

INSPECTION REPORT

NUTGROVE METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

St Helens

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104821

Headteacher: Mr Ian Rimmer

Reporting inspector: Mr J J Peacock
25344

Dates of inspection: 2 - 4 July 2001

Inspection number: 192670

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Govett Road St Helens Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Gordon Morton
Date of previous inspection:	10 March 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Founded in 1811, the school is one of only two Methodist voluntary aided primary schools in the country. It caters for pupils from four to eleven years of age and is about the same size as most other primary schools. There are 229 pupils on roll, 119 boys and 110 girls. The school has eight classes, four in the infant department, two of which have mixed age groups and four single-age classes in the juniors. Almost all pupils come from the immediate area around the school. The attainment of most children when they start in the reception class is broadly average.

At present, 19 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. Only two pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has 22 per cent of pupils on its register for pupils with special educational needs, which is in line with the national average and 2.1 per cent with a statement of special educational needs, which is above the national average. The mobility of pupils appears to be a significant factor for the school. Last year, for example, eight pupils were admitted and six left during term time and about a quarter of all pupils in the Year 6 class joined the school after they were seven.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school where the many strengths far outweigh any weaknesses. The recently appointed and extremely enthusiastic headteacher is providing a high quality of leadership and management and this is largely responsible for the school's success in addressing previous issues. In spite of high levels of pupil mobility and an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs in some year groups, standards in English, mathematics and science have improved steadily, above the national trend. The quality of teaching is good. It is particularly effective for pupils with special educational needs, enabling many to achieve nationally expected standards. All pupils show a very good attitude to learning and behave well in lessons. Most are working at or near to their capacity. When all these factors are considered, along with the slightly above average level of funding, the school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- The very good leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are rapidly bringing about improvements.
- A high proportion of pupils achieves standards, which are in line with national expectations. In mathematics, they do particularly well in the national tests at seven and eleven.
- The quality of teaching has improved a great deal and is now good throughout the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are very good.
- Parents have very positive views of the school.

What could be improved

- Attendance, which is below the national average, with more unauthorised absences than in most primary schools.
- The physical development of children under six in the Foundation Stage as it is restricted by the lack of a suitable outdoor play area.
- The way in which the school prepares pupils for the diversity of cultures in Britain today.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was previously inspected in March 1997, three key issues were identified for improvement: the school development planning; systems to undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness and more detailed curriculum guidance with better use being made of assessment information. The programme of improvement was interrupted when the previous headteacher spent a year in Australia and then retired for family reasons. In September 2000, the acting headteacher was appointed as headteacher and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in January this year. In addition, three new teachers have joined the staff in the past two years.

Following this period of instability, the previous issues were addressed in earnest, with the result that most of the improvements are recent and have not really had time to make a significant impact. There are now up-to-date policy statements and detailed programmes of work for each National Curriculum subject, giving teachers clear guidance for their lesson planning. Assessment procedures are good and teachers are using assessment information in a satisfactory way to guide their future planning. The headteacher is using computer technology very effectively to support the very good systems, which are now in place to monitor standards and evaluate the quality of teaching. The current management plan is detailed and gives a clear indication of developments planned for the next three years. The school has also successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies over the past two years and this is having a marked impact on standards, particularly in mathematics. The level of improvement, taking into account the standards achieved, and the much better quality of teaching, has been good. The school is well on course to meet the targets set for English and mathematics in 2001. Furthermore, the school has the skilled leadership and strong commitment from staff to maintain the current trend of improvement. All can be justifiably optimistic about the continuing success of the school.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	B	B	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	A	A	
Science	C	A	C	C	

The determination shown by the headteacher and staff to raise standards is helping to ensure that they improve steadily, above the national trend. Pupils' achievements in the 2000 national tests for eleven-year-olds, shown above, have largely been maintained in spite of the disruption caused by changes in staffing over the past two years. When the results in 2000 are compared to those of similar schools, that is to say those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards are well above average in mathematics, above the average in English and in line with the average in science. Inspection evidence confirms that, by the time pupils are eleven, overall standards in English and science are in line with the national average for all schools and above average in mathematics. An analysis of pupils' completed work confirms that all pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment and there is no difference between the attainment of girls and boys. With about a quarter of pupils in the current year group on the school's register for pupils with special educational needs, the school is doing well to continue to improve on its overall standards.

Targets for English and mathematics are carefully and realistically based on a detailed assessment of pupils' potential and a high proportion achieve them with many exceeding them. Pupils with all types of special educational needs make very good progress due to the careful planning by their teachers and the very good support they receive from classroom assistants. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with national expectations. The favourable ratio of computers to pupils, a new computer room and commitment by staff to improve their own level of expertise are beginning to have a beneficial impact on standards. Attainment for eleven-year-olds in art and music is average.

