

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whetstone

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101321

Headteacher: Graham Gunn

Reporting inspector: John Lilly
12487

Dates of inspection: 26 – 28 February 2001

Inspection number: 192186

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: Swan Lane
Whetstone

Postcode: N20 0PL

Telephone number: 020 8445 4693

Fax number: 020 84463569

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Donald Merritt

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12487	John Lilly	Registered inspector	History	Leadership and management Attainment and progress Teaching Curriculum
			Special educational needs	
9075	Juliet Baxter	Lay inspector		Attitudes and personal development Care for pupils Partnership with parents
27736	Jeremy Collins	Team inspector	Science	
			Information and communication technology	
			Design and technology	
			Physical education	
			Equal opportunities	
22113	Aileen King	Team inspector	Mathematics	
			Foundation Stage	
			Art and design	
			Music	
1963	Sibani Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	English	
			English as an additional language	
			Geography	

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections
6, East Point
High Street, Seal
Sevenoaks
TN15 0EG

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John's is an Anglican voluntary-aided school of average size. There are 244 girls and boys on roll between the ages of 3 and 11, some of whom attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Although the school's admission policy reflects the school's religious nature, governors seek to provide for children from the immediate locality, whatever their faith background. The pupils come from homes that are broadly average in terms of social and economic factors, but the range is wide, with a significant proportion coming from homes that are more favoured than average, balanced by others from homes that are economically disadvantaged. Attainment of pupils on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is lower than average. The proportion of pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds is above average. These pupils have very varied backgrounds but most have English as their first language. The school's aims stress high academic standards, equality of opportunity within a Christian, supportive and safe environment, and partnership with parents and community. The current improvement plan places priority on raising standards in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, design and technology, history and geography.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St John's is a good school that does many things very well. Pupils make good progress and most attain high standards within a very caring community that has strong values and clear aims. The headteacher provides very inspiring leadership for a hardworking and close-knit team of teachers and other staff. The deputy headteacher, governors, and staff in their management roles provide wise, strong and perceptive support. The very good curriculum provides rich and varied learning opportunities, and teaching is very good. The pupils develop as balanced and caring young people with a joy in learning and confidence in their own individual worth. They behave very well. The school offers very good value for money

What the school does well

- The school provides a very good ethos for learning and personal development.
- Staff teach very well, following a very good curriculum. Consequently, pupils make good and often very good progress.
- Provision for information and communication technology and activities beyond class lessons are excellent.
- The good provision at the Foundation Stage (early years) provides a secure start to the pupils' schooling and encourages good learning.
- The school is very well led and managed.
- The school supports a very productive partnership with parents.

What could be improved

- The ability of pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards in information and communication technology, and design and technology have improved significantly. The curriculum as a whole has become even richer, varied and balanced. Teaching has improved and assessment now provides a more secure basis for identifying areas for future development. Skilled and determined leadership and management have put in place the foundations for future improvement. However, attainment in national tests tended to remain static until 2000 and, therefore, declined when compared with other schools nationally. Standards have risen since 2000 and are now good. The school has the capacity to achieve very high standards.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	A	C	C
Mathematics	A	B	C	C
Science	A	C	C	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In national tests and assessments in 2000, seven-year-old pupils achieved above-average standards in reading, average standards in writing and well above average standards in mathematics. Results in reading were above the average for similar schools, in line with this standard for writing, and well above in mathematics. In national tests in 2000 for pupils aged eleven, the school's results were average in English, mathematics and science when compared both with all schools nationally and also similar schools. Overall, standards tended to remain static until 2000, and therefore did not improve at the same rate as all schools nationally. However, the school noted this and took well-considered action. Consequently, standards overall are now above average and are well set to improve further. The school's targets are appropriate and suitably challenging.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very keen to come to school, to work hard and to behave well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good both in and also outside lessons. There is an air of calm, caring self-discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good, and pupils gain in self-confidence and maturity. There is a marked lack of oppressive behaviour.
Attendance	Attendance and punctuality are very good.

The behaviour and caring attitudes of the pupils are strengths of the school. Even so, there is room for the school to help pupils take further responsibility for their own learning, becoming more aware of how to achieve, for themselves, even higher standards.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 6-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching is consistently very good throughout the school and across subjects. All teaching is always at least satisfactory. Almost 90 per cent is good or better, of which 55 per cent is very good or excellent. The teaching of literacy and numeracy reflects these overall high standards. Class teachers work very productively with skilled classroom assistants. The school employs a wide range of expert teachers to add further to the quality and range of learning, for example in physical education, music and design and technology. Consequently girls and boys of all backgrounds and levels of ability work with interest, good understanding and determination to do their best. They show considerable pride in their well-earned achievements.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The very good curriculum and excellent range of activities outside lessons provide rich, balanced and very varied learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is well-managed and provides effective support. These pupils make good progress relative to their prior attainment.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils make good progress in their development of English and their general work. However, specific focus on their language-learning needs remains an area for development.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils grow in both self-confidence and also maturity, and become balanced, caring and thoughtful young people.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for the pupils very well.

The school has built and maintains a very productive partnership with parents which is a strong foundation for the school's future success. This working partnership helps the school provide a very rich curriculum and dynamically supports the good progress of pupils. Assessment is rapidly developing as a key aspect of the school's improvement planning, but has yet to develop sufficiently in ways that help pupils understand how they, themselves, can help improve their own progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership both for staff and for pupils. They lead a very hard-working, reflective and purposeful staff team; all teachers provide good leadership for their individual areas of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Under the excellent leadership of the chairman, the governors meet their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance rigorously, and now uses analysis of assessment data systematically and to good effect.
The strategic use of resources	Very good management and use of resources is a strength of the school. They gain best value by using the advice of others and by ensuring they gain the required quality at the lowest price.

The school is very well staffed. The accommodation provides an excellent environment in which to teach and learn. Resources are very good. The use of assessment is good, but remains an area for further development as a way to gain even better value from the work of the school and achieve even higher standards.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What a small number of parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their relationship and partnership with the school.• The curriculum, especially the outside-class activities.• The good teaching that helps their children make good progress.• The provision in the nursery and reception.• Their children are keen to come to a school where they are happy and safe.• The leadership of the headteacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A better-informed working partnership with parents, for example through reports that make clearer the next steps to be learned.

The inspection team agree with the parents' very positive views, and agree with the area they identify for improvement. Individual parents raised further points with inspectors, and these were all followed up.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards of attainment have improved since the previous inspection. Across all subjects except science, attainment is above average by the time pupils are eleven. Since pupils join the school with broadly average attainment, this above-average attainment shows that girls and boys of all ability levels make at least good progress and often very good progress. Pupils who can speak languages other than English or come from cultures other than British make equivalent progress to their peers. The strength of the school is that attainment and progress are equally good across the curriculum; this is very much in line with the school's aims and values. This high quality learning results from coherent and very effective leadership and management, a very good curriculum enriched by excellent extra-curricular provision and consistently very good teaching. It also relates to the 'open' character of the school that welcomes and supports every pupil, whatever his or her ability, talent or background. Together, these strengths mean that the school is well placed to achieve even higher standards.
2. Over recent years, the school's results in national tests and assessments for pupils aged seven have varied; for example, there has been very good improvement in mathematics and a slight decline in writing whilst standards in reading have remained static. In 2000, results were well above average in reading, above average in writing and very high in mathematics. However, in science they fell below the national average. Although the proportion of pupils achieving higher than nationally expected standards in English and mathematics was above the national average, it was well below this standard in science. Compared with similar schools, standards overall were above average in reading, broadly average in writing and well above average in mathematics.
3. The school's overall results over recent years in national tests for pupils aged eleven have tended to remain static or have showed a slight decline. However, standards in mathematics improved at the national rate. In 2000, the proportion attaining the expected level in English was average, in mathematics below average and in science above average. The proportion exceeding the expected standard was above average in English and mathematics, but average in science. Overall, the standards in each of these subjects matched both the national average and also the average for similar schools.
4. Overall, these results are average in a school where the ethos, teaching and curriculum are now very good. Governors and staff were rightly concerned about results in 2000, particularly in mathematics. Together they took determined and well-considered action, and this inspection finds clear improvement. The key to governor's and senior management action was careful and rigorous analysis of assessment data which identified areas to improve. These processes have already brought improvement, but remain an area for even further development.
5. By the age of seven, the attainment of current pupils is now above national expectations and above national averages in all subjects except for science, design and technology, geography and physical education; in these subjects most pupils meet national expectations but too few exceed them. By eleven, most pupils exceed national expectations in all subjects except science, and in information and communication

technology standards are very high. History provides a good example of how good teaching, based upon a very good curriculum, enables most pupils to attain nationally-expected standards, and a higher than average proportion of pupils to achieve high or very high standards by the time they are eleven. In most subjects, this above average attainment includes an appropriate proportion of pupils reaching very high standards. The satisfactory, rather than good, standards in science relate to the subject being assigned too little time for teaching towards the top of the school. The overall improvement relates to more effective use of assessment, use that has brought greater precision to the teaching.

