

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ST. GABRIEL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Leigh, Greater Manchester

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106506

Headteacher: Mrs M Naylor

Reporting inspector: Mr P Dennison  
17736

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 September 2001

Inspection number: 194240  
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Kensington Drive  
Higher Fold  
Leigh  
Greater Manchester

Postcode: WN7 2YG

Telephone number: 01942 673603

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Hindley

Date of previous inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17736	Mr P Dennison	Registered inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Mathematics Art and design	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19669	Mrs F Kennedy	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20846	Mr A Wilson	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs English Information and communication technology Geography Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
12232	Mrs D Atkinson	Team inspector	English as an additional language Science Design and technology History Music	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Gabriel's Catholic Primary School is situated in Leigh, Lancashire. The school serves an area which includes both rented and privately owned homes. Most pupils live on the Higher Folds estate, within walking distance of the school, although some travel from other parts of the parish. There is no nursery class but there is a pre-school group in a spare classroom. This meets each afternoon and works in close co-operation with the reception class. There is a wide range of attainment on entry but overall it is below expectations for the age group. At the time of the inspection there were 126 pupils on roll, taught in 6 classes. The number of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is above the national average. Seven of these pupils have a statement of Special Educational Need. This is above the national average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is also above the national average. Pupils are of white British heritage. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school is a member of Leigh Education Action Zone and has also received support from Coalfield Challenge.

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

This school provides a sound quality of education. The headteacher and governors provide clear leadership. They and the staff work well together, with a shared commitment to raising standards. Much of the teaching is good and this has a positive effect on pupils' progress. The pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they make good progress. By the time they leave school, they achieve standards in English and mathematics that are higher than those in similar schools. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils make good progress and by Year 6, standards of attainment in English and mathematics are higher than those found in similar schools.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school.
- The school cares well for its pupils and relationships are good.
- The school provides good support for parents in preparation for their children starting school.
- Pupils develop good investigative skills in science.

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

- The use made of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs.
- Pupils' attainment in writing.
- Reference materials in the school library.
- Pupils' research and reference skills, especially in history and geography.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in April 1997. Since then, there have been improvements in a number of areas. The headteacher and governors have ensured that the issues raised by the previous inspection have been addressed. The quality of teaching has been improved and is now good overall. This, along with the successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, has helped to raise standards in English and mathematics. The school development plan now has clearly identified targets, costings and success criteria and is a useful management tool. Systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress have been improved but are not yet used effectively in setting clear targets for individuals and groups. Learning resources have been improved but the school library lacks sufficient reference materials to support independent research. Other improvements have included the development of the computer suite and the implementation of the 'INSPIRE' project to support parents and children entering the reception class. The school has made very effective use of the

support and guidance from the Coalfield Challenge initiative and the Leigh Education Action Zone. These organisations have helped considerably with the improvements made.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	D	E	B
mathematics	E	E	D	B
science	E	D	E	D

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

Pupils' performance in the year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was well below the national average in English and science and below the national average in mathematics. However, in comparison with similar schools, the performance was above average in English and mathematics although below average in science. Results show a clear improvement since 1996, in line with the national rate of improvement. Results in the 2001 tests show a decline in English and mathematics results although there are no national comparisons yet available. The school agrees realistic but challenging targets for each year's tests at Year 6. It surpassed the targets it had agreed for the 2000 tests but did not achieve its targets for English and mathematics in 2001.

Results of the Year 2 and Year 6 National Curriculum tests have tended to vary from year to year. This is because of the relatively small number of pupils in each year group and the variation in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the cohorts for successive years.

Evidence from the inspection indicates that the attainment of pupils in the present Year 6 class is broadly in line with that expected for their age group in English, mathematics and science. They are achieving well.

Attainment in Year 2 is in line with expectations in reading and mathematics but below expectations in writing.

Attainment in information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection and is in line with that expected for the age group. Attainment in all other subjects of the national curriculum is in line with the national expectations for the age group. However, one area of weakness is the lack of opportunity for pupils to develop independent research and reference skills, particularly in subjects such as history and geography.

There is a wide range of attainment on entry to the reception class but overall, standards are below those expected of this age group. Almost all children achieve well. This is due to the suitable curriculum and the good quality teaching. However, despite the good progress made, overall standards on entry to Year 1 are below the nationally expected level.

Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to school. They work hard, concentrate well and show good levels of interest.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave consistently well in lessons but some can be restless and inattentive.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is satisfactory. Relationships are good.
Attendance	Below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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.*

The quality of teaching is good overall and has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

Children in the reception class are taught well. The adults work effectively together. Planning is good; the classroom provides an effective environment for young children to make their own choice of what to do. Children are provided with many interesting practical activities and they respond very positively, making good progress.

Throughout the school, the best teaching is based on good planning and effective ways of keeping the pupils interested and working hard. The teachers generally have appropriately high expectations of behaviour and attainment. They expect pupils to maintain concentration and lessons proceed at a good pace. They make good use of questioning to develop pupils' understanding and they give clear explanations. Where teaching is less successful, learning objectives are not clear and work is not well matched to pupils' capabilities. The work lacks challenge and the pace of pupils' response slows with an adverse effect on the progress made. Class management is also weak on occasions.

Teaching in English and mathematics is good overall. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. At times in Years 1 and 2, planning is good but work is not always well matched to pupils' needs and lessons proceed at a modest pace.

The school works hard to meet the needs of all pupils and there is good support for pupils with special educational needs.

Most children are keen to learn, work hard and enjoy what they are doing but some throughout the school are easily distracted and do not take a sufficiently active part in lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is sound overall. There is a well-balanced curriculum for children in the reception class although limited facilities for outdoor play. In Years 1 to 6 there is an appropriately wide range of learning opportunities to support pupils' academic and personal development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. There are good procedures for assessing and identifying those pupils who have special educational needs. They are well supported by class teachers and assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound overall. Moral development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good level of care for its pupils and is successful in ensuring their welfare, health and safety.

The school works well in partnership with parents. Very good support is provided for parents of children starting in the reception class.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership. The newly – appointed deputy headteacher has been given a strong role in helping the school to move forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive. They are aware of the needs and priorities facing the school and contribute effectively to its success.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Teaching and pupils' learning are being checked regularly but there is a need for greater rigour in analysing assessment information and using it to improve standards by setting clear targets for individuals and groups.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are used well. Finance is managed prudently. Very effective use has been made of the resources provided via Coalfield Challenge initiative and the Education Action Zone.

The school is generously staffed with experienced teachers and support staff. The accommodation is satisfactory. The new computer suite has helped to improve standards. However, the library is far too small to use as a base for independent study. The reception class lacks an enclosed area for equipment designed to stimulate imaginative physical development through play. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. However, the range of non-fiction in the library limits the pupils' opportunity to engage in research and investigation.

The school development plan has been produced in consultation with staff and governors. This is based on an analysis of the school's needs. It clearly identifies the school's priorities and is reviewed regularly to evaluate progress.

The headteacher and governing body consider cost, quality, service and efficiency in their decisions on the choice of goods and services, and obtain tenders for larger expenditure. The school applies the principles of best value soundly.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school with problems or concerns</li> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• The teaching is good</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<p>A small number of parents expressed concerns about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework</li> <li>• How well informed they are about their children's progress</li> </ul>

Through the questionnaire and in discussions with inspectors, parents expressed much satisfaction with the school's provision. They appreciate the fact that their children are happy and make good progress. They respect the teachers and find them very approachable. The inspection team agree with their positive comments. A few parents have reservations about the homework policy and the information provided about pupils' progress but the inspectors consider the school's arrangements for these matters to be both adequate and appropriate.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. There is a wide range of attainment on entry to the reception class but overall, standards are below those expected of this age group. Almost all children achieve well. This is due to the suitable curriculum and the good quality teaching. However, despite the good progress made, overall standards on entry to Year 1 are below the levels expected nationally.
2. Pupils' performance in the Year 2 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was above the national average in reading, in line with the national average in writing and well above the average in mathematics. In comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the results in reading and writing were above the average and results in mathematics were well above the average. These results show a clear improvement since 1996. In the 2001 tests, pupils' performance declined in all three subjects. Girls achieved better than boys in reading and writing, whilst boys achieved better in mathematics.
3. Pupils' performance in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was well below the national average in English and science and below the national average in mathematics. However, in comparison with similar schools, the performance was above average in English and mathematics although below average in science. Results show a clear improvement since 1996, in line with the national rate of improvement. Results in the 2001 tests show a decline in English and mathematics results.
4. Standards of attainment, as measured by the Year 2 and Year 6 National Curriculum tests, have tended to vary from year to year. This is because of the relatively small number of pupils in each year group and the variation in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the cohorts for successive years. In last year's Year 2 class, for example, 7 out of 17 pupils were on the register of special educational needs. In the Year 6 class, 11 out of 18 pupils were on the register.
5. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the attainment of pupils in the present Year 2 and Year 6 classes is broadly in line with those expected for their age group. Attainment by Year 6 in English and mathematics has improved since the previous inspection when it was below the national expectation. This is due to improvements in the quality of teaching and the successful implementation of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. This has brought improvements in teachers' planning and a clearer focus to the lessons, enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve well.
6. Inspection findings are that standards in English are broadly average. Pupils are taught to listen carefully and opportunities for them to talk during whole class and group sessions enable them to make sound progress. By Year 2, they speak confidently and usually listen well. However, a minority of lower attainers have difficulty taking part in discussions, prefer to avoid being questioned, and are reluctant to contribute. Most pupils develop satisfactory reading skills. Their knowledge of letter names and sounds is good. By the end of Year 2 most are able to read simple texts with some accuracy. Standards of writing are below expectations for

the age group. Most pupils write simple sentences independently and a few higher attaining pupils write at length. Pupils' handwriting is unsatisfactory. Too many pupils do not control the size and shape of their letters well enough. Overall, teachers place too little emphasis on the quality and range of written work.

