. Many people in school have known each other for a long time. For this reason, management has evolved, and evolved well, over a number of years. In general, people know what is happening in school and are alert to some of the main issues it faces. Means of monitoring the successes and shortcomings of the school work at the personal level, but they lack the structure and formality to ensure maximum rigour and impact. Additionally, ways to evaluate and follow up what has been discovered are not always systematic enough. Accordingly, some ways to achieve the school's targets are not as focused as well as they might be and there is insufficient analysis of what works best in the school and why. School evaluation systems are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the pursuit of standards that will meet or exceed those of similar schools will be realised sooner rather than later.

55. Money-wise, the school has secure and effective ways of planning, managing and controlling the budget. Decisions are costed thoroughly, additional funding, for example that for pupils with special educational needs, is spent in the way intended, and most other resources are put to good use. The exception is time. The school day does not always follow the timetable, schedule or the clock as it should. There are no shortages of staff or learning resources and, although space is tight, the ongoing building work will result in more roomy accommodation. The school appropriately has library development and increased use of information and communications technology as two of its current development priorities.

56. The pupils enjoy coming to a school that is well run and where they get a good deal. Parents are pleased that their children come to the school, and give many good reasons for this. They all are rewarded by the good value that the school gives for the relatively low income it receives.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Raising standards of attainment will be no easy matter for this already successful school. Teaching is good and the curriculum provides a good range of experiences for pupils to learn. The resources available to the school are not at the level of many other primary schools nationally. In pursuit of best value the head and governors have ensured that resources are well targeted to give maximum advantage to the quality of education provided, and this results in the good standards achieved. Progress will need to be better still if attainment is to be at the highest level nationally and above that of similar schools. With this in mind the school should:

i Extend monitoring and evaluation practices so that:

more staff have the necessary skills, time and opportunity to undertake classroom observations to check on quality and standards in the subjects they co-ordinate so that they can play a full part in school improvement planning and action, the information gathered and analyses of findings are used to check that the projected school targets are on schedule to be met or exceeded.

(The above key issue can be found in the following paragraphs: 5, 6, 10, 17, 24, 50, 52, 54, 81, 82, 91, 98, 115, 126, 127, 139.)

ii Review the organisation of the curriculum to:

ensure that specified time allocations for subjects are met in practice,
give sufficient time for pupils to learn in reasonable depth across the range of foundation subjects;
ensure that lessons start and finish according to the timetable;
enable the same opportunities for all pupils.

(The above key issue can be found in the following paragraphs: 8, 20, 24, 26, 41, 55, 78, 106, 108, 109, 114, 132.)

iii Improve the consistency of lesson planning and assessment to:

ensure that all lesson plans have clear and detailed objectives for the range of pupils in the class, especially high attainers;
set clear targets for pupils and clear outcomes for lessons based on accurate assessment of what pupils have already achieved;
ensure that marking not only recognises effort but shows pupils clearly how work may be improved;
review the quality and impact of planning and assessment through regular and systematic monitoring.

(The above key issue can be found in the following paragraphs: 5, 10, 16, 21, 25, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 45, 58, 79, 81, 91, 96, 104, 120,138.)

Although not identified as separate issues, in preparing their action plan, the governing body should also pay attention to the following:

tracking what pupils miss out on when they are withdrawn for additional basic skills support;
extending the range of resources available in the school library;
making sure that the annual written report on individual pupil achievements and the governors' annual report to parents meets legal requirements.

(These can be found in paragraphs: 26, 48, 78.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	34	44	22	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	204
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	24

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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	13	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	13
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	27	27	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (90)	96 (93)	93 (87)
	National	79 (80)	83 (81)	86 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	15
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	27	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (97)	100 (97)	100 (97)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	12	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (81)	90 (81)	90 (78)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (81)	90 (81)	90 (78)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	4
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	171
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	1	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White		
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.9
Average class size	29.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	303 120
Total expenditure	302 810
Expenditure per pupil	1 463
Balance brought forward from previous year	5 634
Balance carried forward to next year	5 944

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	204
Number of questionnaires returned	167

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	31	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	63	35	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	72	26	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	42	5	0	0
The teaching is good.	74	25	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	43	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	19	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	58	32	8	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	78	20	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	27	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	31	10	2	4

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

57. In 1997, when the school was last inspected, provision for the under-fives was reported as being unsatisfactory. Through concerted efforts of teaching staff and management, good progress has been made in making improvements and today provision is good. An effective programme of professional development has resulted in teaching now being very firmly focused on the learning needs of children under five and ensuring that a balanced curriculum is in place that meets all of the requirements of the Desirable Learning Outcomes. Good emphasis is given to ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to manage appropriate aspects of their own learning and grow in independence as a result. In line with the rest of the school there is still room for improving lesson plans so that the objectives for learning are more precise and take account of the range of children's learning needs.

58. At the time of the last inspection there was above average attainment on entry. The intake has changed and inspection findings, confirmed by the school's own baseline assessment, shows a broadly average intake. Children achieve good levels of learning in all of the Desirable Learning Outcomes that are the basis of their preparation for the National Curriculum programmes of study. Through the firm foundation across all areas of experience children make good progress and a good start to their school lives.

59. At the time of the inspection there were 16 children who were below the age of five in the reception class. They were all admitted to school at the beginning of the school year in which they become five years of age. Children visit school for one afternoon every week in the term before they start school. They and their parents are provided with very helpful pre-school packs to work on at home. This supports them very well in settling into school quickly. As the activities in the packs are based around the use of a book it particularly helps the children to find their way around a reading book, and means that they are well prepared for enjoying books when they actually start school.

