

INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Welwyn Garden City

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117464

Headteacher: Mrs Brid Regan

Reporting inspector: Miss Cheryl Thompson
22822

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th November 2001

Inspection number: 192173

Full 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:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Woodhall Lane Welwyn Garden City Herts
Postcode:	AL7 3TF
Telephone number:	(01707) 324408
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Ainscough
Date of previous inspection:	24 th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22822	C Thompson	Registered inspector	English Music	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14347	J Lindsay	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8845	H Sumner	Team inspector	Geography History The Foundation Stage	
23566	J Iles	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
21245	W Lowe	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Equal opportunities Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Our Lady's is an average size primary school with 244 boys and girls aged three to eleven on roll including 38 children attending part time in the Nursery. Around four fifths of the pupils are Roman Catholic. The school serves an area of mixed housing and draws its pupils from a wide area which creates quite a high turnover of pupils. Fifty pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs which is about average and includes two pupils with a statement. Most pupils on this register are identified as having speech and communication difficulties. Seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 20 per cent. The great majority of pupils have their origins in the United Kingdom and are white but there are several pupils from minority ethnic groups. Twelve per cent of the pupils have English as an additional language with six of these at the early stages of acquiring English. Attainment on entry can vary considerably from year to year but is generally around the local authority average. There has been a high turnover of eight teaching staff in the past two years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school which serves its pupils and their parents well. The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction for the work of the school. The school has effective strategies for inclusion and ensuring equal opportunities for all. Teaching is very good overall, with a high proportion of excellent lessons observed. This year, Year 6 are achieving standards that are generally above those expected in English and science. Year 2 are achieving above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in other year groups are around average but vary, reflecting the high turnover of teachers which has affected pupils' progress. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards for eleven year olds are improving and likely to be above average in English and science by the end of this school year.
- Nursery and Reception children have a very good start to their education and make rapid progress.
- Overall, teaching is very good, with some excellent teaching for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils.
- The school provides very good pastoral care for its pupils which promotes very good relationships throughout.
- There is a very good range of activities outside lessons.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics are not high enough; the school must review its setting arrangements for pupils in Years 3 to 5.
- The headteacher has too many management responsibilities; there is no deputy headteacher.
- Some aspects in the provision for pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory.
- The school has good procedures for checking on pupils' progress and now needs to make better use of them. (The school has identified this as an area for improvement.)
- Library resources, both fiction and non-fiction, are poor. (The school has identified this as an area for improvement.)
- The quality of presentation of pupils' work is inconsistent.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997, since then improvement has been good. In spite of a high turnover of staff, the key issues raised by the last inspection have been resolved well. There has been an exceptional improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Improvement in standards achieved in National Curriculum tests, especially for eleven year olds, has been variable and can be tracked to changes of teaching staff. These changes, often mid-year, and the inability to recruit permanent staff have had an adverse effect on progress and standards.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The table above indicates a fluctuation in standards. Results in 2001 were lower because half of the pupils had special educational needs and although they achieved well in relation to their starting point, did not achieve the expected standards. Compared to all and similar schools, results in mathematics and science were well below average and similar to the lowest five per cent of schools in the country for science. Results in English were below the average of all schools and well below average compared to similar schools. Inspection evidence provides a more positive picture. This year's Year 6 have fewer pupils with special educational needs and are making very good progress in response to high quality teaching. Appropriate targets have been set for national test results and it is likely that standards in 2002 will be higher than in 2000. Standards achieved by seven year olds are generally average or above, but in 2001 dropped to below average in reading and writing and to average in mathematics as a result of a high turnover of teachers. Again, inspection evidence shows a better picture; most Year 2 pupils are achieving appropriately although a few more able pupils are not doing as well as they should. By the end of the school year, standards are likely to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics and around average for science. In response to high quality teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes, children in the Foundation Stage make rapid progress and by the time they start in Year 1 will achieve above the levels expected. In Years 3, 4 and 5, standards are around the level expected, but there are noticeable effects from the high turnover of teachers in the past two years. It is in these year groups that progress in mathematics is slowed by setting according to ability. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in many subjects, especially for Years 3 to 6. Inspection evidence shows that in Year 6 in English and science, standards are above average and in mathematics, average. In information and communication technology (ICT), seven and 11 year-olds are achieving standards expected for their age. Standards in history are above average; in design and technology, geography, music and physical education, standards are average for seven and 11 year-olds. The school has adopted a new handwriting scheme and it is beginning to have some effect; however standards of presentation of work are inconsistent and too many pupils use an inappropriate pencil/pen grip.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like coming to school, are interested in and enjoy their lessons. Where teaching is excellent, pupils have excellent attitudes; they try hard, persevere and are very reluctant to stop work at the end of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils know the school's 'Golden Rules' and keep to them. Pupils are helpful and considerate when working together in groups.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships are evident throughout the school. Pupils show a high level of respect for all adults. Pupils' personal development is very good; they show a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others.
Attendance	Satisfactory, but with a high number of unauthorised absences. These absences are attributable to family holidays taken in term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is very good and much improved since the last inspection. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff in the past two years and it is only since the start of this academic year that the school has again had a permanent staff. Already there is a strong team spirit with teachers working very well together to the benefit of all. The high quality of teaching is beginning to have a good impact on pupils' learning, especially in Year 6, where exceptional teaching is moving pupils on at a very good rate. Teachers of Nursery classes have a very good understanding of young children's needs and how they learn. Within explicitly planned activities, teachers and proficient classroom assistants develop children's vocabulary and social skills and promote good learning skills such as staying with a task until it is finished. Early literacy and numeracy skills are introduced in fun and meaningful situations. These skills are developed exceptionally well in the Reception class, where excellent teaching moves children on at a good rate. In Year 1, pupils learn at a good rate in response to lively, challenging and often inspirational teaching. These pupils are keen, interested and confident to 'have a go' at any work set them. In Year 2, teaching and learning are always satisfactory; however, there is not the challenge to move pupils on at a better rate. In Years 3, 4 and 5, teaching is frequently good and sometimes very good. However, pupils' learning ranges between satisfactory and good because it is in these year groups that the effect of a high turnover of staff is noticeable. Teachers are finding and having to 'plug' gaps in pupils' knowledge and remind them how to behave. English and literacy skills are taught well throughout. A feature is how confidently pupils apply their knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell. In lessons, mathematics and numeracy are taught well but grouping according to ability for Years 3 to 5 constrains progress. Teaching and learning are good for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Many of these pupils do exceptionally well and benefit from the support of the whole school. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are sound but more needs to be done to link the work done in small groups with classwork. Homework is used effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. For older pupils, the range is good, supplemented by a very good range of activities outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Targets on individual education plans are not specific enough. Work done in withdrawal groups does not always tie in with classwork.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils receive good support from the visiting teacher and benefit from the kindness and support of the whole school community. The school is responding well to the sudden influx of pupils at the early stages of learning English and staff are to undergo training in this area.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The strong Catholic ethos underpins the school's provision for spiritual, moral and social development. Teachers are good role models and set high expectations for pupils to show courtesy, good manners and respect for others. Provision for pupils' cultural development is sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good pastoral care for all its pupils. They feel confident and happy in school. The procedures for checking on and tracking pupils' progress are good and used appropriately. The school has identified the need to make even better use of these procedures in order to raise standards further.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents are supportive of the school and feel well-informed. They make a good contribution to their child's learning at home by hearing reading and supporting with homework. Teachers value the help given by parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides a very clear sense of purpose for the work of the school. Currently, there is no deputy, therefore the headteacher takes responsibility for all aspects of the school. Two senior teachers form the management team, co-ordinate several subjects and support the headteacher very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Under the direction of a newly-appointed and astute chairman, the governing body is developing its roles rapidly. Governors have a much clearer understanding of their task of acting as a 'critical friend' to the school but are not yet holding the school to account for the standards it achieves.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good, with further improvement planned. The school analyses results of National Curriculum and other tests. The outcomes are used to set targets for year groups and individuals. Teaching and pupils' learning are monitored by the headteacher and senior staff. Outcomes of this monitoring are used to help teachers improve their practice.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes good use of all the funding it receives.

The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily. Accommodation is good except for the toilets for older pupils and staff which are poor. Staffing is adequate for teaching the National Curriculum. Resources for teaching the National Curriculum are satisfactory except for the library where book provision is poor.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children love coming to school.• Teachers are helpful and approachable• The school expects children to work hard and do their best.• The school promotes good behaviour and teaches children right from wrong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few parents felt that there was too much homework and, conversely, a few felt there was not enough.• A few parents expressed concern that classes had to be split if a supply teacher could not be found.• A few parents felt their child could make quicker progress with reading.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments. The amount of homework given is in line with the school's homework policy. Homework is relevant and interesting and extends pupils' learning. Reading at home with parents is very beneficial and promotes good progress. In the school's area it is difficult to find supply teachers, especially at short notice, and the school has to cope as best it can if none are available. Many younger pupils, particularly the more able, could make better progress if they were not constrained by the perceived need to read the reading scheme books in a prescribed order.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Results show:

- Standards (based on average point scores) have declined since the last inspection.

Inspection evidence shows:

- Standards are improving and, in general, are likely to be above average by the end of the year for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils;
 - standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection;
 - by the end of the Foundation Stage standards are generally above expectations.
1. Results of National Curriculum tests at age 11 show standards have declined since the last inspection, although they picked up again in 2000 especially in science where, in response to specialist teaching, standards in science were above average. In 2001, standards in English were below the national average, in mathematics well below and in science very low and amongst the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. Compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards in English and mathematics were well below and in science, very low and amongst the lowest five per cent of schools. In the 2001 cohort of pupils there was a much higher than usual proportion (half) of pupils with special educational needs. There had also been a high turnover of staff.
 2. Inspection evidence shows that standards achieved by this year's Year 6 pupils are much improved. Pupils are achieving very well; standards are likely to be above average in English and science and around average for mathematics. The main reasons for this are:
 - In this year group, there are fewer pupils with special educational needs and more higher attaining pupils;
 - high quality teaching;
 - better assessment systems for checking on pupils' progress and setting targets.
 3. Results of National Curriculum tests and tasks for seven year olds give a picture, over time, of standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above average and, in 1998, well above average. Compared to similar schools, in 2000, standards were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. In 2001, standards fell dramatically to below the national average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. The main reason for this was that half of the year group were taught by a newly qualified teacher who was not coping, despite a great deal of support. This teacher left at Easter and was replaced with supply teachers. Compared to similar schools in 2001, standards in reading and writing were well below average and, in mathematics, below.
 4. Inspection evidence, again, shows an improved picture for this year's Year 2, although if teaching was more challenging, a few pupils could do even better. Most pupils are achieving reasonably well; standards in reading, writing and mathematics are likely to be above average by the end of Year 2. Standards in science are likely to be average at the end of Year 2. The main reasons for improvement this year are:
 - better systems for checking on pupils' progress and setting targets;
 - a secure teaching situation with satisfactory teaching.

5. Standards in the Foundation Stage are generally above average, mainly as a result of very good and excellent teaching. Children develop very positive attitudes to learning. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is around average.
6. In response to the key issues regarding assessment raised by the last inspection, the school put in place better systems of assessment. Around two years ago the school identified as a concern the disparity between the results achieved by pupils at age seven and at age 11. The school sought help from the local education authority and as a result, the headteacher has introduced good procedures for checking on pupils' progress and target setting. The school has also identified its gifted and talented pupils and has set challenging targets for achievement at the higher Level 3 for seven-year-olds and Level 5 for 11 year-olds. Unfortunately, staffing difficulties have slowed the progress and effect of these procedures. It is only since the school has had a settled staff that these procedures are beginning to 'bite' and show noticeable results. The targets set for Year 6 to achieve in National Curriculum tests in 2002 are appropriate for this group of pupils. However, the high quality of teaching for this class is moving them on at a good pace and some of the targets have already been reviewed and set higher.
7. Standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection, especially in ICT, history and geography. Standards in history are above average and in all other foundation subjects are in line with expectations.
8. The school endeavours to identify pupils with special educational needs as early in their school life as possible using both results of baseline assessment when pupils start school and teacher assessment. Individual education plans are written half-termly by the special educational needs co-ordinator in co-operation with class teachers and are based on the emerging needs and problems being experienced by the pupils. Targets are set and suggestions as to how they can be achieved are recorded. At the end of the period covered by the individual education plan a review of how successful it has been is carried out and a new one written. However, inspection evidence shows that reviews are not being carried out consistently throughout the school at the appropriate time, or where they are, the results are not always being recorded on the assessment record sheets provided. The school also needs to review its procedures for the writing of targets on individual education plans. A random scrutiny of these plans indicates that many targets are not specific enough for their achievement, or otherwise, to be easily measured. The school is very aware of its responsibility to ensure that gifted and talented pupils are challenged appropriately. It has identified the pupils who are in this category and is developing its procedures for catering to their needs. For example, it is providing lessons in Latin for them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths are:

- Very high level of respect for others leading to very good relationships;
- pupils like coming to school, are interested in and enjoy their lessons;
- behaviour is good and oppressive behaviour kept to a minimum;
- pupils are willing to take on responsible roles throughout the school.