7. By the end of Year 6, most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and other pupils. Many pupils retain information they have listened to and link two or more ideas when answering questions. A significant minority, on the other hand, have difficulty in understanding instructions and are hesitant to answer questions, still limiting contributions to short phrases or single words. Standards of reading are in line with expectations for the age group. By Year 6, most pupils read independently, fluently and with good expression from a satisfactory range of texts. When asked about their reading they show good comprehension skills. Wider reference skills, on the other hand, are under-developed because there are not enough opportunities for them to carry out independent research. Pupils make good progress in writing between Year 3 and Year 6. By the time they are in Year 6, most write letters, stories, descriptions, reports and instructions. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects.
8. In mathematics, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 2, pupils have an appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Most have a good understanding of pattern in number and know the difference between odd and even. They have a secure understanding of shape. They are encouraged to use and develop their skills of mental arithmetic. They develop skills of simple data handling and can construct and interpret graphs. The higher attaining pupils have a clear understanding of the value of numbers and they carry out simple calculations accurately. They can work out simple problems mentally. Lower attaining pupils have a limited ability to mentally recall number facts but they are able to use apparatus effectively to aid calculations.
9. Pupils make good progress in mathematics between Years 3 and 6. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils of all abilities have a good understanding of the value of a digit in numbers to 1000 and can add, subtract, multiply and divide competently. They measure accurately areas and perimeters of regular and irregular shapes. They draw angles accurately and recognise and name properties of three-dimensional shapes. They use a variety of methods to collate and represent data they have collected. The pupils can use fractions and decimals accurately and can use a wide range of units of measure competently. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of number facts and multiplication tables. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in this area. Pupils make good progress in developing their mental strategies and are able to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and to support their work in other subjects.
10. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science in Years 1 and 2. They benefit from a strongly practical approach to the subject, improving their skills in handling equipment and making careful observations. By the end of Year 2, they appreciate that a test has to be made fair if the results are to be of any use and some pupils can suggest what needs to be done to make an investigation fair. They are beginning to use measurement as part of their investigations. They can make simple recordings of their work, using writing or labelled drawings.

11. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in science. By the end of Year 6, they use accurate scientific vocabulary to describe what they know or observe. They have a good grasp of the factual knowledge required by the National Curriculum and they also develop their understanding of the process of scientific enquiry. They can identify the features of a fair test and apply the principles well to their own investigations. They are able to measure a range of variables, and record their results.
12. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school now has a computer suite and teachers are using this facility very effectively for the development of computer skills. Consequently, pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their lessons in the computer suite because the quality of teaching is consistently good. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with those expected for the age group.
13. Pupils in Year 2 are confident with the computer, can start programs, save their work and know the conventions of using a mouse to operate the program. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils use computers to edit their work and improve it by adding pictures and borders. They also use their keyboard skills to good effect in other subjects when given the opportunity.
14. Pupils with special educational education achieve well in meeting the targets identified in their individual education plans. This is because of the effective support they receive from teaching and non-teaching staff.
15. Attainment in all other subjects of the National Curriculum is in line with the national expectations for the age group. However, one area of weakness is the lack of opportunity for pupils to develop independent research and reference skills, particularly in subjects such as history and geography. Teachers are hampered in their efforts to promote research by the limited resources available. Information and communication technology skills are being developed well through the use of the computer suite. However, teachers are not yet making effective use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

16. Overall the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in school have a positive impact on the progress that they make. Most pupils have good attitudes towards the school and to their work. Parents agree that pupils enjoy school and that the school helps them to become more mature. The good relationships in school ensure that ideas can be explored harmoniously as pupils work together. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Parents, staff and governors feel that this has improved. Certainly in the playground and on visits out of school it is good. However, on a daily basis most teachers still have to work constantly to help pupils respond appropriately. There have been no exclusions in the last school year.

17. The reception children settle well into the routines of school life and are eager to take part and enjoy the varied diet of activities and experiences. This positive attitude continues throughout the school - particularly when experiments and practical activities are involved. Year 1 pupils could barely wait to shut their eyes to work out what materials objects in a 'feely bag' were made of, whilst Years 5 and 6 were engrossed in solving challenges as they applied their knowledge of circuits and electricity. There is no reticence about asking questions or asking for help when necessary.
18. The youngest children have already made good progress in adjusting to the routines and expectations of their lively classroom. This establishes a sound foundation on which the school is building. Most pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. However, in every class a few still need the positive support of the adults as well as the sanctions to help them conform at all times and to maintain their concentration. When lessons are well-paced and teachers skilfully divide lessons into opportunities for active investigation, class discussion and quieter written work the tendency towards restlessness declines rapidly.
19. Relationships between pupils are good. They are courteous to each other and the adults around the school. There were no reports or evidence of bullying or friction between boys and girls. Boys and girls seemed to be equally enthusiastic about a skipping game one lunchtime. On the occasions when tensions between two pupils rose, quiet talk with an adult helped them understand how they felt and the implications of their actions. When Year 6 pupils tried to marshal thoughts and words to discuss exploration, they were considerate and interested in the ideas of their classmates.
20. Pupils, particularly the older ones, enjoy opportunities to take responsibility, help teachers at the end of the day and support the younger children but there are rather few opportunities for individuals to take any initiative over the content, direction and individuality of their work. For example, the library, the computer suite and the free-standing computers are underused when they might be harnessed to developing pupils' skills in organising their own research.
21. Attendance in the school is currently unsatisfactory, and below the national average for primary schools. Illness and holidays account for almost all absence and the rate of unauthorised absence is extremely low, below that found nationally. The recent re-organisation of school holidays within the local education authority has been a contributing factor in the unusually high number of families taking holidays in term time. Now that the re-organisation is complete, and the pattern of school holidays throughout the authority is established and uniform, the school anticipates that fewer families will take holidays in term time in the future. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in punctuality. The pupils arrive on time in the mornings and morning and afternoon sessions start promptly.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

22. During the inspection, two of the six classes were taught by temporary teachers due to staff absence through illness. Two other teachers had started at the school only two weeks prior to the inspection.

23. The quality of teaching is good overall and has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. During the inspection, 65 per cent of the teaching observed was good or better, 17 per cent was very good. Four per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory and none was poor. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection when teaching was satisfactory. At that time, only one per cent of teaching was very good and 19 per cent was less than satisfactory.
24. The quality of teaching in the reception class is good. The curriculum has been adapted well to take account of the new guidance for the Foundation Stage and planning is good. The classroom is well organised with many stimulating learning activities; it provides a good environment for young children to make their own choice of what to do. The adults work well together and direct teaching of skills is good. The children are relaxed and keen to learn. The main strengths are the very good relationships between adults and children, good planning and the teachers' knowledge of the curriculum and of how young children learn. The staff have appropriately high expectations of the children, both in achievement and social skills, and the children are respected and valued. Support staff work closely with the teachers and make a very positive contribution to children's learning.
25. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is satisfactory overall. In the lessons observed, 34 per cent of the teaching was good, whilst the remainder was satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is good overall. In the lessons observed, 73 per cent of the teaching was good or better and 23 per cent was very good. However, two lessons were unsatisfactory.
26. Throughout the school, the best teaching is based on good planning and effective ways of keeping the children interested and working hard. Pupils are made clear about what they are going to learn and how they are going to do it. The teachers generally have appropriately high expectations of behaviour and attainment. They expect pupils to maintain concentration and lessons proceed at a good pace. They make good use of questioning to develop pupils' understanding and they give clear explanations. Group work is organised skilfully to enable some groups to work independently, thus enabling the teacher to give intensive support to others. Where teaching is good, pupils are encouraged to be responsible about their work, and are given opportunities to work independently and in pairs or groups. Relationships are positive and pupils respond well to teachers' expectations of good behaviour and show good levels of concentration. Where teaching is most effective it builds on previous learning, work is introduced in a lively and stimulating way and tasks are provided to meet the differing needs of pupils. Teachers make good use of questioning techniques and effective use of review sessions to reinforce and evaluate learning and understanding, for example when recapping on the work done in numeracy lessons. This good quality teaching has a very positive impact on maintaining and raising the standards of attainment. Where teaching is less successful, learning objectives are not clear and work is not well matched to pupils' capabilities. The work lacks challenge and the pace of pupils' response slows with an adverse effect on the progress made. Class management is also weak on occasions.
27. Teachers know their pupils well. They provide good verbal feedback during lessons and help pupils to improve their work. The use of written marking is less consistent. Comments do not always effectively ensure that pupils are aware of areas which need to be improved or set clear targets for improvement. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment is not always used well to plan future work. Consequently work is not well matched to pupils' capabilities.

28. Teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good overall in Years 3 to 6. In these classes, teachers generally have high expectations. Pupils respond well and make good progress. Good use is made of the framework provided by the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The best teaching is brisk and well structured. Mental and oral work is particularly well delivered. Lessons usually proceed at a lively pace and pupils work hard, developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. At times, in Years 1 and 2, planning is good but work is not always well matched to pupils' needs and lessons proceed at a modest pace.
29. The teaching of science is good overall. Teachers make effective use of an investigative approach to science and encourage pupils to record their results and findings. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that all children participate fully and use carefully devised written tasks that ensure that expectations are in tune with pupils' capabilities, with the higher attainers appropriately challenged. Teaching is less effective when lesson objectives are not clear enough and pupils do not fully understand what they are trying to learn.
30. Teaching in information technology has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. A strength of the teaching in both key stages is the very effective use of the computer suite to develop pupils' skills.
31. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Any problems are identified quickly, and individual education plans are established which enable pupils to achieve as much as possible. The pupils are well supported in class or in withdrawal groups. Teachers take care to ensure that pupils who need support have time from them as well as from the classroom assistants.
32. Most children are keen to learn. They work hard and enjoy what they are doing but some throughout the school are easily distracted and do not take a sufficiently active part in lessons. Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, in every class a few still need the positive support of the adults to help them conform at all times and to maintain their concentration.
33. From the time pupils start in the reception class, the school encourages parents to support their children's learning at home. The amount of homework given to pupils is increased as pupils progress through the school. This takes a variety of forms including reading activities, mathematics and following up classwork in curriculum areas such as history, geography and science. The use of homework to support learning across the curriculum is satisfactory.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

34. In the reception class, the curriculum is securely based in the six areas of learning appropriate for this age group. In line with the school's philosophy and the children's needs, special emphasis is rightly given to personal, social and emotional development, as well as to communication, language and literacy and to mathematical development. Appropriate elements of the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy are incorporated into lessons. The children are encouraged to enjoy learning and to take part in a wide range of lively practical activities, which support their progress effectively in all areas.