By the time most children are six, virtually all achieve the Early Learning Goals in the six areas of learning which make up the Foundation Stage curriculum. By the age of seven, they achieve above average standards in mathematics and standards which are in line with the average in English and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. All concentrate well in lessons, working hard to produce lots of neat work. Most say that they enjoy their time at school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils in general respond to the school's high expectations of behaviour. Any bullying is dealt with effectively. There have been no exclusions and no racist or sexist behaviour is reported and none seen.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The close links with the Methodist church and parents help to create a caring, family atmosphere. Pupils are given and readily accept responsibilities.
Attendance	Below average. The levels of both authorised and unauthorised absence are above that normally seen in other schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall (24)	Good	Good	Good

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

Previously, the overall quality of teaching was judged to be good, in spite of criticism about the pace of lessons, matching work to pupils' abilities, marking and the use of praise. Seven per cent was judged to be unsatisfactory. Some of this was with children under five, where there was an 'insecurity in teaching techniques'. These aspects of teaching have improved a great deal since then, and the overall quality of teaching is now good throughout the school. The highest standards of teaching were found in the Year 5 and Year 6 classes with five out of the eight lessons observed being very good and the remainder good. In the Foundation Stage, the overall quality was also good. The quality of teaching seen in this inspection was satisfactory or better in 23 of the 24 lessons observed. It was unsatisfactory in only one of the junior lessons seen, mainly due to the low expectations of the teacher and a lack of challenge, which led to some inattention.

A strong commitment by most staff to give pupils the best possible education they can, results in most aspects of teaching now being of a high standard. Strong features, common to all teachers, are detailed lesson planning, high expectations of pupils, discipline and the support for pupils with special educational needs. These help to make learning effective for all pupils. In addition, classroom support assistants are deployed effectively in the classrooms and they invariably make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The very good support for pupils with special educational needs, particularly during literacy and numeracy sessions, enables most to achieve nationally expected standards. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. As a direct result, pupils' productivity and pace of working are very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all the nationally agreed areas. However, there are deficiencies in the provision for the physical development of children caused by the lack of a suitable outdoor play area. The recently developed range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, overall. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to enjoy competitive team games.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. All pupils are supported very well in lessons. Individual educational plans clearly identify their areas for improvement and pupils are given appropriate work to do. Specialist teachers give valuable additional support to individual pupils, helping many to achieve nationally expected standards.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few pupils involved now speak English competently and are fully included in all lessons and school activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, overall. The school's aims and values are reflected in all aspects of daily life. The motto, 'My best, always, everywhere' is particularly apt. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, overall. However, as noted in the previous inspection, opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of the different cultures found in Britain today are not systematically or routinely planned.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good, overall. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are very effective. Attendance is carefully monitored and recent initiatives have been introduced to improve the rate of attendance.

Most parents hold the school in high esteem. This was evident at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection and from the returned questionnaires.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is deeply committed to raising standards. He is ably supported by a new deputy headteacher and is successfully building a high performing staff. The subject coordinators are making a valuable contribution to managing the curriculum.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Business is conducted in a satisfactory way and all statutory requirements are met. However, governors are not sufficiently involved in deciding the priorities for the school, or evaluating the success of current initiatives.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Standards are closely scrutinised by the headteacher and prompt action is taken to bring about improvements. Some very good procedures are being developed using computer programs to analyse pupils' achievements.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The best value is sought in all expenditure and specific grants are spent appropriately. Thanks to the efforts of the Methodist church and local community, the loans for the new school building have been already repaid. Very good use is made of new technology throughout the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils like school.• They make good progress.• Behaviour is good.• Teaching is good.• The approachability of the school.• Pupils are expected to work hard.• School works closely with parents.• It is well led and managed.• Pupils are helped to become more mature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of activities outside normal lessons.• The quantity of homework set.• Information about how their child is getting on.

Inspectors are in full agreement with the positive views expressed by the 43 per cent of parents who returned their questionnaires. However, inspectors disagree with the small number of parents' views about homework and the quality of information on pupils' progress. Teachers set a realistic amount of homework and make satisfactory use of it to support pupils' learning. Arrangements to inform parents about pupils' progress are similar to those found in other schools and pupils' annual reports are good. The recently introduced programme of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, overall. We agree, however, with those parents who would like to see a wider range of options, including competitive sporting activities, being made available to pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The very good leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are rapidly bringing about improvements.