The main area for improvement is:

- The school's comparatively high number of unauthorised absences.

9. Pupils have maintained the good attitudes to school life that were seen at the last inspection. All of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their child likes coming to school and this is reflected in the way pupils of all ages start the day with enthusiasm. They settle to work quickly and apply themselves to the task in hand. A very good example of this was in a Year 1 design and technology lesson where pupils had to try to identify different moveable joints in the classroom and corridor. They did this with great enjoyment as the teacher made the lesson fun for them. Some then went on to make their own hinges by joining two pieces of card together with tape or string. Pupils persevere even when tasks are challenging, such as in a Year 5 numeracy lesson where pupils were trying to use different operations to reach the total of 1000 without using the same digit twice. Pupils also participate eagerly in the very many extra-curricular activities available to them, such as the choir, recorder and sports clubs.

10. Standards of behaviour have also been maintained at good levels since the previous inspection and again, a great majority of parents believe that behaviour is good. There are occasional lapses of behaviour where pupils have to be reminded of acceptable behaviour and teachers manage these situations well. These lapses are mostly as a result of a high turnover of teaching staff for particular year groups. There have been no exclusions from the school during the last reported period. Strategies for dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour such as the use of warnings and the loss of Golden Time (special time set aside for pupils to choose their activities) are effective when used consistently by staff. Pupils are very aware of the behaviour policy within the school and the Golden Rules, such as “do be gentle and do be kind and helpful” are referred to frequently during the school day and are on display all around the building. Although there was some overly-boisterous behaviour seen in the playground, there was no evidence of intimidation or harassment such as racism or sexism and pupils are confident that any issues are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.
11. Very good relationships are evident throughout the school. Pupils show a high level of respect for all adults within the school and there is often a very good rapport between adults and pupils within the class that makes learning more effective. Pupils show a very good level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. This is emphasised by the use throughout the school of “value words” such as ‘friendliness’, ‘courage’ and ‘appreciation’. As a result, pupils who have recently joined the school from other countries have been made to feel very welcome and a part of the school community. Racist incidents or comments are extremely rare but the school does record any that occur and takes appropriate action. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all the activities provided by the school. Where the need is physical then they are encouraged to do what they can and given as much sensitive support as possible. They are fully accepted by their peers and the school has not needed to take positive action to strengthen their acceptance. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils with special educational needs are less likely to attend school than the other pupils.
12. The extent to which pupils show initiative and take responsibility is good; even from nursery age, pupils willingly help to tidy up or hand out resources. In the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes), teaching is excellent in the area of personal, social and emotional development. As a result, children soon learn to respect others and their feelings; they take care of equipment and thrive on the responsibilities given them for tidying up and helping. Older pupils help to set up for assembly, assist with some extra-curricular activities and take on roles such as house captain. The headteacher and her staff realise the importance of raising the self-esteem of pupils and enhancing personal development and so there is a weekly assembly at which pupils can perform perhaps a dance routine or a puppet show. Circle time (a time when pupils sit together and talk openly about issues/feelings) is a weekly activity for all classes and there is a school council that meets regularly with representatives from Year 1 onwards. The school is also involved in various charity collections throughout the year and distributes Harvest Festival goods to the local community. The residential trip for Year 6 pupils is regarded very highly by parents as an effective means to enhance the personal development of pupils.
13. Attendance has improved overall since the previous inspection and is satisfactory when compared to national figures. However, the unauthorised absence rate is higher than the average nationally and has been affected by the number of parents taking holidays during term time, some of whom do not seek permission before doing so, and others who take beyond the 10 days normally allowed. In addition, the school adds to its roll pupils who are expected from overseas but, in many cases, their entry to school is delayed and therefore the school’s absence statistics are adversely affected. Punctuality to school is generally satisfactory although there is a small minority of pupils who are consistently late and this has a negative impact on their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

The main strengths are:

- Good planning with clear statements of what they are expected to learn shared with pupils;

- Nursery and Reception teachers have an excellent understanding of how young children learn;
- brisk pace to lessons;
- literacy and numeracy skills are taught well.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Raising teachers' expectations for achievement by Year 2 pupils;
 - setting more measurable targets in IEPs and providing more opportunities for pupils to practise what they need to do to meet these targets;
 - setting higher expectations for presentation of work.
14. Overall, teaching is very good. Forty-two per cent of teaching was either very good or excellent which is a much higher percentage than is normally found. Forty per cent of teaching was good and 17 per cent satisfactory. The very best teaching and learning were observed in the Foundation Stage, Year 6 and Year 1. The above demonstrates a tremendous improvement since the last inspection when over a quarter of teaching observed was unsatisfactory.
 15. There has been a high turnover of staff in the past two years. When staff have left mid-year, it has been almost impossible to recruit permanent replacements, resulting in the need to employ several supply teachers. It is only from September, 2000 that the school had a permanent staff. Already, under clear guidance from the headteacher, there is a strong team spirit. The high quality of teaching is beginning to have a very positive impact on standards, especially in Year 6. Standards, as measured by National Curriculum tests, are likely to be much higher in English and science at the end of this school year. In Years 3 to 5, teaching is frequently good and sometimes very good; however, pupils' learning ranges from satisfactory to good. The main reason for this is that it is in these year groups that the effect of the turnover of teachers is most noticeable. There are gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding and teachers are having to deal with these before they can go on. Also, for some groups of pupils, the changes of teachers have had an unsettling effect on their behaviour and application to work. Teachers are working hard and succeeding to manage these pupils' uncharacteristic behaviour but in some lessons pupils do not yet work as hard as they should. In mathematics, the system of grouping Years 3 to 5 by ability means that in some groups there are more able Year 3 pupils and less able Year 5 pupils. Teaching for these groups was often good in lessons observed but the system of grouping and also changing the groups' teachers on a termly basis slows overall progress. The headteacher has recognised this grouping as an area to review.
 16. Teaching for Nursery children is mostly very good. Teaching for Reception children is always excellent. Nursery and Reception teachers have an excellent understanding of the needs of young children and how they learn. This knowledge underpins all planning and provision and is shared by highly proficient support staff. As a result, all staff work towards the same goals – to make learning interesting, fun and relevant and give many opportunities for practising and reinforcing newly-learned skills in a wide variety of structured situations. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are introduced and taught very well and provide solid foundations for future learning.
 17. Planning is good throughout the school, demonstrating significant improvement since the last inspection. A key feature of planning is the explicit learning objectives for all lessons which are shared with pupils. This feature is built on further when pupils are expected to (and do) evaluate their learning. Teachers' questions 'Have you learned what we set out to?' or 'Have we met our objective today?' are met with a very honest thumbs up or thumbs down. Older pupils are expected to explain (and do so confidently) what they found easy or difficult. Teachers then alter their planning for subsequent lessons accordingly. Teachers also use the outcomes of half-termly assessments to alter their planning to ensure any areas of difficulty are re-visited. Pupils' work is marked reasonably well and in accordance with the school's policy. Some teachers add more to their marking by adding praise and comments on what is needed to improve. Such comments are more helpful and meaningful to pupils.
 18. In classes, other than in Year 2, where they are satisfactory, teachers set very high expectations within a framework of very good relationships. There is a good level of challenge in work set so that more able pupils in particular make at least good progress. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils

were set the difficult task of writing their opinions, rather than facts, about the content of a photograph of bomb damage in World War II. When asked if they found the work easy, they replied 'No' to which their teacher replied 'Good' and proceeded to tease out the areas requiring more explanation. In Year 2, teaching is satisfactory overall, but teachers are not expecting enough of high-average and more able pupils. These pupils are not being extended by being expected to 'have a go' at more demanding or challenging work. The pace in Year 2 lessons is generally much more pedestrian than in other year groups, especially Year 1 where lessons fly along at a very brisk pace. Teaching and learning for Year 1 pupils is mostly very good with some excellent teaching observed in music where pupils behaved impeccably even though the lesson was such fun and they were so keen to play their instruments. In this lesson a very good balance between the teacher's input and pupils' practical experience ensured excellent learning; pupils learned the tune and words of a new song and put actions to it very competently. They also learned how to keep and demonstrate a steady beat, using a good range of percussion instruments. Excellent relationships and their teacher's very high expectations ensured that a great deal of incidental learning also took place, such as learning not to play an instrument until it is your turn as well as how to look and listen for cues for when to start playing. A very good balance between direct teaching and pupils' practical experiences was also noted in an excellent ICT lesson for Year 5/6. Here, pupils listened to their teacher's very good explanation of how to enter data into a spreadsheet and were then given time and support to practise. Suitable and knowledgeable intervention ensured that all pupils succeeded in their tasks. In the main, teachers make good use of ICT within their teaching. Word processing is used to particularly good effect for displaying pupils' work and making lessons relevant, as when creating newspaper headlines in a newspaper format.

19. Literacy skills are taught well throughout. The school follows the National Literacy Strategy and is also giving a strong and successful focus to guided writing. A crucial feature is teachers' good understanding of how to teach phonic strategies which results in younger pupils being very confident in their attempts at spelling and writing in order to express themselves rather than just using words they can spell easily. Older pupils use dictionary skills well to check their spellings or to look up meanings. The school has very recently introduced a new style of handwriting. The style is developing well but not enough attention is given to teaching a correct pencil grip and ensuring pupils use this grip. Presentation of work is a recognised area for improvement, especially in Years 3 to 5.
20. The school follows the National Numeracy Strategy. Numeracy skills are also taught well throughout. Progress is sound but slowed by the present system of grouping Years 3 to 5 according to ability. In Year 6, where pupils are taught together, progress is good and, in an excellent lesson, pupils made excellent progress in response to their teacher's good subject knowledge and well planned and highly interesting activities. In Year 2, teaching is satisfactory but lacks the challenge and pace found in the better lessons. In this year group, the more able pupils do not always make the progress they should.
21. Teaching and learning are good for pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school has coped very well with a sudden influx of pupils whose parents have come to live in the area as a result of a recruitment drive for nurses at local hospitals. Specialist teaching for those at an early stage of learning English is good, although the school is hoping for more support for recently-arrived children in the Nursery. For pupils whose English is good, teachers make sure that any new vocabulary, for example in science or mathematics, is introduced carefully and that pupils' understanding is checked on unobtrusively.
22. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. Currently, there is not enough overlap between the work done in small groups and classwork so that, in particular, not enough progress is made towards achieving literacy and numeracy targets. Targets in individual education plans are not easily measurable and not as helpful as they should be for class teachers to follow.
23. Teaching and learning for pupils who have physical disabilities are very good. The class teacher and support assistant manage the sensitive task of balancing support and encouraging

independence very well indeed. Very good support from the classroom assistant helps the pupils take advantage of the very good teaching in their class. Very good relationships within the class means that they feel secure, are confident and have very good self esteem. All pupils in this class benefit from the positive manner in which inclusion is managed. Pupils without physical disabilities have learned to respect the extra-special efforts their friends have to make to do the simplest of tasks and are very helpful and supportive.

24. Teaching and learning for pupils identified as gifted or talented are overall very good, although only satisfactory in Year 2, because there is not enough challenge in the teaching provided.
25. Homework is used well. It is relevant, interesting and extends learning. Teachers value the help parents give at home.

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

26. Overall the quality of the curriculum is good but there are weaknesses in the provision for pupils with special needs and the implementation of ICT in science.

Strengths are:

- English and mathematics well linked to planning in most subjects;
- good emphasis on practical, investigative work, particularly in science;
- Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) curriculum is very good.
- provision for PSHE is good;
- very good range of extra-curricular activities;
- good links with the community.

Areas for improvement are:

- aspects of the provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- insufficient support of the science curriculum through ICT.