6. Children join the school with attainment that is broadly average, although there are a significant number of children with high attainment, balanced by some who have lower than average attainment. Children at the Foundation Stage make good progress, and by the time they are six, most attain higher than average standards. This provides a very good basis for future improvement. By the time they are seven, most pupils, even though they have not benefited from the nursery provision now available, have made good progress. Progress between Year 3 and Year 6 is at least good, and often very good. The real strength of this progress and eventual attainment is that it is equally good right across the curriculum. This provides very rich and coherent learning. For example, attainment is good in physical education and the creative arts, and represents good progress, because these subjects offer an excellent range of experiences allowing particular abilities, interests and talents to flourish. Information and communication technology provides a good example of what St John's can achieve when they bring all their many strengths together. Progress in this subject is very good and attainment extremely high.
7. Standards of literacy and numeracy are now good, and rapidly improving. These skills underpin overall progress and high attainment. Pupils listen intently so that they can work out what each piece of new information means and, consequently, their responses are articulate and well considered. They gain a good vocabulary and can justify their views. Slightly weaker are their questioning skills, and this relates to the relatively less developed assessment procedures that would allow them to understand their own learning more precisely, for example the questions that teachers ask that help pupils check they have fully understood the work. The pupils are very numerate, and enjoy the power that good computation and understanding of number bring to all their learning. They can manipulate shapes well, and this brings an added dimension to subjects such as design and technology and art.
8. In the main, girls and boys of different abilities and cultural backgrounds make equally good progress. Those with special educational needs are very effectively supported. The good teaching allows pupils of below average, average and above average ability to make good or very good progress. Pupils with particular gifts and talents also make good progress, and they especially benefit from the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. However, as assessment procedures develop further, there needs to be more precise challenge for these pupils' very high intellectual abilities so that their progress becomes not just good but very good. Pupils who can speak languages other than English make similar progress to their English-speaking peers. At the pre-inspection meeting, many parents said how well their older children were doing at secondary school. They said that this was not only because their children had made good progress at St John's, but also, and perhaps more significantly, they had learned how to learn and how to gain great pride and satisfaction in their learning. Inspectors agree.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils in all year groups show very positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards school. On entry to the school, there is a constant and happy buzz of children hard at work. They are eager to learn and are enthusiastic about the content of most lessons. They set about their tasks purposefully and are keen to please their teachers. They concentrate well and remain attentive throughout lessons. They enjoy working together in groups and share resources and learning in a co-operative and friendly fashion. Their enthusiasm for some of the school's special features knows no bounds. They cannot wait to get into the computer suite and they deeply appreciate the wonders of their new library with its quietly running water fountain and miniature toy pandas nestling between bamboo shoots, to name but two of its attractive features. This attention to detail clearly entices the pupils to use the library frequently and use its excellent range and large number of books.
10. The very young children in the newly built nursery settle in quickly and are soon comfortable with its routines and procedures. The same applies to the reception class and the school's warm and inclusive open-door policy means that parents can come right into these and other classes each morning to ensure that their children are well-and-truly settled. This leads to pupils feeling secure and comfortable as they start their day's work.
11. When speaking to pupils in all year groups, it is very clear that positive attitudes on the part of pupils are a strength of this school. They say that the school is a happy place where they make good friends, like their teachers and which they do not want to leave at the end of the day. They are very clear about the high standards of behaviour expected. Behaviour throughout the school day in a variety of settings is very good, and adult intervention to correct behaviour is rare. Pupils have a strong sense of occasion, for example in assemblies when they respect and enjoy the contribution of other pupils with applause and enthusiasm. When asked if bullying occurs in their school, pupils are very clear about the difference between mild irritation and serious acts of aggression. They can relate to the former on occasions as part of daily life but are adamant that bullying in its more sinister sense simply does not happen in their school. Should it ever do so they have complete confidence that staff would deal with it speedily. There were no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection.
12. Relationships amongst pupils and with all adults in the school are warm and respectful. They are a further strength of the school and in part a result of the school's philosophy of valuing everyone for what they have to offer and for the uniqueness of all individuals, whatever their strengths or problems. This is very evident in the way the pupils treat each other well and show regard for their teachers and support staff. Not only are they friendly and courteous to visitors, but also they have a high regard for each other and indeed they relish the different backgrounds in their midst. They look after each other and are concerned when things go wrong for their friends.
13. Allocated tasks, for example taking registers to the office, provide a firm base to pupils' personal development and increase their confidence with a sense of communal responsibility. They act as classroom monitors and generally help around the school in their enthusiasm to preserve the stimulating and attractive environment in which they work. The pupils in St John's school behave very maturely. They show great potential to become effective citizens of the communities in which they are growing up. Their calibre is such that staff could well afford to let them undertake further responsibilities, for example in contributing to a 'school council' or by carrying out more extensive and challenging tasks. Greater responsibility would enhance their already very good

personal development further and more formally acknowledge the important part they play in the school's community life.

14. The school's rate of attendance is well above the national average for primary schools and as such is very good. In addition there was no unauthorised absence in the year prior to the inspection. Punctuality is very good and no pupils were observed to arrive late during the period of the inspection.
15. The pupils' very good behaviour, high quality relationships and growing personal development make a strong contribution to their achievement and progress. They enliven the flourishing and exciting community that is the trademark of this school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. It is at the heart of the school's success and helps pupils learn in an effective and exciting way. All teaching is at least satisfactory, and almost 90 per cent is good or better. More than 50 per cent is very good or excellent. Teaching is consistently effective in all years, in all subjects, and by all teachers. There are no weak links and, therefore, pupils make consistently good progress overall as they move through the school. This good teaching is the result of very good leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They ensure that staff have the right resources and appropriate training, and observe teaching, identifying what goes well and areas for improvement. They help staff work as a team, sharing good ideas and helping each other to solve problems.
17. There is much evidence that teaching has improved considerably and is usually very good. Even so, the school realises that there is still more to be done, and that the current quality of teaching has yet to be fully reflected in the pupils' learning, because some areas of learning need to make up ground, for example in mathematics. The foundation of this current effective teaching is the teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding, very good planning with clear learning objectives and carefully chosen activities to support the learning. This planning takes the wider view of the curriculum, allowing learning in one area to support learning in another, for example artwork connected with studies of Ancient Greece or in information and communication technology. This core strength of the planning provides pupils with learning that holds together rather than being divided up into non-related parts. Consequently, pupils are becoming powerful learners, rather than simply successful in a few areas. The teachers have high expectations, challenging the pupils to achieve very high standards, for example in an excellent history lesson when the teaching expected pupils to grapple with ideas that pupils of 14 may have found difficult. This teacher knew her pupils very well, taught in ways that matched each level of ability and helped each to achieve these very high standards. Most lessons bowl along with a sense of pace and shared purpose. Teachers use homework effectively, providing a good balance between the practice of skills covered in class and individual research.
18. Assessment is an aspect of teaching that has improved significantly in recent years. Teachers use this information sensibly to understand the learning needs of each pupil, and gain a view of the standards each should reach. However, although they give satisfactory and helpful oral feedback, teachers' marking does not always show clearly why pupils have done well and what they need to learn next. When giving oral feedback, teachers do not always ask the probing questions that force pupils to evaluate and think through their own learning. This misses opportunities to extend the questioning aspect of pupils' speaking and listening skills, and marking does not

sufficiently build upon these skills by clarifying for pupils the next step in their learning. Similarly, teachers have yet to devise sufficient ways for pupils to evaluate their own work, set themselves targets and work out ways to achieve these targets. At present, pupils tend to accept the teachers' evaluation of their work, rather than evaluating their own work and recording their own achievements.

19. A feature of this very good teaching is the effective and well-planned teamwork amongst class teachers, class assistants, volunteers and the additional specialists employed by the school. This allows individual pupils to be well supported, and pupils as a whole to enjoy and gain from a very wide and rich curriculum. For example, all pupils are able learn an individual musical instrument by the time they leave the school, have opportunities to experience a very wide range of sports, and have many different opportunities to work creatively. These opportunities are available not only to some pupils, but to all pupils.
20. The basic skills that underpin all learning are taught effectively. Reading is given high priority, and pupils become keen readers who see the part it plays in all their learning. Writing is accurate, fluent and enjoyed because teachers encourage and guide writing, and help pupils to use their writing to report, describe, record and express their imagination and feelings creatively. Teachers build on the pupils' speaking and listening skills steadily by using language that is not only clear but also demands a response from the pupils. They deepen and extend the learning by asking questions that force pupils to think for themselves and give reasoned and articulate answers. However, it is only in the most effective teaching that the building of these skills is fully thought-through and applied.
21. Numeracy is taught effectively and, consequently, pupils see these basic skills as not only important but also an essential part of all their learning, for example in design and technology and geography. Pupils' ability to calculate, manipulate shape, and analyse, present and interpret data underpins much of the learning.
22. The effective teaching supports good learning. Pupils of average and below average ability make very good progress. Pupils of higher ability make good progress, but because some are not sufficiently aware of their ability, they do not always attempt the higher standards. Similarly, there are some very able pupils who, in the main, do well, but are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve very high, rather than just high, standards. The rich curriculum allows the pupils' many talents to flower, and therefore, overall, the school provides well for pupils of very high ability and/or with particular talents, for example in music or sport.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make at least good progress. This is because class teachers and assistants support them perceptively, and many receive specialised and very good teaching separately from the rest of the class. They have very helpful individual education plans that provide good guidance for teachers. However, finding ways for the specialised teachers, class teachers and class assistants to work even more as a team, remains an area for further development.
24. A significant number of pupils have either English as an additional language, or an additional language to English. Only a small number of pupils are at an early stage of English development. Truly bi-lingual pupils make good progress and are well supported, but opportunities are missed to support even better progress, because the school investigates insufficiently their unique learning needs, and this is also the case for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Occasionally, pupils at an early

stage of English development are supported alongside pupils with special educational needs. This is not helpful, as English learners need to have high quality language models among their peers. Teachers in the main know their pupils very well, but this practice is an example of how their knowledge is sometimes insufficiently precise and probing.

25. Some pupils have problems with behaviour and social skills. Teachers deal with these problems very well, partly because they have very good class management skills and partly because they value these pupils and address their individual needs specifically.
26. All the above supports very good learning. Girls and boys are caught by the enthusiasm of their teachers and are keen to learn. They are curious and excited by new ideas and skills. The high expectations of their teachers and the varied experiences on offer help them take learning in one area and apply it in others. They work hard, fast and with a due regard for accuracy and high quality work. A marked feature is the way especially older pupils work not only co-operatively but collaboratively, modelling themselves on the way the adults work so closely as a team. Homework becomes an effective joining of teaching and independent learning.
27. Illuminating this very good teaching and learning is the general environment and ethos of the school. Every area of the school has been developed to inspire good learning, and displays both celebrate pupils' achievements and also present the ideas and beauty that enliven a joy in learning. Celebration of the achievement of all pupils is at the heart of the school's ethos, best seen in the 'open' assemblies that mark the success of staff and pupils as well as the secure relationship between home and school.