35. In Years 1 to 6, there is a satisfactory range of interesting subjects and activities overall to support academic and personal development. Since the last inspection, the school has given due attention to raising standards in English, mathematics and science, resulting in improved performance in all three areas. Consequently, teachers now place less emphasis on planning work in sufficient depth for physical education, geography, history and art and this is an area which is in need of review. There has been significant improvement in the curriculum for information and communication technology. Governors have used specific grants, supported generously from school budget, to provide a technology suite and to develop keyboard skills, which have improved rapidly as a result. The computer suite is now widely used throughout the school to support teaching and learning, although there is room for further development in the use of computers in the classroom. Teaching successfully promotes literacy and numeracy throughout the school through the national strategies. Lessons across the subjects make a positive contribution to the development of numeracy skills. In science, for example, pupils use their knowledge of data handling and measuring. Literacy skills are not extended as successfully. Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills in speaking and listening through other subjects, for instance when describing weather conditions in other countries. However, there are limited opportunities to develop extended writing or to improve independent research skills across the curriculum.
36. There is a good scheme for personal, social, and health education. Issues such as healthy eating are explored thoroughly through science and there is gradual and sensitive promotion of drug awareness from an early age. Teachers enable pupils to explore other moral and social issues such as family responsibilities, improving the environment and citizenship. They learn about the human life cycle in science lessons and this is supported by talks on sexual development provided by the school nurse for older pupils. All Year 6 pupils are offered a residential visit to Hinning House Adventure Centre and this plays an important part in developing social skills and independence.
37. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, overall. Teachers and outside agencies provide an adequate choice of sports opportunities such as football and cricket. Teachers also organise a wide range of out of school visits to support and enhance learning across the curriculum. These include visits to places of interest such as Freshfield and Pennington Flash. The school's curriculum and after school activities are fully inclusive and reflect a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities for all. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and take a full and active role in the life of the school.
38. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and there are strong links with the parish. Visitors to the school from the community make positive contributions to pupils' learning and self-esteem. These include the parish priest and members of 'Blue Watch' from the local fire station. Similarly, teachers make good use of local facilities such as the town hall and the hospital to provide interesting experiences for their classes. The school has established good liaison with a local secondary school. Students from St Mary's High School, who are also past pupils of St Gabriel's, complete their work experience course there and students from Wigan and Leigh College also visit the school.

39. The provision made for pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall. The school is true to its mission statement, placing a strong emphasis on developing Christian principles. This underpins provision of spiritual, moral and social awareness. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. There is a daily act of collective worship: this, together with religious education is the subject of a separate report provided by the diocesan authorities. School assemblies provide time to reflect on different issues such as `caring` or, very recently, the tragedy in the U.S.A. Opportunities to develop a reflective response or be moved by the quality of life or natural beauty around them are not yet exploited across all curriculum areas. However, a good example was the impact made on Year 3 and 4 pupils on a visit to Pennington Flash and their delight in watching the birds and recording their responses as watercolour paintings.
40. The school's provision for moral development continues to be good. The school has developed a good behaviour policy, which all adults consistently implement, taking time to talk quietly with pupils about right or inappropriate behaviour and the implications of their actions if they are silly or irresponsible. Pupils are encouraged to draw up their own class rules. Adults are good role models, treating each other and the pupils with respect and consideration. In all classes, pupils are taught to be fair in sharing equipment and in taking turns.
41. The provision to foster pupils' social development is closely connected to that for moral development. They are expected to work amicably together. For example, a pleasant atmosphere is created at lunchtime with Year 6 pupils working with younger children. In class, pupils are encouraged to collaborate in group work. The residential visit for Year 6 helps to develop pupils' independence as this is often the first time they have been away from home without parents. Day visits for all year groups also contribute to pupils' social and cultural development. Children in the reception class quickly learn to be independent, responsible not only for clearing up resources but for choosing their own tasks and concentrating on them seriously. However, opportunities for pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning, initiate ideas, work independently and make full use of resources outside their classroom are insufficiently developed throughout the school. Pupils are given the opportunity to help to raise funds for charities, helping them to appreciate the needs of others and increasing their social awareness.
42. The Coalfield Challenge initiative has provided a meaningful context in which pupils have been encouraged to study and understand the local changes in the way of life and the use of land and natural resources. The new policies for subjects such as history, indicate how an awareness of their own culture and beliefs and those of people of other races and faiths living both in the UK and abroad may be explored in a meaningful way. The school is building up its resources for this. The potential for further exploration through literature and art is yet to be fully developed. The opportunity to extend children's understanding of life in a multicultural society is not yet fully developed across all aspects of the curriculum and the life of the school.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The school provides a good level of care for its pupils and is successful in ensuring their welfare, health and safety. Child protection procedures are good, adhering to guidelines provided by the local education authority. The governors have formally adopted the well documented policy which was in draft form at the time of the last inspection. The designated teacher and the governor with special responsibility for child protection work together closely and ensure that all staff are fully aware of school procedures and changes in statutory requirements. The school receives very good support from the Archdiocese and the local education authority in all matters concerning child protection and the general well being of the pupils.
44. A friendly, welcoming atmosphere exists inside school and relationships at all levels are good. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents and carers the pupils were praised for their friendliness and positive attitudes. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicate that the parents feel very strongly that their children are happy in the school. Older pupils are given responsibility for helping to care for younger children during the lunch break; this is a good feature of the school's provision for children at the Foundation Stage of their education. During the inspection the "Playtime Friends" monitors from Year 6 were observed giving helpful support to the Reception children in the playground and in the library area.
45. There is a suitable range of systems in place for assessing pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science and teachers are also in the process of establishing evaluation strategies for other subjects. There is close liaison between staff at times of transfer, assessment information is passed on from class to class and teachers keep up-to-date records. Since the last inspection the school has taken steps to improve assessment procedures by enabling teachers to develop skills in moderating pieces of work against nationally agreed standards. Additionally, the recently appointed deputy headteacher has taken the role of assessment co-ordinator and has quickly begun to establish more efficient systems for analysing pupils' performance in national and optional tests. This is beginning to have a positive impact, for example in English where teachers in a minority of classes have begun to use the information from this analysis to set targets for improvement for individuals or groups of pupils. Although, the school has systems for tracking the progress of pupils, teachers are not yet consistently using this assessment information to plan work, which is accurately matched to their needs. The assessment co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop more effective systems and has set clear targets for improvement.
46. Arrangements for monitoring the pupils' personal development are good. The teaching and non-teaching staff know and value each individual pupil. All the pupils, irrespective of gender, race, ability or background, are treated fairly and given equal access to the whole curriculum. Those pupils who have special educational needs receive appropriate additional support from their class teachers and specialist staff. Where necessary they have individual education plans for work or behaviour, in accordance with the Code of Practice for special educational needs. Pupils' achievements, inside and outside of school, are celebrated and recorded in their Record of Achievement files which remain with them from Reception until they leave the school at the end of Year 6.

47. The school's strong links with the parish contribute very positively to the caring, Christian ethos that prevails inside school and to the pupils' personal and social education. The school is situated in close proximity to the church and the parish priest visits the school, to lead assembly and to generally support the staff, the pupils and their families. The school also receives good support from the school nurse, local health visitors and the fire service. Officers from Blue Watch at the local fire station come into school regularly to work with the pupils and talk to them about aspects of personal safety. Pupils from last year's Year 5 represented Wigan in the North West finals of a fire safety quiz organised by the fire service. This was a great honour for the school and for those pupils involved. During the inspection they spoke, in assembly, about their experience and enjoyment of the finals evening and about some of the questions they had been asked.
48. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. School policy is regularly revised and updated to meet the needs of all its pupils, including those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The pupils themselves establish a set of rules for their class and these are displayed prominently in classrooms, useful reminders of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Great emphasis is placed on recognising and rewarding positive attitudes and behaviour. Rewards include verbal praise, certificates and letters of commendation to parents. An appropriate system of sanctions is in place for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and parents are appropriately involved at an early stage when individual pupils do not respond to sanctions or on the rare occasions when serious misdemeanours give cause for concern.
49. Arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Procedures for registration comply with statutory requirements and class registers are inspected regularly by the headteacher and the educational welfare officer, who visits the school on a regular basis and follows up concerns about poor attendance by visiting pupils in their homes. It is anticipated that, from September 2001, the educational welfare officer will be allocated more time to work with the school to improve levels of attendance, which have fallen since the last inspection and which have not kept abreast of improvements in rates of attendance nationally.
50. Induction arrangements for children under five are excellent, and one of the school's major strengths. With funding from the Coalfield Challenge Education Strategy, the school has been participating, in recent years, in the INSPIRE (Involve School Parents In Raising Expectations) scheme. This provides valuable opportunities for parents and carers to come into school each week, with their children, and participate in a wide range of early learning activities, under the guidance of the reception teacher. The scheme takes place over two terms, beginning in January prior to the children's admission to reception in September. It not only gives parents a good insight into how young children learn, it also helps the children to prepare for school, meet new friends and eventually settle quickly and happily into the Foundation Stage of their education.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

51. The school has established a good partnership with parents and carers. At the pre-inspection meeting the parents expressed their appreciation for the happy atmosphere which exists in the school and for the friendliness of the pupils towards one another.