27. The school provides a curriculum that is broad, balanced and relevant to the ages, needs and interests of the pupils. It includes all subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education and complies with all statutory requirements. The Foundation Stage curriculum follows national guidance and provides rich and relevant experiences to help young children achieve the nationally-prescribed early learning goals
28. At the time of the previous inspection there were some weaknesses in the curriculum. There was no whole-school curricular plan to meet the full requirements of the National Curriculum and there was a lack of consistency in the medium term planning. Policies did not exist for some subjects. Inspection evidence confirms that the school now adopts a whole-school planning format which is monitored by the headteacher and curriculum managers. Policies and schemes of work, based on national and local guidelines, have been written and adopted for all subjects within the framework of an effective whole-school plan. The implementation of these plans is checked on by the headteacher through a good programme of classroom observations. The governors have established a curriculum sub-group but do not systematically monitor and evaluate this aspect of the school's work. They are aware of this weakness and state the intention of taking a more active role in the future.
29. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented appropriately, although there are variations in the quality of teaching which affected pupils' performance from year to year. Inspection evidence shows that the current staff have good knowledge of the strategies and there is recent improvement in the quality of provision, especially in the juniors. The current Year 6 pupils are likely to achieve more highly and have benefited from the structures of the strategies and the current high quality of teaching. English and mathematics are linked to planning in other subjects. For example, there are many varied opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through subjects such as art and science. In Year 6 pupils discussed the style of

Andy Warhol's work and the artist's contribution to modern culture and, in science, the pupils explained the reasons for choosing specific apparatus in an investigation to separate mixtures of liquids and solids. In geography, pupils record information using graphs.

30. The science curriculum benefits from regular opportunities for pupils to work practically and research investigations independently. For example, in a science lesson in Year 4 pupils learned about the functions of parts of the body. Their investigations about the movement of the arm and the functions of muscles and joints were closely linked to work in mathematics on angles. Younger pupils in the infants develop scientific language which enables them to broaden their vocabulary and to understand the importance of planning and recording an investigation, for example, materials which are waterproof and those which are porous.
31. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and forms part of the science curriculum. Circle time is used to discuss issues which enable pupils to develop a sensitive understanding of the needs of others and to respect differences in opinions and cultures. The caring nature of the school supports the inclusion of all pupils in discussions very well and promotes values which prioritise trusting and respecting others. Pupils, therefore, demonstrate awareness of feelings and how their behaviour affects other people within and beyond the school. The school promotes the importance of citizenship well through opportunities for pupils to take part in activities within the community such as singing at the local shopping centre and visiting hospitals and homes for the elderly. The provision for social and moral development is good. School rules, founded on strong Christian principles, form a secure framework for behaviour. Pupils usually abide by these rules and consequently behaviour is good and there is a clear understanding of right and wrong. The school nurse supports the teaching of sex education and drugs awareness is taught by teachers. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by regular opportunities to take responsibility for routine duties such as preparing the hall for assembly. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Sixth Formers from the local secondary school regularly spend time in school to support the development of reading by hearing pupils read.
32. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports the curriculum reasonably well. Pupils use their word processing skills in many subjects to record their work for display or write 'formal' letters. In science, not enough use is made of ICT to support research, data handling and pupils' recording.
33. There is a very good range of clubs and activities for pupils to enjoy after school or at dinner times. The school purchases the services of instructors for music and sporting activities, for example, football, tennis and the school choir. Parents also make a very good contribution to this range of activities and run netball and Latin clubs. Pupils take good advantage of these opportunities which enhance their learning and social development.
34. The school is well supported by the community. There are very good links with the church and parish. The parish has leased the new computer suite and the family centre provides an alternative venue for school and community events. The local priest regularly visits the school and festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas are celebrated as important aspects of the Christian culture. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' spiritual development and provision in this aspect is good. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils from different cultures share the differences in the traditions and beliefs within their religions and heritage. Through history pupils learn about the past and how life has changed over time. However, there are not enough resources or planned opportunities for pupils to make links with schools in contrasting locations or to learn about the lives of people who live in other countries. Overall, the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good.
35. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have equal access to the full curriculum; however, there are weaknesses in the provision for pupils with special educational needs to enable them to benefit fully from their activities. While there are some good examples of teachers and assistants supporting pupils within lessons, the objectives for learning in individual education plans are not as tightly focused as they could be. Consequently pupils' progress is often slow. There are weaknesses in the assessment procedures which means

that targets and timescales for achievement are not precise enough. This is a weakness and a key issue for the school to address. Where inclusion is good, for example in Year 1, teachers ensure that pupils know what is expected of them in lessons. Pupils with hearing difficulties are taught signals which enable the pupils to participate with their friends. All staff in the school are aware of the need to ensure that special educational needs pupils do not become too dependent on support; they ensure that pupils are given opportunities to develop independence in the classroom and to take responsibility. The school fully complies with the provisions of the Code of Practice in the drawing up of statements and ensuring that their provisions are complied with. The support of outside agencies is well used by the school. For example, the educational psychologist recently held an open evening for parents and explained her role and gave them an opportunity to express their concerns. Training for classroom assistants has been provided by the Applecroft Centre that specialises in dyslexia. The Special Needs Advisory Service has recently carried out an audit of the school provision for special needs pupils.

36. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are provided for effectively. Specialist and specific teaching is provided for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Pupils and their families also benefit from the supportive nature of the whole school and parish community. The sudden influx of young pupils into the school with little English has been managed well. Teachers are keen to undergo training to develop their understanding and skills further to support pupils and the school is hoping to provide more specific support for the very youngest pupils in the Nursery classes.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths are:

- The very good procedures for child protection and the care and welfare of pupils;
- the way good behaviour is promoted and monitored;
- assessment has improved; good procedures are in place for tracking pupils' progress and setting challenging targets for achievement.

Areas for improvement are:

- Making even better use of the outcomes of assessment to help pupils make more rapid progress;
 - improving assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs who are not supported by outside agencies.
37. The support and welfare of pupils has been maintained as a significant strength of the school since the previous inspection. The procedures for child protection are very good. The school's policy is brief but covers all the important aspects. The headteacher is the designated coordinator and she ensures that her training in this important area is kept up to date. She also ensures that support staff and midday supervisors are aware of the policy and bring any concerns to her as soon as possible. A record of such concerns is kept and when necessary the appropriate agencies are notified.
38. The school has an appropriate number of staff trained in first aid and there are first aid boxes in every classroom as well as bags that are taken out to the playground at morning and lunch breaks. Each class has a medical information pack to notify staff of any particular medical needs of pupils.
39. Health and safety procedures are also very good. There are very regular fire drills and checks are made of the premises on a daily basis by the caretaker. Each term, the headteacher and members of the governors' premises committee carry out a risk assessment. The school is due to have a full Risk Assessment carried out by the local education authority in the near future. Appropriate care and attention has been paid to ensure the safe use of the Internet.
40. There are good procedures in place to monitor and improve attendance. The school has only recently instituted a system of telephoning the homes of absent pupils on the first day of absence and the effect of this policy has not yet shown through. In addition to this, regular checks of the registers are carried out by office staff and letters are sent home to parents if attendance or punctuality is giving cause for concern. If no improvement is seen, the education welfare officer is notified. To help improve attendance, the school gives each parent a copy of its attendance policy

that clearly states what constitutes an authorised absence and what parents should do to notify the school.

41. Staff at the school monitor and promote good behaviour well. The school's behaviour policy is clear and well understood by pupils. The rewards and consequences are used well to promote good behaviour. For example, if a pupil does not behave they are given a warning card so they have a physical reminder to behave. Any subsequent problems can lead to the loss of much cherished Golden Time. The strategies are positive however, as good behaviour can win this time back and pupils who behave well are given house points or stickers. Those who do not lose any Golden Time throughout the term are awarded certificates. Any incidents of poor or oppressive behaviour are noted in the school's Behaviour Book and pupils also have the opportunity to record any incidents or problems in the class Think Book. Teachers regularly monitor these books to pick up any issues. Through such systems, the school has successfully reduced oppressive behaviour to a minimum and racist incidents are very rare.
42. Assessment has improved since the last inspection. However, the improvement has not been as rapid as had been expected because of the high turnover of staff and the headteacher not having enough time to give to this important area of the school's work. In response to the school's concern about the disparity between national test results at age seven and 11 together with advice from the local education authority, the headteacher has recently put effective assessment procedures in place across the school which include half-termly assessment weeks when pupils complete tests in core subjects, religious education, ICT and other foundation subjects. The headteacher receives the results from all teachers and analyses them after which teachers discuss the results with the headteacher and targets are set for improvement. The headteacher monitors teachers' planning and teaching to make sure that these targets are taken into account. Currently, the effect of these good procedures is not as good as it will be when all the staff new to the school are familiar with the procedures and are making best use of them.
43. Assessment for pupils for whom English is an additional language is good and used well to provide appropriate support and guide class teachers. Assessment for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in terms of pinpointing a pupil's specific difficulty and planning an IEP to address this by building on the pupil's strengths. The exception to this is when pupils are supported by outside agencies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths are:

- The positive views that parents have of the school;
- the support that parents give to their children and to the school as a whole.

The main area for improvement is:

- To ensure that all the statutory requirements are in place in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.
44. The school has maintained the strong links with parents that were seen at the last inspection and parents have positive views of the school. Although only a small number of parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, those who did, those who attended the parents' meeting before the inspection and parents spoken to during the inspection had positive things to say particularly about how much their children love coming to school. A small minority of those who returned the questionnaire felt that the right amount of homework was not given but inspection findings do not support this as the use of homework was judged to be good overall. The school has a homework policy that shows pupils are expected to do an increasing amount as they progress through the school and parents of older children were particularly impressed by the standard of homework projects such as the design and construction of an Anderson shelter by Year 6 pupils. A few parents expressed concern that their child was not making enough progress in reading in the infants. Discussions with pupils, hearing them read and looking through their reading diaries suggests that pupils think that they have to read the reading scheme books in a certain order and cannot deviate from this. It would appear that teachers need to be more diligent in checking up

and moving pupils on at a better rate. Progress in reading is mostly good, but more able pupils are capable of moving on at a faster rate.

45. A few parents also expressed concern at the need and practice of splitting up classes when supply teachers cannot be found. This issue concerns the school as much as it does parents, but in the school's area, supply teachers are hard to find, especially at the last minute, and the school has to do the best it can.
46. Parents are consulted on relevant policies such as sex education and behaviour and, for example, on what sort of residential visit they would like for the Year 6 pupils. An appropriate home school agreement is in place. A Parents' Club has recently been set up at the school looking at such issues as guilt-free parenting. Parents welcome these initiatives.
47. Parents make a good contribution to children's learning at home and at school. For example, many hear their children read at home and help with other homework tasks. On a practical level, several parents come to help in school, for example, with Golden Time activities, with swimming or with extra-curricular clubs such as the Latin master class. The school's Parent Teacher Association is flourishing and organises several fundraising events throughout the year such as a summer fair and discos. A large group of parents meet each year to "spring clean" the school, washing window frames, touching up paint work and other refurbishment, and this sort of activity does much to promote an effective partnership with the school. Parents are regularly invited in to assemblies and school productions are always particularly well supported.
48. The quality of information that parents receive is satisfactory overall. There are regular newsletters and parents have three opportunities each year to meet formally with their child's teacher. In addition, all staff are very accessible and parents are encouraged to speak to the class teacher about any concerns. Teachers are available for brief discussions at the end of the day or appointments can easily be made to have longer talks or to meet with the headteacher. Parents receive written curriculum information each term and also an annual progress report for their child. These reports are satisfactory overall, although there is some inconsistency in the use of clear targets and the quality and depth of the remarks, especially in relation to the foundation subjects such as geography and design and technology. Progress in English, mathematics and science is not related to National Curriculum levels.
49. The quality of the last governors' annual report to parents was poor as there were very many statutory requirements missing. The prospectus also omitted some items. The next report from governors is currently being produced. The governors should ensure that it meets legal requirements by including the omitted information about the next election of parent governors, a statement of progress in relation to the action plan following an inspection, information about school security, all the relevant entries relating to pupils with disabilities, a summary of the school's National Curriculum assessments for both key stages as well as national comparisons, the school's targets for Key Stage 2 assessments and a statement about the professional development of teaching staff. The prospectus should include dates of school holidays, details of parental rights to withdraw their child from assembly and religious education, complaints handling and the school and national results for National Curriculum test and task results.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths are:

- The headteacher's clear vision and sense of purpose for the school;
- good team spirit;
- good systems for checking on the work of the school;
- governors improving understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Main areas for improvement:

- A second tier of management;
- library provision;