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

28. The curriculum is very good and much improved since the previous inspection. It is very broad, carefully balanced and implemented with a concern for appropriate depth and rich variety. It meets the requirements for the Foundation Stage, the National Curriculum and for religious education. Recent development of provision for the Foundation Stage has already given these young children an even better start to their schooling. The curriculum underpins and drives good learning, and clear policy provides clear standards, guidance and detail for teachers.
29. The school places due priority on literacy and numeracy and this aspect focuses not simply on skills but also on the creativity that comes from reading and writing and the joy in what numbers can do. Teachers take every opportunity to use these skills in other areas such as history, design and technology and geography. Science is well planned but the school assigns the subject insufficient time to cover each aspect in sufficient depth, especially in higher years, and this results in relatively lower attainment throughout the school and particularly in Year 6. The information and communication technology curriculum is extremely good, supported by very good teaching and excellent resources. Learning in this subject, as with other subjects, is not seen in isolation but used to enrich learning in all subjects.
30. The high quality lies in the way teachers and very effective management see the curriculum as a whole, each being a part of an overall programme of learning. Design and technology is used perceptively to bring together learning from science, art and design, and music to investigate and practise the design process in relevant depth and with precision. The humanities, history and geography, involve required skills and

knowledge, but also cover topics in depth, drawing in moral, social and cultural aspects. The performing and creative arts, music, and art and design, illuminate and enrich learning in all areas, providing steady acquisition of skills alongside many opportunities for imaginative creativity. In addition, drama and dance are playing an increasingly positive role. Physical education plays a very large part in the school, building skills and offering a very wide range of experience. Religious education works to a locally agreed syllabus from another area, but agreed by the diocese. It introduces pupils to a good range of other faiths, as well as Christianity. All these very good aspects of the curriculum, extended through excellent outside-class activities, provide an excellent programme of learning and one of the best any member of the inspection team had seen.

31. The curriculum is very relevant to pupils' present and future lives and, therefore, pupils find it interesting and exciting. It spurs on their curiosity and challenges their abilities. However, two aspects offer areas for further development. Firstly, the school community includes many cultures and, although they are valued and respected, insufficient opportunity is taken to promote and celebrate their unique and special differences, and bring this additional quality to the learning. As a result, the multi-cultural dimension of the learning is overly bland and unfocused. Secondly, although the school has produced a good policy and scheme of work for personal, social and health education, it is not delivered sufficiently systematically week-by-week. The health aspects are well delivered through other subjects, for example science, but the more personal development elements are missed and the social aspects, for example citizenship, tend to get lost within other areas.
32. The curriculum as a whole is implemented in ways that stretch and challenge each level of ability, and in ways that serve girls and boys equally well. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well both within and also outside classrooms, and they have good access to the learning. Teachers help pupils who have other languages than English, or come from other cultures, to access the learning productively. Even so, this is an area that would benefit from more detailed consideration, for example recognising the variety of cultures in the school more explicitly, and investigating in more depth the languages some pupils speak at home. Overall, the curriculum provides very good opportunities for pupils of all abilities, cultures, gifts and talents to reach their individual potentials.

Opportunities beyond class lessons

33. It is seldom that an inspection team finds a school where the range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils is judged to be exceptional and outstanding. However, this is the case at St John's.
34. Over the school year, pupils have the choice to involve themselves in a large array of activities which include horse-riding, football, rugby, netball, fencing, golf, French, chess, poetry, embroidery/craft, art, computers, dance and drama, canoeing and rock climbing. In addition, the school's strong commitment to musical provision is reflected in the large number of opportunities for pupils to learn a variety of instruments or play in the school orchestra. That the school financially provides for this provision is very much appreciated by parents and enjoyed by their children, and ensures that pupils have equal opportunities.
35. The team interviewed a large number of pupils during the inspection. When asked what they liked best about the school their very positive responses unanimously included the wide range of opportunities open to them in the form of extra-curricular activities. This view was clearly echoed by their parents at the pre-inspection meeting and through the large number of completed questionnaires. The inspection team fully endorses parents' views that this school provides their children with a stunning range of extra-curricular activities that most schools would find difficult to match.
36. This excellent provision is highly inclusive. It is not provided for some but for all, and staff openly encourage all pupils to take part. Realising that some may choose not to take advantage of what is on offer, much of the provision is provided within the school day, ensuring that all benefit. There is a wide range of varied visits away from school and of visitors to the school. Visits include residential experience. Again, the school ensures that all pupils benefit from these experiences; finance is never an inhibiting factor. The strong partnership with parents underpins this very good provision.

The contribution of the community

37. The school's philosophy of warmly including everyone it works with extends to its wish to include the local and wider community in all that it does. The school holds 'open' assemblies that are highly valued, and they act out the school's commitment to being open to everything that would enhance the pupils' learning and generate a feeling of worth and value in all who work with the school, young and old.
38. This openness attracts expertise to enhance standards and extends to the wider community. The school has strong links with the Church of St John and the vicar is a regular visitor to take assemblies, in addition to his role as vice-chairman of the governing body. There are very strong links with the University of Middlesex that have resulted in recruitment of teachers to work in the school and extensive input by the university into the school's provision of information and communication technology. There is a strong relationship with the Rotary Club through the chairman of the governing body. Students from the University of Hertfordshire frequently undertake their teaching practice in the school, trainee nursery nurses work in the school's exciting new nursery provision and local secondary schools are pleased to place their older pupils in St John's for work experience, many of these young people having been former pupils of the school. A parent who was the bandmaster of the Grenadier Guards supported the school in its very high quality dramatic productions before he was posted elsewhere and the Army, stationed at Mill Hill, provides support and help on

the school's very large open day in the summer. Students from a French university have made a contribution to the French Club.

39. The school has positive relationships with outside specialist agencies, for example support for special educational needs and its diocesan and local education authority advisors. It enjoys positive and fruitful relationships with the many secondary schools to which its pupils transfer at the end of Year 6.

Provision for personal development

40. Provision is very good, and consequently pupils mature as balanced, caring and perceptive young people, certain of their own value and accountable for making their own decisions. Provision has improved since the previous inspection, particularly as to its depth and breadth. Provision is intrinsic to the curriculum and deeply embedded within the ethos of the school.
41. Provision for spiritual development is very good. At the core of the provision are the Christian nature of the school and assemblies. These are very much events of collective and corporate worship. They are celebratory of achievement as individuals and of the school as a whole. They link these achievements securely to a developing understanding of the importance of having a shared commitment to seeking meaning within and accepting the purpose of creation. Pupils are helped to understand the importance of belief in a caring deity, a belief that implies personal responsibilities. There are many further opportunities for pupils to probe and express their feelings and responses to life and nature through creative writing, music and art. Teachers help pupils through, for example, science to revel in the joy that comes from awe and wonder. Religious education plays a significant part in helping pupils understand the point and purpose of a spiritual life within Christianity but also other religions. However, the school has yet to provide sufficient opportunities for quiet reflection, and the spiritual development that comes from silence.
42. Provision for moral development is very good. Staff help pupils understand that communities need rules and that individuals need to know what constitutes right and wrong. From the nursery onwards, adults help pupils understand the consequences of their actions, and how and why they need to discriminate between what they choose to do. This learning is supported by agreed school and class rules of conduct, and reinforced by a perceptive and well-understood pattern of rewards and sanctions. Sanctions are rarely needed because the school sees that individuals are held to account rather than being punished. Consequently, pupils take a moral awareness into their own lives, rather than having it imposed. This learning is significantly enriched by the way that adults present pupils with the moral component in other studies such as history and geography.
43. Provision for social development is very good. The school works as a close-knit community that is concerned for the quality of life of all its members. Adults set fine role models for the pupils to emulate. This is empowered by very good relationships where good things are recognised and celebrated, and bad things are treated as something to be put right together. Each class acts as a 'family' within the community, and like good families there is a sense of purpose, cohesion and belonging. The residential trips make a very positive contribution to the pupils' social development and, for many, they are the high point of the year. The very wide and varied provision for physical education helps pupils learn it needs effort and teamwork to succeed, balancing strictly keeping the rules with a natural desire to compete and win. Even though the overall provision is very good, the school misses opportunities to improve on

this already very good provision, through more systematic implementation of the school's good policy for personal and social education, and a more rigorous focus on the concept of citizenship, possibly through a school council. Dealt with more fully in the section on 'Care', the provision would benefit from seeking ways to increase pupils' awareness of their own learning and development.

44. Provision for cultural development is very good, well founded within the very good curriculum. This allows pupils to experience and take part in a very wide range of cultural experiences within, in particular, the creative and performing arts. School productions and, for example, the school orchestra give pupils a joy in individual, team and community performance; music assemblies provide other excellent opportunities for pupils to come together to enjoy each other's achievements. Pupils are introduced to cultural achievements from many cultures and faith communities, for example within religious education, history and geography, as well as music and art. Even so, there is scope for greater promotion of the special qualities of each culture represented within the school. The excellent extra-curricular activities allow pupils to follow up their many talents and find new ones. 'Open' assemblies regularly celebrate pupils' achievements within their own home communities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. High standards of pastoral care have been maintained since the last inspection. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting commented on the high quality of care afforded their children and their views are endorsed by this inspection team.
46. Staff and governors give high priority to security and health and safety, and consequently, pupils work and play in a safe and attractive environment. Regular health and safety checks are undertaken, as are termly fire drills. A number of staff have updated training certificates in first-aid and children are well cared for should they become unwell during the school day.
47. Arrangements for child protection are in place and the headteacher is the designated officer for child protection. Staff are well aware of the school's detailed procedures for child protection, but as yet there has been no in-service training for this although there are plans for it to take place in the near future.
48. Pupils are well known to teachers, classroom assistants and all other staff in the school. This results in their behaviour and personal development being very well monitored over time, informally but effectively. If there is good reason to record concerns then this is done by the class teacher and the headteacher on a confidential written record.
49. The provision is enhanced by careful induction into the nursery and good preparation for the pupils' secondary education. Effective guidance is provided on maintaining good health, sex education and the possible misuse of drugs.
50. The school's attendance policy is simple and clear. Its effective implementation results in a rate of attendance that is well above the national average for primary schools. In spite of its consistently high attendance rate, the school is not complacent and the headteacher and visiting educational welfare officer monitor attendance figures regularly.
51. The support given to pupils with special educational needs by teachers and classroom assistants ensures their good progress. The pupils in the school who have English as

an additional language are well supported by a their teachers and, currently, by the special educational needs co-ordinator. At present there is no specialist input into the school for pupils with English as an additional language from the local education authority.