52. Analysis of the parents' and carers' replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires revealed that they have very positive views of the school. The vast majority feel their children like school and are making good progress. Almost all the parents and carers would feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems or questions concerning their children. The great majority consider the school to be well led and managed and are of the view that teaching is good. They are of the opinion that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve of their best and is helping them to become mature and responsible. The inspection findings support all these positive views.
53. Some parents feel their children do not get the right amount of homework, although it is not clear whether parents think pupils are given too much or too little. The inspection finds that teachers make satisfactory use of homework to support learning, particularly in English and mathematics. While the majority of parents and carers consider the school keeps them well informed in relation to their children's progress, a small minority are dissatisfied with this aspect of the school. The inspection finds that the school's arrangements for reporting on pupils' progress are good. Parents and carers have suitable opportunities to discuss their children's progress formally with class teachers at the parents' evenings which are held in the autumn and summer terms. Class teachers are always available at the beginning and end of the school day to talk to parents informally and deal with day to day concerns. The quality of pupils' annual written reports has improved since the last inspection. They now give parents and carers clear and relevant information about their children's attainment and progress, with appropriate emphasis on areas of weakness and targets for future development. The reports could be further improved by providing separate sections for information and communication technology and design and technology.
54. The overall quality of the information provided for parents by the school is good. Through the prospectus, the governing body's annual report, regular correspondence and the annual open evening the parents are kept well informed in relation to the life and work of the school. A very useful calendar of events is given to parents and carers at the beginning of each term. This includes the planned dates for parents' evenings, educational visits, Religious Celebrations and parish and community events.
55. The parents and carers make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning, at school and at home, through their support for the home-school reading scheme and for homework in general and through their support for school policies, for example the behaviour policy and the wearing of school uniform. They ensure their children arrive on time in the mornings and they are very conscientious in informing the school if their children have to be absent for any reason. Attendance at parents' evenings is usually very good as is parental support for special assemblies, the annual Fun Day and various parish activities.
56. Parents of children with special educational needs are properly involved in their children's education plans and the school provides them with the opportunity to participate in an annual review.
57. The school organises a very useful "Homeworks" course for Year 6 and their parents. This is a 6-week course, designed to raise their awareness of the importance of homework and to develop their understanding of how best to approach it and how parents can help their children benefit from it. In addition, the school arranges a very helpful information evening for Year 6 pupils and their parents. This covers topics

such as class organisation, arrangements for transfer to Year 7 and the responsibilities associated with being in Year 6 in terms of behaviour and setting an example to the rest of the school.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

58. The overall quality of the school's leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership, promoting and sustaining a clear sense of direction for the work of the school. Collectively, the headteacher, staff and governors contribute effectively to the quality of education provided and to the standards achieved by the pupils. They have established a caring and supportive ethos for the school. The school ensures that all pupils have access to the curriculum. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour, good relationships and equality of opportunity for all. The school has made very effective use of the support and guidance provided through local initiatives such as the Coalfield Challenge and the Education Action Zone to improve the quality of education and the standards of attainment.
59. The governors are kept well informed about developments in school and many of them are regular visitors. They provide good support for the school and are effectively involved in decisions about finance and the curriculum. Individual governors have responsibility for areas such as special educational needs, literacy and numeracy. They have established committees to oversee and meet the requirements of their statutory responsibilities.
60. The school has taken positive and effective steps to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. The school development plans now provide an effective management tool. The quality of teaching has been improved, especially in Years 3 to 6. Lesson plans have improved and work is better matched to pupils' prior attainment. Teachers also have higher expectations of what pupils should be doing. There has been a clear improvement in standards of attainment in English, and mathematics. This has been helped by the successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress have been improved but are not yet used effectively in setting clear targets for individuals and groups.
61. The school development plan has been produced in consultation with staff and governors. This is based on a clear analysis of the school's needs and identifies the school's priorities. It is linked to the school budget, has criteria for success and is reviewed regularly to evaluate progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the development planning was unsatisfactory.
62. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed effectively. The school fulfils the requirements of the Code of Practice in having a special educational needs register, consulting parents, and holding annual reviews. All statutory requirements are met. Effective use is made of all staff to teach pupils with special educational needs both within class and in withdrawal groups. The school has made good use of additional funding to provide extra support staff to assist in the classroom.
63. The school has effective strategies in place to promote skills of literacy and numeracy and has successfully implemented the national strategies to provide a useful framework for curriculum planning in these subjects.

64. In consultation with staff and governors, curriculum co-ordinators have produced whole school policies, which support teachers. Co-ordinators are responsible for managing their subjects and providing curriculum support. They are also involved in monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' attainment. The major focus for such monitoring has been in English, mathematics and science and this work is less developed in other subject areas. The quality of teaching and learning has been monitored by the headteacher. Staff from the local education authority and the Leigh Education Action Zone have also carried out some monitoring.
65. The school has some strategies in place to monitor pupils' progress through the use of standardised tests and teacher assessment. These procedures are in the early stages of development and do not yet provide a sufficiently rigorous analysis of pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers do not consistently make use of the assessment information to plan work that is accurately matched to pupils' needs.
66. Long term strategic financial planning is good. Governors are fully involved in establishing spending priorities, which are clearly detailed in the school development plan. They carefully evaluate the effectiveness of their spending decisions and ensure that the long-term interests of the school are best served. For example, they have recently invested in protective cladding for the outside of the building after carefully considering a number of options. This has helped with the reduction of maintenance costs.
67. The day-to-day administration and management of the school is very good. The school's administrative officer has a thorough knowledge of current financial systems and ably supports the headteacher. She is also courteous and welcoming to parents and visitors to her office and this makes a positive contribution to the good relationships that are typical of the school. The collection of money and ordering and checking of school equipment are efficient and ensure minimum disruption to teaching and learning. The very few minor recommendations in the latest auditor's report have been implemented.
68. The school makes very effective use of specific grants through the Coalfield Challenge and Educational Action Zones to support initiatives such as the development of computer keyboard skills and the establishment of the very effective 'INSPIRE' programme. Good use is made of information and communication technology to manage the school budget and the deputy headteacher is developing the use of efficient software to analyse assessment results.
69. The school is generously staffed and classes, especially the reception and Years 1 and 2, are small. Classroom assistants, whom the school has helped to train, effectively support teachers. This greatly facilitates the organisation and implementation of the literacy and numeracy hours and the teaching of information and communication technology. In Years 5 and 6 the employment of a part-time teacher to work with booster classes in English and mathematics and teach the science curriculum is already proving effective in raising the standards of pupils' learning. There are good performance management procedures in place. The award of Investors in People status gives clear evidence of the priority given to staff development.

70. The seven bright classrooms comfortably accommodate the six classes whilst providing space for the booster groups. The school has established a computer suite since the previous inspection and this has greatly improved pupils' access to computers. However, the library, whilst attractively and clearly set out, is far too small to use as a base for independent study or the teaching of library skills. The large outdoor area is an effective resource for learning but the reception class lacks an enclosed area for equipment designed to stimulate imaginative physical development through play.
71. Since the last inspection the school has greatly increased the quality and range of resources to support the teaching of English, mathematics, science and information technology. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers make effective use of loan material from the library service to supplement resources. However, the range of non-fiction in the library limits the pupils' opportunity to engage in research and investigation, particularly in history and geography. The range of challenging outdoor play equipment for the reception class is limited.

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

72. To improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governing body should:
- (1) Make effective use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress in all subjects and ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs.  
*(paragraphs 26, 27, 45, 65, 95, 105, 118)*
  - (2) Raise the standard of pupils' writing by:  
setting clear targets for the improvement of standards of spelling, punctuation and handwriting;  
ensuring that they are provided with work that is well matched to their ability;  
providing more opportunities for pieces of extended writing.  
*(paragraphs 6, 7, 35, 92, 94, 95, 130)*
  - (3) Develop the school library facilities and promote pupils' independent learning and research skills.  
*(paragraphs 15, 70, 71, 91, 135)*

### **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

- Work with parents to improve pupils' attendance.  
*(paragraphs 21,49)*
- Provide more opportunities for children in the reception classes to take part in challenging outdoor play.  
*(paragraphs 70,71, 83)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	23	15	2	0	0
Percentage	0	17	48	31	4	0	0

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

### 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	127
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	43

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	59

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	5.2

#### 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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	3	10	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	2	2	3
	Girls	9	10	10
	Total	11	12	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (81)	92 (71)	100 (95)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	2	3	3
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	12	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (71)	100 (95)	100 (67)
	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 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	7	15	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	2	3	4
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	15	16	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (69)	73 (63)	77 (88)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	2	3	3
	Girls	10	9	10
	Total	12	12	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	55 (56)	55 (63)	62 (56)
	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	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	110
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)	7.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	25.4

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

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	63

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	310,827
Total expenditure	297,026
Expenditure per pupil	2,168
Balance brought forward from previous year	28,360
Balance carried forward to next year	42,161

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	127
Number of questionnaires returned	85

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	35	4	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	59	31	5	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	46	7	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	35	8	4	7
The teaching is good.	65	31	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	33	14	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	39	0	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	22	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	44	45	9	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	62	31	1	4	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	31	0	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	51	6	4	4

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

73. Children start full-time in the reception class in the September prior to their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection, there were 17 children on roll. The school does not have a nursery class although there is a pre-school group that meets in a spare classroom every afternoon. This group and the reception class work in close co-operation. The majority of children in the reception class have previously attended the pre-school group. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class varies widely, many children start school with skills which are below the expected level in almost all areas of learning. Careful assessment made of the new entrants soon after they start school indicates that their skills, particularly in personal and social development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are below those expected. Almost all children achieve well. This is due to the suitable curriculum and the good quality teaching. Children with special educational needs are effectively supported and have full access to the curriculum. They make good progress. Despite the good progress made, overall standards on entry to Year 1 are below the expected level. A significant number of children do not attain the early learning goals<sup>1</sup> in communication, language and literacy and mathematics. In personal and social education and in knowledge and understanding of the world, the pupils make good progress and reach the expected standards. In physical development, where attainment on entry is close to the expected level, children make satisfactory progress and attain the early learning goal.
74. Staff from the reception class and the pre-school group have benefited from a recent project led by the Leigh Education Action Zone. This has involved an audit of the provision for children in the Foundation Stage and has resulted in a review of practice and the development of planning, resources and classroom organisation. This has helped the school to maintain and develop the good provision for children in the Foundation Stage<sup>2</sup> reported at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum is securely based in the six areas of learning appropriate for this age group. In line with the school's philosophy and the children's needs, special emphasis is rightly given to personal and social development, as well as to communication, language and literacy and to mathematical development. Appropriate elements of the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy are incorporated into lessons. The children are encouraged to enjoy learning and to take part in a wide range of lively practical activities, which support their progress effectively in all areas. The Foundation Stage prepares children well for the next stage of education.
75. The quality of teaching is good overall and at times is very good. Relationships are strong and supportive. The classroom assistant is deployed effectively and makes a very important contribution to children's learning.
76. The school, supported by the Coalfield Challenge initiative has implemented a very successful induction programme 'INSPIRE'. This provides opportunities for parents and children to visit the school in the two terms prior to them starting in the reception class. Parents are given useful information about the school and how they can