- governors should ensure that statutory requirements are met in the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus;
 - junior and staff toilets need refurbishment.
50. Leadership and management are good and improved since the last inspection. The headteacher provides a very clear vision and sense of purpose for the school which encapsulate the Catholic ethos. There is a clear commitment to equal opportunities and the expectation that each child should reach his or her potential both personally and academically. The aims of the school's Mission Statement 'We learn to love and love to learn' are implicit in all its work and met well.
51. In response to the 'Parents' Questionnaire' distributed before the inspection, nearly all parents agreed that the school is well led and managed. In meetings with inspectors before and during the inspection, parents spoke highly of the ethos of the school and the headteacher and felt that she is always approachable.
52. At the moment, there is no deputy headteacher and this has been the case for nearly two years. It is very difficult to recruit an experienced and knowledgeable deputy who is also a practising Catholic. Two senior teachers have taken on the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and are effective in their roles as key stage (infant and junior) co-ordinators and co-ordinators of English, mathematics and several foundation subjects. However, for the size of the school, there is no 'second tier' of management, therefore the headteacher takes the lead for all key areas of the school's work. It is here that the headteacher's very clear understanding of where the school should be heading is hindered by the lack of a deputy. In the main, through hard work and determination, she is moving the school forward but acknowledges that there are areas, such as assessment and special needs, where progress has not been as she would like because there has not been enough time to devote to these. A high turnover of teaching staff in the past two years has also slowed the progress, especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The school has endeavoured to find permanent staff but has frequently had to rely on short-term supply teachers and quite often the headteacher has taught classes when supply teachers cannot be found. The appointment of several new teachers at the beginning of this academic year means that the school now has a permanent staff. The headteacher leads by example and has already engendered a strong team spirit; teachers feel valued and work very well together for the benefit of all.
53. Procedures for checking on teaching and learning are good. The headteacher checks on the quality of teaching in the school and uses the outcomes to help teachers improve their practice. Each teacher is observed at least once per term either by the headteacher or senior management team. Pupils' work is also checked on by the headteacher and senior management and areas highlighted for improvement and praise. The headteacher also manages assessment which gives her a very good picture of the strengths and weaknesses across the school. She has a clear understanding of each pupil's National Curriculum level. The headteacher and senior management team analyse baseline results and results of National Curriculum tests and tasks. The outcomes of their analyses are used to make changes to the curriculum or teaching. For example, it was noted that standards in writing were not high enough. As a result, the school introduced a programme of guided writing which has been successful in raising standards. The school improvement plan is good, comprehensive and has an implicit focus on raising standards; however, to be even more useful, there are areas where explicit, measurable targets could be included.
54. The governing body is proud of the school and has always provided positive support. However, until very recently, governors have not provided informed, questioning support and have not met statutory requirements in relation to information to be included in their annual report to parents and in the school's prospectus. Under the very effective and astute guidance of a new chairman, governors' understanding of their roles is improving rapidly. Committees now have clearly- defined roles and responsibilities and are developing a sound understanding of the work of the school. Governors are taking advantage of training opportunities. They are now at the stage of being able to question and act as a 'critical friend' from an informed base. The headteacher is very appreciative of the role governors are now taking. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

55. All monies allocated to the school are used appropriately. The strategic use of resources is well managed by the school with a budget that is carefully controlled and monitored by the governors through their finance committee. Spending decisions are based on the school's improvement plan and the principles of best value. Specific grants are correctly allocated and controlled, as is all other funding. The school has good systems in place to administer all the ordering and payment for goods. The recommendations of the latest auditors' report have been fully actioned by the school. The management of the school's finances has shown a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The governors are seeking to develop their role in the financial management of the school and are doing so with some success.
56. The accommodation is good overall, with mainly spacious classrooms that are enhanced by displays of pupils' work. The relatively new ICT suite has improved accommodation further since the previous inspection. The school benefits from having a separate dining room that has been colourfully decorated, in addition to the main hall that is used for assemblies and physical education. The problem remains, however, that this hall is not suitable for fixed apparatus with the consequent restriction on the teaching of the full range of gymnastics. There have been recent good improvements to the toilets in the infant corridor but the remaining toilets in the school, including staff toilets, are in a poor condition, although the caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to keep them clean. There are plans for the toilets to be refurbished at some time in the future. Outdoor facilities are good. There are separate playgrounds for children in the Foundation Stage, for pupils in Year 1 and 2 and for pupils in Years 3 to 6. They are adequate in size although there are some areas of the Foundation Stage playground that are very uneven. There is a very spacious playing field and an environmental area with a safely fenced pond.
57. There have been good improvements seen in the school's resources since the previous inspection and all subject areas are now adequately resourced. For example, the previous inspection highlighted history and geography as weak areas and they are now considered to be satisfactory. Information and communication technology resources have been enhanced by the addition of a suite as well as additional computers in the classrooms. Resources are well labelled and easily accessed. The library is an area of weakness, however. Although the area is spacious, the room is at the furthest point for older pupils and the stock of books is poor. It is also difficult to access non-fiction books as many are mis-categorised and some categories have no books at all. In addition, the range of fiction for older pupils is very limited and unexciting. The need to develop the library as a resource was also mentioned in the last inspection report and so the school needs to address this issue as soon as possible. The school has improved the use it makes of the local environment as a resource through regular visits to the church and to local shops.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school has many strengths. In order to build on these and improve standards further the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) In mathematics, raise standards and review the present arrangements for setting according to ability in Years 3 to 5.

Paragraphs: 15, 94, 95, 101

- (2) To build on her work and promote greater effectiveness, governors should consult with, and take note of, the headteacher regarding the need for a second tier of management.

Paragraphs: 42, 52, 94

- (3) Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs by:

- a) setting tighter and more measurable targets in IEPs which, if possible and appropriate, relate to the work undertaken in withdrawal groups;
- b) providing more opportunities for pupils to practise, in particular, basic literacy and numeracy skills so that they make better progress towards achieving targets in IEPs.

Paragraphs: 8, 22, 35, 43, 88, 99

- (4) Make better use of the good procedures for checking on pupils' progress so that teachers can set even better targets to move pupils on at an optimum rate. (* The school has identified this as an area to build on.)

Paragraphs: 42, 82

- (5) Purchase up-to-date fiction and non-fiction books for the library which meet the requirements for teaching the National Curriculum and provide stimulating reading material. Attention must also be paid to providing a good range of books to reflect the multi-cultural society pupils live in and, if possible, reflect the cultural heritage of pupils who have very recently arrived from other countries. (* The school has identified the need to improve the library as an urgent matter and the Church intends to make a financial contribution.)

Paragraphs: 57, 84, 90

- (6) Improve the presentation of pupils' work by:
- a) Setting higher and consistent expectations for presentation;
 - b) reviewing the size of square in mathematics exercise books, especially for older pupils;
 - c) making regular checks of pupils' work;
 - d) teaching a correct pencil grip and making sure all pupils, especially the youngest, use a correct pencil grip consistently.

Paragraphs: 19, 86, 98

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- Meet statutory requirements for items to be included in the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents.
- Improve toilet facilities for the juniors and staff.

Paragraphs: 49, 54, 56

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	13	21	9	0	0	0
Percentage	17	25	40	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	19	255
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	57

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	24	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	17	18
	Girls	22	21	23
	Total	40	38	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (97)	88 (97)	95 (97)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	18	18
	Girls	22	23	23
	Total	39	41	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (97)	95 (100)	95 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	20	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	9
	Girls	19	15	17
	Total	28	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (86)	74 (68)	76 (96)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	8
	Girls	16	17	17
	Total	24	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (75)	76 (68)	74 (89)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	4
Indian	6
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	203
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	116

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	541362
Total expenditure	545396
Expenditure per pupil	1928
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3106
Balance carried forward to next year	-7140

The school expects to carry forward £4978 in 01/02

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	244
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	46	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	43	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	40	17	0	0
The teaching is good.	60	13	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	43	6	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	26	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	46	0	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	49	37	11	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	46	37	11	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	37	6	3	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	43	0	0	3

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 (Nursery and Reception classes)

58. Children are admitted to the Nursery as they approach their fourth birthday, three terms before they enter the Reception class. There are now two admissions a year, with younger nursery children attending in the afternoons and moving on to the slightly more challenging afternoon sessions when they are ready for them.

Strengths are:

- The very good quality of teaching which has a very positive effect on children's progress and attitudes to learning;
- very good, well-used assessment strategies that support the good match between the needs of individual children and their learning opportunities;
- early identification of and provision for the needs of SEN and EAL children;
- good curriculum planning delivered through motivating learning activities;
- the good quality of the attractive, spacious, re-furnished outdoor facilities.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Higher priority for learning activities which address the few areas of underachievement in children's physical and creative development;
- improving the decor and storage facilities in the relatively drab indoor learning environment currently provided.

59. Provision for young children at the Foundation Stage is very good in most respects and rarely less than good. This is a significant improvement on provision at the time of the last inspection when it was satisfactory overall, with a few weaknesses and some good features. The curriculum has now been completely revised to meet the latest national guidelines and assessment arrangements have been enhanced to provide very good support for children's progress. Teaching has improved following good levels of commitment to further professional training and learning resources have been supplemented. Outdoor facilities have been much improved following a grant from The Prince's Trust. The result is a spacious, attractive area which is used well as a learning resource and play area.
60. Most children enter the Nursery with a secure basis for further learning. Their levels of prior knowledge and experience are in line with expectations for their age. A minority of children exceed these expectations in some areas, especially in language and communication skills, mathematical experiences and physical development, although the proportions who do so vary with each year's intake. Minorities of children are at below average levels of achievement on entry. A few have special educational needs or require help with English as an additional language. Assessment of their needs and appropriate support is in place within the first few weeks of their arrival in the school. All children have equality of access to the curriculum and opportunity to make progress in their learning. Most children respond positively and make good progress towards the early learning goals, almost all achieving them. A significant minority of children exceed them in some of the six areas of learning into which the curriculum is divided at this stage of the children's learning.
61. The school is effective in establishing good co-operation with the parents of these young children. Staff relationships with parents are good and they are welcomed into the classrooms until their children settle. Each child's portfolio of work and detailed information about their progress are shared with parents at regular consultation meetings. Home/school reading record books show good communications between staff and parents. These features provide good support for children's transition into the Nursery and on into the Reception class. Moves within the Foundation Stage are eased by daily opportunities for Nursery and Reception children to share facilities for

learning. The move into the main school is smoothed by opportunities to use the school hall and to join in acts of worship.

62. The quality of teaching at the Foundation Stage is very good overall and sometimes excellent, leading to very good responses from the children and good levels of achievement in most areas of learning. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the children's needs and how best they can be helped to learn. They have been diligent in the updating of their professional expertise, with very positive consequences for the quality of education provided. Their relationships with the children and their management of them are excellent, leading to very positive attitudes towards learning. Support staff make a very significant contribution to children's overall success. The very good quality of assessment strategies and their use make a major contribution to children's progress in the areas of literacy and numeracy in particular. Curriculum planning is good, leading to an appropriate range of good quality learning experiences, although slight adjustments in emphasis are required in one or two areas if children are to receive a fully rounded preparation for the next stage on the education ladder.

Personal, social and emotional development

63. Children's achievements in this area are good and teaching is excellent. Even though some have below average levels of development on entry into the Nursery, most reach and many exceed the relevant early learning goals by the time they move into Year 1. Teachers' excellent child management skills are extremely significant in achieving this result. Very good relationships between children and staff are evident in all Foundation Stage classrooms. All staff show very good insight into how young children learn and are alert to every opportunity to further their personal development. Strategies include a calm demeanour which reduces children's anxieties, a sense of humour, the modelling of appropriate inter-personal skills, patient but persistent guidance in reaction to misdemeanours and praise for kind and helpful behaviour. Children are supported by brief explanations of reasons why their reactions to situations are acceptable or otherwise. Staff show considerable skill in the use of approaches which have resonance for children in the age group. For instance, Nursery children respond to comments that toys might be damaged and Reception children to a dramatic approach which makes learning fun. Children develop a sense of community in group membership as they join in early morning routines, story sharing, rhyme chanting and prayer times.
64. Some parts of each day are allocated to a wide range of 'choice activities'. This is effective in furthering children's independence and commitment as learners. Nursery children show an increasing self-reliance in their selection of learning opportunities and the confidence to cooperate with other children in such activities as imaginative role play. They learn to share equipment when using construction toys and in water and sand play, for example. Children's ability to concentrate on their chosen activities develops well. Staff show very good judgement as to when and how to support and intervene in choice activities, looking for younger children to explore the potential of their chosen activities and Reception children to apply and so further develop their learning. A sense of responsibility is developed through the allocation of clearing up and other jobs around the classrooms. By the time they are in Reception children generally show very positive responses to the day to day challenges they meet.

