

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC LOWER SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122038

Headteacher: Mrs C Shoreland

Reporting inspector: Anne Currie
25429

Dates of inspection: 13th – 14th March 2002

Inspection number: 194768

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Grange Road Northampton
Postcode:	NN3 2BD
Telephone number:	01604 403511
Fax number:	01604 403606
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Joseph Metcalfe
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd – 6 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
25429	Anne Currie	Registered inspector
13807	Christine Haggerty	Lay inspector
20142	Malcolm Childs	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

WES World-wide Education Service
Canada House
272 Field End Road
Eastcote
Middlesex
HA4 9NA

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Gregory's is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Lower School for boys and girls aged from four to nine years. It has 284 children on roll and it is similar in size to most other primary schools. The roll is stable, with only six children leaving during term time in the last school year. Almost all children are from Catholic families in the Northampton area. They come from three different parishes and they have very varied social backgrounds.

Children enter the school in the September before their fifth birthday. Most have previously attended local nursery schools. They have a wide range of attainment on entry to the school, but overall it is similar to that found nationally. Only five children come from families where English is not the first language at home and none of these have just started learning English. Their home languages are French, Vietnamese or Gujarati. About 12 per cent of children are known to be entitled to free school meals, which is similar to the national average. The percentage of pupils who have individual education plans to cater for their special educational needs, nearly 15 per cent, is below the national average. Only one child has a statement of special educational need. Children who receive regular additional support have a wide range of difficulties. They include moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication problems, emotional and behavioural difficulties or medical conditions.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Gregory's Lower School is a very successful school, which provides good value for money. Teachers establish highly positive relationships with the children and help all, including those with special educational needs, to make above average progress. High standards are achieved in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and when children leave the school at the end of Year 4. Children develop very good attitudes to learning and the standard of their behaviour is well above that normally found. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and she is extremely well supported by the deputy head in the management of the school. Governors play an active role in running the school.

What the school does well

- Children achieve high standards in English and mathematics in Year 2 and these are maintained until they leave the school at the end of Year 4.
- The leadership is very good. The headteacher gives very clear direction to the school's work and she is extremely well supported by the deputy head. The knowledgeable governing body plays a significant role in the running of the school.
- The quality of teaching is good and it promotes children's learning well.
- Children's attitudes to learning are very positive. Their behaviour in lessons and around school, including the relationships they have with adults and each other, is very good.
- The ethos of the school is strong. It provides well for children's spiritual, moral and social development.
- The curriculum is well planned with good links made between subjects.

What could be improved

- The information provided to parents about their children's work and the progress they are making, especially in the annual report to parents.
- Opportunities for older children to take part in activities outside lessons, especially in sport.

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 June 1997. It was seriously damaged by fire in 1998 and recently it was threatened with closure because of the re-organisation of schools in the area. Overall there have been good improvements since the last inspection and the school has the capacity to continue to develop. Standards achieved in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have risen steadily. The school has recently received a School Achievement Award for substantially improving its results between 1998 and 2001. Teaching is now good across the school and it gives more challenge for children capable of higher attainment. The quality of education in Years 3 and 4 has improved. Teachers' subject knowledge in information and communication technology (ICT) and science is now more secure. There is effective emphasis on helping children develop their investigative skills in science and mathematics. Co-ordinators now have more opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subjects. The school has adopted national guidelines to ensure that subjects are taught appropriately.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by children at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			#similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	C	B	A	A
Writing	A	A	A*	A*
Mathematics	C	C	A	A

Key

In the top five per cent nationally A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

#Similar schools selected on the basis of the percentage of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals.

In 2001, Year 2 children attained standards in national tests in reading and mathematics that were well above average compared to all schools and also schools in similar economic circumstances. In writing, their results were in the top five per cent nationally. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are similar this year. Overall, results have risen over the last few years. When children leave the school at the end of Year 4, they are achieving standards that are above those expected in English and mathematics. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Year 4 children are on course to achieve the standards set for them by the local authority at the end of Year 6.