Personal and social development

60. Children enter school with good personal and social skills and make good progress in developing these skills. By the time they are five standards are above those expected. They come into a warm and welcoming environment where they are well supported by a teacher and support staff who all work as a team. This gives the children good role models to follow, and enables them to settle quickly and effectively into school life. They act sensibly when they come into school at the beginning of the day and show good measures of independence as they take coats and hats off in the cloakroom area. They give empathetic support to one another if it is needed as they follow the pattern of adult support being given to them. Children develop co-operative skills capably in lessons as they work in both large and small groups. For example, they take turns to be conductors in a music lesson leading the whole group whilst they work equally well as a group of witches when they excitedly make spells in order to reinforce their understanding of using the letter sound "w" accurately. Through the effective carousel arrangement of activities all children have the opportunity to develop their personal and social skills in this way. Behaviour is good and the equally good attitudes to learning that are well founded enhance their personal development.

61. The quality of teaching personal and social development is consistently good. Teacher and support staff work as a team and so provide the vital element of consistency in approach to developing these skills. They have good relationships with one another, which provides a good role model for the children. Lesson planning tends to take a broad brush approach to highlighting the range of activities rather than specific skills to be promoted for the range of pupils. The assessment in place to support children's personal development is good but could tie in better to guiding planning. Support, particularly for children with any form of special educational needs, is given very sensitively and also gives great encouragement to children to support one another, which they do readily and equally sensitively. Appropriate attention is given to personal hygiene when children wear protective clothing for creative activities and are reminded to wash their hands when they should do so.

Language and literacy

62. Children make good progress in language and literacy skills and achieve well above the expectations for their age. They listen with care to instructions and make perceptive contributions to discussions so that speaking and listening skills are combined to good effect. They show understanding of the structure of words as a group of them skilfully build words. Whilst in another group some sequence a story in following the whole-class discussion, whilst a third group make imaginative stories that they then share with other children at the end of the lesson. They write with good measures of control as they add to the writing of adults. They show an enjoyment of books as well as a good level of understanding of pages needing to be read in an order if they are to make sense and give pleasure.

63. The teaching of language and literacy is good. The teacher plans very thoroughly and includes support staff in the process so that all adults are aware of what they need to do in order to help the children to make good progress. Work is well structured and so children are given a good start to their activities because they know what is expected of them. There is pleasure and enjoyment of work in language and literacy that supports children well in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Mathematical development

64. Children's learning in mathematics is good and their acquisition of numeracy skills is above average for their age. They understand what it means to work with numbers from zero to ten through taking part in a range of relevant activities. They delight in being able to help one another as a whole group when they move numbers around on a number rhyme board to show order of numbers. Skills are then extended as they move on two numbers and reverse the process with real confidence and accuracy. They use accurate mathematical language to explain what they are doing. They then confirm their understanding as they work in groups playing number snap with speedy reactions, and use a number line with good skills. Their learning is enhanced by the sheer enjoyment that they show as they join in singing 'ten fat sausages' with actions that clearly indicates their understanding of numbers.

65. Teaching of mathematics is good. Lessons are thoroughly planned and well organised with relevant and enjoyable activities making learning real but fun. Resources are often 'home made' in order to support their relevance and are carefully used by teacher and support staff. They ask open ended questions of the children in different situations so that the children are always having to think purposefully for themselves.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Baseline assessment on entry to school shows that this is the area of learning

where children have least competency. Their learning is good because they have appropriate opportunities to participate in a wide variety of activities in order to develop their skills. Their attainment is average by the age of five. When they are making candle holders with clay they begin to understand effectively the change that takes place in materials. They use the computer with good measures of skill as they work in small groups in a carousel arrangement to dress and undress a teddy bear in very accurate sequential order. They understand the click and drag operation of the computer and have good knowledge of the computer being able to respond to commands. They build imaginative objects when using constructional kits and assemble and take them apart with accuracy. They talk about their immediate world with confidence as they begin their time together on the carpet at the beginning of the day.

67. Teaching is good. The teacher and support staff provide a good range of opportunities to encourage children to find out about their world through providing well-structured activities every school day. They work as a team to enrich children's experiences and knowledge with particular and appropriate emphasis, on making events arise from real life.

Creative development

68. Children make good progress in learning and achieve the expected level by the time they are five. They regularly have opportunities to experiment with paint and all are involved in making art that shows good imagination and self-expression. The teacher and support staff show that they value their efforts by displaying it well. This helps to create a stimulating learning environment that the children have made a significant contribution towards providing. They enjoy making actions to their songs as they also develop their mathematical skills. They show great pleasure in singing and making their own compositions of songs in music-making time together and show they are able to do this capably. Teaching is good. The carousel arrangement for most of these activities means that all pupils are able to take part in them over a school week and derive a great deal of pleasure from them as well as them giving good learning opportunities. When they are working as a whole group the teacher organises equally well so that all can take part.

Physical development

69. The quality of learning is good and children achieve the standards expected by the time they are five. Children use the much improved outside area to develop their gross motor skills when it is possible for them to do so. They work carefully in the hall with other children in the Reception class as they control their bodies and show understanding about safety rules. They develop their finer skills as they use the mouse on the computer with good levels of accuracy. They move around the classroom very sensibly and pay good attention to one another's actions.