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<sup>1</sup> Early learning goals are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

<sup>2</sup> The Foundation Stage is the education provided for children from entry to a nursery to the end of the Reception class.

support their children's learning. Children have the opportunity to meet staff and their future classmates. The effectiveness of this programme was demonstrated during the inspection. Despite changes of teaching staff due to illness, children had settled quickly and confidently into classroom routines. Parents have the opportunity to talk to teachers regularly when they bring their children to school and collect them at the end of the day. This enables any concerns to be dealt with as they arise; it also reassures children and encourages them to be confident about coming into school.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

77. Teaching is very good and reflects the importance given to this area. Opportunities to promote personal, social and emotional development are built carefully into all aspects of the curriculum and staff set and model high standards of care and consideration. They take all appropriate opportunities to reinforce the social skills of co-operation and learning. Pupils are cared for very well and make good progress. The aims of the school are effectively implemented by the promotion of good, caring relationships, which encourage good responses and good behaviour and ensure children feel safe and secure. Children interact well with each other showing consideration and kindness. Group work is carefully organised so that children learn to be considerate of others. They are good at taking turns and in sharing equipment, for example, when using the sand and water. They show pleasure in their own achievement and are appreciative of the work of others. Staff communicate their high expectations of appropriate behaviour. They establish daily routines to encourage positive attitudes to work and to help children become independent learners. Children settle well into the routines of school life because teachers make clear what is expected. In whole class sessions, especially those when big storybooks are read together, most listen attentively.
78. Children know the rules of how many children may play at each activity and organise themselves with some independence. Although some children have difficulty maintaining concentration for long and move quickly between activities, most are able to concentrate well and finish tasks such as jigsaws before moving to another activity. They co-operate with others in their work and play, for example when developing relatively complex scenarios in the home corner. They are becoming independent in looking after themselves, for instance, in dressing and undressing for physical education. At the end of activities, they help to tidy up and put things away. The majority of children handle equipment and books carefully and with respect. They follow instructions well and are sensible when moving around the school as was observed when they went to the hall for a physical education lesson. The majority of children are well motivated and their behaviour in class and around the school is good.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

79. Teaching is good. The curriculum appropriately emphasises the development of speaking and listening skills as well as promoting the development of reading and writing skills carefully over time. The well-planned, clearly focused activities include formal whole class and group teaching, informal independent learning, for example, through role-play. All staff use questions carefully to help children express and extend their ideas. Some children tend to respond in one-word answers, which are unclear and difficult to understand. Most are becoming confident to contribute to discussion. All of the children are encouraged to enjoy stories. In sharing sessions, children are encouraged to speak to the group and they talk clearly and in extended sentences

about their likes and dislikes. They listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Use of good and varied language is promoted in all activities and staff sensitively encourage the development and use of good vocabulary, particularly in the home corner.

80. Children are developing a growing enjoyment of books and stories. When listening to stories, they concentrate attentively. A good example of this was the teacher's very effective reading of 'The Rainbow Fish', making good use of a puppet to stimulate children's interest. Words and labels are clearly evident in the classroom and children are encouraged to use the writing area in their first attempts at drawing and mark making. They are developing pencil control and learning how to form letters. By the end of the reception year, higher attainers are starting to compose and write their own sentences. Most children can copy the teacher's writing but a number of lower attaining children have difficulty in forming letters accurately and have limited independence in their writing. Most children recognise some letters by shape and sound, and some high frequency words from simple texts. Higher attainers make use of their knowledge of letter sounds to read unfamiliar words. They are reading simple texts from the school reading scheme with confidence.

### **Mathematical development**

81. Teaching is good. There is a variety of interesting well-structured practical activities, which support learning well. Staff provide good support for groups to talk through ideas, ask questions and so promote good understanding. They encourage children to use and develop appropriate mathematical language. In a physical education lesson, for example, the teacher ensured that children understood directional language such as forwards, backwards, up, down and across. The children enjoy singing a variety of songs and jingles, which are number related and which consolidate their understanding of numbers and positional language. Children count, match and order with enthusiasm. They are beginning to recognise numerals 1 to 5 and match these to the correct number of objects. By the end of the reception year, children can recognise common regular shapes. Higher attainers recognise and count numbers to ten and beyond and use non-standard units to weigh and measure. They are beginning to carry out practically, using apparatus, simple addition and subtraction sums.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

82. Teaching is good. Staff plan a range of interesting first-hand experiences including out-of-school visits, for instance, to Freshfield Squirrel Reserve, to enhance the children's knowledge of the world around them. Children are encouraged to talk about events in their lives and the environment. Staff use questions skilfully to enable children to make best use of their observations, and encourage them to explore and investigate in practical situations, as when children explore the properties of wet and dry sand and experiment with water. Children are beginning to consider locations other than their own. Good questioning by the teacher builds on children's holiday experience to help them appreciate different environments such as the seaside. Stories are used to encourage pupils to develop concepts of time and place. They recall their experiences through a range of role-play situations. Floor play equipment such as a garage, railways and roadways is used to enable pupils to develop their language use and to make connections with their own surroundings. Children talk about their family members who are older than them and are encouraged to talk about past events and they recognise the difference between past and present.

Children use information and communication technology to support their learning and become gradually more confident in using the mouse to control objects on screen. Children are able to use the skills of cutting, joining and building using a range of materials. They have access to construction sets which they use with skill to build models.

### **Physical development**

83. Teaching is good. Physical education lessons in the hall are well planned and organised. Staff establish clear rules in the use of space and apparatus and children respond well. They follow teacher's instructions well and show a satisfactory awareness of space. The children move with control and co-ordination, confidence and imagination. Lesson plans show that a good variety of apparatus and equipment is used in lessons and children experiment with shape, space, speed and dynamics and they learn what their bodies can and cannot do. In addition to lessons in the school hall, the class also has easy access to the playground for outdoor sessions and good use was made of this during the inspection for action games and songs. However, outdoor accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no safe, enclosed play area offering good opportunities for a variety of activities to develop skills and enhance teaching. There are limited opportunities for children to experience challenging outdoor play. Children are given a variety of tasks to develop their physical skills in the classroom. Staff help children to use tools and modelling materials with increasing skill. Children show increasing expertise in using tools like glue spreaders and scissors safely, to complete their tasks. They manipulate construction equipment with ease, and they manage small play equipment carefully. The majority of children are confident with the computer and use the mouse with increasing proficiency.

### **Creative development**

84. Teaching is good. Teachers plan a range of activities to develop children's imagination. The children explore an interesting range of media, including art materials, construction kits, and musical instruments. Teachers encourage children to develop their own ideas as well as learning skills. Children explore colour and texture through painting and printing. They model with scrap materials and make collage. Children are involved and collaborate effectively in role-play which is actively supported and extended by staff involvement. The children enjoy singing and most join in with nursery and number rhymes within a range of class activities. The planning of appropriate activities, along with the use of a good range of resources, results in children being able to achieve the intended learning outcomes in this area of learning.

### **ENGLISH**

85. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests in English at the end of Year 6 were well below the national average. They were above average in comparison with schools with a similar intake. The results of the 2000 end of Year 2 National Curriculum tests in reading were above the national average. In writing they were in line with the national average. In comparison with schools with a similar intake, the results were well above average in both reading and writing.
86. Taken across the period from 1996 to 2000, standards in Years 1 to 6 have risen broadly in line with the national trend, overall. However, in the 2001 tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, standards declined, although there is no available data with which

to compare the school's performance with schools nationally. In the tests at the end of Year 2, the performance of girls was significantly better than that of boys. St Gabriel's results have tended to vary from year to year over time because of the relatively small number of pupils in each year group and the variation in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the cohorts for successive years. In last year's Year 2 class, for example, 7 out of 17 pupils were on the register of special educational needs. In the Year 6 class, 11 out of 18 pupils were on the register and only 12 were in the class from Year 2 onwards. Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils in the present Year 2 and Year 6 classes are likely to attain standards that are closer to those achieved in 2000. This is due to a different ability range in those year groups and the continued efforts of the school to raise standards through the National Literacy Strategy.

87. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress, reflecting the overall quality of teaching. In Years 3 to 6, there is a higher proportion of good teaching because in the majority of lessons the pace of work is faster and there are higher expectations of the quality of written work. Booster classes for groups of targeted pupils also make a positive contribution.
88. Attainment in speaking and listening by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is below the national expectation for their age. When pupils first enter the school many have a more limited range of vocabulary than is expected of pupils of their age and some do not speak clearly. They are lacking in confidence to express their ideas and are hesitant to respond to teachers' questions. Pupils are taught to listen carefully and opportunities for them to talk during whole class and group sessions enable them to make sound progress. By the end of Year 2, higher attainers demonstrate the ability to talk at length about their work or the book they are reading. Most pupils listen attentively, contribute to class discussion, ask questions and respond to their teachers' questions in sentences, short phrases, or single words. A minority of lower attainers have difficulty taking part in discussions, prefer to avoid being questioned, and are reluctant to contribute.
89. By the end of Year 6, most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and other pupils. As they move through the school, the majority make sound progress, enjoy contributing during the literacy hour and in other subjects and put forward their ideas clearly. In the Year 3 / 4 class for example, a higher attaining pupil clearly explained the difference between two different versions of 'Cinderella' suggesting, "Instead of going to a ball, Cinderella was going to a baking competition." Most teachers make effective use of discussion and skilfully use questions to check understanding of vocabulary and to develop pupils' confidence in speaking. By the time they are in Year 6, many pupils retain information they have listened to and link two or more ideas when answering questions. Lower attaining pupils, on the other hand, have difficulty in understanding instructions and are hesitant to answer questions, still limiting contributions to short phrases or single words.
90. Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with the national expectation for pupils of similar age. Younger pupils in Year 1 recognise letter sounds and individual words. They hold their books correctly and use pictures and their knowledge of sounds to assist them in reading words they are not sure of. During the literacy hour, the whole class and guided reading sessions successfully develop reading skills when pupils are encouraged to read fluently with good expression. By the end of Year 2 most explain the difference between an author and an illustrator and are able to read simple texts with some accuracy. The higher

attaining pupils clearly enjoy reading short stories, demonstrate good understanding of what they have read, and talk about what has happened in the story and what they think may happen next. Lower attainers need the help of an adult to read stories which are new to them.