The attainment of children when they enter the school is similar to that found nationally. Most meet the standards expected by the end of their year in the reception classes. They make good progress in lessons in Years 1 and 2. Progress continues to be at least steady in Years 3 and 4, with examples of significant progress observed in Year 4. Higher attaining children are set challenging work to extend their understanding and skills. Children with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers. They are not at an early stage of English language acquisition. Children with special educational needs make good gains in learning towards the targets identified in their individual education plans as a result of the high quality support they receive. The school has identified writing as an area for improvement and the increased emphasis has resulted in above average standards being achieved across the school, although handwriting is variable, with few children joining their letters. Investigative skills are developed well in mathematics and science.

Religious education was inspected by a team of inspectors appointed by the diocese and it is the subject of a separate report.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children have very positive attitudes to their work and they are keen to take part in lessons. This is an important factor in the significant progress they make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children co-operate well with each other in lessons and they play happily together outside.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children take responsibility well and work independently. They willingly carry out tasks in class and around school. Relationships among children and between adults and children are extremely positive.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good and it is a significant factor in the above average gains children make in learning. Eleven lessons were observed across the school. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and some was very good or excellent. The quality of teaching is now more uniform across the school than it was at the time of the last inspection. Teachers have high expectations and there is a good level of challenge for higher attaining children, especially in Year 4. Lessons are well planned, with learning objectives clearly identified. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective. There is a clear focus on developing children's writing skills in other subjects, such as history and religious education, and on extending their speaking and listening skills. Staff manage children very well. Teachers establish very good relationships with children and create a purposeful atmosphere in their classrooms. Their subject knowledge in ICT has improved and staff plan well to include opportunities to develop and reinforce children's ICT skills in other subjects. All work is marked with a clear emphasis on improving grammar and spelling. Targets are set for individuals and groups of children, mainly in English and mathematics. They are shared with children so that they are aware of what they need to do to improve.

Both teachers and learning support assistants give good additional help to children identified by the school as having special educational needs. As a result, these children make above average progress towards the targets identified in their individual education plans.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is well planned. A strength of the curriculum is the way in which staff develop good links between subjects, which makes effective use of time and also stimulates children's interest well. There are too few opportunities for older children to take part in activities outside lessons, especially sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good additional support is provided, which helps children make significant progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Only a few children speak English as an additional language. They make similar progress to their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Staff provide very good opportunities for children to extend their spiritual awareness and they also give extremely effective guidance and support for their moral and social development. There is less emphasis on developing children's knowledge of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very caring school. All adults have a very consistent approach to behaviour management and there are good procedures for monitoring and guiding academic progress.

The school develops positive relationships with the majority of parents and involves them appropriately with their child's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership. Together with the deputy head she manages the school very effectively. All staff work together extremely well as a team and they are all committed to raising standards and helping each child achieve his or her best.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of the school's work. They are very supportive of the school's ethos and they fulfil their role well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Children's achievements and their progress are monitored and analysed carefully. The information obtained is used to improve teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	The school looks to obtain best value from its spending and it is beginning to analyse the impact of its decisions. The money it receives is clearly targeted to providing a good standard of education and improving standards. The school has been re-stocked well after the fire.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Behaviour in school is good and children become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good. • Their children are expected to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. • Children make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework children receive. • The information they receive about how their children are getting on. • Links with parents. • The number and range of activities provided outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. The school has a clear homework policy, but it is not always followed consistently by all staff. Some parents do not have a clear understanding of the school's approach to teaching reading, especially in Years 3 and 4, with the move away from hearing children read individually to reading as part of a group. There is an appropriate range of information available for parents, but it is not always in an easy-to-read format. Although teachers are readily available to discuss children's progress, the annual reports to parents have several shortcomings. There is insufficient emphasis on what children know and understand. The reports do not give parents a clear idea of what their children have to do to improve or how they are performing compared to national standards. This is especially important when children transfer to middle schools at the end of Year 4. There is a more limited range of activities than is normal for children to take part in outside lessons and there are no sporting opportunities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Children achieve high standards in English and mathematics in Year 2 and these are maintained until they leave the school at the end of Year 4.