70. Teaching is good. Lessons are organised effectively. Resources are well prepared. Staff are well deployed so that maximum levels of support can be given to children whilst also ensuring that they are able to make judgements for themselves that help them to become confident about their own abilities.

71. It is because there is such consistently good teaching in all of the areas of learning that the learning is so good. The children are confident and well prepared for all of their subsequent learning when they leave the Reception class.

ENGLISH

72. Standards in English have improved since the last inspection. They were judged to

be average and are now above average across the school with well above average attainment in Year 2 and well above average attainment in listening and reading in both key stages. The attainment of boys has been raised at Key Stage 2 and there is now good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The very good quality of the teaching of reading has been maintained and contributes significantly to the high standards achieved in the school. The library is a useful, well-organised facility and there are appropriate plans to develop it further. Pupils in all classes now have much wider experiences of reading and writing. There have been good improvements in the provision for English teaching and learning since the last inspection.

73. The results of the 1999 National Tests for seven-year-olds in reading were well above the national average and well above average for similar schools. Attainment in writing was well above the national average, and above average when compared with similar schools. The results of the 1999 National Tests for eleven-year-olds in English were above the national average. However in comparison to the standards achieved in similar schools the results are only average.

74. The pattern of overall pupil performance has been consistent over the last three years in both key stages. At Key Stage 1 both boys and girls achieved well above the national average in English. At Key Stage 2 there is a pattern over the last three years for boys to attain more highly than girls but in 1999 the situation was reversed. The school is not aware of an explanation for this. The inspection did not reveal any difference in the attainment between boys and girls in either key stage.

75. Attainment in speaking and listening is well above average at the end of Key Stage 1. Year 2 pupils listen attentively, and respond eagerly and confidently in class discussions. Many share their ideas using expressive vocabulary and a good range of complex sentences. In a lesson about describing characters, pupils suggested words such as 'disgraceful, despicable, grumpy, and spiteful' to describe an unpleasant person. Attainment in reading is also well above average at the end of this key stage. Almost all pupils read their texts with accuracy and understanding. They are able to use their phonic knowledge, graphics and pictures to help them tackle unfamiliar words. Most pupils are able to discuss the settings of stories and offer opinions about their favourite characters with ease. At the end of Key Stage 1 attainment in writing is above average. When writing about a character of their choice, language such as 'Her lips were dainty and delicate' was used by one pupil and another wrote, '....she has a fringe that curls round at the ends'. Most pupils can write independently core vocabulary that they use to produce interesting sentences with a good level of accuracy. They use phonic strategies well in attempting more difficult spellings. They write for a variety of purposes in subjects such as science and present their work in many different ways. A good handwriting style has been established well and work is usually presented neatly.

76. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are very good listeners and confident speakers. Attainment is above average. Most pupils use standard English very well to convey their ideas, and they show a high level of sensitivity to ideas expressed, by others. Generally they offer thoughtful contributions to class discussions. When discussing genre Year 6 pupils expressed their views and were able to say why they held their particular view. Attainment in reading is well above average. Pupils can read with fluency and very good understanding. They are able to select books independently for interest and enjoyment and they know how to find information books in the library. Opportunities are provided in school for researching information independently in other subjects such as history. Attainment in writing is above average. At the end of Key Stage 2 almost all pupils can organise their thoughts logically, use punctuation appropriately and write neatly using a number of

different styles. They show the ability to choose words and phrases carefully to convey powerful images. They know how to use literary devices such as rhetorical questions, repetition, and sentence length to create a particular impact upon the reader. There was little evidence of writing for a wide variety of real purposes and therefore a range of different audiences.

77. In Key Stage, progress in English is good overall. Very good arrangements provide for consistent progression in the acquisition of basic reading skills for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and children from travelling backgrounds make good progress. A large number of volunteer helpers make a very valuable contribution to supporting pupils with their reading development. The timing of this extra help, though, needs reviewing to ensure that pupils are not missing out on other important lessons. Good whole class opportunities are provided in literacy hours for pupils to improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through activities led by their teacher. In one lesson, pupils discussed the story titled "We're Going on a Bear Hunt". They demonstrated their understanding of how the story was sequenced and how the text could help them with their reading expression. They were beginning to respond appropriately to exclamation marks and large print for example as they read the story.

78. Progress in English is also good across Key Stage 2. The very high standards in listening and reading are consistently maintained in each year group. Progress in understanding complex texts is well supported in literacy hours. These lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to share their views of a variety of texts. Year 5 pupils shared at length their views about "the boy who cried wolf". Good progress in reading skills is also made as the Year 4 class, led by their teacher, tackle challenging vocabulary such as ominous and senile. Generally pupils make good progress in the development of writing skills in English and in other subject areas. Opportunities to plan and structure longer pieces of writing are limited which restricts the progress that higher attaining pupils can make in the development of their writing skills.

79. Throughout the school pupils have very positive attitudes to English. In lessons they are very well motivated and there is a very high standard of behaviour. They contribute ideas openly, understand that others may have a different view and show respect for the efforts of others. At both key stages pupils are very attentive, they settle down to their tasks quickly, and have very good relationships with staff and each other.

80. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The Literacy Hour has been very successfully introduced into each class and the positive impact on pupils' development is clearly evident. Teachers choose texts, which appeal to pupils and provide a good stimulus for learning. Lessons are well organised, well delivered and pupils are very well managed. The majority of class and group work plans identify learning objectives and show sound structure and development of lessons. In the most successful lessons, teachers' plans outline challenging learning objectives which are shared clearly with pupils so that each group of pupils knows clearly what their teacher expects them to achieve. Specific learning objectives are referred to appropriately throughout the lesson, and in interactions with pupils. Progress is also carefully reviewed at the end of the lesson with a clear focus on what pupils have learned so that informal assessments can be made. In some lessons higher attaining pupils are not made sufficiently aware of what is expected of them and there can be some loss of learning opportunity. Marking is not yet consistently used to confirm the key learning points and set realistic targets for individual pupils to improve further. There is a satisfactory school system for recording pupils' attainment in English but the tracking of progress is under-developed.

81. The introduction of the Literacy Hour has been well led. The strengths of the English teaching in the school and the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy have been dovetailed to move the quality of teaching and learning forward. The literacy lessons have been monitored and staff are well supported in their planning and delivery. Whole school monitoring now needs to use data on pupils' progress and performance so that the literacy planning for groups of pupils takes good account of what pupils have already learned. This is especially important as pupils move from Year 2 into Year 3 and up through each year of Key Stage 2. The systematic development of reading skills is very secure across the whole school and although speaking and writing skills are developed well in each class the progression of development year on year across Key Stage 2 is less secure. For instance, creative writing is not clearly time-tabled in every class and some of the good practices, such as drafting and pupils checking and improving their own work, are not followed consistently. The school has good capacity to address these issues. Realistic targets have been projected for end of Key Stage 2 results in national tests between now and 2002.

MATHEMATICS

82. Pupils at St Wulstan's school succeed well in mathematics. Standards are good and they consolidate and extend knowledge, skill and understanding at a good rate. This stands in good contrast to what was found in the 1997 inspection. At that time, standards were average, teaching, whilst satisfactory overall, showed a large proportion of unsatisfactory practice and many pupils bided time rather than made good progress. The picture was very mixed then; it is now much more uniform and improved.

83. Just how effective the teaching of mathematics is can be seen in comparing standards when the pupils start school and when they leave up to eight years later. The school's baseline data puts attainment in mathematics at the expected level in reception. The Key Stage 2 National Tests in 1999 showed attainment to be well above average and to stand well against the average found in similar schools. Pupils do not just build mathematical experience at the expected rate, they add to their store of knowledge, skill and understanding at a good pace overall. This analysis is equally true of all attainment groups, including pupils with special educational needs and the higher attainers.

84. During the three years from 1997, standards in the Key Stage 2 tests have mirrored the national improvement rate, and standards have always been above the national average. Whilst the pattern of attainment is pretty strong, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 has not exceeded the national percentage. Inspectors observed that in school, many more pupils than is expected attain average levels. This is what makes standards good in Key Stage 2, rather than the proportion achieving level 5. There has been steady improvement in this proportion during the last three years and managers are determined that even more pupils should strike this level.

85. At Key Stage 1, the 1999 overall standards bear good comparison with the national average and compare soundly with those in similar schools. Again, the proportion reaching the higher level (level 3) is average. The school has another challenge in Key Stage 1, namely to boost the proportion of pupils reaching level 2B or better, rather than 2C or better. In 1999 a below average proportion hit level 2B or above.

86. When compared against other subjects, pupils fare better in mathematics at Key Stage 2 than in English or science. It is the reverse in Key Stage 1, where the mathematics results are a little below those in reading, writing or science. There is mixed evidence of the attainment of boys and girls in the test results in both key stages. In 1999, Key Stage 1 boys achieved better results than girls, whereas in Key Stage 2 the girls outshone the boys

significantly. Over the last three years, there was very little difference in Key Stage 1 but, confusingly against 1999, the boys did much better than the girls in Key Stage 2! During the inspection there was very little evidence that boys or girls were doing better than the opposite sex. This is because, in lessons, all pupils work with the same levels of determination and interest and knowledge and skills advance at similar rates.

87. The school has set appropriate targets for mathematics in the last two years and has more than met them. For the future, the targets vary a little. This reflects what inspectors found in school. As in the recent past, the current Year 6 class are evidently achieving at an above average level because of the good proportion of pupils meeting the expected level. Year 5 show stronger patterns of attainment and many more are likely to reach level 5. The school's target for 2001 is the highest yet.

88. Teaching quality is good in mathematics throughout the school and this dictates the level of response from the pupils. Pupils learn at good rates because lessons are made interesting and motivating by teachers. There is particularly good focus on building basic skills of numeracy, though it is also evident that mathematics lessons are a good vehicle for developing literacy skills. This is because of the precision with which vocabulary is used by teachers and the opportunities pupils have to explain their thinking. Attainment in basic number, counting and arithmetic is good in all classes. Pupils solve problems accurately and the more regular practice established since the National Numeracy Strategy was launched is increasing the speed of calculation. In all, the school's strategy for numeracy is working well.