Assessment

52. The school is rapidly developing ways of assessing and tracking pupils' progress and attainment, once staff realised it was an area that needed to be improved. Staff together with governors now analyse results from national tests rigorously, taking care to interpret the data as one way of deciding areas in teaching and curriculum that require improvement. Subject co-ordinators are actively developing ways of assessing and recording progress in their subjects. These processes have already had a very positive impact on standards. Teachers now have a better instrument through which to test the effectiveness of their teaching, and weaknesses, once identified, are addressed. A very positive feature of the teachers' planning books is the way they evaluate each lesson and decide how to improve next time. These improved procedures help teachers to identify where and why pupils meet problems, and both to set work that is well matched to each level of ability and also to spot when a pupil finds work difficult. They are beginning to help teachers set targets for each class, lesson and individual, and to give a better idea of the very high standards that many pupils have the capacity to achieve. The school recognises that more development is still required, but such assessment is already underpinning the increasing success of the school.
53. Assessment of special educational needs is very precise and helps individual education plans to have precise targets and objectives, and practical action plans that involve teachers, assistants, parents and the pupils themselves. Progress is regularly reviewed and adaptation made to the plan. Pupils are helped to understand how far and why they progress, and this increases their motivation, self-esteem and commitment. Pupils who speak other languages as well as English do not have their needs and progress assessed so precisely, and therefore do not have as well-targeted support. This sometimes causes teachers to mistake a pupil's confusion or misunderstanding for lack of concentration or effort, whereas during the inspection this was sometimes because a pupil had not developed their English vocabulary or skills as much as their English speaking peers.
54. The previous paragraph highlights an area of assessment that the school has insufficiently developed; in an important sense, all pupils need individual education plans that they draw up for themselves to help them understand why they succeed and how they can improve. The most effective teachers use a form of language that highlights where and why a pupil or pupils achieve success, and then ask questions in a way that makes pupils think through the next step they need to take. They encourage pupils to evaluate their contributions and work, and this helps drive standards upwards. Although teachers use these techniques, they are not a powerful or consistent feature of teaching throughout the school. Similarly, although marking is conscientious, only some of the teachers add remarks that make clear why a piece of work is good or unsuccessful, and what the pupil needs to learn next. The lack of this type of feedback to pupils misses important opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, evaluating their work for themselves or each other, and deciding the next step in a personal improvement action plan. Similarly, when asked, for example, 'How well do you read?', pupils found it difficult to judge. This means they cannot tell how well they could or should read, or, even if they can, they are uncertain how to achieve the targets they set themselves.

55. Developments of this use of assessment linked to action plans and target setting would usefully be related to the development of personal and social education described elsewhere in this report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The pre-inspection meeting was attended by a large number of parents; they were most positive in their support of the school. If there were any concerns at all these were voiced in a positive fashion and the partnership between parents and the school is another of its many strengths. A very large number of the questionnaires were returned and almost every one of them was extremely positive both in terms of ticked boxes and also comments on the back of the forms.
57. The school operates a warmly inclusive open-door policy that results in parents feeling welcome in the school at any time. They feel valued and their ideas and views are always taken seriously and fully considered. They are encouraged to help in lessons and many parents were seen working in the school during the inspection. They are at home in the classrooms where they are well briefed and valued for their contribution to pupils' learning. Parents are always welcome at 'open' and other assemblies and there were about 50 present at the open whole school assembly during inspection week. They made it very clear that they appreciate the invitation to be present and enjoy supporting the school in this way.
58. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is remarkably well, and professionally, organised. It works very hard to raise a substantial amount of money each year that is spent to benefit all pupils, for example the splendid refurbishment of the junior playground. On walking across this playground during the inspection a large number of pupils rushed up to inspectors asking what they thought of their 'magical' playground. As well as raising money, the officers of the PTA are very clear that the social events they organise are valuable and are seen as a way of bringing the whole school community together. They also comment that they much appreciate the school staff's support at all the events that the PTA organises throughout the school year.
59. Parents are very positive about the information they receive from the school and the team agrees with their views. Newsletters are informative, detailed and regular. Clear communication takes place in informing parents what their children will be studying in each class throughout the school year. The prospectus is attractive and very detailed and the governors' annual report to parents keeps them fully informed of the school's performance each year. Homework provides a good link between home and school, and parents are advised on how to help their children. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is regularly reviewed with parents, and contact is regular and frequent. The reading diaries and information on homework provide a useful vehicle for communication between home and school, but offer opportunities for further development.
60. The quality of pupils' individual reports to parents at the end of the school year is satisfactory and contains good detail in all subject areas. The addition of simple and realistic targets for pupils on these reports would enable parents to be even more involved in their children's learning at home. It would also help pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.
61. The partnership between the school and its parents is genuine and warm. It is a significant and positive factor in pupils' achievement and progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. Leadership and management are very good and a strength of the school; they are even more effective than during the previous inspection. The headteacher provides quiet, calm and very determined leadership for both staff and pupils. This leadership is reflective and clear thinking, and backed by very good management of people, resources and procedures. Senior management has a strong strategic vision, and because they know where they want to go, they plan and implement each stage in development carefully and securely. The headteacher is aided significantly by a close working partnership with the deputy headteacher who provides wise counsel and very good team-building skills, not simply with staff but also parents. Together this creates a strong staff team, which works very hard, striving for very high standards. Improvement is now rapid because ideas and problems are shared, and commitment is assured. A strong feature of this teamwork is the way carefully described policies are then audited, checking that each contributes to a single overall policy. Skilled staff development has allowed all staff with management responsibilities to perform their roles well or very well.
63. Underpinning the work of the school are strong values and well-understood aims that colour every side of the school's life and work. This is one among many instances of the effective work of the governing body that ensures they meet their statutory responsibilities well. The chairman provides excellent leadership for the governing body. Consequently, governors work through efficient working parties that are clearly briefed, and are fully and properly involved in school development planning and the budget. The governing body represents a breadth of expertise, and it adds to this by co-opting others; this is a very effective policy. Governors are well informed and expert, although information is presently mainly through reports from staff. Although several governors, including the chairman and deputy chairman, spend much time in school, the governing body does not yet monitor and evaluate the work and life of the school sufficiently systematically on a first hand basis, for example spending time in school investigating particular aspects. Exceptions are the close relationship between chairman and headteacher, and between the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the governor responsible for this aspect of provision.
64. All the above help the school to have a strong sense of vision, mission and purpose. Once something is decided, careful plans are agreed – and they happen. The school development plan is a carefully crafted action plan, and provides a good basis for improvement. Even so, in areas it lacks sufficient precision, for example aims are goals, rather than clearly specified targets against which progress can be measured or judged. The joint work by governors and staff on analysing assessment data and comparing the school's results with those in other schools is bringing the planning process greater precision and rigour. Targets set by governors are appropriate and challenging, but have yet to move completely from being predictions to being a standard to be reached.

Efficiency

65. The headteacher and governing body plan and administer the school's finances very well, and with insight and care, conscious that the school receives above average funds per pupil. They plan the use of finance rigorously yet innovatively and prudent housekeeping over recent years ensures that the school is in the secure position of having a high but sensible reserve that is carefully managed so that contingencies are met and opportunities quickly grasped; the apparently high reserve includes

expenditure planned for the near future, for example a new specialist room for design and technology. As a result, the school is well resourced in every classroom, and it can afford to provide considerable enrichment to the pupils' learning through, for example, the employment of specialist staff and the outstanding library, which is a justifiable pride and joy for staff and pupils. Professional development of staff is a priority in the school and all specially allocated funds are spent effectively and in accordance with regulations. Specific funds for pupils with special educational needs are spent appropriately, resulting in these pupils making good progress.

66. The school's overall detailed and thoughtful financial planning is effectively related to educational priorities. This rewards and recognises the way all teachers work tirelessly; consequently, their endeavour and very strong teamwork are evident throughout the school. This teamwork helps them individually and makes a striking contribution to pupils' achievement and progress. All non-teaching staff are effectively deployed to provide effective and caring support to pupils. Secretarial staff provide a strong background to the day-to-day life of the school under difficult physical working conditions, which the school hopes to improve in the foreseeable future.
67. The school is very good at gaining best value from its investments. Staff and governors have begun to compare their performance with other schools, and this is driving rapid improvement. They make good use of advice and guidance of others. These principles are helping them gain even better value from their resources and work.

Staffing

68. The staff of the school are a considerable strength. This has not happened by chance. Recruitment criteria are very clear, and the school is very good at spotting talent that they can recruit. Expert staff development, including developing performance management, increases the skills of class teachers both in their work in lessons and also in their management roles. The careful use of resources enables the school to recruit a very wide range of specialist staff for areas such as music and sport. The many classroom assistants are skilled and also very much part of the team. Many volunteers work in school and make a considerable contribution to the pupils' learning. All the adults working in the school feel and are members of a purposeful and confident team, proud of their achievements, but in no way complacent. As a governor said, 'The children come first', and as another added, 'We nurture the future!'.

Accommodation

69. The accommodation, buildings and grounds, provides an excellent context for teaching and learning. Again this is not by chance. Staff and governors are continually looking for ways to improve. As a result every inch of the school is used effectively. The superb building for the nursery, the library, the special educational needs room, the music room and the outside play equipment are all examples. Parents make a major contribution to ensuring and enhancing these high standards. Every nook and cranny of the school is used to make displays that stimulate and celebrate good learning.

Resources for learning

70. Resources are always good and usually very good. They are of sufficient quantity, high quality and accessible to staff and pupils. Examples are the excellent information and communication technology lab, the music room, and the very well-resourced and managed library. Overall, these resources make a very considerable contribution to the pupils' learning.

Value for money

71. The inspection team has judged St John's to be a good school with many very good features. Reading the report as a whole, it might suggest that the judgement should have been that St John's is a very good school. The reason why not needs explaining. The school is on a journey of rapid improvement. The route is clearly planned, and those making the journey are well equipped and have the required training. They are very well led. However, it is only recently that the school has begun to analyse assessment data to evaluate performance precisely and gain a clear view not only of how well the school is doing but also how well it could do. Governors say that a drop in results in 2000 clarified the school's thinking and was a bit of a shock. Staff and governors took firm and determined action to find out why and improve performance. This inspection finds that these actions were effective and standards have improved. However, the school has yet to gain full benefit from its other very good work. The school is well placed to achieve not only high standards but also very high standards.
72. At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to give good value for money. Taking into consideration:
- the high expenditure per pupil,
 - the very good teaching,
 - the high standards attained by pupils,
 - the very good curriculum and outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities for all pupils,
 - the high quality of pupils' behaviour that results in warm and positive relationships throughout the school,

this inspection team judges that the school now gives very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. The school has put in place the foundations for future rapid improvement, and staff are already focusing upon how to raise attainment further. They have the determination and capacity to achieve very high standards, but need to continue to develop the skills and systems necessary to achieving their aims. Key to future improvement is the further use of assessment data to identify ways of making teaching even more effective, and especially the use of assessment data to help pupils understand more clearly how to improve their work.