1. After a period of one year as acting headteacher, when the previous headteacher worked in an Australian school and then retired shortly after returning, the deputy, commended in the previous report as being competent and enthusiastic, was appointed as headteacher. As a result, the standard of leadership and management has strengthened further since the previous inspection when it was reported to be good. It is now very good and this has a major impact on the daily life of the school, inspiring all to give 100 per cent effort in all they do. The headteacher is enthusiastically optimistic about the future for the school and has a very clear vision of what he wants to achieve for the benefit of the pupils and community. His skilled leadership, fresh approach and deep commitment to raising standards are helping to build a high performing staff. They share his commitment to improve and work hard with him to fulfil the school's mission statement. The aims and values in this are strongly reflected in all aspects of school life such as pupils' very good attitudes to their work and their good behaviour.
2. In the previous inspection, three key issues were identified and because of the disruption in staffing since then, progress made in addressing the issues was slow. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the pace of improvement has been rapid and the previous key issues have been addressed in earnest. Much has been accomplished in a short time but, as most initiatives have only recently been put in place, their impact is yet to be fully realised. The school improvement planning is extremely detailed and targets for the next three years are clearly identified. Very good systems, involving much use of computers to analyse and present data, have been recently put into place to monitor standards and evaluate the quality of teaching. All teachers now benefit from clear guidance on what to teach each year in up-to-date programmes of work for each National Curriculum subject and good use is made of information gathered when pupils' progress is assessed, helping teachers to plan future work more effectively. The school identified standards in reading as a priority last year, for example, and took prompt and decisive action to raise standards. In addition, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented and the level of resources for information and communication technology increased to above average levels. The headteacher is particularly proud of the new computer room, which will be available for community use from September. Staff expertise throughout the school has been improved and very good use is made of computers in virtually all lessons. The scope and pace of improvement are a credit not only to the commitment and skill of the headteacher, but also to all the staff who work so well as a team.
3. The effective delegation of responsibility to senior staff is a strong feature. A new very experienced deputy headteacher has recently joined the senior management team and this provides an effective forum in which the school's current successes can be evaluated and its future planned. The deputy headteacher carries out her responsibilities very efficiently and effectively. Individual members of staff who coordinate the development of subjects within the curriculum and the special educational needs co-ordinator take their responsibilities seriously, giving much support to one another. The newly formed Foundation Stage for children under six is managed in a satisfactory way by the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator. Non-teaching staff feel part of the 'school team' and value the guidance and support they receive from teachers. The quality of their work adds to the success of pupils' learning experiences. However, some classes in the infant department benefit much more than others from their help and in the interests of all pupils, the time they spend in each class needs to be reviewed.
4. The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily. Their contribution to monitoring the quality and standards, criticised in the previous inspection, is being developed in partnership with the new headteacher. However, a number of changes, including the imminent departure of the Chair of Governors, are slowing progress in this important area. Through his weekly visits and meetings with the headteacher, the Chair of Governors has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Individual governors are chosen

wisely for their expertise in different areas and all approach their duties conscientiously. All are proud to be associated with the school. Minutes of the governing body's meetings indicate that meetings are well attended and business is conducted efficiently. The statutory requirements for the special educational needs Code of Practice are met in full.

5. The very good procedures recently introduced by the headteacher for monitoring and evaluating teaching are designed to give staff opportunities to spread good practice and to support colleagues in any area of insecurity. The improvements made in the way information and communication technology is taught by all staff, following a thorough evaluation of areas of weakness, are an example of the success of these procedures. The school's procedures for assessing teachers' performance generally are a model of good practice. The headteacher is constantly striving for excellence and has a regular programme for looking at pupils' books to evaluate the standards being achieved. There is also a very good programme for monitoring and evaluating basic teaching skills in classrooms, giving co-ordinators and the senior management team a clear overview of actual standards of teaching in all subjects. When the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were introduced, for example, careful monitoring enabled areas of difficulty to be quickly identified and put right.
6. The school administration staff run the school office very efficiently. All duties and responsibilities are carried out cheerfully and calmly, and this helps to give a positive first impression of the school to visitors. Very good use is made of new technology in the office, with an electronic mail facility and computer programs for managing the finances. Government grants are used effectively and correctly. The special educational needs co-ordinator is meticulous in making sure that funds are applied to the best effect. Overall financial control is very good. The school budget is slightly above the average for most schools. When local authority finance officers conducted an audit of the school's financial management six months ago, only a few minor items for improvement could be found. These have been put in place. The school buys its resources and services at the most competitive prices and pays careful attention to quality. The very efficient management of finances in general has, for example, enabled the governors to repay all the loans for the new building. Taking into account the expenditure per pupil, the quality of leadership and management, the standards achieved, the consistently good quality of teaching and pupils' very good attitudes, the school is providing good value for money.