1. At the end of Year 2, national test results show that standards in reading and mathematics are well above average compared with those of schools in similar economic circumstances. Standards in writing are very high. Assessment records that track children's achievements and current work show that these high standards are maintained until children leave the school at the end of Year 4. Progress is now more uniformly good across the school than at the time of the last inspection. Test results dipped in 1999 (the year following the fire and before children moved back into the new school building) to close to the national average, but they have risen sharply again since then. Over time there is no marked difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
2. When children enter the school, at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five, their attainment is broadly average. Most have had the benefit of nursery education and their personal and social skills are well developed. By the end of Year 2 almost all attain the standards expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In national tests in 2001, the percentage of pupils exceeding the level expected was well above the average for all schools in reading and mathematics and in the top five per cent nationally in writing. This indicates that the school provides well for the children capable of higher attainment.
3. Children make good gains in learning. Throughout the school they work hard and respond very well to the good teaching they receive. Lessons are well planned and clearly focus on what children are to learn, with new work building on what children already know. Staff use targets for groups of children and for individuals to help them focus on what they need to do to improve. This involves children in their own learning and it is working well. There are only a few children who speak English as an additional language and they are not at an early stage of English language acquisition. They make similar progress to their peers. Children identified by the school as having special educational needs are given well-focused additional support and, as a result, they make good progress towards the targets set for them. They have detailed individual education plans, which highlight what they need to do to improve and clearly set out the processes to be used. These children's achievements are regularly assessed and new targets are set when necessary. In Year 3, additional literacy support is given to selected children and, as a result, they extend their knowledge of phonics in small groups with a well-trained support assistant. This enables them to improve their reading and spelling skills.
4. Children make above average progress in extending their speaking and listening skills. They are given good opportunities to discuss their ideas with others in their group – for example, when Year 4 children discussed their ideas for an experiment to test the effect of wind resistance on a piece of paper. Children also share the work they have done with others at the end of literacy and numeracy lessons. Class teachers have high expectations and use appropriate subject-specific vocabulary, which reinforces and extends children's learning. This was seen when Year 2 children, who were designing a poster in a literacy session, were reminded that they could use the paper in either portrait or landscape format. Teachers use questions well to encourage children to express their ideas and they treat their responses with respect, which helps children gain confidence. A good example of this was seen in Year 1 when children were encouraged to think about how Pirate Pete, the main character in the book they were reading, was feeling.

5. Children achieve well in reading. In the lower part of the school, they have frequent opportunities to read to an adult. Classroom assistants and parents helpers play valuable roles here alongside the work done by the class teacher. Most parents also hear their children read regularly. In Years 3 and 4, there is less emphasis on hearing children read their own books in school. Teachers aim to allow children to select books for themselves and to develop a love of books and reading. In class, teachers work with groups of children. Together they read a set text and there is a good focus on extending reading skills related to the learning needs of those children in the group. Older children are encouraged to carry out their own research – for example, in history, using books, CD-ROMs or the Internet and this also extends reading skills.
6. The school has focused on extending children’s writing skills and this has led to good standards across the school. As children move through the school there is an increasing emphasis on grammar and spelling. Time is made available during the week for the older children to have the opportunity to create a piece of extended writing. Effective links are also made with other subjects when children use their writing skills – for example, to record the results of their work in science or in religious education. Marking is used to guide children’s learning, but it is confined mainly to correcting mistakes and giving encouragement, rather than highlighting what needs to be done to improve – for example, by referring to children’s targets. Teachers give children good stimuli for their writing, which ensure that they respond enthusiastically and produce work of high quality. For example, a Year 2 teacher explained to the class that she had two toys to sell in her village. She set the scene very well. Children quickly suggested making a poster to advertise them, they thought of a wide range of adjectives to use to describe the toys in a way that would appeal to others, and they discussed the information the poster needed to contain. Few of the older children regularly join their letters when they are writing and the school does not implement a consistent policy on handwriting.
7. Children make good gains in learning mathematics. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well, especially the mental mathematics session to extend skills. This begins in the reception classes: children took part in a session involving counting to five and then beyond. There was good emphasis on the vocabulary used – for example, ‘one more’, ‘one less’, ‘count on one’. The school is successfully focusing on extending the opportunities children have to complete investigations and to apply these to practical situations. In an excellent lesson in Year 2, children were set a practical problem and they had to estimate the length and width of items and then measure them to see if they would go in one of two boxes.
8. In the last inspection report, concerns were expressed over the progress children made in Years 3 and 4 and the lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils. These aspects have improved. Children now make at least steady gains in learning, with examples of good and very good progress seen in Year 4. Teachers’ expectations are high and the quality of teaching in these year groups is now good. In both Years 3 and 4, the two classes are split for mathematics, which enables work to be better matched to children’s needs. There are especially high expectations in the class for higher attaining children in mathematics in Year 4. In a very good session, the objective was to explore methods of multiplication. The children were highly motivated and the lesson ended with children exploring the Hindu method using the Vedic square, which really challenged their thinking.