91. By the end of Year 6, many pupils are attaining well for their age and pupils overall, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the school. Most pupils read independently, fluently and with good expression from a satisfactory range of texts. When asked about their reading they show good comprehension skills. They make use of the thesaurus and dictionaries and have good understanding of the difference between fact and fiction. They enjoy reading for pleasure and confidently discuss books and authors. A Year 6 pupil expressed interest in a wide range of fiction and magazines and read confidently from a reference book, reflecting standards above the expectation for her age. Other higher attaining pupils use scanning techniques to look for specific detail in a piece of text. Those pupils who find reading more difficult are hesitant but use dictionaries to help them to understand new words in the course of English and other lessons. Wider reference skills, on the other hand, are under-developed because there are not enough opportunities for them to carry out independent research.
92. By the end of Year 2, standards in writing are below the national expectation for the age group. Teachers provide opportunities to develop writing skills and to write for an increasing number of purposes, such as giving instructions on how to make a cup of tea or a drink of orange juice. Higher attaining pupils write independently and are beginning to write stories with a beginning, middle and an end. Their spelling of simple words is generally accurate and they are able to use full stops and capital letters appropriately. Most pupils write a sequence of sentences, such as when re-telling familiar stories, whilst lower attainers need adult help to build sentences. Standards of handwriting are variable and unsatisfactory at this stage because teachers place too little emphasis on the quality and range of written work.
93. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are attaining in line with expectations for their age and make good progress from Year 3 to Year 6. Those with special educational needs receive well-focused support and also make good progress. In the Year 3 / 4 class they begin to appreciate the need to write in different ways to suit different readers. By the time they are in Year 6, most write letters, stories, descriptions, reports and instructions. They plan, draft and improve their writing and make good use of computers to edit and enhance their work. Higher attainers write imaginatively and with increasing confidence. Their work demonstrates accurate sentence construction and grammar. Progress in the use of different tenses, the range of vocabulary, accuracy in spelling and the use of speech marks is good. Many are beginning to develop a more mature joined up style of writing and are improving the presentation and organisation of work. Lower attainers write connected sentences, often using correct, basic punctuation such as capital letters and full stops. Many still print words but try to present work neatly.
94. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good, overall in Years 3 to 6. Teachers plan lessons in accordance with the National Literacy Strategy. The features of the most successful teaching in the Year 3 / 4 and the Year 6 classes are the high expectations, good pace and energetic teaching which accelerate the rate of progress. Work in these classes is carefully planned to meet the needs of individual pupils according to their attainment level. Lesson content is both interesting and challenging and this also helps to engage interest and co-operation. Teaching is less

successful when the pace of lessons is too slow and when classes are asked to spend too long seated on the carpet. This also occurs when teachers fail to plan work that matches individual needs or when they do not use support staff efficiently to provide clearly focused tasks for pupils with special educational needs. In these instances, a minority of pupils lose concentration and become bored or occasionally disruptive. Expectations of standards of written work vary from class to class and are sometimes too low. However, the majority of pupils have a good attitude towards the subject and look forward to the literacy hour. Teachers throughout the school make good use of the computer suite to develop spelling, writing and editing skills and this makes a positive contribution to achievement in English.

95. The school has tried hard to improve standards through the National Literacy Strategy and its efforts have been successful overall, reflected in the gradual improvement in results since the last inspection. There are an increased number of strategies for assessing pupils' performance in reading and writing. The assessment co-ordinator is beginning to establish systems for analysing results and setting more accurate targets for improvement for every pupil. The school has provided booster classes to raise the performance of identified groups and training has been organised to enable teachers to moderate the quality of writing against nationally agreed standards. The headteacher and staff recognise that there remain some areas for further development. For example, teachers do not make effective use of assessment data to guide their medium and short-term planning. There is an urgent need to review the use of the school library, which is inadequately resourced to assist the development of independent research skills. Additionally, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop extended writing skills through work in other subjects. However, there has been good improvement, overall since the last inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

96. The performance of the pupils in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was below the national average. It was however, above average in comparison with similar schools. The results of the 2001 tests show a decline on this performance, although there are no national comparisons yet available. Pupils' performance in the tests has varied from year to year since 1996. The results have been affected by the relatively small size of each year group and in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs. In 2001 for example, 61 per cent of the cohort were on the special needs register. Overall there has been a steady improvement in results between 1996 and 2000 which has been in line with the rate of improvement nationally. Inspection evidence indicates that standards have continued to improve. Pupils achieve well and attainment is now broadly in line with the national expectation. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment in Years 3 to 6 was below the national average and progress was unsatisfactory.
97. The improvement in standards is the result of good teaching and systematic planning based on the framework provided by the National Numeracy Strategy. This has brought clear improvement in the development of pupils' mental skills and their understanding of mathematical processes.

98. Pupils' performance in the Year 2 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was well above the national average. It was well above average in comparison with similar schools. This represented a considerable improvement since 1996 when results were well below the national average. The results in 2001 showed that all pupils achieved National Curriculum level 2 although fewer achieved the higher level 3 than in 2000. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment is currently in line with the national expectation in Year 2.
99. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below that expected for the age group. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above the national average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. They develop an appropriate mathematical vocabulary, an awareness and knowledge of shapes and their properties and simple data handling skills. However, many pupils are still consolidating their knowledge of number facts. By the end of the key stage, the higher attaining pupils have a clear understanding of the value of numbers and they carry out simple calculations accurately. Most have good understanding of patterns in number and know the difference between odd and even. They can use money effectively and can work out simple problems mentally. They develop skills of simple data handling and can construct and interpret graphs. Lower attaining pupils have a limited ability to mentally recall number facts but they are able to use apparatus effectively to aid calculations. The majority of pupils have a satisfactory understanding of shape, space and simple measures.
100. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when progress was unsatisfactory. By the end of the key stage, the higher attaining pupils carry out written calculations accurately and have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of number facts. Pupils have an appropriate mathematical vocabulary, an understanding and appreciation of number pattern and measures and a knowledge of shapes and solids and their properties. The higher attaining pupils have an understanding of percentages and can perform calculations involving fractions and decimals with accuracy. They are able to calculate angles, and can calculate the area and perimeter of shapes. The lower attaining pupils can apply the four rules of number effectively, use a range of units of measure competently and can construct simple graphs to illustrate data they have collected. Pupils can measure length, weight and capacity with a reasonable degree of accuracy, but the lower attainers are not always confident or accurate when making estimates or recording their work. Pupils are becoming confident when handling data. They can interpret graphs and charts to find particular information.
101. Standards of numeracy at the end of each key stage are satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are able to use their multiplication tables effectively and handle numbers satisfactorily in mental work. Higher attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 have good standards of numeracy and make good use of their knowledge, skills and understanding to solve problems. Pupils make effective use made of mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum such as science and design and technology to measure accurately and record results. Pupils are also beginning to make use of information and communication technology to support their work in mathematics.
102. Pupils display positive attitudes to work. Most behave well and respond positively to challenge. They are keen to contribute to discussions and settle quickly to their work. When required, they collaborate well with other pupils, sharing ideas and equipment sensibly. These positive attitudes to learning have a beneficial effect on their attainment and progress. However, there is a minority of pupils, especially in Years 1

and 2 who find it very difficult to concentrate for any length of time. They become restless, particularly when the work they are given is not well matched to their needs and abilities.

103. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good overall in Years 3 to 6. This again, represents a considerable improvement from the previous inspection when the majority of mathematics teaching in Years 3 to 6 was unsatisfactory. Features of the good teaching are the high expectations of behaviour and attitude to work, the very good management of pupils and the variety and effectiveness of teaching methods. Lessons are well prepared and structured, with clear aims which reflect the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons begin with a session of mental work when teachers encourage the development of skills and strategies to improve pupils' performance. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide work which is challenging but well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. A good example was observed in a Year 3/4 lesson on addition. The teacher's classroom management skills and high expectations of behaviour and attainment led to pupils responding very positively. Direct teaching and good use of challenging questions enabled them to consolidate their understanding. Clear instructions and explanations ensured that all pupils had an understanding of the tasks and enabled them to make good progress. Well-organised group activities meant that work was well matched to pupils' needs. The classroom assistant supported pupils with special educational needs and helped them to make good progress.
104. Teaching is less effective when work is not well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, the pace of the lesson slows and pupils lose interest and motivation, consequently, their progress is limited.
105. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of questioning, not only to assess pupils' learning but to reinforce and consolidate concepts learnt and to correct misapprehensions. Pupils receive good feedback on their work through verbal comments, although the effectiveness of written marking is less consistent. There are regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. However, teachers do not always make the most effective use of this information to plan work that is well matched to pupils' needs. Systems to monitor the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils have been established. However, these are not yet used effectively to set clear individual targets for improvement.
106. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and have full access to the curriculum. They work at the appropriate levels of the numeracy strategy and make good progress in relation to their attainment. Classroom support staff are used very effectively and make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. Very effective use is made of a support teacher in Year 6 to teach 'booster' lessons for groups of pupils who require additional support. The work provided is well matched to their needs and is presented in a lively manner that ensures pupils' interest. The teacher has appropriately high expectations and pupils make good progress.
107. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. The mathematics co-ordinator had only been in post for two weeks prior to the inspection and has had limited opportunities to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning. Monitoring has taken place and there are clear plans that this will continue when the co-ordinator has become more established. There is a satisfactory range of resources to support learning and the subject fully meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.

