

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PHILIP'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Litherland, Liverpool

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104898

Headteacher: Ms Ann Hoyland

Reporting inspector: Lynne Read
21199

Dates of inspection: 1 - 4 July 2002

Inspection number: 195104

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 controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Road Litherland Liverpool
Postcode:	L21 8NZ
Telephone number:	0151 928 1483
Fax number:	0151 949 0244
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Finch
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21199	Lynne Read	Registered inspector	English Information and communication technology Music Equal opportunities Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) 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?
12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12232	Diane Atkinson	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Geography Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19709	Jean Fisher	Team inspector	Science Art History Foundation Stage	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Philip's CE Primary School is situated in Litherland, close to the docks at Seaforth. With 223 pupils on roll, it is about the same size as most primary schools. Pupils come from both sides of the busy trunk road that divides the town and each side has different characteristics. Social and economic circumstances vary widely but overall they are average. The attainment of children entering the reception class is average overall for their age group but this varies considerably between year groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average at 18 per cent. The vast majority of pupils are of British backgrounds and one pupil is of African heritage. All speak English as their first language. Almost 18 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs: no pupil has a formal Statement of Special Educational Needs. Both these figures are below national averages. In past years, a high percentage of pupils have entered school in Years 3 to 6. Building work has caused some disruption to normal routines, both before and during the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Philip's is a good school and has many very good features. Standards in English and mathematics and pupils' attainment in their science lessons are above average. Teaching is good overall, with many very good and excellent features. Leadership and management are very good and there is a strong commitment towards constant improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is a strength and underpins the good quality of learning.
- Systems for assessing pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science are very good and provide accurate information to help teachers plan the next steps in learning, enabling pupils to make good, and sometimes very good, progress.
- The headteacher, senior managers and governors constantly drive the school forward, providing very good leadership and ensuring good and improving standards of attainment.
- Pupils have very good standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes to work and there are very productive relationships throughout school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good; it is good for cultural education. Very productive links with the church support learning in these areas very effectively.

What could be improved

- Standards in design and technology in Years 3 to 6.
- Partnership with a significant minority of parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The governors and headteacher made a positive response to the key issues of the last inspection report. This has resulted in good improvements and the work done in evaluating the school's performance is very good. Teaching is much better now than at the last inspection. The procedures for assessing attainment are rigorous and have led to improved attainment in writing and science. Schemes of planning for all subjects, except design and technology, have been developed to provide useful guides for teachers' work. All the required policies are in place. The school has a corporate system of management and seeks the views of parents, pupils and staff to check on how well it is doing. Subject managers monitor and promote standards effectively by checking on planning, teaching and learning. The school did not meet its targets for attainment in English and mathematics in 2001, largely because they were set on the basis of 1997 Year 2 results, and there were too many changes to the year group to make this valid. The school is likely to meet its challenging targets for attainment in 2002.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	C	B	B
Mathematics	B	D	B	B
Science	D	E	C	C