The leadership is very good. The headteacher gives very clear direction to the school’s work and she is extremely well supported by the deputy head. The knowledgeable governing body plays a significant role in the running of the school.

9. The headteacher, who is very well supported by the deputy head, provides very good leadership, which is clearly focused on raising standards in all aspects of the school’s

work. There are some notable examples that illustrate the strong leadership and very effective management.

- The school was almost completely destroyed by fire in March 1998 and had to operate on three sites. It was re-opened in November 2000. During this time, under difficult circumstances, the school managed to maintain standards in line with national expectations and also its identity.
 - The school is now very attractive and well resourced. It provides a good environment for learning across the whole curriculum. There is an inviting, well-stocked library that is used by all children and this helps to foster an interest in books and reading. The ICT suite has been developed and equipped with sufficient computers to allow children to learn new skills, which they can then use in their classrooms.
 - Recently the school's future was under threat from the re-organisation of schools in the local authority, with a move from lower, middle and high schools to primary and secondary schools. The school, with the full support of parents, lobbied hard to remain open. They were successful and the school is to remain, although its status will change.
 - Throughout the difficult times staff morale has remained high, with a strong, continued commitment to helping each child achieve his or her potential. Senior staff have generated a strong team spirit and the warm friendly relationships that have developed have a very positive impact on all aspects of the life of the school. For example, the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) raised a considerable sum of money for the school that was used to make an adventure playground. The school site supervisor used his skills to build this and it now provides a very good facility for the children to use.
 - In the lead up to the inspection, both the secretary and the headteacher were in hospital and neither was working in the school during the inspection. The very good management systems in place and the dedication of the staff were demonstrated as the school continued to run very efficiently in their absence.
 - Good tracking systems have been put in place so that children's progress can be followed as they move through the school and teaching focused on their needs.
 - The school development plan is an effective document, which shows how the school monitors and evaluates its performance and takes action to ensure that it continues to improve.
10. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and actively supports it. It is closely involved in helping to draw up the development plan, which outlines the school's future work. Members of the finance committee question school staff about spending decisions and they monitor the budget throughout the year. A core of governors regularly visit the school and share their skills – for example, by helping to teach the recorder or involving children with craft and sewing projects, such as a wall hanging to mark the headteacher's retirement at the end of this term.

The quality of teaching is good and it promotes children's learning well.