Communication, language and literacy

65. Children's achievements in this area are good and teaching is very good. Few children fail to meet the relevant early learning goals by the end of their time in the Reception class. A significant minority exceed them, helped by the skilled teaching they receive. In staff-led sessions, younger children listen intently, answer questions and offer comments about what they have noticed. Children soon begin to show confidence in initiating conversation with each other and with adults. Speaking and listening skills develop well as they move through the Nursery. They learn to provide brief descriptions of their learning experiences as they recall them at the end of lessons. Children with English as an additional language also progress well, using the repetition of verses in nursery rhymes, following the lead of other children and benefiting from individual support to extend their English language skills. The work of children with special educational needs is guided by the

learning targets set out in their individual education plans. By the time they enter Reception, children have acquired an extended vocabulary of both everyday words and specialist terms associated with the various areas of their learning. Friendly and encouraging support from teaching staff provides strong support for the good development of children's speaking and listening skills.

66. The teaching of reading is also very well managed. Children's progress is generally good and their achievements are systematically recorded. Teachers use colourful, 'big books' as a focus for shared reading with the children, who show high levels of interest and concentration. Skilled questioning directs attention to the ways in which books are organised, to interesting details in illustrations and episodes in story lines, successfully developing the understanding that text has meaning. Nursery children begin by making up stories based on the illustrations in story books, but a few soon learn to recognise familiar words, show appreciation of story lines and to make a few comments about characters. Teachers' systematic introduction of letter sounds provides effective support for the reading of new words. Computer programs help to familiarise children with letter shapes and simple words. By the early stages of the Reception year, children begin to read simple sentences with confidence. Higher achievers recognise a good range of words on sight, occasionally correcting themselves. They apply their growing knowledge of single letter sounds to the decoding of new words. By this stage, most children can identify and describe the roles of authors and illustrators. Progress in reading is supported by the effective implementation of home/school reading arrangements. Occasionally, parents indicate that their children appear to be making insufficient progress - that they are finding their reading books too easy. While there is a case for easy reading opportunities, inspection indicates that a more frequent change of books might well be appropriate in a few cases.
67. Achievement in writing is also good. Younger children begin to use mark-making in their play, writing 'letters' for the postman to deliver, for example. Gradually, their writing includes recognisable letters. On entry to Reception, children's handwriting skills are systematically refined. Children soon learn to write their own names and, eventually, short strings of words such as captions for drawings. Children who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them in the individual education plans. Children who are at the very early stages of learning English also make good progress, demonstrating in their responses to requests or instructions that they are developing good understanding of basic vocabulary but are, understandably, more reticent with speech.

Mathematical development

68. Children's achievements in this area are also good, with almost all reaching the early learning goals. A significant minority exceed them by the end of the Foundation Stage. Teaching is generally very good, sometimes excellent, enabling children to build effectively on their pre-school mathematical experiences. In the minority of cases where this is weak, teachers provide learning tasks with appropriate levels of challenge, combined with extra support which enable the children concerned to make good progress. From the start, children can usually maintain intense concentration when presented with number games of various kinds. The youngest Nursery children could say which one item was missing when the teacher removed it from a collection of objects, incidentally developing the realisation that each item counts as one. Gradually, children learn to count collections of items, chanting numbers in sequence. Teachers give reality to these exercises by using motivating, small equipment. For example, a nursery nurse made excellent use of a 'complete the ladybird' game by adding spots to a card model after throwing a dice. One more advanced child moved on to adding two dice throws together. Opportunistic use of a graduated set of beakers led to the children's acquisition of 'taller/shorter' comparisons. A child with English as an additional language showed clear understanding of the underlying concepts, using the correct vocabulary. Another group decorated small cakes with sweets, first estimating and checking how many cakes they had and then working out whether they had enough for two each. These effective teaching strategies are supplemented by the daily use of songs, rhymes, chants and role play situations to reinforce understanding of numbers. There is also recognition of shapes in real-life activities in physical education lessons, for instance. Clock faces give early insights into the measurement of time as each clock marks the point at which a new point in the day's activities is introduced.

69. By the time they are in Reception, most children show real excitement as they try hard and achieve success in the amazing world of numbers and shapes. The lively and excellent teaching they experience is highly motivating. By this stage, children can count forwards and backwards to 20. They learn to recognise the key features of squares, triangles and circles, using appropriate terms. The teacher pitched questioning at a variety of levels to ensure that children of all stages of prior attainment were included and making progress. Wrong answers were used effectively, giving credit for barely-realised insights. For instance, asked how many sides a circle had, one child just carried on counting as he moved his finger around the perimeter. 'He's almost right, you know', said the teacher, as she explained the correct answer to the class. Learning was reinforced by interesting activities such as making 'shape pictures' from junk materials and working on the computer, although there is no evidence of the use of programmable toys. The teacher's high expectations were typical of Foundation Stage staff who set high achievement goals in literacy and numeracy in particular.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

70. Starting from a broadly average basis, children also make good progress in this area in response to very good teaching and interesting activities. Key themes are weather, journeys and different kinds of transport. Children are also introduced to aspects of the natural world and to cultural elements such as the beliefs, values and celebrations linked to the Roman Catholic faith. They become acquainted with traditional stories, nursery rhymes and toys which give them a window on the past. Children respond with interest to these opportunities. Their 'choice' activities introduce them to the range of activities and roles which form part of daily life. In the case of their religious culture, they begin to show commitment as they participate in the daily prayer times and practise putting the key values into practice. Photographs record that this becomes an obvious pleasure as they visit the church for festivals and participate in frequent celebrations of Saint's Days. Secular celebrations such as Red Nose Day and Bonfire Night introduce them to current concerns and elements of history which are supplemented by aspects of the thematic programme they follow.
71. Local studies include such visits as one to the post office and learning about the journey to school. Nature studies include observations of changes in the large natural space outside their classrooms, most recently focused on the drama of changes in the colours of leaves. It seems that the children collected so many leaves that the distinction between outside and inside was at risk of becoming blurred! Nature studies are supported by a nature table and include a visit to a farm and to a wildlife park. Children also learn about how people and animals grow and about their senses. Regular observation of the weather extends into learning about the changing seasons. Scientific understanding is supported through activities such as sand and water play and by carefully managed learning about materials including how wax melts when heated. Nursery children were entranced by this, noting that it begins 'to look like water' and that 'it dribbles down'. (Opportunities for a wider focus are not missed by the teachers. In this case the sound of the letter 'w' was rehearsed as children learned the words 'wax' and 'wick'). Reception children learn about the needs of plants, each child growing a crocus bulb, for instance. Awareness of natural forces such as gravity is begun as children engage in construction activities. Everyday learning using the computer reinforces children's awareness of the widespread applications of new technology in the modern world. Most pupils achieve levels that are above those expected by the end of their time in the Reception class. The overall result is that children develop a good foundation of general knowledge and understanding on which to build when they enter the next stage of their education.

Physical development

72. The majority of children enter the Foundation Stage with physical skills that are at least average for their age. Although year groups vary, some children are above average in their ability to control their movements while others are below. Overall, standards by the time they enter the main school are satisfactory and often good. Few children are handicapped by an inability to manipulate small pieces of learning equipment. For example, though some refinement is still to be achieved if

writing skills are to be advanced, few show clumsiness as they handle pencils, crayons and manipulate the computer mouse and keys. Most are equally adept at handling jigsaws and pieces in construction kits. Reception children move on to the effective handling of clay when making pots and putting together junk materials to make effective, three-dimensional collages.

73. During outside play, many Nursery children showed equally well-developed large motor skills, enabling them to ride tricycles without mishap, negotiating their routes so as to avoid others who were close by. (Climbing equipment is readily available but was not in use on the occasion observed.) In a physical education lesson, young children were learning to obey instructions and to understand the need to observe safety rules, including immediate obedience of the teacher's instructions. Some found it difficult to exercise the necessary self control, such was their delight in having the opportunity to move about in a large space. Some showed a good sense of balance as they hopped about, but others found this difficult and resorted to running. Also, their sense of right and left was not yet fully established, causing some confusion. While some children showed ability to move appropriately to music, others just danced around demonstrating a lack of sense of rhythm. Many were able to re-dress themselves with relatively little help in applying fine levels of control to fastening buttons and tying laces. Reception children show much greater control over their gross motor skills. Teaching in this area of learning is at least satisfactory, but opportunities to explain the importance of exercise to the preservation of health are not always taken.

Creative development

74. Standards in this area are broadly in line with expectations for the age group, the majority of children meeting the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. A few show special talent and exceed these goals. Painting opportunities are available to children as 'choice activities' from their start in the Nursery, but surprisingly few take them up on their own initiative. Home conditions may not have established an interest in this form of creativity and more encouragement from teachers is required. Displays around the classrooms show that children can be successful in this respect. For instance, nursery children show skill in the printing of fruit shapes using blended poster colours. Quite atmospheric effects of poppy fields were achieved, inspired by a photograph and thoughts of Remembrance Day. Pastels on black backgrounds echoed the swirling and explosive lines produced by fireworks as they light up the sky. Nursery children also produce bold and colourful self portraits. Reception children contribute to large and attractive collages illustrating characters in nursery rhymes. They also make very successful collages when exploring the possibilities of textural contrasts combined with shades of a single colour.
75. Creative opportunities of a different kind are available on a daily basis as children engage in imaginative role-play. Scenarios range from pirates to shop assistants, from wedding preparations to cafe' scenes and washing up. Children become completely absorbed in these activities, drawing in stray adults to enrich the experience. Musical skills are also developed as part of the regular range of daily activities, as children build up a repertoire of traditional songs. A suitable range of musical instruments is available in the department, which also has access to stock held in the main school, although use of these resources was not observed during the inspection. The one lesson seen was taken by a student teacher. It involved an action song accompanied by a guitar and inspired a very enthusiastic response from Reception children. The experience contributed effectively to their growing repertoire of action songs.

ENGLISH

Strengths are:

- Good teaching and learning;
- pupils' independence in spelling;
- writing skills develop well;
- pupils' good attitudes;
- good subject leadership.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Maintaining/improving the present standards in the subject;

- as a matter of urgency, improving library stock;
 - providing challenge for more able pupils in Year 2;
 - improving provision for pupils with special educational needs;
 - ensuring the correct pencil grip is taught and used;
 - improving presentation of pupils' work.
76. For the period 1998 to 2001, results of National Curriculum tests for 11 year-olds show standards to range from average to well below average and have dropped since the last inspection. The trend for improvement is below the national trend. Results in 2001 were below the national average and well below the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In the 2001 group of pupils, half were on the school's register of special educational needs and whilst they did reasonably well from their starting point, did not achieve the expected standards. Another factor affecting standards has been a high turnover of staff in the two years preceding the time these pupils took their National Curriculum tests.
77. For the similar period, results of National Curriculum tests and tasks for seven year-olds show standards ranging from well above average to below average in 2001. In this year, one of the two groups of Year 2 pupils had a newly-qualified teacher who was not coping and who left at Easter and was replaced with supply teachers. This group of pupils did not perform well in the tests and as a consequence, overall results were lower than usual. In reading and writing standards were below the national average and were well below the average for similar schools.
78. Further analysis of the data supplied about the school shows that 11 year-old girls do slightly better than boys in the subject but are about one term behind compared to national levels. Boys are in line with the average for boys nationally. During inspection, there was no noticeable difference between the achievement of boys and girls; they were equally positive about their work.
79. The school is concerned at the disparity between the results achieved by Year 2 pupils (usually average or above) and results achieved by Year 6 pupils. As a result, the headteacher has put in place new, carefully focused assessment procedures linked to target setting which are just beginning to have a beneficial effect.
80. Inspection evidence gathered from lesson observations and examining pupils' work provides a much more positive picture of standards in the school. There are three main reasons for this:
- different teachers;
 - different groups of pupils;
 - much better systems of assessment, target setting and for tracking progress.
81. Standards achieved by 11 year-olds this year are likely to be above average. This year's Year 6 pupils have greater numbers of more able pupils and fewer with special educational needs. They have an exceptionally talented teacher who provides challenging and stimulating work and sets very high expectations. The targets set for these pupils, combined with excellent teaching, are extending them well and have already been reviewed to set higher ones in a few cases.
82. Standards achieved by Year 2 pupils are also likely to be above average, although there are a few who could do even better. There is a secure teaching situation and the procedures for assessment are beginning to have an effect on moving pupils on at a better rate.
83. Standards in speaking and listening are above the levels expected for seven and eleven year olds. Teachers place a strong emphasis on speaking and listening, not only in English lessons but in other subjects too, as in a Year 3/4 mathematics lesson when pupils had to explain the methods they had applied to solve their 'problems'. Teachers set high expectations for pupils to listen carefully and explain their work or give an opinion. As a result, pupils show confidence and speak clearly when they speak to their class. Pupils in Year 6 could offer good explanations and opinions about World War II photographs, explaining why it is was a good idea to have car bumpers painted white in blackout situations. Pupils showed a good awareness of their audience. Year 2 pupils were keen and confident when reading out their poems about colours.