108. Mathematics has been a priority area in the school improvement plan and the school has effective strategies to develop numeracy. Homework is used effectively to support learning in mathematics. The National Numeracy Strategy is now used as an effective framework for planning. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when lesson plans lacked sufficient detail. It is having a beneficial effect on standards especially in mental work and the development of mathematical language. There is clear evidence that these strategies are having a positive effect on standards of attainment.

## **SCIENCE**

109. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Year 6 were well below the national average. They were below average in comparison with schools with a similar intake. The results of the 2000 end of Year 2 National Curriculum assessments in science were below the national average. However, small year groups and contrasting cohorts make simple statistical comparison difficult. Last year's cohorts both in Year 2 and Year 6 were small and included a significant number of pupils with special educational needs. Although science standards have been consistently below the national average since 1997, it is possible to see a slight upward trend across the school. Whilst no pupils in Year 2 achieved the higher Level 3, in 2001 26 per cent achieved this level. In 2001, the number of Year 6 pupils achieving Level 4 was very similar to that in 2000 with a slight improvement in the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5. However, only girls managed this. There are no national comparisons yet available for the 2001 results.
110. Inspection evidence suggests that the performance this year in both Year 2 and Year 6 is likely to be considerably better. Attainment is in line with the national expectations for the age groups. The school has a well thought out scheme of work that ensures that pupils in split age classes now cover the full range of the science curriculum and that it is addressed at an appropriately challenging level. Particular attention is given to the development of pupils' understanding of the investigative nature of science. They are taught to predict and reflect and benefit from carefully planned opportunities to apply current knowledge in new contexts. This is done well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. They make good progress in Years 3 to 6 in relation to their earlier attainment. This is due to the good standard of science teaching in these classes and to the effective help supplied by support staff. Progress on the work undertaken this term is good.
111. A careful analysis of the pattern of results has led to a move to block time for science. It was evident from the lessons seen that this provided sufficient time for prediction, investigation and reflection on the outcomes. Implications were explored in depth and anomalies identified and investigated further. Furthermore, in an effort to raise the level of performance in Years 5 and 6, science is now taught by a very experienced science teacher. It is hoped that this continuity will facilitate the more systematic acquisition of skill and understanding and result in a further improvement in standards

112. The school makes very good use of field trips, workshops and visitors to the school in an effort to provide a dynamic scientific experience. Science is used effectively to develop pupils' speaking and listening and writing skills. Pupils also make use of numeracy skills when measuring or using data handling to present results.
113. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their science and overall behave particularly well in this context, as the variety and hands-on nature appeals to those who are more restless and easily distracted in other settings. However, some pupils still find it difficult to concentrate when asked to record results and findings.
114. Year 1 pupils are developing a very sound understanding of different materials and how to frame a series of questions to describe a material's characteristics. Year 2 pupils' understanding of forces is developing as a result of their visit to the new local play area and is combining well with the work in design and technology. Pupils are encouraged to express their ideas though a number found it hard to express their understanding of friction. At times pupils were not entirely clear about what they were predicting or expected to find out in the lesson although by the end eight out of ten could say with some certainty that cars travel further on a smooth surface.
115. Years 3 and 4 were applying prior knowledge about magnets to an investigation of the magnetic or non-magnetic quality of materials. The systematic sequence planned over several blocks of time ensured that pupils were helped to think logically, to predict and then check by investigation. The teacher noted that the vast majority of pupils were able to recall and predict with some accuracy, generalising and drawing inferences from previous work. They used scientific terminology with increased confidence and put forward their reasoning with confidence and clarity. Years 5 and 6 are working on electricity, building simple circuits with switches or buzzers and then extending these to test articles for their ability to act as conductors or insulators. The same logical approach reinforced understanding, allowed pupils to work purposefully, show initiative and interestingly, explore ambiguities such as why the graphite in one pencil worked as a conductor and in an exactly similar one, did not. Year 6 were looking critically at circuit diagrams, checking their assessment of whether they would work or not and then moving on to drawing their own increasingly complex, stylised circuits. Both these classes used the `traffic light` system to record their own assessment of their group's understanding. The teacher was pleased with the enthusiasm, accuracy and seriousness with which this task was completed.
116. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6, teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers make effective use of an investigative approach to science and encourage pupils to record their results and findings. Very few worksheets are used. Consequently, pupils are confident about writing their own predictions, observations and report their investigations clearly.
117. Teachers are aware of the wide range of abilities and needs in their class and try to involve everybody through skilful questioning. Pupils are actively drawn into discussions and investigations and their opinions are listened to and valued. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that all children participate fully and use carefully devised written tasks that ensure that expectations are in tune with pupils' capabilities, with the higher attainers appropriately challenged. Teaching is less effective when lesson objectives are not clear enough and pupils do not fully understand what they are trying to learn.

118. Following the good leadership of the co-ordinator, teachers are making effective use of nationally produced guidelines, selecting a stimulating range of teaching strategies and making better use of the guidance on how to assess and record pupils' understanding and progress. There are good systems in place for assessing pupils' achievement in the various national and optional science tests. However, the use of assessment information to inform lesson planning is not consistent throughout the school.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

119. No art and design lessons were observed. The inspection took place at the very beginning of a new school year and there was very limited evidence of previous work. Consequently it was not possible to collect sufficient evidence to enable secure judgements to be made about standards of attainment, progress or the quality of teaching.
120. Teachers' planning indicates a range of media including drawing materials, paint, printing and collage is provided throughout the school. There is also evidence that pupils use information and communication technology to support their learning. They have used computer programs to produce and print pictures and patterns. Planning is based on the national guidance and covers all aspects of the National Curriculum programme of study. Much of the work in art and design is used to illustrate and support learning in subjects such as history and geography.
121. There is no school policy for art. The subject has had a relatively low profile whilst the school has focused on the need to raise standards in English and mathematics. The co-ordinator has had no opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and standards. The school has adequate consumable resources for art and is developing a collection of reference materials concerning artists and their work.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

122. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 and Year 2 is broadly similar to that expected nationally. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection. The quality of the curriculum has been improved, ensuring greater emphasis on exploring how things are made, a more varied use of materials in the making stage and time to re-evaluate and improve or modify the original design. The two-year cycle ensures that pupils, some of whom are in split age classes, systematically experience the range of experiences and develop skills. The practical nature ensures that pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress. Resources are adequate to deliver the scheme of work, which is based on national guidance. No design and technology teaching was seen, but evidence of previous and ongoing work, together with discussion with staff, provided a sound evidence base.
123. Pupils enjoy design and technology and the photos of different stages in projects show them totally involved, working effectively in groups, together with the improvements that they have made to their original design and construction.
124. Year 2 pupils are involved in a study of the nearby children's adventure area. They visited this and, in conjunction with their work on forces in science, looked carefully to see how swings, slides and roundabouts moved and were constructed. Photographs taken at the site enabled them to reflect, recall and discuss important features back in the classroom. After making drawings they used a range of elements from simple

construction kits to build their swings, working collaboratively in small groups. The teacher then challenged them to improve their constructions, so different individuals in each group set about increasing its height, its breadth or stability. As much of the work evolves from good quality discussion and the sharing of ideas, pupils from an early age learn to think about the purpose of the item that they are about to make and consider and compare the effectiveness of materials. In this case they found some sorts of construction material were more effective than others for their purpose.

125. All pupils experience an appropriate breadth of challenge and have the opportunity to use a range of materials and tools. Thus Year 3 will explore pneumatics to make monsters, or parts of a monster, move. Year 6 will tackle moving vehicles and incorporate elements of control. Thoughtful and reflective work previously undertaken by the mixed age classes Years 3 - 6 includes food technology based on bread; the use of reclaimed materials to create a container such as a vase; bridges - with the emphasis on their strength and stability, and a study of ways of using paper to increase its strength. The pupils also benefit greatly from day workshops such as the visit to Wigan and Leigh College's building unit, to explore real construction materials. Pupils investigated and built walls.
126. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the subject and takes a strong leadership role. She has developed effective links between other curriculum areas and design and technology, which has increased both the relevance and interest of the projects, as well as providing a context for writing for different purposes. The new information technology resources are now able to support more `control` technology for Years 5 and 6, thus applying their computing skills in a different context. The co-ordinator has an assessment procedure in place, which will now allow the systematic evaluation of pupils' progress in skill acquisition, use of materials and quality of design drawing.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

127. It was possible to observe only one lesson during the week of the inspection due to the organisation of the timetable. Judgements are based on that observation, as well as on scrutiny of work in books or on display and on discussions with teachers and pupils. On the basis of the evidence gathered, standards are similar to those expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.
128. In Years 1 and 2, teachers organise a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to familiarise themselves with the local environment and locations further afield. By the end of Year 2 they are aware of Leigh's position in relation to major cities in England and that they live on an island separated from other parts of Europe and the wider world. This is achieved in part by following the travels of Barnaby Bear and discussing the type of clothing he would need to take to the various countries he visits
129. This theme is continued in the Year 3 / 4 class where pupils compare the climatic conditions in different parts of the world and how these influence aspects of people's lifestyles such as work and clothing. The lesson seen took place in the Year 3 / 4 class and teaching was very good. The class teacher provided interesting activities which challenged and extended pupils' knowledge of the world map and also made a good contribution to the development of speaking and listening skills and developed new vocabulary. One pupil, for example, suggested, "You would need to use a

mosquito net in Brazil.” In Year 6, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to study the lives of people in other countries through the news media and to examine ways of improving the local and wider environment.

130. In recent years, the school has justifiably placed greater emphasis on raising standards in English, mathematics and science. In so doing it has endeavoured to ensure that teachers plan enough activities to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for geography. However, there has been no system during this time for accurately measuring coverage of the programmes of study from year to year. Consequently, the teaching of geographical skills, map work and the recording of results is under-emphasised. There is no systematic evaluation of pupils' progress in geography. Additionally there are missed opportunities to develop extended writing and to make full use of computers through teaching in the subject.