89. A key element in the work is to be found in the emphasis on problem solving, investigation and the application of mathematics. Pupils develop such skills early in their school career. In reception they are given every opportunity to talk about their learning and the emphasis on the process of solving a problem accelerates in Key Stage 1. This underscores the good level of understanding that the six and seven-year-old pupils have. In Key Stage 1, this platform of accomplishment is raised. Pupils explore different ways of solving the same problem; they say what they find straightforward and what is found difficult and they develop a good instinct for pattern to help them solve problems logically and accurately. Year 5 pupils were taxed considerably by a problem involving cutting a rectangle into half in order that it could be reassembled as a square. Many knew instinctively how to attempt the problem, but most found it hard to demonstrate their solution. The teacher treated the problem as something of a cliff-hanger, and moved on to the next step of the work. At the end of the lesson she returned to the original problem. In the meantime, several pupils had been thinking about the challenge as they completed other tasks. Several solved the problem the second time round. The sense of success and enjoyment could almost be cut with a knife!

90. This lesson is an example of just how good mathematics teaching can be at St Wulstan's school and how well pupils respond and learn. These strengths are attributable to good management that sets high standards at the head of its priorities. The influence of the co-ordinator as a Year 6 teacher is currently felt more in KS2 than KS1. This lesson also throws up something of a challenge for the school itself. The lesson was very good and resulted in high standards. Monitoring of teaching is rudimentary in that it is instinctive and informal, rather than rigorous and set against clear indicators to show the information to be found. The current structure does not adequately allow for such good teaching to be analysed, shared and celebrated through the school. Thus, the impreciseness of many objectives in planning and the marked absence of target setting in lessons go unrecorded and unanswered to any great degree.

91. Managers are determined to make continued improvement to mathematics. This report has identified where effort will bring best return. The track record of the school is good to date. There is every reason to believe that improvement at a good rate will continue.

SCIENCE

92. In the last inspection report the standards in science were average overall in both key stages. Standards have improved since then and are now above average at the end of both key stages.

93. 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 show well above average attainment. The results of National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments at Key Stage 2 show above average attainment. Inspection evidence shows above average attainment overall at the end of both key stages. Inspection evidence confirms that the above average attainment is particularly well sustained at the end of Key Stage 2 in Years 5 and 6. The evidence shows a good match between activities prepared and the range of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs. There has been a steady improvement in standards shown by the careful and comprehensive analysis of results made by the co-ordinator that needs to be shared more fully by all staff in order to continue to raise standards further.

94. As pupils move through the key stages they learn well. Their good learning is supported by all aspects of science being well covered in the curriculum. Although there was some discrepancy between the latest teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 1 and inspection findings this was not found to be significant. Teachers' assessment in science is now being well supported by new agreed assessment recording sheets. The school has given good attention to developing pupils' investigative skills since the last inspection. Currently there is good attention paid to learning being firmly based upon experimental and investigative science throughout both key stages. In Key Stage 1 pupils observe how quickly a bulb lights up when studying electricity whilst in Key Stage 2 equally good opportunities are given to a detailed study of rocks in Year 5, and consideration of environmental issues after a woodland walk in Year 6. Pupils make good progress in science year on year.

95. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2 with particular strengths in Years 5 and 6. Where teaching is best in both key stages teachers have clear understanding of the differing attainment levels of their pupils and provide activities that are interesting and exciting enough to ensure that they want to find out for themselves. The good range of activities provide challenge for high attaining pupils and stem from teachers' confidence which is rooted in their very secure subject knowledge as well as knowledge of their pupils' needs. For example, in a Year 1 class pupils made good gains of knowledge and understanding as they compared mains and battery provision of electricity because of the good resources available to them and the effective organisation of the group work. In a very good Year 5 class lesson there were very good resources provided for pupils to make comparisons about the permeability of rocks in their classification of materials. The teacher worked at a very good pace with pupils, asking open-ended questions that continually made pupils think about their findings. This was effectively brought together in a plenary session that extended learning opportunities for all pupils through shared findings. Where teaching is less effective, but still of good quality, there is less challenge given high attaining pupils to think for themselves and prepare their own recording formats for their findings.

96. There is a good range of opportunities created in which all pupils participate. The different forms of recording that they have to devise for themselves in the best activities increase their literacy skills effectively. The group work that is a regular form of learning in science is all encompassing as pupils' share their learning with one another regardless of their attainment levels. Their social skills are particularly well developed by their science work.

97. Resources for science are satisfactory and used well by both teachers and pupils as they give good measures of support to pupils' learning. This is because their provision is well monitored so that pupils can always have appropriate opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding through their effective use. The co-ordinator has made a very good analysis of results in national tests and comparisons between school performance and accuracy of assessments of pupils' learning. There has been a useful start made to planning being monitored by the co-ordinator as well. This gives the school a clear indication about what needs to be done in order to improve standards even further. There is, however, no system for the co-ordinator to share this information with all staff so that they are all making assessments that will help to improve standards even further. However, the school does have the capacity to improve standards even further as a result of the commitment of the co-ordinator, the quality of the teaching and the high interest level of the pupils.

ART

98. At the last inspection very few lessons were observed but standards were judged to be average at both key stages but with some below at Key Stage 2 based upon previous work seen and discussions with pupils. Standards have improved since that inspection so that pupils' learning is good across both key stages as a result of good teaching.

99. Standards in art are above what would be expected across both key stages. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress and are given opportunities to use a variety of media. The effective use of different art forms ensures a broad base of learning for pupils. There is effective use of mixed media of chalk and paint in a Year 2 class as pupils make a picture of the fire of London that reinforces their learning in history. This is made into an even more interesting piece of learning for them because pupils in Year 6 have made examples of pictures to share with them as stimulus for their learning. In Year 4 pupils' skills of observation are drawn out very successfully as they use the more restricted media of pencil only in their sketch books to make subtle and perceptive drawings of cellos and violins paying particularly good attention to size, line and shading in their drawings. At the end of Key Stage 2, many of the skills developed at an earlier stage in school are drawn together well. For example, as pupils study the work of famous artists such as Michelangelo and J. M. Turner in order to increase their knowledge and replicate some of the techniques and skills that these artists used in their work.