A high proportion of pupils achieves standards which are in line with national expectations. In mathematics they do particularly well in the national tests at seven and eleven.

7. The determination shown by the headteacher and staff to raise standards is helping to ensure that they improve steadily, above the national trend. This is a remarkable achievement, considering the disruption caused by changes in staffing over the past two years, the above average proportion of pupils on the special needs register in some year groups and the mobility of pupils. Almost a quarter of pupils in Year 6 in 2000, for example, joined the school after they were seven. The high proportion achieving nationally expected standards each year at seven and eleven shows that the teaching is effective and that many of the pupils with special educational needs are making very good progress to reach the required standard.
8. Attainment on entry to the reception class is broadly average. Children benefit from the detailed lesson planning which effectively covers the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum for children under six. The quality of teaching is good and as a result most make good progress in language and literacy, mathematics, in their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and in their personal and social development. For example, children listen well to all adults, respond well to instructions and work well on the tasks set for them. In their physical development, progress is also good. However, teachers have to work hard to compensate for the lack of a suitable outdoor play area and shortage of equipment such as large climbing frames and wheeled toys for children to push or ride. The school is lagging behind modern-day standards in this particular area of provision. By the end of the Foundation Stage, virtually all children achieve the Early Learning Goals in the Foundation Stage curriculum. This gives them a good start for the next phase of their education.

9. Results in the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, in comparison with all schools, show that standards in reading and writing were well above average. In mathematics they were above average. When the school's performance is compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the pattern is the same. The results for science, based on teacher assessments, show every pupil achieved the expected Level 2 or above, which is very high, being in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion achieving the higher Level 3 was in line with the national average.
10. Inspection findings show that attainment for current seven-year-olds in English and science is average, and in mathematics it is above average. This is virtually the same as in the previous inspection in March 1997, except for science, which was below average then. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and a marked improvement in the quality of teaching are having a good effect. In 2000, for example, the proportion achieving the expected Level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics was 93, 93 and 97 per cent respectively. The previous year, every pupil was successful in writing and mathematics, with 94 per cent in reading. These percentages are high, considering the problems the school has overcome and are a credit to the hard work of the teachers and positive attitudes of pupils towards their work. Overall, pupils' level of achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good by the time they are seven.
11. In English, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to express themselves in class discussions. Most make satisfactory progress in their speaking and listening as a result. Reading is taught effectively, allowing pupils to develop their technical skills well. All have good strategies, for example, to try and read unfamiliar words. Most read with understanding. The close liaison between home and school, with parents regularly hearing their children read and writing comments in reading diaries, is helping to improve standards. Pupils are provided with lots of opportunities to write in most subjects and the standard of their spelling and handwriting is satisfactory. In Year 2, for example, pupils record their observations following their investigations into electrical circuits in science. The daily literacy sessions successfully introduce skills that pupils can use when writing in other subjects. Year 1, for example, are taught the difference between labels and captions and in Year 2 pupils discuss the differences between fiction and non-fiction texts.
12. In mathematics, pupils do well. This is mainly because of the clear structure of lessons, which closely follow the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy, the quality of teaching and pupils' positive attitudes. All pupils enjoy the challenge of finding answers to problems and when teachers make them work quickly, or explain how they worked out an answer, it raises their interest and enjoyment of lessons. In the Year 1 and reception mixed age class, for example, pupils made good use of small clock faces to solve problems involving time. In the Year 1 and 2 mixed age class, most successfully count in twos, fives and tens, halve and double numbers and competently add and subtract numbers to 50.
13. Much of the work in science is of a practical nature. By the time they are seven, pupils have studied electricity, magnets, sounds, light, materials and living things, such as plants. In a lesson seen in Year 2, for example, a part-time teacher who specialises in science helped pupils to appreciate the dangers associated with electricity and how to construct an electrical circuit.
14. Pupils continue to achieve well in the junior classes. Their rate of progress is particularly good in Years 5 and 6, largely because of the quality of teaching in these two classes. The mature, sensible attitude most pupils show towards their work is another key factor.
15. The results of the National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-old pupils in 2000 showed that attainment was in line with the average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. When the results are compared with those of pupils from similar backgrounds, they remain well above average in mathematics, in line in science, but above average in English. The improvement in all three subjects has been above the national trend. Inspection findings show that in the current Year 6 class, attainment in English and science are in line with the national average, but above average in mathematics. Early indications from this year's national test results confirm this picture. It is clear that in spite of the recent changes in staffing

and increasing numbers with special educational needs, standards have been maintained in all three subjects since the previous inspection.