84. Throughout the school, including Nursery and Reception classes, pupils enjoy being read to and reading for themselves. Standards are mostly above average because reading is promoted well in the school and parents are encouraged to help their child practise as much as is possible. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are given a very firm grounding in letter names and sounds and this is built on well as pupils move through Years 1 and 2 where they learn to use letter sounds to help them spell and to read unfamiliar words. Throughout, pupils make good use of their knowledge of letter sounds and letter strings to help them work out unknown words. In the main, pupils read books that are matched to their reading abilities and can make good use of their reading skills to extract information from non-fiction texts or information they find on the Internet. In Year 2, pupils enjoy reading the reading scheme books but have the perceived notion that they have to read every book at a certain level before they can move on to the next. Teachers need to keep an eye on this and move pupils on at a better rate, because more able pupils, in particular, do not need to read each book. The range of interesting, up-to-date fiction for older pupils is very restricted and so many pupils bring books from home to read. Those with few books at home have a very restricted choice at school. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.
85. Standards of writing for Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 are above average and in other year groups around average at the moment. Pupils' ability to 'have a go' at spelling words they want to use is impressive; this ensures they can get on and not waste time seeking help with spelling words they want to use. For pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5, the high turnover of teachers has had a detrimental effect on standards of presentation, and in Year 3, several pupils have 'gaps' in their knowledge which teachers are working hard to address. The school recognised the need to improve standards in writing and now has a 'guided writing' programme and target setting system in place. These initiatives are very successful in providing pupils with frameworks for their writing, examples of what to say and how to write it; therefore pupils' confidence is high and they are keen to write. This keenness, coupled with their ability to use letter sounds to help them spell ensures that good progress is made in lessons. Year 2 pupils' competence and enjoyment in writing was obvious in their books of 'Do you like ketchup on your cornflakes?' or 'Don't do that'. This year group has also used their writing skills to good effect in history when they wrote about Louis Braille and made good comparisons with a modern-day blind person, David Blunkett. The oldest pupils have good dictionary skills and can use dictionaries and thesauruses appropriately to improve their work. Pupils experience a suitable range of writing experiences such as poetry, play scripts, newspaper articles and story writing. Pupils also use their writing skills to advantage in other subjects such as geography where Year 6 pupils wrote their 'Diary of the Blitz'. In their well ordered accounts they showed a very good awareness of keeping a reader interested by using such phrases as 'I ran for my life to the nearest underground' Word processing programs are used effectively to provide work for display and write letters or set out newspaper headlines.
86. The school has recently introduced a new handwriting scheme which is beginning to have a positive effect on standards. However, there are far too many pupils of all ages, who use an incorrect pencil/pen grip and this is slowing progress in developing neat, fluent and legible writing. A few teachers are not totally secure about how to teach handwriting; they need to ensure pupils have a 'rest stroke' and do not expect them to continue a handwriting pattern across a page without a break.
87. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers make good, confident use of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils' attitudes generally reflect the quality of teaching; where teaching is excellent, so are pupils' attitudes. All teachers have secure subject knowledge and teach phonics (the use of letter sounds) well. All teachers make good use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. There is outstanding teaching for Year 6 pupils where lessons proceed at a very brisk pace with relevant and interesting resources. Within a framework of very good relationships, the teacher sets very high expectations and a high level of challenge for all pupils. Year 1 pupils also benefit from very good teaching, where the pace is fast and challenging but the teacher's expertise ensures all succeed. In Year 2, teaching is at a slower pace but always sound; however, it is not challenging the more able pupils to make better progress. Teachers mark pupils' work according to the school's marking policy. Pupils know what the letters A, AW and NMH mean (achieved, achieved well and needs more help) but teachers who put extra comments in to praise or indicate how the

work may be improved are giving more help to their pupils. Homework, at all levels, is set appropriately and is beneficial to pupils' learning.

88. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory rather than good because the provision of individual education plans (IEPs) is unsatisfactory. Pupils have IEPs but in many cases the targets are not measurable and so it is difficult to know when they have been achieved. Several pupils have specific literacy targets on their IEPs but are not making enough progress because they do not practise towards achieving these every day in class. Pupils are withdrawn for specific help but more must be done to ensure teachers know and see what work is going on in these withdrawal sessions. Teaching for pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. Good teaching support from a specialist teacher and sensitive support from classteachers ensure that vocabulary is developed well and pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
89. Subject management is good. There is a good understanding of the strengths in the subject and the areas for improvement. The co-ordinator has monitored the quality of teaching in the school alongside the local education authority's literacy consultant. This process has helped the moderation of observations and also been good professional development for the co-ordinator. She has interviewed pupils about their writing targets and discussed their work. A good portfolio of National Curriculum levelled work is in place which is particularly beneficial to the newly-qualified teachers in the school.
90. In the main, resources are adequate. However, for all ages, the number of good quality, interesting and relevant reading books is unsatisfactory; therefore, pupils' choice is restricted. Library provision is poor and does not support teaching of the National Curriculum requirements and the National Literacy Strategy; it is in urgent need of improvement. The school invited the library service to appraise the library stock and as a result a high number of books was discarded and, at the moment, have not been replaced. Books that remain are adequate but not of good quality. There are too few books reflecting the multi-cultural society we live in and no books reflecting the cultural heritage of pupils from the Philippines and other countries who are joining the school as a result of the recruitment drive for nurses to train at local hospitals.

MATHEMATICS

Strengths are:

- The subject is well led and managed;
- teaching is good in lessons.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Maintaining/improving standards especially in Years 3 – 6;
 - reviewing the grouping by ability in Years 3 to 5;
 - improving presentation of work;
 - improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
91. Pupils in Year 2 are on course to achieve standards that are above nationally expected levels by the end of the year. This exceeds the level of attainment achieved in the national tests earlier in 2001 which were average. In Year 6, pupils are on course to achieve standards in line with those expected nationally by the end of the school year. This represents a considerable improvement in standards since national tests earlier in 2001 when attainment was well below that expected nationally for 11 year-olds. For Year 2 and Year 6, the results will represent a return to the standards achieved in 2000 and show an improvement over those reported during the inspection of 1997. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.
92. The majority of pupils in Year 2 can add and subtract numbers up to two digits with reasonable accuracy and have an understanding of early multiplication and division. In class they use this knowledge to solve simple number problems. They can use non-standard units of measurement and have a reasonable knowledge of the language of relative size, for example, *short, tall, deep* and *shallow*. Pupils are able to recognise odd and even numbers and are developing an understanding of place value. Pupils in Year 6 can order decimal numbers in ascending order and understand the

concept of equivalent fractions. They can identify the symmetry of two-dimensional shapes and use formulae, for example, length x breadth = area, to solve problems. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of approximate proportions, for example, they know that $\frac{1}{2} = 50\% = 0.5$. In their work on data handling, pupils are able to collect and record information in graph form.

93. Since the last inspection the school has done a considerable amount of work to improve the general provision for the subject. It has adopted procedures for assessing pupils' levels of attainment and progress at regular intervals throughout the year and is using this information to inform, for example, target setting, the formation of groups in Years 3, 4, and 5 and curriculum planning. A recent analysis of the pupils' answers to test questions highlighted particular weaknesses in their knowledge of symmetry and in their ability to use and apply their knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. As a result the school has given extra time and emphasis to the development of both areas. The results of assessment are also used to decide the formation of groups and pupil movement between them. Pupils who are deemed to need extra help are given the opportunity to take part in the Springboard Mathematics booster classes.
94. The headteacher and senior management team are aware of the need to raise standards further for Years 3 to 6 and this is an area where the lack of a deputy headteacher is evident. The headteacher has not had enough time to monitor and gather enough information to gauge the effectiveness or the strengths and weaknesses of the current system of grouping.
95. In spite of the good teaching observed during the inspection, progress is only satisfactory for Years 3-5. The main reason for this is that the present system of grouping by ability is constraining progress for some pupils, in particular the younger ones, because of the wide age range within one teaching group. In addition, the half-termly change of teacher for each group unsettles pupils and teachers and does not promote the best possible progress. Inspection evidence indicates that Year 3 pupils are sometimes distracted by older pupils. There is also the danger that they will not receive the basic skills instruction that they need because they are following the same curriculum as the older members of the group. An example of this noted during the inspection was the inability of a group of Year 3 more able pupils to complete part of their work because they could not use a ruler to measure millimetres; a problem that would, no doubt, have been recognised had they been working in a class of pupils of the same age.
96. In contrast to the mixed grouping, Year 6 are taught as a single age group. Pupils here make good progress overall during lessons because of the high quality of teaching provided. In a lesson on calculating the surface area of cuboids, pupils made excellent progress due to the good subject knowledge of the teacher and the very well judged balance between direct teaching and practical activities that maintained pupils' interest and created considerable excitement amongst them.
97. An important feature of the school's subject development has been the very marked improvement in the quality of teaching that has risen from satisfactory with some unsatisfactory during the inspection of 1997 to good with some very good and excellent during the current inspection. Overall, teaching is now never less than satisfactory. The best teaching is generally seen in Years 3 to 6. In Years 1 and 2 teaching and the subsequent progress made by pupils are both satisfactory overall, with some very good teaching and learning in Year 1. For example, in a lesson on addition and subtraction facts to 10, pupils in Year 1 made very good progress due to the enthusiasm for the topic created by the teacher and the well structured activities that encouraged them to think and develop a firm understanding about what was being taught.
98. Where teaching is good or better teachers ensure that the correct vocabulary for the subject is used. Teachers work hard to build pupil confidence by providing challenging activities and using praise and rewards well. They maintain good class control and a brisk pace to their lessons. Teachers have good expectations and generally demonstrate an understanding of the needs of their pupils. Teaching assistants work closely with the teachers and are deployed well. Throughout the school the majority of pupils are well behaved and co-operate effectively with each other and their teachers. They demonstrate good, sometimes very good, attitudes to their work, often becoming very involved with and excited about the activities provided for them. There is a poor level of presentation in the majority of the books scrutinised. Much of the work is untidy, for

example, lines are drawn without rulers and pupils do not always use the squares provided. Teachers observe the school's marking policy, but in the work of many classes, there is little evidence of written feedback to pupils to help them to improve their presentation and subject knowledge.

99. Pupils with special educational needs make progress that is commensurate with their individual abilities. However, the school should ensure that their needs are more clearly identified in the targets set in their individual education plans, some of which are not specific enough to be easily measurable. It should also ensure that there is a clear link between lesson planning and the needs of these pupils as set out in their individual plans. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress
100. During inspection, work was seen that clearly linked mathematics with information and communication technology. Pupils in Year 6 use it to develop their understanding of number sequences and their ability to produce graphs and extract information from them. They also use ICT to calculate the mode of a set of numbers. Year 5 and 6 pupils made good use of a spreadsheet program to enter data and calculate costs. In a link to geography, pupils in Year 6 used their ability to draw graphs to record their finding about the use of transport in the local area. The development of the speaking and listening skills of the pupils is a good feature of many lessons in mathematics. Pupils are able to discuss their work and do so with clear explanations.
101. The subject is well led and managed. There has been a good improvement in the general provision for the subject since the last inspection. However, the school needs to continue to improve overall attainment particularly for 11 year-olds. The resources available for teaching the subject are generally satisfactory in quality and easily accessible.

SCIENCE

The main strengths are:

- An investigative approach to science;
- very good quality teaching in the juniors;
- strong leadership in the subject.

The main areas for improvement are:

- More support for science through ICT;
- more challenge and pace to lessons in Year 2.