100. Boys and girls across both key stages have very good attitudes to work in art as they find it gives them good measures of pleasure and enjoyment. It is often possible for pupils of all levels of attainment to work to good standards in the subject and to have their skills effectively valued. In Year 2 they are keen to get going on their picture work because they want to meet the challenge of making their work as good as that of Year 6 pupils who have provided good examples for them of high standards of work. In Year 4 they show good measures of confidence as they build upon knowledge gained from previous learning about observing objects carefully.

101. Pupils are well taught across both key stages. Teachers give pupils plenty of variety

in both the materials that they have to use and in the tasks that they involve them in. Teachers also make the tasks more meaningful because they link them clearly to other areas of learning. In Year 4 the teacher has given them all the techniques that they need to be using such as using the pencil as the judgement of a height and length tool when they make observational drawings of the musical instruments being played in school. The pupils' skills are then extended by the expectation that they will shade in with subtlety with the restricted use of a pencil as their illustrative tool. Pupils at this key stage complete some of their art work in sketch books which supports pupils very well in understanding the need to make progress in their skills. The sketchbook is not used consistently throughout school in order to ensure continuity and progress in developing their skills appropriately.

102. All pupils are effectively involved in making art with a variety of resources. All pupils succeed in making some artwork valued enough for it to be effectively displayed either in their classrooms or in the central areas of the school. As so much of the work is linked to work in other subjects it does not only make it more meaningful but also supports developing understanding in other subjects. Examples of this are where pupils' literacy skills are successfully promoted in Key Stage 1 where pupils are well stimulated in extending their vocabulary as they study the fire of London. In Year 2 pupils' spiritual awareness is raised as they use Michelangelo's study of the Madonna as a stimulus for their own representation of Her. In consequence, pupils show high levels of creativity because of the good challenge in their tasks.

103. In class lessons the work is monitored well but because sketch books, or picture and design books that are used only in Year 2, are not used consistently throughout the school there is not enough attention paid to coherent assessment of the development of art skills. Although the satisfactory resources are used very effectively by teachers this lack of consistency in assessing progress means that pupils' achievements are not as fully linked into improving skills as they could be. The co-ordinator for art is aware of the need to improve this aspect, however, and so the capacity for improvement is judged to be good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. There was no report on design and technology at the time of the last inspection with no indication as to whether this was as a result of insufficient evidence. The small amount of work observed in design and technology in this inspection was supplemented by discussions with Year 2 and 6 pupils and scrutiny of a small sample of photographic evidence. These show that learning is satisfactory even though opportunities are limited because of the small amount of time given to the subject. It is blocked into periods of the school year and as a result there is no systematic build up of skills over time. Too little in-depth study is possible under current arrangements.

105. Progress is satisfactory across both key stages for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, as a result of the range of design and technology experiences that pupils are given over their whole time in school. There is too little opportunity given to revisit these experiences in the different key stages for learning to be better than satisfactory. Where learning is best in both key stages pupils make accurate decisions about which materials to use, as they become involved in the making processes. At Key Stage 1 this is the main focus of the subject. It is only at Key Stage 2 that the design process comes before the making in order to achieve successful end products. The skills of cutting and joining after marking out are practised at Key Stage 1 but with limited opportunity to repeat them at Key Stage 2. Pupils test their capabilities after deciding how to make a water clock in Year 1 and become excited about what they have done but then the skills learnt in completing this task successfully are not revisited for too long a period of

time. At Key Stage 2 in Year 6 pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunity given to design, make and test a rocket but this and any similar exercise is not revisited even though the skills of assembly and disassembly have been satisfactorily covered. There are missed opportunities to reinforce learning through a systematic programme of work being put into place.

106. Pupils across both key stages are excited by the subject. When they are given learning opportunities to design and make objects they take them up with good attitudes and sustained concentration. Girls and boys enjoy the creative element of design and making a product, whether it be a tapestry, such as the one being made for the chapel by older pupils, or joining together plastic bottles to make a water clock that water will flow through successfully in Year 1.

107. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Where it is best there is thorough planning. Clear instructions are given. There is good pace to teaching as perceptive interventions are made in order to move pupils on in their learning. There is too little time or opportunity available to teachers to extend pupils' design and technology skills beyond a satisfactory level.

108. All pupils have access to the subject and all strands are taught throughout the whole school with different emphases given in different year groups and key stages. For example, although food technology is not ignored completely at Key Stage 2 it is mainly covered more fully in Key Stage 1 classes. This restricts the progression made by pupils as part of a continuous process.

109. Although there is ongoing monitoring of learning in lessons there is no formal assessment in place. There is a lack of liaison between the key stages as two co-ordinators are involved in developing the subject, one for each key stage. A clearer vision about how to raise standards is needed by both co-ordinators if standards are to be successfully improved. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory for raised standards to be achieved.

GEOGRAPHY

110. Standards, teaching and learning in geography are as expected though they could all be stronger, as other subjects show.