## HISTORY

131. At the end of Years 2 and 6 standards of work and the range of topics covered is similar to that of other schools. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection. In the past, the emphasis has been on the use of worksheets and the assembly of a collection of facts. The new policy and scheme of work, developed in the last year, place far greater emphasis on the pupils thinking about cause and effect, on using evidence and searching for reasons and being aware of bias. The scheme of work ensures that all pupils have an opportunity to benefit from visits such as that to Astley Green Colliery to study the effects of coal mining on the local area in the past.
132. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2, but pupils' earlier work and discussions with teachers provided evidence of attainment. Much of the pupils' historical understanding is developed through discussion which, whilst enabling those who have immature writing skills to participate fully, misses an opportunity for the higher attainers to write at increasing length for different purposes. Pupils have explored 'toys in the past' and discussed famous characters such as Florence Nightingale. Many opportunities are taken to develop pupils' understanding of chronology using familiar everyday events and story.
133. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 was satisfactory. Lessons are planned to encourage pupils to think about the past rather than simply acquiring factual knowledge. Currently the Year 5 pupils are looking at aspects of Victorian life. Here, the limited resource material available prevents the effective development of good enquiry skills. In contrast, in a Year 6 lesson on Tudor exploration, pupils are challenged to reason, draw out implications and use secondary sources to consider the issue of bias. They do not always find this easy but a better range of material, supported by a project loan and carefully structured lesson sequences, ensure the majority makes reasonable progress during the lesson. Far more opportunities occur in this class to write for different purposes as well as practising and applying language skills met earlier in the day. Good relationships and class management ensure that pupils work well. However, in other history lessons, some pupils find it difficult to settle, especially when the work lacks sufficient challenge.

134. The two-year rolling cycle of topics began last year so a complete picture of the quality and range of historical understanding is not available. Years 3 and 4 pupils' study of the Ancient Greeks focused on a limited number of related aspects: the differences between Athens and Sparta, the importance of games, the Gods and the effectiveness of the army and navy. Much of this came together in the study of Greek pottery. As with the younger pupils the range of strategies was limited by the paucity of resources but good links were made with design and technology.
135. The school has a limited range of good quality historical resource material. The number and quality of non-fiction books and illustrations does not allow the systematic development of pupils' research skills, the proper development of historical enquiry and the evaluation of evidence. Information and communication technology is not yet being used as effectively as it could be to support work in history. There is no systematic assessment of pupils' progress in history.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

136. There has been good improvement in attainment in information and communication technology since the last inspection. The previous report indicated that pupils had too little access to computers. Since then, governors have made good use of specific grants, subsidised from the school's budget, to provide a computer suite and to develop keyboard skills. The school's membership of the Leigh Education Action Zone has also had a beneficial effect as a result of additional training for teachers and support and advice from the advisory staff. Consequently, standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are securely in line with expectations for their age groups. Although these are similar standards to those reported in the last inspection, there has been significant improvement in the development of word processing skills. In this element of information and communication technology, standards are above expectation for pupils of similar age. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress and the school is in a strong position to raise standards further.
137. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils use computers confidently and independently. Whenever they use the computer suite, they log on without any help from adults and competently retrieve files or saved work from previous lessons. They use computers for a variety of purposes. In Year 1, for example, they use software to label, sort and classify objects. By the end of Year 2, word-processing skills are well developed and a significant minority demonstrate speed and skills reflecting standards above expectations for their age. They use word banks to build sentences and successfully add simple graphics to text. A minority are less confident and need help from adults or more competent classmates.
138. From Year 3 onwards, the keyboard skills associated with word processing continue to develop quickly. In the Year 3 / 4 class, for example, pupils used computers to select suitable words to replace the word 'good' in a piece of text. Most chose successfully from a bank of words provided whilst many others used an electronic thesaurus to find better alternatives. Most pupils were able to highlight their new words by changing their size, font and colour. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils use computers to edit their work and improve it by adding pictures and borders. They also use their keyboard skills to good effect in other subjects when given the opportunity, for instance when using a spreadsheet to work out the cost of items for a party.

139. The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to the subject and there were very few examples of inappropriate behaviour. They cooperate well with adults and each other and are ready to help classmates who are having problems. This is because they enjoy using computers and also because the quality of teaching in the computer suite is consistently good. Teachers prepare lessons well and are confident and authoritative. They provide interesting and challenging activities and make good use of classroom assistants so that lessons run smoothly. They provide good personal support for individuals, have clear objectives and expectations and ensure that everyone is fully involved in lessons. Their use of computers in the classrooms is less successful. They sometimes use computers as a teaching aid or enable pupils to use them to help them with their work, but they do not plan the use of the classroom computer as an integral part of day-to-day learning across the curriculum and this is an area for future development.
140. The two co-ordinators work hard to support colleagues and to encourage the use of the computer suite on a regular basis. They have produced an action plan which recognises that, whilst progress and attainment in word processing are good, there are gaps in the curriculum which require attention. Control technology and the other, wider uses of computers for communication are not fully included in teaching and the use of computers in the classroom is under-developed. Their action plan contains intentions to develop these aspects and the assessment of pupils' progress. They have a clear sense of direction, supported by good resources and are in a strong position to raise standards further.

## **MUSIC**

141. Standards in music are satisfactory. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6 the range, understanding and performance of pupils is similar to those of a comparable age in other schools. The school has made effective use of regular advice from the local authority music advisor, thus ensuring that at a time of staff change the subject continued to experience good quality leadership. The school makes good use of a combination of local authority and nationally designed guidance. In the limited number of music lessons observed, this structure, together with the suggested strategies, worked well. There was no opportunity to evaluate choral singing. The school continues to make very good use of the instrumental teaching service, `Music Live` and follow up workshops.
142. The instrumental teachers played as a jazz group for the whole school. Pupils, encouraged to participate, were excited and stimulated both by the range of types of jazz played and by the individual performances. The pupils saw an active demonstration of the fun of playing in a group. Discussions later reflecting on what they had seen, enjoyed and understood demonstrated just how much the pupils had taken in. The detailed recall and eagerness to share these reflections with their classmates was particularly striking in Year 1.
143. In the two lessons observed, teaching was good. Both teachers concentrated on developing skills and understanding and then using these aspects to `compose`. Year 1 pupils were exploring pitch - high and low. The good teaching ensured that pupils listened carefully and were able to use their own voices to replicate these patterns of pitch. The whole focus was great fun and then used effectively in the context of the story of the Three Little Pigs. Pupils also listened to a piece of music and thought about how it might illustrate the events of the Three Pigs story. Individual pupils produced fascinating creative and imaginative ideas. Year 6 pupils are exploring their

understanding of the Tudor period through an exploration of Tudor dance music. This enabled the teacher to review and update work on the beat (pulse) and introduce the idea of the pentatonic, five-note scale. Pairs of pupils were challenged to compose and remember short tunes. Pupils were quite amazed that within a short lesson they were able to combine both their tunes with the `beat players` using tambas. Skills, understanding, composition and performance came together in a most satisfactory way fulfilling their teacher's high expectations.

144. Last year, Years 3 and 4 benefited from a Samba workshop following on from a visit of the music teachers' ensemble. Over a month, pupils developed their understanding of beat and rhythm as they composed their own music. Along with the costumes and dance steps that they created, they performed their work at the local music centre and for the whole school. The taped evidence demonstrates extended work of quality.
145. Resources are adequate but there are a limited number of music tapes and CDs to support some of the planned work. A small number of pupils receive keyboard tuition from the peripatetic music service.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

146. The school provides a programme of physical education which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils learn to play games, participate in gymnastic activities and respond to music through dance. All pupils have opportunities for swimming lessons.
147. Standards are in line with the national expectation by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection.
148. In Year 1, pupils demonstrate adequate awareness and use of the space around them. They follow instructions accurately, adjusting the pace and direction of their movement in response to signals from their teacher. By the end of Year 2, they perform simple jumps and rolls competently and are aware of the need to land safely and softly. Higher attaining pupils build up a basic sequence of rolls and jumps using floor apparatus, whilst a small minority are more inhibited and run out of ideas more quickly than others. All pupils put out and store equipment safely and are becoming increasingly conscious both of the benefit of exercise and the importance of warming up for physical activity.
149. From Year 3 onwards, pupils develop their sequence of movement further, increasing the distance and variety of take-off and landing. By the time they are in year 6, most pupils strike, pass and receive a ball accurately in games such as hockey, a minority demonstrating skill and balance above expectations for their age. The majority recognise the need for rules, play small-sided games without the need for adult supervision and are developing a sense of fair play along with some tactical awareness. Older pupils are given opportunities to develop a sense of team work through competitive sports and a residential trip to Hinning House for adventure activities.

150. The quality of teaching is good, overall. Teachers set a good example by dressing correctly for lessons and this has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. They begin lessons with an appropriate warm-up session and take opportunities to remind pupils of the benefits of physical exercise. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are lively, energetic and move along at a brisk pace, with new challenges set for each activity. This approach was clearly seen in a hockey lesson, where the teacher quickly judged how successfully his class were developing skills with stick and ball and moved on to more complex team games. Most teaching makes best use of good performers to demonstrate new skills to the rest of the class. On a few occasions where such opportunities are missed, progress is slower because pupils do not have a clear idea of what can be achieved. Teaching is also less effective when too much time is devoted to explaining skills instead of practising them and this sometimes results in lessons going on for too long.
151. The vast majority of pupils enjoy lessons and respond enthusiastically and co-operatively, especially to lively and challenging teaching. A minority lose concentration where the pace of teaching is slow, but even when this is not the case and teaching is stimulating, a few pupils remain uncooperative and sometimes disruptive.
152. The deputy headteacher has very recently taken over as co-ordinator. He has quickly recognised that although teachers are planning lessons regularly, coverage of the programmes of study varies from class to class. Consequently, some elements of the curriculum are being taught in isolation and in insufficient depth. There is no means of ensuring or measuring the development of skills across a wide range of activities as pupils move through the school and this is an area for further development.