102. Standards in science dipped in the 2001 tests and were well below other schools at the ages of seven and 11. Results of 11 year olds were amongst the lowest five per cent of similar and all schools in the country. This was due to discontinuity in teaching and aspects of the curriculum not being covered adequately. This decline in standards has been addressed through changes in staff and a review of curriculum coverage. The current analysis of work for pupils in Years 6 shows a marked improvement since last year. Standards are now above average for eleven year olds. Standards have also improved in the infants, and pupils' work is average although not as high as it could be. The needs of more able pupils are now being addressed well in the juniors through clearly targeted work which is matched to individual needs. While the work in the infants is appropriate for the age range, tasks are not always sufficiently challenging for pupils and they do not have enough opportunities to use their initiative.
103. Standards in science have improved since the previous inspection when they were described as below the national average by the age of eleven. Science, particularly investigative work, is now a strength of the provision and well linked to mathematics. The weakness lies in the lack of use of ICT to support research, data handling and pupils' recording.
104. Lessons focus on pupils carrying out science investigations through systematic enquiry. Initial discussions pose questions for pupils to answer. For example, pupils in Year 4 were asked to find out whether muscles pull or push when they moved their arms. Discussion supported pupils to ask questions about the way muscles work and they learned the terms *extended* and *contracted* to

describe the changes they observed. Model making built well on this knowledge and provided a practical dimension to learning which reinforced the scientific enquiry. In Year 6, pupils filtered substances in their investigations to separate liquids and solids. Again they made good use of these scientific terms and made very good evaluations to show how they would improve on their techniques to ensure fair testing.

105. The improvement is due to very good teaching in the juniors. Teachers explain clearly what is to be learned so pupils have a good understanding of how their skills and knowledge are to be extended. The excellent relationships teachers have with pupils and high quality planning which defines clearly the lesson structure, use of resources and very good pace to lessons ensure pupils are well motivated and enjoy their learning. Because subject vocabulary is introduced through well-modelled sentences, pupils are confident to use this new terminology in their own speech. This extends well the links to literacy. Teachers use questioning effectively to engage pupils of different abilities and stages in language development. They ensure that all pupils have the chance to take part in discussions and value their comments and ideas. This results in pupils feeling confident to volunteer their hypotheses and opinions even if they are not always accurate. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the presentation of work is neat, tidy and well organised. Pupils are taught to record their experiments to reflect the investigation process. Teaching in the infants is satisfactory. However the pace of lessons is not as brisk and opportunities to challenge younger pupils fully are missed. Consequently the pace of learning is slower.
106. Subject leadership is a strength. The coordinator has very good subject knowledge and provides a good role model for staff through her very good organisation and planning of the curriculum. She has time to monitor lessons and is able to work alongside staff to develop their expertise. This is working well and there is a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The coordinator feeds back observations to staff and this enables them to try out new ideas and to extend their practice. The analysis of test results also helps staff to recognise the aspects of teaching which need to be strengthened. Resources are good and used well; however, there are very few relevant and up-to-date books to support pupils' learning in the library.
107. In the infants, discussion with pupils indicates that their understanding is wider than their recorded work suggests. They talk enthusiastically about their investigations to discover materials which are waterproof and those which are not. They are enthusiastic about their work and eager to describe their findings. The slower pace of these lessons leads to pupils becoming restless on occasions, as they are ready to move on to the next stage of their work.
108. Science is closely linked to pupils' personal, social and health education. Good quality provision for drugs and sex education develops pupils' awareness of the dangers and benefits of medicines and of drugs abuse. The planning for these lessons indicates good preparation for life in the community. Displays support the focus of learning well; for example, life cycles and body parts. In the infants, pupils learn why exercise is important through physical education lessons which are linked well to their work in science. The strong emphasis on investigative science and the importance of establishing cross-curricular links make a positive impact on pupils' learning.
109. The quality of marking is variable. Where it is good, in the upper juniors, comments indicate to pupils their successes and how their work can improve. Oral marking is good across the school and pupils value their teachers' comments and strive to please them. The support given to pupils with special needs by teaching assistants is good and ensures that pupils access the full curriculum. They help them to develop their work through scientific enquiry but the targets for learning are not precise enough and this is a weakness in provision. These pupils rely on adults for their success and tasks are not adapted sufficiently well to support greater independence. Teachers make a point of ensuring pupils for whom English is an additional language are helped to understand and reinforce new vocabulary.

ART AND DESIGN

The main strengths are:

- Pupils' enthusiasm for the subject;
- art and design are used well in other subjects.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Develop drawing skills more systematically;
- continue to develop and use systems to records pupils' progress in the subject.

110. During the inspection not enough evidence was available to make any firm, valid judgements about the level of attainment of pupils or the quality of teaching in the subject. However, in the two lessons observed the level of teaching was of a high quality and provided learning opportunities that were at least good.
111. In a Year 6 lesson the teacher discussed the work of Andy Warhol, demonstrating a very good knowledge of the artist and his work. The very good questioning techniques used during the lesson teased out the important aspects of the work being studied. The brisk pace of the lesson and the ability of the teacher to make the subject interesting held the attention of the pupils. The high expectations of the teacher were rewarded by the exceptionally high quality of the work produced by the pupils.
112. Pupils in a Year 2 craft lesson on weaving techniques made good progress in their ability to manipulate different materials. They were able to discuss the work they were doing and compare it to that of others. The lesson was well prepared with materials clearly focused on the objectives and laid out ready for the pupils to use. The teacher ensured pupils were clear about what they had to do and they settled to the task quickly. The objectives of the lesson were fully realised.
113. In both of the lessons observed the pupils were very enthusiastic and worked hard with obvious enjoyment. They were always well behaved and co-operated with their teachers and with each other.
114. Pupils have been studying the different styles of art produced around the world and are able to produce copies of them, for example, the work done on African and Aboriginal traditional patterns. Year 5 pupils have worked on the use of watercolours to paint landscapes with varying levels of success. The work shows that some of them are developing the concept of perspective.
115. The subject is well used in other areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 5 pupils have produced posters with drawings of Boudicca as part of their studies on Roman Britain. Religious Education is well represented with work on the story of Moses and illustrated prayers. Year 2 pupils have used the "Dazzle" computer program to design tablemats in a link to information and communication technology.
116. Generally, throughout the school, pupils lack the necessary skills to produce good life drawings. For example, the work of Year 5 pupils shows a low level of ability to draw the humans figure. The school should seek to ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to practise their life drawing techniques.
117. The subject co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop art and design further throughout the school. The assessment of pupils' work and the recording of their general progress are both in the very early stages of development. The resources available to teach the subject are satisfactory although there are no suitable books to enrich pupils' learning about art and design in the library.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The main strength is:

- An investigative approach to the subject

The main area for improvement is:

- Providing stronger links with informational and communication technology for older pupils.

118. Standards in design and technology are average for seven and 11 year-olds. These standards for pupils aged seven are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection and an improvement on the previous report for pupils aged 11. In that inspection, standards for 11 year-olds were described as varying from average to below average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress.
119. Pupils in the infants are aware that materials can be joined together in a range of different ways. They experiment joining materials using, for example, glue, adhesive tape, lacing and stitching. Pupils make comparisons of hinges on doors with moveable joints on their bodies. On a tour of the school pupils identify hinges and name doors, windows and cupboards that are opened using them. They recognise and describe the differences between handles and hinges and make hinges from card and adhesive tape to illustrate their ideas. Good speaking and listening links extend language as pupils strive to find the correct vocabulary to describe their activities. In another project, pupils designed mats. Pupils use ICT skills to support their planning and to help them choose the colours for the mats. There is clear evidence that pupils are developing a systematic approach to evaluate their work on completion.
120. Designing and making skills are developed further in the juniors. In a project to make a simple circuit incorporating a battery, light bulb, switch and connecting wires, pupils describe the role of each part. Pupils choose the most appropriate material to make a switch that can be turned on and off. Through their work in science pupils know that switches join a circuit and that they must be made from materials that conduct electricity. This lesson is one in a series which will involve the designing and making of a torch for a specific purpose. The work of one pupil who completed making an effective switch at home was celebrated enthusiastically by the pupils.
121. Pupils in Year 6 designed an Anderson shelter for four people in connection with their work in history. Drawings with explanatory notes accompany all projects and provide good quality links with writing. Pupils design the investigation which is broadly based on their experience in their science work. Their work is very well presented. Handwriting is neat and sketches are carefully drawn. An evaluation of work on shelters emphasises design. Stronger links with ICT for older pupils would provide additional challenge and raise standards further.
122. The quality of teaching through an investigative approach is good. Very good relationships between the teachers and pupils provide a very good platform for learning. Planning is of good quality and the needs of all pupils are considered carefully. Additional support for pupils with special educational needs is provided by teaching assistants who know precisely what is expected of them. Pupils are confident to express their opinions and know that their suggestions will be respected. Pupils are pleased to suggest ways in which their work could be improved. They take criticism well and learn from other class members. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social development.
123. The curriculum is based upon the latest national guidelines. Design and technology is blocked with art and design. This system enables teachers and pupils to follow tasks through and develop skills more systematically. The subject is well led by a co-ordinator who also has many other responsibilities

GEOGRAPHY

The main strengths are:

- Investigative approaches are contributing well to raising standards;
- recent up-dating of the subject policy and scheme of work are providing a secure basis for further development in planning for geography.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Although in place in some lessons, the matching of learning tasks to the needs of pupils with different levels of prior achievement is underdeveloped;
- planning for progression in basic geographical skills, especially in mapping skills, is insufficiently detailed to support precision in lesson objectives and accurate assessment of pupils' progress.

124. Standards at the time of the time of the previous inspection were unsatisfactory for seven and 11 year-olds. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding were all underdeveloped. Since then, they have improved to reach a satisfactory level in both cases, with a substantial minority achieving above expectations by age 11. These results arise as a consequence of improvements across the key aspects of the school's provision for geography. A new policy provides direction for the subject and a revised scheme of work sets the pattern for appropriate learning activities, supporting pupils' progress towards the relevant attainment targets. Resources have been improved and the effective use of ICT has been introduced.
125. Year 2 pupils achieve mapping skills which are broadly satisfactory. They investigate and record features around the school and its immediate environment. They develop a sound knowledge of the shape of the British Isles and its relation to other countries. Teachers use the motivating strategy of following the travels of Barnaby Bear, as he sends back postcards from places at home and abroad. This is very effective in extending pupils' understanding of the position of notable buildings and cultural features of other places around the world. For instance, his visit to Dublin introduced awareness of Irish dancing, Celtic designs and key landmarks as pupils drew illustrated route maps of the bear's travels around the city. Courtesy of Barnaby, pupils also visited France, tasting its food and learning the names of shops of different kinds. A fieldwork opportunity at the seaside is planned for Year 2, following work on coastal features, both natural and man-made. Pupils also develop a suitable concern for the environment. In a well-planned lesson on competition between land uses, they were challenged to consider the positive and negative consequences of building a new road through a wooded area. Follow-up work was well-matched to the learning needs of different groups of pupils, enabling them all to make good progress. Pupils respond positively to the interesting learning activities provided.
126. For Years 3–6, progress is at least satisfactory and in some cases good, especially in the case of higher achievers who are also motivated by the research opportunities now available to them using ICT. The majority of Year 4 pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of contrasting locations and peoples' adaptation to them as they study the examples of the United Kingdom and the Gambia. Displays in classrooms are good. They include artefacts, photographs and maps, giving reality to pupils' learning. Pupils progress to detailed study of specific geographical features such as the water cycle, weather and river systems. Work included the construction of a meander using a ditch in which pupils placed soil and rocks. Pupils' recording indicates good quality responses to these learning opportunities. By age 11, pupils understand the differences between climate and weather and know the main characteristics of tropical, temperate and polar zones. In a Year 6 lesson on settlements, pupils were using computers and a range of written resources to carry out investigations into why and how their own city had developed over time. Their researches were guided by a well constructed list of key questions, an effective strategy often used by other teachers. Previous work showed that a study of local transport had included the decoding of a complicated data chart.
127. Overall, teaching is good. Occasionally it is excellent. These better lessons are marked by challenging activities and teachers' high expectations to which pupils respond with enthusiasm. The more systematic use of investigative approaches is raising pupils' interest in the subject as well as their achievements. All lessons and pupils' work are prefaced by a statement of what it is

pupils are expected to learn so that pupils gain a general idea of their progress in the subject. However, these objectives are not always sufficiently finely tuned to chart their progress accurately, especially in the case of mapping skills which are not yet sufficiently developed. The subject leader has specialist knowledge in the subject and is working effectively to raise standards, occasionally monitoring the quality of teaching, as well as teachers' lesson planning. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are adequate for teaching the subject although there are not enough suitable up-to-date books in the library to support pupils' learning.