11. The quality of teaching is good overall and it has a positive impact on children's learning. Of the 11 lessons observed, one lesson was excellent, two were very good, six were good and two were satisfactory. There has been an improvement in teaching in Years 3 and 4 since the last inspection; within most lessons seen it was at least good. Teachers' expectations have risen and they give an appropriate level of challenge for children capable of higher attainment. Standards of teaching in English and mathematics are good. Teachers have a secure understanding of the literacy and numeracy strategies and they implement them well, ensuring that children steadily develop their skills and understanding. Teachers have a clear understanding of how to extend children's writing skills. They give children a wide range of opportunities for writing and they generate a great deal of interest and enthusiasm, which leads to work of an above average standard. The school's emphasis on developing children's investigative skills in mathematics is also successful and it is raising achievement.
12. The last inspection report highlighted some teachers' lack of subject knowledge and consequent low confidence in teaching music, ICT and some aspects of mathematics and science. Current evidence shows that teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is at least secure and often good. Staff are still completing their New Opportunities funded training in ICT, but their use of ICT skills across the curriculum and their use of the ICT suite to teach specific skills, confirm that their confidence in this area has improved. Teachers' planning and children's completed work illustrate that teachers now have at least secure subject knowledge in music and science. Teachers make effective use of the national guidelines contained in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) recommended schemes of work to ensure that appropriate work is covered.
13. There are several general features of the good teaching that can be seen across the school and which result in good learning.
 - Lessons are well planned and teachers devise interesting activities which capture children's interest. For example, a Year 4 class investigated water resistance during a swimming lesson as part of their work on forces. Teachers clearly identify what they want children to learn. They give clear explanations so that children know what is expected.
 - Teachers generally have high expectations. They know the children in their class well and they ensure that the work is appropriately matched to their learning needs.
 - Teachers use questions to good effect to assess what children know and also to help children extend their understanding and speaking skills by explaining their ideas.
 - Children with special educational needs are well provided for and they receive the additional support they need to help them feel successful and to make good progress.
 - Most teachers manage children very effectively and, as a result, lessons proceed at a good pace and a substantial amount of work is covered.

Staff, both teachers and learning support assistants, establish highly positive relationships with the children, so that the latter work hard and are keen to please.

14. There are two general features related to teaching that could extend children's learning:
- There is some variation in the setting of homework. Most children are asked to learn spellings and tables at home, as well as reading a book, but requirements can vary from class to class and over the year. Some parents have concerns about this aspect of the school's work. A more consistent approach by all staff would ensure that everyone knew what was expected.
 - Most of children's work is marked. Praise is used effectively but, especially for the older children, marking gives little indication of what they need to do to improve.
15. The school has experienced some staffing difficulties over the last two years. Four teachers left during this period and it was not always possible to replace them with permanent teachers. This resulted in some disruption to children's learning, but the headteacher and senior staff have done all they can to keep this to a minimum. There are good procedures in place to ensure that new staff are well supported.

Children's attitudes to learning are very positive. Their behaviour in lessons and around school, including the relationships they have with adults and each other, is very good.

16. Children's attitudes to learning have improved since the last inspection and they are now very good. Parents are rightly happy with this aspect of the school. Positive attitudes to learning are fostered in the reception classes through the provision of a stimulating range of activities for children to select from and good interactions with adults to extend children's interests and help them succeed. There is an emphasis on extending children's personal and social skills, with activities organised that encourage children to share, take turns and work with each other.
17. The very positive relationships children develop with each other and with adults have a beneficial impact on all aspects of their learning and contribute to the harmonious atmosphere in the school. Children of all ages come to school happily and settle quickly to their work. Most concentrate well and sustain their interest throughout the sessions, even when an adult is not directly supervising them. They eagerly answer questions in lessons and they are keen to show their work to visitors. Children respond well to the positive encouragement they are given, both through written comments and verbally. The use of targets is making children more aware of their own learning and they are working hard to improve.
18. Behaviour, both in and around school, is extremely good. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Children respond very positively to the consistently high expectations staff have of them. They know what is expected and they are keen to please. Children are courteous and friendly. They treat each other and adults with respect and are quick to open doors or find a chair for visitors. Children listen politely to what others have to say and willingly take turns – for example, when working with a partner on the computer. They play together well in the relatively small playground. The small number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated.
19. Children readily take the responsibilities they are given. Class monitors complete their tasks with a minimum of fuss and the older children readily assist in assemblies. They have a good awareness of others less fortunate than themselves and make collections for charity. There is currently no way for children to make suggestions or to be more actively involved in decisions related to aspects of school life – for example, through a school council. Given the maturity of the older children and their good speaking and listening skills, this is a possible area for development.

The ethos of the school is strong. It provides well for children's spiritual, moral and social development.