74. To improve progress and raise attainment, governors and staff should:

- (1) Increase the ability of pupils to take responsibility for their own learning by:
 - ensuring oral feedback and marking always makes clear to pupils why they succeed and how they can improve;
(paragraphs 18, 53 – 55, and 43)
 - helping all teachers develop the questioning skills that support pupils' reflective learning alongside developing even higher standards of speaking and listening;
(paragraphs 18, 85 and 142)
 - providing ways that pupils can regularly agree with their teachers targets for improvement and ways to achieve these targets;
(paragraph 54)
 - relating these target-setting and action planning procedures to continuous and individual recording of achievements as targets are met;
(paragraphs 54 – 55)
 - implementing the programme for personal and social education more systematically, encouraging and helping pupils become more independent and aware of their unique personalities and developing talents;
(paragraph 31)
 - ensuring that parents are made more aware of the part they can play in their children's progress, especially through clearer targets and action plans in reports.
(paragraph 60)

Minor issues:

When addressing the above, governors should consider ways of:

- improving provision for science so that progress and attainment become as good as in other subjects;
(paragraphs 107 – 114)
- further improving the multi-cultural provision of the school;
(paragraphs 44 and 53)
- continuing to develop the analysis of assessment data as a way of identifying areas for improvement, and setting more challenging targets.
(paragraph 64)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15	40	32	13	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	19	204
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	na	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YN – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	21

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	96.1
National comparative data	94.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	10	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	9	10
	Girls	18	18	19
	Total	28	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (90)	93 (83)	100 (100)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	8
	Girls	18	19	17
	Total	28	29	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (80)	100 (97)	86 (93)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	15	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	9	14
	Girls	10	8	11
	Total	22	17	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (86)	63 (75)	93 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (77)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	12
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	20	21	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (86)	78 (89)	85 (89)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	10
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	162
Any other minority ethnic group	18

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)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	35.5
Average class size	25.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	36

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	457483
Total expenditure	435518
Expenditure per pupil	1862
Balance brought forward from previous year	66500
Balance carried forward to next year	88465

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	244
Number of questionnaires returned	148

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	28	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	39	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	41	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	38	9	4	2
The teaching is good.	65	29	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	42	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	32	5	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	39	7	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	71	27	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	34	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	85	14	0	0	1

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents felt reports should give a clearer picture of how their children could improve.

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

75. Provision was judged effective at the last inspection, and has improved; it is a strength of the school. The school has placed high priority on improving early years provision, including sparkling new accommodation and provision for children aged three. Together with the reception class, the school provides exciting and challenging experiences for 'early years' children, rich in variety and carefully structured to support learning. Even though provision for children aged three was only introduced in September 2000, it already gives children a very good start to their schooling, with a smooth transition to effective learning in the reception class. The children make progress at a good rate and development of their independence and creativity is very good. Those children identified as having special educational needs are very well supported and they make very good progress. The children achieve at a good level overall, and in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development they progress well. The children for whom English is an additional language are supported effectively, for instance through labels to identify different areas in the classrooms, and adults promote positive images of a variety of languages and develop the children's ideas about writing conveying meaning. Attainment on entry to the nursery and reception years is average and, as the children make good progress during this time, their attainment on completing the Foundation Stage is predicted to be good.

Personal, social and emotional development

76. The children's progress in their personal, emotional and social development is good overall. They are developing their confidence; for instance, children in Reception speak up clearly at registration and take turns to return the register to the office. The children have good self-esteem due to the positive input from staff. They are developing good skills in concentrating, for instance to create their own three-dimensional models. They are encouraged to take turns and those younger children who find this more difficult are reminded to be fair. The children are learning to have self-respect and are developing an awareness of others and their feelings. For example, facial expressions and what they mean are discussed regularly. Behaviour is good and relationships are secure. The children approach adults, certain of a positive response, and they share their ideas and experiences readily. Personal independence is encouraged effectively; for example, younger children are able to put on their own coats, and persevere to fasten zips and buttons. The children are learning about a variety of cultures; for example, they have studied Chinese New Year and enjoy activities such as making pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

Communication language and literacy

77. The children are working well towards the early learning goals. They are developing their skills in listening effectively and enjoy creating their own stories and scenarios; for example in Reception, the older children make up stories about buying flowers at the 'florists'. They use their language to express themselves clearly and have a good developing awareness that words have meaning and recognise the sounds letters make in words. The older children's skills in developing ideas about sounds in words are progressing very well. Children handle books well; younger children turn pages properly and are aware that print has meaning. The older children are refining their

skills and some are already quite fluent readers. The children use the range of implements to scribe and make marks; for instance, in role play younger children take 'notes' when using the 'telephone'. The children are developing their skills in writing effectively and are forming letters correctly.

Mathematical development

78. In mathematical development, the children are making good progress. They are learning to count accurately and are able to recognise numerals and use mathematical language correctly. They are developing a good sense of how to solve simple problems. For example, younger children develop their ideas when cooking and weigh ingredients to make pancakes. The older children are familiar with a variety of number songs and these are used effectively to develop their understanding about numbers, make comparisons and add on or take away objects from a group. They are able to recognise shapes accurately and create mathematical patterns, using colours and shapes.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. The children are developing their skills in being observant and looking closely at changes in substances. They are developing a good awareness about living things, for example through a topic on 'Farmer Duck'. The older children, in the reception class, are learning about the environment and particular features and characteristics within it, for example when playing in the 'florists'. They are beginning to develop a sense of past and present. They are adept at making models from recycled materials, using their own ideas. They use technology, such as computers and discarded telephones, effectively to support their learning in other areas.

Physical development

80. The children have very good experiences in developing their skills in climbing, balancing and jumping. New apparatus, a recent addition to the nursery and reception outdoor area, is beneficial for the children's learning and they use these facilities regularly. The children are developing a good sense of space and are able to move about the classrooms confidently and negotiate children, furniture and other obstacles. Their skills in hand control are developing well; for instance, they use pencils and crayons to draw, make marks and symbols. The younger children are developing very good skills when using paintbrushes and older children handle glue spreaders and scissors safely and with confidence.

Creative development

81. The children's creativity at St John's is valued and the children's skills benefit as a result. They are learning to express themselves imaginatively and use the variety of experiences very well to create different effects. For example, collage, printing and painting techniques are employed and the children are developing good skills in three-dimensional work. They are learning to explore sound, and in the nursery area there are very attractive instruments made from recycled materials which the younger children enjoy playing. The children also have regular singing sessions, when they try their hand at using musical instruments to keep the beat and develop their ideas about rhythm. Some children are particularly skilled in devising their own rhythms in time to music.

82. Teaching is good overall, with very good expertise in teaching basic skills. The staff have a very good knowledge of the curriculum and planning is particularly effective. The children are managed very well and resources are used very effectively to support and promote the children's learning. The staff use different methods well and have clear expectations for the children's attainment and behaviour. All children have access to the range of activities provided. The quality of the children's learning opportunities is very good and the curriculum is very broad and well balanced. There is good use of assessment to inform planning and to provide a rich learning environment. There is good involvement from parents and carers in their children's learning and an effective partnership with the parents and carers has been established. For example, home visits are undertaken before the children start at St John's and the parents are actively encouraged to make contributions to the assessment of what their children have achieved. A curriculum meeting is held for parents, to explain what the children are expected to learn and the benefits of learning through play.

ENGLISH

83. Provision is good. The inspection evidence shows that overall standards of attainment in English are in line with national expectations for seven-year-old pupils and above national expectations for eleven-year-old pupils. This is different from the Year 2000 test results, which show standards as being average for eleven-year-olds and above average in reading for seven-year-olds. These differences reflect the different cohort of pupils and the improvement in English made by the current Year 6.
84. In national tests and assessments in 2000, seven-year-old pupils achieved above average standards in reading when compared with the performance of all schools and of similar schools. The results in writing were average when compared both with all schools nationally and similar schools. In the same year, the school's results in English for eleven-year-olds were average in relation to all schools nationally and schools in similar circumstances. There were no significant variations in attainment among pupils of different gender, ethnicity or background. Overall, standards tended to remain static until 2000 whereas the results for all schools improved nationally. The school met its targets for 2000, but governors and staff now analyse assessment data more rigorously, and realise their targets need to be more challenging.
85. Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment in English. They make good progress in speaking and listening and attain standards that are above the expected level for their age by the time they are seven. This standard is maintained as they move up the school and their speaking and listening skills are also good by the age of eleven. In both key stages, pupils listen very attentively to their teachers and each other. Most pupils make well-expressed contributions to lessons and answer teachers' questions readily and with enthusiasm. In Key Stage 2, pupils pay close attention to what others say and use appropriate language in discussions. They can also adapt their talk very effectively to a purpose in a range of situations. During shared text sessions some good examples of discussion on literature were seen. Pupils also give very good responses during the recapitulation of previous learning which is a strong feature in lessons, although their questioning skills are not quite so well developed.
86. Attainment in reading is average in the current Year 2. Pupils have sound knowledge of letter sounds, which they can use in reading unfamiliar words, and they understand what they read. Higher-attaining pupils read confidently and independently by the age of seven; they can talk about the characters, plots and main events of the story. They can also make predictions when reading a story. Although average and lower-attaining pupils show that they understand what they read, they find it difficult to talk about books.

Most pupils have satisfactory library skills and can distinguish between fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils of all abilities enjoy reading stories and poetry and can often be seen curled up with a book in the very attractive library, which invites children to spend time in reading.