16. The formal structure of literacy and numeracy sessions continues to have a beneficial effect on standards in the junior section of the school. Detailed lesson planning, well chosen texts and teachers' skill in teaching reading, supported by parents at home are helping most to reach nationally expected standards. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to write in a wide range of contexts and styles, often using computers. Letters by pupils in Year 4 to an Aztec leader about human sacrifices provide a typical example. Pupils also write poems and character profiles about people in stories they read, using punctuation correctly. All demonstrate a fluent joined style of handwriting and most of their work is neatly presented.
17. Pupils in the junior classes do well in mathematics and standards are higher than in the other core subjects of English and science. This is once again due mainly to the structured approach in lessons and the quality of teaching which promotes pupils' interest in the subject very effectively. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils were set a series of challenging problems to solve involving numbers to 1,000. All showed a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages.
18. In science, pupils have many opportunities to investigate and conduct experiments independently of their teacher. All show a very good attitude, are well motivated and work hard in lessons to complete their work. Topics covered include monitoring how materials such as ice change when heated, solutions, plant growth, healthy lifestyle and sound, light and electricity. The performance of girls and boys is almost identical in science, as well as in English and mathematics.
19. Pupils with all types of special educational needs do very well at this school. Most achieve nationally expected levels of attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, due to the careful planning by teachers and the effective support of the classroom assistants or specialist learning support teachers. Challenging targets are set for them and most are well on course to meet them.
20. All pupils, whatever their ability, are fully included in all aspects of school life, with teachers ensuring equality of opportunity for all. As a result, a high proportion of pupils achieves the standards expected of them in national tests. Parents should note that the absence of one or two pupils during the crucial time when the tests were undertaken reduced the percentage figures by 3.2 per cent for every absentee last year, adversely affecting the school's performance. The 90 per cent achieving Level 4 or above in English could so easily have been higher.

The quality of teaching has improved a great deal and is now good throughout the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

21. In the previous inspection in March 1997, the overall quality of teaching was judged to be good, in spite of criticism about the pace of lessons, matching work to pupils' abilities, marking and the use of praise. Seven per cent was judged to be unsatisfactory. Some of this was with children under-five, where there was an 'insecurity in teaching techniques'. Since then, there has been a significant change in the teaching staff with three new appointments in the past two years and a new headteacher and deputy head. As a direct result of the headteacher's leadership and a shared determination by all staff to raise standards, all these aspects of teaching have improved a great deal. The overall quality of teaching is now good throughout the school. The highest standards of teaching were found in the Year 5 and Year 6 classes with five out of the eight lessons observed being very good and the remainder good. In the Foundation Stage, the overall quality was also good.
22. The quality of teaching seen during this short inspection was satisfactory or better in 23 of the 24 lessons observed and good or better in 17 of them. It was unsatisfactory in only one of the junior lessons seen, mainly because of the low expectations of the teacher and a lack of challenge for pupils, which led to some inattention. Staff are guided effectively in their lesson planning by detailed teaching programmes for all subjects and as a result, the quality of their

planning is very good. Good features, common to all teachers, which are contributing most to the effectiveness of teaching, are the pace of lessons, high expectations of pupils, class discipline and the use of computers to make learning interesting for pupils. In addition, the satisfactory use of homework further enhances the quality of learning. As a direct consequence of the quality of teaching, pupils work conscientiously in their lessons, taking a pride in their work.