111. At the time of the previous inspection the situation was similar, though some work was not taxing enough for the higher attainers and sometimes too demanding for lower attainers. Since 1997 the school has made sound progress in improving provision for geography and the work is now matched effectively to the needs of the different groups within all classes.

112. Standards are satisfactory at the end of both key stages and pupils build knowledge and skills at the expected rate through the school. Pupils' awareness of places increases soundly as they grow older. In Key Stage 1, pupils learn more about the places around the school and their homes. They also begin to understand that not every place is the same. In Key Stage 2 pupils' knowledge and skill is firmly rooted and they make appropriate comparisons of the similarities and differences between places, peoples and physical features. They know where important cities, rivers and other features are to be found on the map of the British Isles and relate this knowledge soundly to other places in the world.

113. It is, however, evident that the level of knowledge, skill and understanding in geography is not as strong as for other subjects. Geography is planned with history and yet it is history that has the upper hand. The examination of pupils' work shows more coverage, more depth and more work completed in history than geography in virtually every class. This ought not to be the case, as the pupils are the same, their enthusiasm for the subject is good and they enjoy learning. Opportunities to expand their geographical knowledge are lost unnecessarily.

114. Teaching quality is satisfactory and results in sound learning. In many ways, teaching is ordinary in geography, rather than special as in most other subjects. The subject co-ordinator understands these shortcomings and is determined to bring about improvement. She has good ideas for the strengthening of geography in relation to other subjects. The impact of her innovations on teaching, standards and the curriculum will require close monitoring for effectiveness. At present, structures and opportunity for formal monitoring are missing. The current status of geography is firm indication of why these things form a key issue of the inspection.

HISTORY

115. History is a favourite of staff and pupils alike. There is better determination to teach history than its pair, geography. The result is good standards, teaching and learning and a well-balanced curriculum that give pupils the necessary opportunities not just to learn fact, but to enquire, research and discover things for themselves.

116. The previous inspection judged history to be taught soundly and standards to be average. There has been good improvement since that time and today, standards are good, teaching quality is a strength and the rate of learning is brisk. History is in better shape today than it was three years ago.

117. Pupils enjoy history lessons that are stimulating and motivating. The visitor to school sees history lessons that include direct teaching of information but also ample chances for pupils to take charge of their own learning. Thus, Year 2 pupils are keen to investigate the things from the past that another pupil brought from home. They are able to say how these things differ from what they have at home today, though one or two of the artefacts are unfamiliar and provide a good degree of challenge in the process of identification. Key Stage 2 pupils are as likely to use facsimiles of original documents, eye-witness accounts and computers to find out about the past as they are to be told facts by the teacher. This blend of direct teaching and original research is effective in building not just knowledge and skills but understanding too.

118. History is used well to advance basic skills of literacy. There is some good writing in pupils' history books, often of different forms and it is generally presented neatly and spelled and punctuated well.

119. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Lessons are well planned on the whole, though the identification in planning of precisely what is to be learned is not as consistent as it might be and teachers rarely set and share targets for an individual's learning. In other respects, teachers teach well and the lessons are interesting for pupils, who respond by working hard, producing a good amount and building skills and knowledge well. Behaviour is good and relationships are a particular strength.

120. The management of history is effective, though what works best and what could be improved could be checked more fully. In all, history is a strength of the school.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards, the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum for information technology have all been boosted since the school took recent delivery of more computers linked to the internet. The school promotes information technology across the curriculum, and pupils' information and communication technology skills are well advanced. Compared to the previous inspection, the subject has improved greatly. In 1997 the work was judged to be less demanding than in other schools and that the resulting standards were satisfactory.

122. Today, standards in information technology are good by the age of eleven. Many pupils have little experience of computer use when they start school, but because the curriculum is well structured, they are given good opportunities to build skills and knowledge at a good rate. By the age of seven, standards have improved well and reach the expected level. The firm foundation built in Key Stage 1 is extended in Key Stage 2 so that when pupils leave school, they take skills and knowledge with them that will stand them in good stead at secondary school.

123. There are very few lessons in information technology as such. Instead, the work is integrated into that for other subjects. There is strong evidence that this does not do a disservice to information technology as it extends opportunities to use information technology resources as a tool of communication. Pupils learn much about computers, their power and use, through researching into history, using the word processor to produce well-written text of different types for the project on irrigation in Guatemala, for example. In this, the Year 6 pupils learnt that computers can control hydraulic rams to open and close flood gates. They modelled this using resources of very good calibre. This type of project builds many strengths in the pupils, not least their geography, information technology and design and technology skills and knowledge; also serves their social, moral and cultural development well.

124. Teaching quality is good in both key stages, though the identification of objectives for learning, as opposed teaching, in planning is inconsistent and few targets are set, shared or evaluated in lessons. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of information technology are good and the subject is used well to encourage practice and consolidation in the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Because the approach to the subject is so successful, the quality and rate of learning is good too. Pupils are heavily involved and motivated towards the work. It is clear that boys and girls are equally keen and that their level of attainment does not differ substantially. The pupils' personal development is encouraged well because teachers expect them to work independently and to take increasing responsibility for their own work as they grow older. The pupils have no difficulty in doing this and show a maturity in the work that is beyond that found in most schools.

125. These strengths are the direct result of effective management. The co-ordinator has been successful in bidding for new resources and the school is adding well specified machines gradually. Teachers have improved documentary support for the work compared to 1997 and the co-ordinator advises, leads and supports them personally as required. There is little direct monitoring of the work in information and communications technology and so all of its strengths and shortcomings are not easily identified. In addition, ways to assess how well the pupils are doing are not as well developed as in some other subjects.