87. Pupils make at least good progress in Key Stage 2; their attainment in reading is above national expectations by the time they are eleven. In Year 6, most pupils read very fluently and accurately, and with expression and good understanding. Higher-attaining pupils read at a well above average level. They can discuss the main points and themes of the texts they read, and make predictions and inferences. Pupils, particularly high and average-attaining pupils, enjoy reading a wide range of literature. For example, they read modern children's novels, children's classics by famous authors, poetry, science fiction, and non-fiction. Pupils' enjoyment in reading poetry is apparent across the school. In a Year 3 lesson, the pupils enthusiastically read rap poetry using different rhythms. This enjoyment in reading influences their writing. The pupils in Years 4 and 6 write amusing limericks following the work of Edward Lear. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils acquire good library skills for finding information from books and other sources and use them in various study projects.
88. By the time pupils are seven, their attainment in writing is broadly in line with average expectations for their age. From an early age, pupils learn to write for a range of purposes, producing a variety of work, which is celebrated in displays in the classrooms. For example, the pupils in Year 2 write news, stories, letters and reports. Average and high-attainers write fluently in a sequence of sentences using capital letters and full stops. In creative writing most pupils show an awareness of the reader; for example, they write pen-portraits of the children in the class using suitable words that describe them accurately. This range of writing is maintained across the key stage. Most pupils achieve good standards in spelling and handwriting.
89. By the age of eleven, pupils' attainment in writing is above national expectations. Towards the upper end of the key stage pupils write very fluently and at length. They plan, draft and review their writing to improve it. Pupils are able to write for a range of purposes and audiences, producing high-quality creative work. For example, the pupils in Year 6 write science fiction following H G Wells' 'The War of the Worlds'. They write very imaginatively using words and phrases to create maximum effects. A good example was also seen in a Year 5 lesson where the pupils wrote their versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' by turning the conventions of traditional fairy tales up-side-down, where 'a bride in rat skin walked down a mud-rack'. Their choice of words fitted the purpose. Pupils have developed good technical accuracy, which is evident in their use of grammatically correct complex sentences and a range of punctuation. They attain high standards in spelling and handwriting style, which is fluent, joined and legible.
90. The quality of teaching is good across the school. Nearly a half of the teaching seen was very good, including a quarter which was excellent. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory. The planning of the Literacy Hour with appropriate activities for each section of the hour indicates very good subject knowledge of teachers. Teachers across the school have a good understanding of how to teach reading and writing. There is a strong emphasis on the teaching of phonic skills in Key Stage 1. In the reception class and Year 1, the teaching of phonics is highly effective where the teachers use rhymes and songs to ensure that pupils tune into letter-sounds as well as enjoy the activities. The pupils respond very well and consolidate their learning in lesson. Teachers effectively encourage pupils to learn new words and use them in writing. Pupils learn to use alternative words to improve their writing, as observed in a Year 4 lesson on the use of descriptive and

expressive language. Teachers know their pupils well and manage them effectively to motivate them through stimulating activities. In a Year 5 lesson where teaching was excellent, the teacher engaged a class of lively pupils very productively in discussing different versions of traditional fairy tales. The pupils not only gave their opinions but they also showed their good knowledge of descriptive language and use of alliteration.

91. In both key stages, well-organised group tasks that are well matched to each level of ability help all pupils to work independently with sustained concentration. However, pupils of average and below-average ability make very good progress but pupils of higher ability make only good progress, as they are not sufficiently challenged to achieve the highest standards. There are areas of teaching that are not as strong as the ones described above. Oral feedback during plenary sessions is not sufficiently planned with adequate time for pupils to tell and share what they have achieved in the lesson, or ask questions about areas they found difficult. Although marking is consistent, it is mainly simply encouraging and does not tell pupils how they can improve. The 'booster' class for Year 6 pupils is not sufficiently focused on how to improve pupils' level of attainment.
92. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by class teachers and assistants and make good progress in English. Their individual education plans have a clear focus on their needs in language and literacy.
93. This effective teaching across the school helps pupils with English as an additional language to make good progress in English. However, their specific needs in all aspects of learning are not sufficiently identified to support their progress further. Occasionally, pupils at an early stage of English acquisition are supported alongside pupils with special educational needs, who do not often provide good language or role models for learning.
94. Behaviour is always good; pupils co-operate with each other and with their teachers well, and they take care of books and other resources. Relationships are very good all round. They take the activities seriously and are very keen to become involved in discussions. When working with partners or listening to the plenary of the Literacy Hour, pupils show great respect for each other's views. Pupils' responses are lively, and they are eager to contribute to lessons from the beginning and make them enjoyable occasions.
95. The development of literacy across the curriculum is very strong and all subjects are used effectively to extend pupils' vocabulary as well as reading and writing skills. Pupils are encouraged to use information technology in every lesson. English makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
96. The subject co-ordinator provides a very good role model for the staff and has implemented the Literacy Strategy effectively. It is making a good impact on pupils' learning. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' achievement are good and teachers throughout the school generally use assessment information effectively when planning work for different groups of pupils. However, results of national tests and internal tests are not analysed formally to set targets for pupils, and pupils are not sufficiently aided to make these targets their own.

MATHEMATICS

97. Provision is good. Standards in mathematics are good overall and most pupils are achieving at a level above the national average. Pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve at a

good level overall, and with the introduction of 'nurturing' groups in Year 6 and 'booster' classes in Year 5, pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are on line to achieve at a good level. Teaching and the pupils' learning are good overall, with some instances of very good teaching, especially in Years 1 and 5, which is of benefit to the pupils' future attainment at the end of each key stage.

98. Results in Key Stage 1 national tests are consistently very good, with a year-on-year upward trend. In 1997 and 1998 results were above the national average and in 1999 and 2000 they were well above; compared with similar schools pupils achieved at a high level. Key Stage 2 results in 2000 were disappointing for the school, but above the national expectation and close to those expected for similar schools. However, this was a decline from previous years and the school has taken significant steps to improve numeracy. Considerable time has been given to the subject and all indicators now predict that pupils are on line to achieve at a good level of attainment. Pupils present their work very well.
99. The previous inspection judged mathematics to be satisfactory at both key stages. The quality of the pupils' learning is now good overall and sometimes very good; improvement since the previous inspection is therefore good.
100. In Year 1, the pupils have very good skills in making mathematical patterns and use these skills to develop their ideas about simple multiplication. In Year 2, the pupils are learning how to apply their knowledge about simple number facts to manipulate larger numbers effectively. In Year 3, the pupils' skills in applying their mathematics and using number operations are developing well. The pupils in Year 4 are learning to work confidently with multiples of numbers up to ten. In Year 5, an introduction to co-ordinates and quadrants effectively extends the pupils' thinking and Year 6 pupils are productively refining these skills.
101. Teaching in mathematics is good overall and it is very good in Years 1 and 5; pupils' learning reflects the teaching they receive. Lessons are very well planned and generally offer the pupils a good level of challenge and opportunities to reinforce their skills. Teachers show good subject knowledge and expertise and use time effectively. They manage the learning well, and most lessons have a sense of clear purpose, pace and increasing challenge.
102. Pupils who learn more slowly or who are identified as having special educational needs are well supported and those who are learning English as an additional language receive appropriate help.
103. There are very good attitudes to the subject generally; the pupils are well motivated, interested and keen to learn. Behaviour is always at least satisfactory and it is good overall, with examples of very good and sometimes excellent attitudes and behaviour.
104. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good, with very clear educational direction to improve standards, especially at Key Stage 2. There is very good use of resources to support the pupils' mathematical understanding and consolidate skills, for example computers are frequently in use. Staff deployment and support for the pupils' learning is very good. Planning of the curriculum is very good and assessment is generally used effectively to check for understanding. The commercial scheme in use has an in-built checklist at the end of each unit or units of learning and this is a useful tool to assess the pupils' progress. In lessons, which are very good, the staff use assessment very effectively, for example through marking or relevant questioning to check for understanding and to improve planning in the short term.

105. The hour for numeracy has been implemented effectively and the staff are secure in their understanding of what is expected. The use of a commercial scheme is helpful in ensuring that aspects of mathematics are covered effectively.
106. The monitoring of mathematics in the school is being undertaken effectively. The staff have regular sessions when the pupils' work is moderated and the senior staff in conjunction with local education authority staff, ensure that monitoring is completed regularly.

SCIENCE

107. Provision for science is satisfactory. Results of pupils aged seven in national assessments in 2000 were below the national average. This shows a drop since the previous inspection where assessments were in line with the national average. Results by pupils aged eleven in national tests in 2000 were in line with the national average. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection.
108. Standards at Key Stage 1 during the present inspection were satisfactory and had many good features; there has been a considerable improvement on last year.
109. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average. Improvement is hindered because reduced time allocation has disadvantaged science and, therefore, the quality of the work seen is good but the depth and breadth of the learning is too restricted.
110. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are working well in the area of scientific enquiry. In Year 1 they were investigating the properties and characteristics of materials. Well-planned teaching ensures that they examine the materials in depth and the pupils meet the challenge of the teaching by thinking carefully about their activities. For example, one pupil noted with play dough 'you have to pull it and push it until it's warm before you can make cookies'. This pupil also knew that if left for a few days, the play dough would harden up again. Their language skills were developing well; the appropriate words used showed a good understanding of the properties of the materials, such as 'rigid', 'bendy' and 'opaque'. The good structuring of the pupils into different groups gave them a wide variety of suitable activities, including the production of a collage with papers of diverse properties. The pupils record their findings from investigations well.
111. Pupils' attitudes and response to teaching in Year 2 were very good. Teaching posed the pupils with a challenging task of selecting uses for the materials, and pupils considered the properties of various materials very carefully. The pupils were very thorough in their examination of them and went on to naming the types of materials accurately. Many came up with correct answers for the more usual ones and one pupil managed to name 'steel'. The very good teaching left the pupils eager for the next science lesson when they would be able to air their suggestions on what the materials could be used for.
112. Scrutiny of the pupils' work at Key Stage 2 showed they were making good progress throughout Years 3, 4 and 5, but this declined to only satisfactory progress in Year 6. The good progress was due to the broad coverage of any one topic. Year 5 pupils were asked the question 'What does being alive mean?'. They gave very good answers such as 'heart beat and breathing'. They also pointed out well that plants lean towards the light and that healthy plants had healthy green leaves. A taxing task was set as the pupils had to define each characteristic. Their answers were very good, such as 'Growth - as a plant or animal matures it grows in strength through obtaining

nutrients'. The pupils' learning was very good and they also made very good progress over time. At the end of the key stage, the Year 6 pupils were working on predictions on the lifespan of a plant when deprived of one of its essential ingredients for life. Though the pupils' work over the year included physical forces, light sources, materials, solids and liquids, the coverage lacks breadth in these areas. Therefore, progress became only satisfactory overall.

113. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Half was very good, a quarter was good and a quarter was satisfactory. Teaching is based on good subject knowledge, presenting the challenge to the pupils that makes them reflect on their ideas. This was particularly noted in Year 5 where pupils had to compare truly living things with the man-made 'Frankenstein's monster'. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss and share their ideas; one pupil in Year 1 noted that some metals were not only hard and heavy, but also so shiny that they were like mirrors. Good support staff are available for pupils with special educational needs or with English as additional language. These pupils make good progress.
114. Pupils' work is assessed against the local educational authority benchmarks termly and effective records are kept of the pupils' work. The assessments are used well to inform and adapt planning, though there is not yet sufficient dialogue to address the need for higher attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Resources are generally good, but the school is still awaiting texts to cover the newly-developed scheme of work. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed.

ART AND DESIGN

115. Provision for art and design is very good and a strength of the school. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. By the time pupils are seven and eleven their attainment is above average and exceeds national expectations. Teaching is very good and learning rich and varied. The curriculum does not simply meet but exceeds the requirements of the National Curriculum.
116. The good progress made by pupils is best seen in a series of very high quality work displayed on the stairway going up from the foyer. These exhibits show how skilled and expert teaching introduces pupils from the start to using their eyes to see colour and form, and that, as pupils move up the school, they gain technical skills and knowledge that allow them to create pictures of rapidly increasing maturity and sophistication. By the time pupils are seven they have been exposed to very broad artistic experiences, and worked with colour, form and texture, and a wide range of media and techniques. The teaching encourages them to explore these materials and also their expressive and creative abilities. They have begun to experiment with drawing with computers, and show a good understanding of observation, composition and aesthetic appreciation. By the time they are eleven, pupils have not only acquired a wide range of techniques including collage, tile painting, pot making and embroidery, but also a critical awareness that allows them to respond critically to the pictures of such major artists as William Morris and Van Gogh, and try out their techniques in their own work. They use their learning to reflect other cultures and illustrate vignettes of life in other societies, for example from Africa. The depth and quality of the teaching and learning make a significant contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils, for example insightful and well-observed portraits in both Years 4 and 6.
117. Although only limited teaching could be observed, all of this teaching was very good. It included very expert use of computers to create and adapt images in Year 2, inspiring and very expert introduction to the work of William Morris in Year 4, and very good

development of pot making and decoration in Year 6. The Year 6 lesson effectively related the pupils' creativity to work on Ancient Greece. The quality of the teaching exemplified its effectiveness through the pupils' appreciation that the task of decoration was not just to make the pots 'pretty'. The teaching is very strongly enriched by the input of an artistically gifted classroom assistant who works alongside class teachers and runs several well attended club activities. Work in these sessions produces grand displays, for example in the style of Matisse. Art displays make the whole school an artistically stimulating place to be.

118. The subject is well and dynamically led and managed, and the subject leader has a clear vision as to how standards can be further improved. Accommodation, materials, tools and staffing are very good and very well managed, so that girls and boys of all abilities and cultures can make very good progress. The school is beginning to find ways of assessing attainment and tracking progress, and has already found effective ways of moderating standards. As yet, ways for pupils to evaluate their own work and plan their own improvements over time are underdeveloped. Such development would build upon the critical awareness already generated by the very good teaching.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

119. Provision for design and technology is very good and, consequently, the standard of work is of a high quality. In both key stages standards are above average and exceed national expectations. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection when the subject was considered to be below national expectations.
120. The teaching and learning at both key stages enable pupils to use the appropriate 'tools for the trade' very effectively. 'Junk' modelling has its proper place and the children in the Foundation Stage work on these models very purposefully. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils cut, sew, drill and fix with skill and accuracy. The depth of the teachers' planning and expertise helps pupils to transfer their designs onto the computer, resulting in most acceptable artefacts. Pupils were focusing very knowingly on puppets with 'mechanisms', for example butterflies that flap their wings, a technical word they used with pride. In planning such quality lessons, the teachers' clear intention is to give the pupils the opportunity to learn how to use the equipment safely, efficiently and effectively. They then test how this results in good working models, and adapt their teaching if this not the case. This teaching helps pupils to learn very well. Consequently, they build up their expertise and confidence to attain even higher standards as they move through the school. The great care, determination and effort the younger pupils put into their work indicates their appreciation at being set demanding tasks, which they meet most successfully.
121. At Key Stage 2, the pupils' very good progression continues both in extended use of tools and also their understanding of the process required for effective results. In Year 3, pupils elected to make a picture/photograph frame, using a model Saxon ship as a base. This was a useful link with their history topic. The daunting complexity of the task showed the pupils' confidence in their own abilities. It was also a very imaginative concept. The pupils used vices, saws and drills very carefully, following their marked-out lines and angles. Their making skills were above average and the pupils were well aware that safety in the use of the tools was paramount. The high expectations of the teaching were well rewarded as the emerging artefacts were of such high quality. The pupils were so successful because the planning was extensive and very well structured. This planning also took into consideration the needs of all pupils, such as the use of balsa wood rather than hard wood and a mitre saw if required. The pupils

worked very well in pairs, discussing each other's models and comparing their techniques using the tools.

122. Similar detailed planning and teacher's expertise were seen in Year 5 where pupils were making varied musical instruments. Here the pupils concentrated well on carefully constructed instruments, which functioned well. In this they were quite successful, and could suggest perceptive ways that their designs could be improved. The pupils thought carefully about the form and function of their instruments. Their learning was good in the investigation of their products and use of equipment.
123. One-third of the teaching was excellent and the remaining two-thirds was very good. The pupils' learning reflected this teaching as all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were making very good progress. The pupils' very good attitudes added greatly to their serious approach to the tasks in hand and added to their enjoyment of using the correct tools in their making.
124. The subject manager has devised a very well structured system, which looks to the increasing success of the pupils' attainment in the subject. He gives very good support to the staff when required. The pupils' progress is monitored in great detail and this drives them and the planning forward to even higher standards.

GEOGRAPHY

125. Provision is good. Standards of attainment are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average and the national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Only three geography lessons were seen during the inspection. Further judgements on standards and progress in geography are based on a scrutiny of teachers' plans, pupils' work and discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator. By the end of Key Stage 1 attainment remains the same as found during the last inspection. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be only satisfactory.
126. The pupils in Year 1 make satisfactory progress in identifying different types of buildings in Whetstone and recording their findings in design and technology lessons by making well-observed models of these buildings. They use their developing geographic observation skills to identify, for instance, the post office, church, petrol station and street. They are also becoming aware of places beyond their own locality through the travel of the 'Barney Bear' around the world. The pupils in Year 2 attain satisfactory standards in map-reading skills and in the acquisition of relevant vocabulary that they use geographically as required for their age. They know their way round the school. They show an awareness of their local area and places beyond their own locality. The pupils can identify geographical and human features of a place, showing good observation skills. Their study of Whetstone and contrasting it with an island from the story of 'Katie Morag and Big Boy Cousins' is a good example of their understanding of these features. The pupils used their first-hand experience from a walk round Whetstone, thoughtfully and appropriately recorded their findings of different features on a large plan. They also produced a large and clear three-dimensional relief map of the island depicted in the story.
127. At Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in the acquisition of geographical skills and understanding of places. In Year 3, pupils learn about climates of different places on the earth and discuss these with good understanding. The pupils look at different countries of the world and correctly identify their weather and climates; they consolidate their learning by writing postcards from pretend holiday places. The pupils in Year 4

show a good understanding of environmental issues arising from pollution and rubbish in the local area. They have designed gardens using their knowledge of co-ordinates and area in mathematics effectively. This linking of learning in geography with learning in other subjects of the curriculum such as art, English and mathematics is a strength. It helps pupils to apply their skills in one subject to another and to consolidate them. The pupils in Year 5 make an in-depth study of contrasting United Kingdom localities through a field study of a coastal village in Norfolk. The pupils do a sea-life study, strongly linked with information and communication technology. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 show good progress in reading and interpreting different types of map. In Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of physical features through studies of rivers of the United Kingdom. They use accurate vocabulary to describe features of a river. The presentation of their work through writing and diagrams which show different parts of the river is of good quality. They attain above the national expectations for their age.

128. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is well supported by a helpful policy and a good scheme of work. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons well, using strategies that match the aims of the curriculum. The lessons are planned with suitable activities to inspire and motivate pupils. The learning objectives are specific and pupils are aware of them. Pace is brisk and high standards are expected of pupils. Teachers manage their lessons very effectively so that pupils can learn and make good progress. The teachers give pupils the opportunity to learn from their first-hand experience. There is a strong focus on a 'What's in the news?' topic, which effectively builds on pupils' knowledge from television and newspapers. A very good example of the use of newspapers as a resource for learning was seen in Year 5 where the pupils had to investigate places on a map after reading news and their locations. This work was very clearly linked to English as the pupils had to scan-read the newspapers. They also acquired vocabulary such as 'local', 'national' and 'global' or 'international'.
129. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. A strong focus on subject-specific words, reading and writing helps pupils with English as an additional language to make good progress.
130. Pupils generally have good attitudes to learning. Pupils in Year 1 need some attention from the teacher to get them to start their work, whilst pupils in Years 3 and 5 settle to activities quickly and work with good motivation. Pupils generally listen and participate well and contribute to the development of the lesson. Pupils' behaviour is usually good in lessons and their presentation of work is also good.
131. The management and co-ordination of the subject are good. There is a strong geography curriculum, which has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Resources are sufficient and of good quality, and support the delivery of the curriculum effectively. The school is currently developing resources for contrasting localities abroad. The curriculum is further enriched by visits and very good use of information and communication technology.

HISTORY

132. Provision for history is good, and there has been improvement since the previous inspection. By the time pupils are seven and eleven, their attainment at least meets national expectations. When pupils are seven years old their attainment is marginally above average, and by the time they are eleven it is well above average, and their learning is both broad and deep. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and teaching is good.