23. There is evidently a very strong determination by all staff to raise standards and pupils are playing their part by showing a very good attitude towards their work and trying constantly to do their best. Teachers' enthusiasm and good knowledge of the curriculum and the knack of making learning exciting and fun help to keep all pupils fully motivated and extremely busy. In a Year 6 history lesson, for example, as pupils were researching information using the Internet, the teacher was able to exchange humorous comments with pupils about old television programmes, winkle-picker shoes and 'Teddy boys'. As a result of this, a copious amount of pupils' completed work was available to the inspection team for their scrutiny.
24. The most important element in bringing about the improvement in standards and the quality of teaching is teachers' detailed lesson planning, with specific learning objectives clearly identified. All teachers take care to communicate these objectives to pupils at the beginning of each lesson and review the level of success with pupils before the lesson ends. Effective links are also made between different subjects. In Year 4, for example, a history lesson involved pupils using computers to write a letter to an Aztec leader called Montezuma, trying to persuade him to stop making human sacrifices in religious ceremonies. Skills from English lessons as well as a historical understanding of the Aztec civilisation were put into practice. Expectations of pupils are generally high and pupils respond by behaving extremely well and working conscientiously to produce neat work. Pupils of all abilities are given suitably challenging tasks and strict time targets to complete them. Year 3 pupils, for example, had only a few minutes to make a list of homonyms before using a word art computer program in the new computer room to present them graphically. Year 6 were challenged to set up an experiment to find the strongest magnet and showed the level of their understanding of magnets and scientific enquiry as they discussed in groups the age, weight, shape and thickness of coating on the various magnets.
25. Another strong feature of most lessons is the effective way teachers use support staff or parent helpers, when they are available. The very good attitude pupils in general have towards their work means that they can be trusted to work diligently, whether they are supervised by an adult or not. Children in the mixed Year 1 and reception class, for example, did not need telling to find something else to do when they had finished their task and their teacher was occupied with another group. Praise is used well throughout to motivate or raise pupils' self-esteem. This was evident in the supportive comments attached to pupils' marked work.
26. The quality of teaching in the literacy hours and during numeracy sessions is very good throughout the school. All teachers use the skills that pupils have learned in these sessions effectively when teaching other subjects. In history in Year 5, for example, pupils' literacy skills were developed well as they researched information from the Internet about the Tudor period. Pupils are frequently provided with the opportunity to use computer skills as part of their work in all subjects and this invariably involves literacy or numeracy skills.
27. The consistently good quality of teaching accounts for the good level of achievement for most pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In English, virtually all achieve the targets set for them and many exceed them by the time they are ready to leave the school. In mathematics, pupils do particularly well in the national tests for seven and eleven year olds, achieving better than average standards by the time they are 11 years of age. This is a direct result of the quality of teaching and the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. In information and communication technology in particular, pupils' above average achievements reflect the vastly improved level of resources and quality of teaching, which is good throughout the school.
28. All teachers work hard to establish a good working atmosphere and promote effective learning. Pupils obviously enjoy the calm, orderly atmosphere in lessons and usually behave well. This

results in a productive working environment in all classes with pupils sustaining very good levels of concentration. As a direct result, effective learning occurs in virtually all lessons. The quality of teaching for children in their reception year is good, helping all to settle quickly into school routines. Planning of children's work meets the new requirements of all six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, the lack of a suitable outdoor play area makes it more difficult for teachers to meet the Early Learning Goals for children's physical development effectively.

29. A further strength of teaching is the very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs. Staff use expert advice and good assessment information to ensure that individual learning plans identify precise and achievable targets in relation to literacy, numeracy and social behaviour. Teachers take full account of these individual targets in their lesson plans. They work closely with support staff to ensure that the best possible use is made of their time and talents. As a result, these pupils consistently receive the help they need to make very good progress in relation to their personal targets. Teachers and learning support staff continuously monitor individual pupils' progress and further action is planned accordingly. Alongside this, trained specialists work with small groups in Years 3, 4 and 5 to give additional support in literacy to lower attaining pupils. Also booster sessions which focus on English and mathematics give pupils in Year 6 the extra push they need to achieve the best they can in National Curriculum tests. Teaching is usually of a high quality. It is characterised by well-planned activities and a sensitive and caring approach which successfully builds pupils' confidence. As a result, most pupils achieve the levels expected of all pupils in the national tests and assessments for seven and eleven-year-olds.
30. A small number of parents, in their responses to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, were unhappy with the amount of homework their children were expected to do. At the meeting for parents, some said pupils were given too much homework, and others felt that the tasks set were not well matched to pupils' capabilities. Inspection findings do not support these parents' views. The school's policy statement gives clear guidance to teachers and parents on homework. Teachers make satisfactory use of homework as part of their strong commitment to raise standards and the amount and quality effectively support pupils' learning.

Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are very good.

31. Pupils' attitudes have improved since the previous inspection when it was reported that in most cases pupils displayed a positive attitude. Most now have a very good attitude and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of life for all in the school and the standards achieved by the time pupils are ready to leave the school. All, including those with special educational needs, enjoy being in school and parents' views confirm this. In the lessons observed during the inspection the attitude and behaviour of pupils were judged to be good or better in 20 out of the 24 lessons. They were very good in one third of the total.
32. Behaviour, on its own, was judged to be good overall, as there was some inattention by a few pupils and on occasions, teachers had to raise their voices to keep noise levels low when pupils were working in some classes.
33. As they progress through school, pupils' attitude to learning improves and by the time they are in Year 6 it is invariably very good. In four of the five lessons observed, for example, it was very good and in the fifth, it was good. In the classes with reception children, which make up the Foundation Year, children learn quickly to listen to instructions and to work co-operatively in groups. All were keen to show their finished work to any adults present. In the mixed Year 1 and reception class, children showed remarkable patience when they had finished their task and were waiting for the attention of the teacher who was busy with older pupils. All sensibly found a book or carried on working through a computer program. It is apparent however, that there is an unequal provision of support assistants in the infant classes, with some having the benefit of a full-time assistant, whilst others only have help on occasions. In order to maximise the rate of progress for all pupils, the school should review the deployment of its classroom support assistants.