HISTORY

The main strengths are:

- Dynamic subject leadership;
- good standards of achievement by the pupils;
- very good lesson planning and teaching, leading to motivating and effective learning opportunities.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Continuity in the development of historical enquiry skills;
- refinement of assessment procedures .

128. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now those expected for seven and 11 year-olds. Although no lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, a scrutiny of pupils' previous work showed most are now attaining at above average standards. These levels of achievement are enhanced across Years 3 to 6, leading to attainment at above the level expected by age 11. Teachers are responding well to the dynamic leadership of the new subject co-ordinator whose new policy for the teaching of history includes due emphasis on the skills of historical enquiry, the development of knowledge and understanding as well as cross-curricular references, including literacy. The school's scheme of work is well sequenced, drawing effectively on national guidance. Teachers' planning of individual lessons is regularly monitored.
129. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Starting from topics which have personal meaning for them, pupils learn to appreciate that homes and toys of long ago are different from those of today. Their study of famous people and events in earlier times opens their minds to the concepts of past and present and provide the basis for the notions of chronology and social change. Starting with un-dated timelines showing 'now', 'long ago' and 'a very long time ago', teachers reinforce learning by building up dated timelines relevant to the periods of history concerned. Year 2 pupils are then able to put the famous people and events they study into context. A detailed study of Louis Braille, for example, revealed similarities and differences in children's lifestyles then and now. Some noticed that his clothing restricted his freedom to play, showing the beginnings of an emerging insight into essential difference between children's role in society then and the way they are regarded now. Interesting learning activities such as writing a message in braille help pupils to understand that influences from the past are still with us, in this case reinforced by the example of how the ex-Minister of Education is able to cope with his handicap.
130. Enquiry methods provide the foundation for pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6, where pupils are helped to realise that history is not just a matter of collecting facts. This was extremely well demonstrated in a Year 3 lesson where a well-structured video discussion and pupils' own role play enabled them to see that the differences between the points of view of the Romans and the Celts in the time of Boudicca led to differing interpretations of the same events, a difficult idea for pupils in this age group to appreciate. Teachers' lesson planning and class management in the two lessons concerned were very good, significantly enhancing pupils' progress. Year 5 pupils learn to appreciate the importance of artefacts as they studied Ancient Greek pottery and other evidence to arrive at an understanding of the past. They developed a substantial evidence base leading to a good understanding of warfare at the time. The realisation that the London Marathon drew on an event which originated at this period led to a gasp of amazement and pleasure. In Year 5/6, pupils build up a picture of life and achievements in the Victorian period, their growing skills contributing well to their Year 6 study of key events in the twentieth century, particularly what it was like to be a child during World War Two. Evidence for this included reference to computer stories and oral evidence. Pupils showed awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of both primary and

secondary sources of evidence, leading to empathy with the experiences of evacuees, for example. Good use is made of the Internet to find sources of evidence. Year 6 pupils had pursued the topic at home on their own and were keen to bring in their findings.

131. Teachers' own enthusiasm for and understanding of the essentials of the subject is successfully communicated to pupils, whose work is well presented, showing pride in achievement. Assessment arrangements are to be developed and the coordinator is keen to refine the definition of learning objectives, especially as they relate to enquiry processes, in order to support these assessments and to provide a firmer basis for continuity in pupils' acquisition of historical enquiry skills. The target is to develop pupils' roles as 'young historians'. Resources for the subject have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now adequate, although book provision for the subject in the library is unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Strengths are:

- Good improvement since the last inspection;
- teaching and learning are very good for Years 3 to 6;
- good leadership for the subject.

The main areas for improvement are:

- Developing assessment procedures further so that the outcomes are used to make a difference to planning future lessons;
- providing more computers so that pupils in larger classes have more opportunities to use computers in lessons.

132. The standard of attainment of pupils is broadly in line with those expected nationally at the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils up to the age of seven make satisfactory progress in their ability to use ICT effectively. Pupils between seven and eleven make very good progress due in the main to the high quality of teaching they experience in lessons. For both age groups these results represent a marked improvement over those reported after the last inspection of 1997, when attainment was judged to be below that expected nationally. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as a second language is in line with that of their peers. There is no obvious difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
133. In order to address the issues raised in the last report the school has worked hard to improve its general provision for the subject. The computer suite has considerably increased the number of opportunities that pupils have to gain hands on experience of computers. The amount and variety of software have been increased and teacher training has been undertaken in order to increase their ability to make effective use of it. Teaching has, as a result of the training provided, shown a marked improvement since 1997, when it was judged to be satisfactory with some unsatisfactory. It is now good overall with some very good and excellent. Teaching is never less than satisfactory.
134. Another important aspect of the school's development of the subject is the introduction of a scheme of work that ensures skills are built up systematically. The school is developing procedures to assess and record the attainment and progress of pupils. However, it should bear in mind the importance of ensuring that assessment results are used to inform future lesson planning.
135. Pupils in Year 2 are developing their ability to use the hardware available. They can use and describe the functions of the space bar, backspace, shift keys and mouse. They know that ICT can be used to rearrange text to make it easier to read. They can use the direction keys and delete to make corrections to their work. During the lessons observed pupils made good progress in their ability to co-operate with each other. Pupils in Year 6 are able to use the Internet to access information, for example, finding out about evacuees during the last war in their history work. They can use spreadsheets to enter data and perform calculations and are able to answer questions based on the work being done. In a lesson on controlling traffic lights with a logo program the pupils showed a good understanding of the use of computers. They understand that computers need precise and accurate instructions if they are to function correctly.

136. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Where teaching is good or better pupils make good progress because of the well organised lessons that they experience. For example, pupils in Year 5 made very good progress in their understanding of spreadsheets and their function due to the good subject knowledge of the teacher and the brisk pace of the lesson. The teacher demonstrated a high level of expectation and ensured that the pupils were aware of their own learning. In a lesson on controlling computers through direct instructions, Year 6 pupils made very good progress because the resources were well focused on the objectives of the lesson. The lesson had a very good balance between direct teaching and practical activities and the enthusiastic approach of the teacher motivated the pupils to work hard. Other aspects of the good or better teaching noted during the inspection are the good relationships between teachers and pupils, well-organised lessons based on careful planning and correct use of the subject vocabulary. In all the lessons observed pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their ICT work. They become very involved in the activities and co-operate well with their teachers and each other. They are very attentive to what is being taught.
137. The subject has good links to literacy where it is used effectively to enhance language development. In science it is used to produce databases to record findings. ICT is used effectively in mathematics to help with calculations and produce graphs. During ICT lessons pupils are encouraged to discuss their work thus developing their speaking and listening skills.
138. The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator who has a good grasp of what still needs to be done in order to improve the schools provision. There are enough computers to deliver the required curriculum; these are sited in a suite and used according to a set timetable. If practical, the school should consider increasing the number of computers available in order to ensure that pupils in larger classes are able to have greater access to one during lessons.

MUSIC

Strengths are:

- Pupils' enthusiasm for the subject;
- good teaching and learning.

The main area for improvement is:

- Finding more time for the co-ordinator to check on teaching and learning in the subject.

139. Standards for seven and 11 year olds are in line with those expected for their age and remain similar to those noted at the time of the last inspection. Throughout the school, pupils delight in their music-making activities as when young children in Reception showed great enthusiasm for singing 'Jump up little rabbits, hop, hop, hop' and joined in the actions eagerly and could sing in tune. Older Year 5/6 pupils tried hard to master the words of a Gilbert and Sullivan song and clearly enjoyed the sentiments of the song. They demonstrated a good understanding of how the song was meant to be sung and worked hard to achieve this, showing a reasonable understanding of dynamics and pitch.
140. Year 1 pupils quickly learned to sing a new song and put actions to it in response to excellent teaching. Pupils showed good control of pitch, dynamics and rhythm. These pupils also learned to keep a steady beat with clapping and moved competently to using a range of percussion instruments to do the same. Year 2 pupils could easily clap the rhythm of their name and most could make suggestions as to how it could be changed to make the rhythm more interesting, such as hard and soft. Nearly all pupils could write notation for a simple rhythm and could read it back and play it on a range of percussion instruments. Towards the end of the lesson, pupils demonstrated good performance skills when they read and played their compositions. Other pupils listened and appraised these performances well and most could identify changes in rhythm.
141. The full range of the curriculum is covered and in the Year 5/6 lesson observed, good links were made with history when pupils had to listen to and suggest which Victorian instrument was being played.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with excellent teaching in Year 1 where the very brisk pace to lessons, excellent relationships and high expectations ensured that pupils learned at an excellent rate. All teachers have adequate subject knowledge and know that they can call on the support of the co-ordinator. The school has good resources to support teaching such as taped songs, and these are used well to promote good learning.
143. The school employs a teacher for the school choir, where standards are high and membership of the choir promotes good personal development. Choir members have performed at the Royal Albert Hall.
144. Leadership is good, although the co-ordinator has no formal time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, the subject co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and expertise and takes regular hymn and singing practices and consults very regularly with teaching staff and visiting music teachers. The schemes of work are helpful to teachers, especially for Years 1 and 2. The scheme for the older pupils is to be reviewed. Assessment is in place but still at the early stages of being used. Now that the school has a permanent staff, it is expected that progress in this area will be good. Resources are adequate for teaching the National Curriculum for music although there are no up-to-date books on the subject in the library.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The main strengths are:

- Enthusiasm of the subject manager;
- appropriate range of activities is covered;
- excellent inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

The main area for improvement is:

- Further challenge for higher achieving pupils.

145. Standards in physical education for seven and 11 year-olds are average and are similar to those described at the previous inspection. A criticism made in the previous report about the lack of big apparatus restricting coverage of certain aspects of the subject has been addressed. The school has sought the advice of the local education authority and new apparatus has been provided to enable the requirements of the National Curriculum to be fully covered. Lessons were observed in games and gymnastics only, although all areas of the subject are taught.
146. All pupils are aware of the importance of warming up activities and this is well linked to their work in science when pupils learn how muscles and bones interact. Teachers make time in their lessons for these activities to be both interesting and to prepare pupils for more demanding physical activities later in their lessons. Teachers promote the awareness of safety issues in pupils and how their behaviour affects other people.
147. Pupils in the infants explore ways of travelling around the hall floor and over apparatus. They experiment with different kinds of movement and are keen to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of different techniques. Pupils are very pleased to be asked to demonstrate their skills in front of their friends. In the lower juniors (Years 3 and 4), pupils learn techniques to improve the quality of their movements, particularly through transferring their weight to make high and low jumps successfully. Pupils learn well, building on previously learned skills. At first, these skills are erratic but, with practice, signs of improvement emerge and this provides additional enjoyment. Older juniors consider the importance of using tactics in games as a means of improving success. In teams, pupils play a form of benchball and with teacher support, consider ways in which their efforts can be improved if they work as a team with a strategic plan to gain advantage from their own play and control the strengths of the opposition. This work generates a lively discussion of individual responses to games.
148. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers are enthusiastic and motivate pupils and this contributes to satisfactory learning through the acquisition of skills, awareness of rules and the enjoyment of sharing games activities. Lessons are planned

systematically and ensure that there is progression in learning for most pupils. However, further consideration requires to be given to extend learning opportunities for the more able pupils to develop their skills further, particularly when lessons are set in the hall, where restriction is imposed by the amount of space available. There are occasions when pupils spend too much time listening to their teacher rather than being involved in physical activities. A very strong feature of the subject is the excellent example of inclusion of special needs pupils. For example, a teacher rehearses the lesson with a little girl with hearing difficulties. During the lesson the teacher and pupil communicate through hand signals. The rest of the class are unaware of these arrangements, believing the signals are for every member of the class! A child with physical difficulties is partnered by the teacher to enable full participation in all activities. In these situations, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

149. Pupils benefit from the use of a local pool to develop their swimming skills. The school makes very good effort to encourage as many pupils as possible to swim 25 metres unaided by the age of eleven. In the main, nearly all pupils achieve the target.
150. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic subject manager with good vision for the development of the subject. She is anxious to improve her skills and knowledge further by taking advantage of courses organised by the local authority. Assessment procedures are sound but as yet their use has not had time to influence curriculum provision. Until very recently, the high turnover of staff has meant that the procedures have not been used by all teachers consistently.
151. The school benefits from hard play areas marked for a range of games and skill practice. The school field enables good opportunities for team games. Additional support for extra-curricular games activities make a very good contribution to the learning opportunities for pupils.