133. The strength of the pupils' learning is that they think and work as young historians. Teachers ensure that by the time they are seven, they have a good sense of time. They understand that the past is different from the present, but also grasp that things change over time. They can describe in good depth how people, events and inventions change the way people live, and can explain why life today is different from life in the past. They have begun to understand what it was like to live at a period in the past and live through great events. An example of this high quality learning was evident in a Year 2 class display on the 'fire of London'. Teachers had introduced art to help the pupils almost feel the heat and destruction.
134. Work in Year 3 is evidence of expert and effective teaching. Pupils showed through their writing and drawing that the Saxons changed the British way of life. The learning is broad and rich, and yet the pupils show they can relate such ideas as trade, transport, social and community customs, and food into a coherent understanding of life at that period. By Year 6, pupils have a very deep sense of history and can investigate very demanding historical questions using and evaluating a range of sources. In an excellent lesson in this year, the teacher set the level of challenge very high, and had thought through carefully how to help pupils of all levels of ability gain from the lesson. Consequently, pupils showed they could see that the concept of 'crime' may differ in different societies, as would the way societies dealt with designated crimes. They worked very collaboratively to research how Ancient Greeks treated such problems as 'unpopular politicians' and compared ostracize with 'vote out' in today's society with considerable maturity, a maturity that showed the very good history teaching that had gone before.
135. Girls and boys of all levels of ability make equally good progress. Those with special educational needs are well supported and the very able fully stretched. Considering the wide range of cultural heritages present in the school, an area for development is finding ways to show that history need not be centred on a British way of thinking. Pupils enjoy history, and are curious and questioning. Consequently, they work hard and with pride in their work. Teaching and learning make a significant contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
136. Although little teaching could be observed, the pupils' previous work shows that teaching overall is expert, dynamic and challenging. It is at least good at Key Stage 1, and very good at Key Stage 2. The subject is very well led and managed, and there is a good range and quantity of resources to support the learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

137. Provision is very good. The standards in information and communication technology are now excellent by the end of Key Stage 2. This indicates a very good improvement since the previous inspection, which found certain areas of provision unsatisfactory.
138. Pupils attain high standards by the time they are seven. This learning builds upon learning at the Foundation Stage where children use the computers confidently and to very good purpose, working on a painting program and also using the mouse very skilfully.
139. Judging from the analysis of pupils' previous work in Year 1, they produce good pictograms and bar graphs and use them well to answer simple questions about the different types of pets other pupils have at home. In Year 2, there were many good examples of research in science, finding information on animals, which the pupils

analysed and made short observations on their discoveries. These pupils worked on a painting program effectively drawing skeletons. They evaluated their learning and found ways to modify and correct their pictures using the appropriate tools. The excellent teaching gave the pupils great confidence, which resulted in very acceptable and varied pictures. This lesson was a good example of how teachers share expertise and use learning in one subject to support learning in another, in this case art and design.

140. By the end of Key Stage 2, Year 6 pupils are using CD-ROMs and 'surfing' the Internet to research their own particular projects. These projects are very effectively produced, one of which includes detailed information on a children's TV programme. Some of their previous work, which includes selecting fonts, scanning and importing photographs, is of exceptional quality; it far exceeds expectations for pupils aged eleven. Their level of excellence might be compared with that found in work at the later stages of secondary education.
141. Year 3 pupils were learning about e-mailing and its purpose. They can access the web sites quickly and were making good progress in the task of creating and sending an e-mail message. They did this by accessing the BBC website, in passing finding their own school's website. This helped them understand the function and purposes of websites.
142. Year 5 pupils produce spreadsheets and they make excellent progress due to the considerable expertise of their teacher. They learn very quickly and ask testing questions, even before the teacher's planning addressed the areas. This is a good example of how pupils who are very aware of their own learning see what they need to learn next, and how far they need to go. The pupils clearly understand that spreadsheets are read across the top and then down the left-hand side, a mirror image of co-ordinates.
143. The teaching seen at Key Stage 1 is excellent, demonstrating very good pace and in-depth knowledge of the subject. The pupils make very good progress in comparing and contrasting different modes and colours. They learn to look critically at their work. They make improvements by good use of the tools at their disposal.
144. At Key Stage 2, the teaching overall is very good. Half of it is excellent and the other half is good. The excellent lessons are characterised by detailed planning, which leads to the very good input of technical knowledge and skills. The pupils' very good knowledge and excellent progress demonstrate their independence in working. Also, in the plenary sessions, the pupils are able to describe most clearly the processes they have used during the lessons. Their attitude towards the subject is such that not only do they learn very well, but also they expect to learn very well, which complements their expectations of the teaching. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make very good progress.
145. Excellent co-ordination ensures that the coverage in the schools' curriculum exceeds the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's guidelines. This is exemplified by the highest quality of work found at the end of Key Stage 2. All pupils are working well at a standard at least one level above national expectations and many are working far beyond them. The great impact of this co-ordination is in the monitoring and assessing of the pupils' work. A continuous record of the pupils' work is kept and this work has been sampled for moderation. There is very good extra-curricular provision with lunchtime clubs for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. The young pupils are taught skills by volunteer parents who are information technology trainers. These parents also assisted in the construction of the school's website and played a considerable part in

the establishment of the computer unit. The older pupils make very good use of the study club to research their projects. The co-ordinator is kept well up-to-date by keeping in contact with lecturers at a university. Accommodation is very good and the resources are excellent.

MUSIC

146. Provision for music is very good. Attainment in music in both key stages is good overall and above national expectations. In all lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory, usually good and on occasions very good. Attainment in singing is consistently good, the pupils sing tunefully and with confidence, older pupils are able to sing in parts and enjoy their singing sessions, for example when exploring rhythm in Maori music. Standards in reading musical notation are very good, and are particularly strong for the younger pupils, for example in Year 1. The Kodaly method is being used and has been used effectively to develop the pupils' ideas about how music is recorded and what it means. All pupils have opportunities at some time in their school career at St John's to learn to play instruments, usually keyboard work and playing the recorder. By Year 6, the pupils have a good range of skills and expertise and are actively encouraged to use these, for example when producing school performances of 'Bugsy Malone' and 'Grease Lightening'. A good number of pupils are learning to play a variety of instruments. These include trombone, violins, flutes, drums and clarinets as well as piano. The pupils' skills in these areas are developing very well and the school is rightly proud of their achievements and gives the pupils good opportunities, for example at 'open' assemblies, to share their expertise with others.
147. The previous inspection found the pupils' attainment in music to be above the national expectation and particularly good in Key Stage 2. This continues to be the case and the school has maintained its good position. Pupils in Key Stage 1, particularly in Year 1, make very good progress. They are learning to beat time to music and have a good knowledge of musical notation. In Key Stage 2, progress is good; most pupils have skills in playing an instrument and in Year 6 the pupils greatly enjoy singing Maori songs in conjunction with using Maori sticks to keep tempo. Teaching of music is good overall, with some examples of very good teaching.
148. The pupils enjoy their music lessons and always behave appropriately, and generally they are well behaved, with instances of very good attitudes and responses. The wide range of instrumental work is available to all the pupils and the school strives successfully to include as many pupils as possible in instrumental learning. Specialist teaching has a beneficial effect on the pupils' progress and learning.
149. Music is very well led and managed, with a strong commitment to including all pupils, and giving them very good experiences in musical activities at a variety of levels, including playing alongside professional musicians. An appropriate amount of time is devoted to music. There is a dedicated area for the subject to be taught, and considerable effort has been put into offering the pupils a range of experiences. The pupils also learn about different cultural and musical styles through their singing and instrumental work; these experiences enhance the pupils' musical development. The school orchestra had recently been re-established and is popular, giving pupils with a range of abilities the opportunities to perform together and in front of an audience.
150. Assessment is to be developed in the future, but already specialist teachers, in conjunction with class teachers, meet to discuss the pupils' progress and to agree what level they have achieved. Monitoring is based on observations of what the pupils achieve and the school is committed to providing a wide and varied programme of

musical experiences for all pupils. The school has links with other schools and organisations in the area to share music and develop expertise.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

151. Provision for physical education is outstanding. It includes athletics, fencing and swimming, with numerous other clubs and activities. Thus standards in physical education have shown a good improvement since the previous inspection, which judged attainment to be satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Standards are now good overall.
152. Unfortunately, no physical education lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 during the inspection. However, the excellent provision and high attainment at Key Stage 2 now found in the school suggest that standards at Key Stage 1 are above national expectations.
153. In Key Stage 2, pupils make remarkable progress in their swimming. The excellent and highly knowledgeable teaching together with the high expectations of the pupils' abilities, ensure that all the pupils enter their secondary education as competent swimmers. All will be swimming more than the expected minimum of 25 metres. One of the most unusual aspects of the overall provision is the high performance in fencing. Here the pupils show their skills not only in the deft use of the epees, but also in the good understanding of the complexities of judging and refereeing. The pupils have attained their first grade in the nationally recognised award scheme. This is due to the very enthusiastic and expert teaching of an international fencing coach. The school is very fortunate in enjoying such skilled services, not only here but also in football and rugby. Pupils with significant difficulties in co-ordination progress very well in fencing, which demands poise and asymmetrical movement.
154. Pupils in Year 4 show good timing and considerable expertise in country dancing, where listening well to the caller is of paramount importance. All pupils, both boys and girls, mirror the enthusiastic teaching and they dance very well together in separate but co-ordinated pairs, are very controlled in swinging partners and they also produce good effects when performing in larger sets.
155. In gymnastics, pupils in Years 5 and 6 show good imagination and flair in their movements, building up interesting sequences in symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns. They listen very carefully to their teachers' well-informed comments. They show very good control, holding balances on small body parts, hands and fingers, and toes and feet. The pupils work extremely well together in constructing their series of actions.
156. Pupils' learning is very good on account of the very good teaching. The teaching is predominately very good or excellent. The overall impact leads to high standards. All the teachers' expectations are high. The expertise of the teachers is very good throughout the school starting from the Foundation Stage. Here provision is very good and the opportunities presented for physical development, both in fine motor skills and also more robust physical activities, are extensive. The school is well endowed with quality climbing and adventurous equipment in all play areas, thus adding daily to the pupils' physical development.
157. Pupils are very keen to perform well and are given every chance to do so in the teaching they receive. Their attitude is very positive and increases their skills, and thus the pupils make very good progress, especially those lacking specific co-ordination skills. The excellent co-ordination is particularly successful in extending the day-to-day

curriculum as exemplified in fencing and the development of athletics. The school's many extra-curricular clubs are always full. They offer a very wide variety of activities, giving pupils a wide choice of participation. The activities also include canoeing and rock-climbing, and a good range of competitive sport for both girls and boys.

158. The policy is very practical and is exemplary for the understanding of children's needs and its child-centred approach. It shows the school's commitment to raising standards to ever-higher levels. It emphasises well the aspects of fair play, honest competition and sporting behaviour, thereby extending the pupils' personal development. Under the outstanding direction of the co-ordinator, physical education has become a considerable strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

159. Religious education is inspected under Section 23. Provision meets statutory requirements.