20. There is a strong Catholic ethos. The school's vision statement, 'We believe in Jesus Christ; through him, with him, in him, anything is possible', permeates all aspects its work. Within the school children learn that generosity, courtesy, good manners, and tolerance and respect for one another are qualities the school expects. Staff manage children very well in lessons and in the playground. They have high expectations and a consistent approach to managing behaviour. As a result, children develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and of what will happen if they break the rules. They are taught to consider their actions, and begin to take responsibility for them, developing a clear understanding of right and wrong from a Christian perspective. Parents are rightly happy with this aspect of the school's work.
21. Staff show great care for the children and they give good help and guidance to children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. All children are included in all aspects of the school's work. The school runs a Rainbows club for children who have suffered a loss through death or a change in family circumstances, such as divorce.
22. Assemblies play a significant part in extending children's spiritual development. An excellent example of this was seen when Years 3 and 4 children took part in an assembly for the whole school based on the Stations of the Cross. The children took part in readings and also mimed related scenes. The rest of the school joined in with singing appropriate verses from a variety of hymns. The atmosphere was enhanced by the use of images, projected on the wall, of children, mostly in third world countries, whose moods reflected the feelings referred to in the readings. Teachers also plan good opportunities for children to discuss their feelings and show respect for those of others. Year 3 children wrote about things that had made them happy and things that had made them sad during a literacy session and they then shared their work with the rest of the class.
23. Staff throughout the school develop very good relationships with children and they are very good role models. There is effective emphasis in the reception classes on developing children's personal and social skills. As a result, children learn to share, to take turns and to relate to each other well from an early stage. Teachers create a good learning environment in lessons. They listen carefully to what children have to say and they treat their responses with respect. Therefore, children learn to relate well to each other and to adults. They listen carefully to each other in discussions. They gain confidence and learn to readily share their ideas and opinions. Teachers also give well-planned opportunities for children to work together successfully in groups and in pairs – for example, on the computers. Through the schools' citizenship programme, children find out about different roles in society – for example, through links with the police and the postal services. There are also links with neighbouring sheltered housing for the elderly.
24. Older children learn about life in other European counties through the Comenius project, which links them with pupils at schools in France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain. In religious education, children develop an awareness of the beliefs of others – for example Jewish and Muslim visitors to the school give an insight into different customs and religions. Opportunities for children to become aware of the wider multi-cultural society in which they live are more limited.

The curriculum is well planned with good links made between subjects.

25. The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum within lessons. Particular strengths are the links made between subjects, which ensure that effective use is made of the time available and that an interesting range of activities is provided, which captures children's interests well. There are several examples that illustrate these.

- A good link between religious education and literacy was seen in Year 3 when children wrote responsorial psalms. This activity also gave children a valuable opportunity to discuss their feelings and to share them with others.
- In Year 1, children were learning about Christopher Columbus. As part of this work they designed ships in design and technology. They drew ships on the computer whilst learning how to use aspects of a particular program – for example, how to fill a shape with colour and how to change the thickness of the line. Links were also made to literacy as children were encouraged to add a sentence about their ship using the text facility.
- In Year 2, children's work in English and mathematics was based on responses to practical problems, which the class teacher set for the children. These captured children's interest well and, as a result, they responded very positively. In literacy they designed a poster for a specific purpose and carefully considered the information it should contain and how to make it eye-catching and interesting. In a mathematics lesson, children were involved in thinking about toys they could send to two children who had lost their belongings. As well as thinking about what toys would be suitable they also had to solve the practical problems of which ones would fit into the boxes provided, which involved estimating their size and then measuring them.
- A Year 4 class studied texts in literacy sessions related to their history theme, which was Grace Darling. The children completed a piece of extended writing using the notes they had made when they carried out their own research and drawing on the understanding of the use of expressive and descriptive language that they had gained from the literacy sessions.