126. The school is faced with a number of challenges in information and communications technology as it adds to its stock of resources. All evidence suggests that it will tackle these successfully, particularly when the improved structure for monitoring standards, teaching and the curriculum are introduced, as required by the current key issue. This will give added focus to the work of improvement.

MUSIC

127. Standards were found to be above average and progress good in both key stages at the last inspection. Through very worthwhile experiences, standards have been sustained at above average levels whilst teaching and learning are both very good across both key stages. This subject is a strength of the school.

128. Pupils in Reception appreciate that sounds need to be sequenced in order to create a tune as they use a selection of instruments to make music. They use previous understanding and knowledge to good effect as they take up the challenge in their task of putting different musical parts together in order to produce a pleasing performance. They not only act as instrumentalists but also as conductors at this very early stage of their learning and show confidence in making music together. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to build upon these skills throughout the school. The significant amount of very good learning that takes place at Key Stage 2 is well augmented by a good variety of instrumental work with specialist teachers as well as with the co-ordinator and class teachers.

129. All pupils have very good attitudes to learning in music. They show a great deal of enjoyment and pleasure in music-making with particularly good levels of concentration being shown in order to meet challenges that are given to them to perform. When working in Key Stage 1 the youngest pupils enjoy being the conductor as they use the hand puppet, Walter Wizard, to help the other pupils to make a sequenced tune as different pictures are pointed to by Walter. In consequence by the time that they have reached Year 6, music is so much a part of the majority of the pupils' school lives that they show enormous enjoyment in composing and performing mood music as they work with the subject co-ordinator.

130. The quality of teaching is very good across both key stages. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge, plan together successfully with the coordinator's input and are well supported by a detailed and comprehensive scheme of work. In consequence, music is taught with confidence by class teachers across both key stages and by instrumental teachers at Key Stage 2. Where teaching is best, teachers are good role models being as enthusiastic as their pupils about music making. They are very focused upon how pupils can improve their work. There are a wide and interesting range of activities prepared with excellent resourcing. Teachers give very good introductions and explanations to pupils in order to continually improve pupils skills' and understanding.

131. All pupils have good access to most of the musical activities of the school. Apart from the instrumental work in Key Stage 2 there is also a large choir formed from pupils in Year 5 and 6. The choir performs to a high standard and is regularly involved in public performances in school and other venues. The few pupils who are not involved however do not have an appropriate opportunity to sing joyfully with those who are in the choir, although they sing at other times, for example in assemblies

132. The subject is very effectively led by a teacher with expertise, who is able to call upon the expertise of other teachers to ensure there is a very successful learning experience for pupils that results in high standards. The involvement of a good number of instrumental teachers expands pupils' musical horizons and gives them added impetus to perform to a high standard. There is good on-going informal monitoring of progress. The co-ordinator has produced a particularly good composition observation sheet, although as yet this is not used consistently throughout the school. It is judged that there is very good capacity for the subject to improve even further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

133. On the basis of the limited number of lessons observed, progress in physical education is judged to be good in both key stages. In swimming, pupils make very good progress. The good provision for this subject has been maintained since the last inspection.

134. In a gymnastics lesson pupils in Year 1 confidently try out a number of ways of transferring their weight from one part of the body to another. They develop their ideas imaginatively using the large apparatus and try hard to link their actions smoothly. They hold balances with reasonable control and show good progress in the development of their skills. In a dance lesson in Year 4, girls and boys, showed good coordination as they explored ideas and feelings in response to a lively piece of music called 'Popcorn'. They worked creatively, demonstrating good skills, and a high level of sensitivity as they worked with their partners and in groups. They performed their routines with sustained, energetic activity.

135. Pupils understand and operate the safety rules well in physical education lessons.

136. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic and highly motivated to do well in this subject. They have a good sense of self-discipline and respond very quickly to teachers' instructions. All pupils show respect for the efforts and feelings of others. Attitudes are very good. Pupils co-operate well with their teachers, with each other, in group-work and in setting up apparatus. They treat equipment with care.

137. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have secure knowledge and show commitment to the subject. The best lessons are characterised by effective warm up activities, brisk pace, clear teaching points, opportunity to practise and improve technique, and some, one-to-one coaching interactions with pupils. Also, adequate time is provided for self-evaluation of performance to support pupils' understanding of their own development. Higher attaining pupils are not always given appropriate levels of challenge in lessons which can curtail progress. Resources are good quality, sufficient, stored conveniently and used very well.

138. Physical education enjoys enthusiastic leadership, although opportunities to observe the quality of provision and standards being achieved have largely been informal to-date. All staff have had "Top Sport" training and there are appropriate plans to incorporate this experience into a new policy and scheme of work. This guidance for teachers is needed to secure the appropriate development of performance, and assessment of achievement, in all areas of physical activity as pupils move up through the school. At present continuity and progression of skill development in swimming is much more secure than other areas of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs are provided for well in lessons but girls and boys do not have equal access to the development of netball and football skills. There is a shared commitment amongst staff to improving the delivery of the subject and there is good capacity to succeed. There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities and school teams. The take-up by pupils is excellent. These opportunities provided by staff and supported well by volunteers motivate pupils very successfully and contribute significantly to high standards.