34. By the time they are seven, pupils approach their work with enthusiasm and respond very well to the structure of the literacy and numeracy lessons. All are keen to try and be the first to answer during the whole class introductory sessions and maintain their concentration level very well. They particularly enjoy the challenge when the pace is rapid and they have to find answers quickly. In a Year 2 science lesson observed, pupils showed much interest in investigating electrical circuits and worked well, independently of their teacher.
35. By eleven, pupils have very good levels of concentration, are determined to succeed and are prepared to work hard to do so. In the new information and communication technology room, for example, Year 6 pupils were fully absorbed in the task of researching information from the Internet for their history project on Britain since 1948. The very good attitudes throughout the junior classes are a result of the good relationships that exist between all staff and pupils and of teachers' high expectations, which are communicated effectively to pupils. Most teachers, for example, make it clear to pupils precisely what the learning objectives are for each lesson. In a Year 4 art lesson with an Aztec pottery theme, for example, pupils worked conscientiously to design and make pots from clay and were genuinely disappointed when they had to tidy away at the end of the day, as many had not finished the task to their satisfaction. Pupils' very positive attitudes towards their work, resulting from parental interest and the good quality of teaching, ensure pupils of all abilities work productively and produce lots of neat work. As a result, almost all achieve their full potential.

Parents have very positive views of the school.

36. The strong commitment to a meaningful partnership with parents, which was reported in the previous inspection, still exists today. Those who attended the meeting for parents prior to the inspection showed pride in the reputation the school enjoys in the community. An analysis of the returned questionnaires shows parents are happy with school and confident that their children are getting a good education. Parent governors report that parents appreciate the family atmosphere within the school and the approachability of the headteacher and his staff. Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. Pupils are well taught by a dedicated and caring staff who expect them to work hard and help them to achieve their best. Almost all (98 per cent) agree that the school is helping their children to become more mature and responsible.
37. There is a strong commitment by the school to work closely with parents for the benefit of pupils and this helps to foster the good relationship and their positive views. During the inspection, a few parent volunteers were seen helping in the classrooms. They and other parents spoken to by the inspection team confirm that they feel welcome in school and are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. Virtually all (99 per cent) agree that their child is making good progress. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and those with more able pupils had no concerns about the school's provision for both groups of pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Attendance, which is below the national average, with more unauthorised absences than in most primary schools.

38. Attendance is currently unsatisfactory, being below the national average by almost one per cent. Annual figures show that absence has reduced slightly since the previous inspection in March 1997, but it has not kept pace with the improving national trend and comparatively, the gap is now wider between the school figure and the national figure. Pupils taking holidays during term time is one of the main reasons for absence. Most pupils arrive on time for school and lessons begin punctually.
39. The rate of unauthorised absence has increased markedly from well below the national figure in 1997 when it was reported as 'at an acceptable level' to slightly above the national figure in the last full academic year. This may be the result of stricter recording procedures instituted by the school.

40. The school has recognised that attendance is lower than it should be and a clear statement in the prospectus urges parents to telephone the school on the first day of their child's absence.
41. An unrealistic target of 100 per cent attendance has been set by the headteacher and positive steps have been taken to work towards this goal. Pupils have been rewarded with certificates for full attendance but, at present, significant improvements by individual pupils are not recognised.
42. Very good procedures to monitor all absence, using a computer spreadsheet, have been introduced by the headteacher. Any incidence of lateness and the reason for all absences are recorded for individual pupils. With the aid of this structure, the impact of absenteeism on pupils' achievements is being analysed and the results will be communicated to parents. Unfortunately, the recently introduced measures to monitor and promote attendance have not had sufficient time to show that they are working.

The physical development of children under six in the Foundation Stage as it is restricted by the lack of a suitable outdoor play area.