26. The use of ICT across the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. There are examples of its use to support learning in a variety of subjects as well as to help children extend their computing skills. For example, children use the Internet and CD-ROMs to carry out research in history and Year 4 pupils draw tables on the computer to display their work in science. The school is involved with two projects that link to schools in other parts of Europe. These are helping to extend ICT skills and children's knowledge of other countries; they also generate considerable interest and enthusiasm. The Comenius project is in its second phase and currently involves children in schools in several European countries. The children are taking part in activities linked to improving the environment. St Gregory's children are involved in recycling projects and they are designing and creating a Peace Garden in the school grounds. These activities connect well with work in design and technology and geography. Ideas are exchanged between the schools using a web site and a CD-ROM. Year 4 children are also taking part in the Kingswood project, which links them with children in schools in Normandy. Children have sent e-mails to their pen pals and there are plans for them to meet during a residential trip to the Isle of Wight later in the year.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The information provided to parents about their children's work and the progress they are making, especially in the annual report to parents.

27. The majority of parents are happy with the relationship they have with the school. They find the staff approachable and willing to give time before or after school to discuss their children's progress. Some parents, however, do not feel that they are kept well informed about the work their children do and are unsure about the standards they reach, especially before they transfer to the middle school. As a result, parents find it difficult to judge the progress their children make at their new school. A few parents expressed concerns about the apparent infrequency of their children reading with a teacher in school because there was no mention of this in the home/school record book. Parents are not generally aware of the schools' move in Year 3 away from hearing individual children read the book they take home to guided reading, where children read with the teacher as part of a group, as outlined in the National Literacy Strategy.
28. The last inspection report commented that the reports infrequently contained reference to specific progress in subjects other than English and mathematics and that they did not often contain targets to help children improve. There have been few improvements. The reports do not give a clear picture of children's knowledge and understanding across the whole of the curriculum. There are no references to how the child is performing in relation to the standards expected nationally. Many of the comments are confined to what work the child has covered and refer to pastoral issues rather than attainment. The report forms are quite small and, as a result, the amount of information that can be included is limited. Parents are not given information about what their children need to do to improve. Although the school does provide the required documentation for all parents in the form of a prospectus and a governors' annual report, the information is not always in a format that is easy to read.

Opportunities for older children to take part in activities outside lessons, especially in sport.

29. At present there are no after-school clubs for children to take part in. There are a few activities at lunchtimes. There are recorder groups and a dance club for Years 3 and 4 children but the number of children involved in these is limited. A computer club also operates at lunchtime. Last term it was restricted to Year 3 and 4 children and this term it is for Year 2 children only so each child has limited access.
30. The school attributes this restricted range of activities to the short lunchtimes and the lack of space available. In addition, some children rely on coach transport for their journeys to and from school and staff feel that these children would be unfairly discriminated against if there were activities after school. These reasons all have some validity. However, the range of activities on offer is limited compared to that provided by other schools in similar circumstances for children in Years 3 and 4, which often include sporting activities and the chance for team games.
31. Just under a quarter of parents returned the questionnaire they received and of these, 28 per cent were dissatisfied with the range of activities provided. Concerns were also expressed at the parents' meeting.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. To improve further the good practice and high standards evident in many aspects of the school's work, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve the quality of information provided for parents, especially in the written annual reports, so that parents can gain a clearer understanding of:
 - the standards their children reach;
 - what their children know, understand and can do;
 - how their children could improve further;
(Paragraphs 27, 28)
- (2) investigate ways of providing more opportunities for older children to take part in activities outside lessons, especially sport.
(Paragraphs 29, 30, 31)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	11
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	2	6	2	0	0	0
Percentage	9	18	55	18	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y4

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	284
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	34

Special educational needs

YR– Y4

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

2000-2001	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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
	2001	30	27	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	28	28
	Girls	27	27	27
	Total	56	55	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (90)	96 (97)	96 (97)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	29
	Girls	26	27	27
	Total	53	56	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (86)	98 (95)	98 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	12
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	261
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	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 – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.8
Average class size	18.4

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	136

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-1
	£
Total income	521,316
Total expenditure	509,984
Expenditure per pupil	1,835
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,300
Balance carried forward to next year	47,632

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
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	284
Number of questionnaires returned	68

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	16	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	29	6	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	47	0	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	49	16	1	0
The teaching is good.	59	35	3	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	46	10	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	26	9	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	38	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	32	19	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	58	31	4	3	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	34	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	28	19	9	9