43. The overall planning of work for children in the Foundation Stage, which covers all those who are under six in their reception year, is very good. It meets the requirements of the six areas of learning which make up the Foundation Stage curriculum.
44. All children in their reception year are very well supported by their class teachers and by classroom support assistants when they are present in the classroom. This makes sure that they make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning by the time they are six. However, staff face difficulties in ensuring that all children make good progress in fully developing their physical skills. In the classroom, the good quality of teaching means that children improve their skills of cutting out, using scissors accurately. During the inspection, they were observed using tools such as glue spreaders carefully when decorating card lollipops using brightly coloured shapes. All manage to hold pencils and crayons properly when attempting to write simple three letter words or numbers. They learn to mould shapes in play dough showing good levels of coordination when rolling it out or using cutters to make 'cakes'. All enjoy playing with the good variety of construction kits, which are readily available.
45. In the previous inspection report, it was noted that building works for the new school hindered the outdoor physical education programme. It is obvious from the report that the exterior was not completed at the time of the inspection. No suitable outdoor play area for the reception children was subsequently provided. It is difficult to understand why, in a new school built just over three years ago, no provision was made for this important area of young children's learning. It severely restricts the opportunities for children to practise their climbing, balancing, crawling or jumping skills. The school is also woefully short of outdoor climbing apparatus and large wheeled toys for children to ride on or push. A lack of storage space for such items is the most likely cause for this. The unsatisfactory provision not only limits children's physical development but also denies them valuable opportunities to interact socially and develop their linguistic skills. As a matter of some urgency, the school needs to improve the facilities and resources for this important aspect of children's learning, bringing them up to acceptable modern-day standards.

The way in which the school prepares pupils for the diversity of cultures in Britain today.

46. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development, with opportunities for pupils to appreciate the importance of music, art and literature in our daily lives. In history, pupils come to an understanding of the changing nature of society, both within Great Britain and societies in the past such as the Aztecs, Romans and Egyptians. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Year 6 used the Internet to research what life was like in Britain since 1948. However, there is little evidence of pupils developing an informed understanding of the diversity of cultures in Britain today. This aspect was also found to be a weakness in the previous inspection and the school was urged to "prepare pupils more thoroughly for life in our multi-ethnic society." This does not appear to have been undertaken.

At the school, 97.4 per cent of pupils are of white UK heritage. The planned programme for religious education ensures that the beliefs of Christianity, and in particular those of the Methodist Church, are taught coherently and well. There are close links with the Church and the clergy are regular visitors in school but few visitors are recorded from other cultures. Furthermore, pupils are not provided with many opportunities to visit places of worship for other religions, or to understand the many cultures represented in Britain today. This lack of first-hand experience was also noted previously.

47. There are few resources available to teachers or pupils on other world religions. In the library, for example, there are very few books about religions such as Hinduism, Judaism or Sikhism. Moreover, the school, unlike many others, has not built up a sufficient stock of artefacts associated with the many different world faiths. No evidence was found in teachers' planning to show that pupils are being taught about special celebrations such as Divali, Eid or the Chinese New Year, or to communicate with other ethnic groups.
48. At present, there is a lack of emphasis on helping pupils to appreciate the different cultures and beliefs practised in Britain today. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. Under the present fresh and extremely enthusiastic leadership and with the current team of hard working staff, this church community school has a bright future. Few weaknesses exist and most of those identified by the inspection team are already known to the school. For example, improving attendance is already a priority and the provision of a suitable outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage is on the headteacher's agenda for development. In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of education, the key issues for the school are to:
 - (1) improve the rate of attendance;
(Paragraphs 20, 38-42)
 - (2) provide a more suitable outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage;
(Paragraphs 8, 28, 43-45)
 - (3) help pupils to become more aware of the diversity of cultures to be found in Britain today.
(Paragraphs 46-48)
50. The following less important weakness, not included as a key issue for action, should also be considered by the school.
 - Review the arrangements for the deployment of classroom assistants in the infant department of the school so that teachers and pupils in all classes benefit equally from their support.
(Paragraphs 3, 25, 33)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	20.8	50	25	4.2	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)	N/a	229
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	45

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	50

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	4.3

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.3

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	21	8	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	27	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (94)	93 (100)	97 (100)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	20	21
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	26	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (88)	97 (94)	100 (94)
	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	16	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	14	14
	Girls	15	13	14
	Total	27	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (76)	87 (79)	90 (82)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	14
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	28	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (79)	87 (79)	94 (91)
	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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	191
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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)	9.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.8
Average class size	28.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	150

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	401,162
Total expenditure	413,990
Expenditure per pupil	1,785
Balance brought forward from previous year	26,671
Balance carried forward to next year	13,843

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

43.7 per cent

Number of questionnaires sent out	229
Number of questionnaires returned	100

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	53	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	50	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	45	0	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	55	9	5	0
The teaching is good.	61	35	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	41	11	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	26	3	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	38	53	8	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	49	44	2	3	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	45	1	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	49	24	7	0