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

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the more able, achieve well in their time at the school. Children make good progress in the Reception class and many are reaching standards above expectations when they enter Year 1, especially in English and mathematics. In the Year 2 National Curriculum tests and assessments in 2001, pupils' results were above average in mathematics and well above average in reading and writing. Inspection evidence shows that standards in mathematics are well above the national average and they are average in English, with speaking and listening and reading being above average. One group of Year 2 pupils were experiencing difficulties in writing and their attainment was below average, although they have progressed well over the year. The majority of pupils were attaining at least average standards in writing and a good proportion were working at the higher level. Progress in English and mathematics is good. Results of the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were not as high as might be expected when compared with the Year 2 tests which the same year group took in 1997. However, one quarter of the pupils had joined the school in the intervening four years and, therefore, direct comparison with the Year 2 results cannot be made fairly. Detailed information gathered from the very good assessment records, together with early indications from the 2002 tests, shows that current Year 6 pupils have made good progress, especially in science, over this last year. During the inspection, standards seen in this subject are now above average, as they are in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, attainment in all other subjects matches national expectations with the exception of design and technology where it is below. Pupils progress well in ICT and use their skills when studying other subjects. The rate of improvement of results in English and mathematics is greater than that seen nationally, and in science it has risen considerably over the last year. A group of Year 6 pupils who are talented in mathematics work at advanced levels.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are keen to succeed, maintain very good levels of concentration and work hard to complete their tasks. There is a strong sense of pride in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour throughout the school is very good. Pupils understand and follow the school rules and routines with very little prompting by adults. They show respect and consideration for others.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good among all groups and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress and the industrious atmosphere. Pupils are confident and show developing maturity as they take responsibility for their own conduct.
Attendance	Attendance is consistently high and pupils are punctual.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
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Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good
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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 and in almost half the lessons seen it was very good or excellent. The teachers' skills, informed by the rigorous target setting process, enable pupils to achieve their learning goals. Both are major factors in the good progress seen during the inspection. Good emphasis on literacy and numeracy starts early in the Reception class and teaching and learning in these two areas are mostly very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good across most of the curriculum except in design and technology. Staff who have expertise in specific subjects, for example ICT, advise their colleagues effectively. Throughout the school, lessons have clear aims, which the teachers share with the class. This sets a purpose for the work and presents pupils with a clear focus for their learning. Teachers pay good attention to the needs of all groups within the class. Support for pupils who have special educational needs is well planned to ensure that they make good progress. Teachers set extended activities for those capable of higher attainment, especially in English, mathematics and science. In the lessons seen which were satisfactory rather than good, there were several strengths but less demand was made of pupils. Sometimes, pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than being actively involved in learning. The best teaching is in Year 6 where lessons have very fast pace, a series of interesting activities and timely interventions to take learning forward. The teacher has excellent relationships with his class and pupils rise to the demands made of them. Praise is effectively used throughout school to encourage pupils to try hard and do their best.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school places suitable emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science within a broad teaching programme that generally promotes personal, creative and academic development effectively. The scheme of planning for design and technology, however, does not allocate enough time to the key skills of designing, evaluating and modifying work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils have suitable goals for learning, and enjoy good support in the classroom. Their progress is regularly reviewed. Parents are not involved in setting their children's targets and therefore are limited in the help they can provide. All pupils have full access to all parts of school life.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	For spiritual, social and moral education, provision is very good and well supported by the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils have a well-defined sense of right and wrong: they are polite, friendly and helpful. Pupils respect other people's beliefs, views and opinions. Cultural development is well promoted, especially through some rich experiences in music, art, geography and in reading.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Pupils' welfare is guarded by very strong child protection and health and safety procedures. Their progress, both academic and personal, is assessed and tracked very well. The information gathered is very effectively used to plan the next steps in learning. Positive strategies and reward systems underpin the promotion of good behaviour and attendance.

Outside of lessons, a very good range of interesting activities is available to pupils in Years 1 to Year 6. Parents generally support the work of the school effectively but they have expressed some concern about how the school works with them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and manage-	Very good. The headteacher provides active, focused leadership and is

ment by the headteacher and other key staff	key in maintaining the good standards of attainment. Supported well by the senior management team and subject managers, she is committed to providing clear educational direction for the school and is highly regarded by the governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors discharge their responsibilities conscientiously and are very supportive of the school. They have a very good overview of the school's strengths and a clear idea of future developments. The efficient organisation of the sub-committees ensures that governors have a strong role in shaping the direction of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a strength of the school. The headteacher maintains a very good overall view of pupils' performance. The governors actively evaluate the success of school development planning by gathering evidence on how standards, teaching and learning are improving. The vast amount of information gathered through the evaluation process is used to decide on future priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The governors budget their resources intelligently in the drive for improvement rather than simply managing them. The large reserve held at present represents the money saved to pay for parts of the building work and for essential repairs and cabling once the work is complete.

Including the new space provided by the building extension accommodation, staffing and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Library provision for Years 3 to 6, however, is not satisfactory because the selection of books is limited and some are out of date.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good. • Children make good progress. • Children like coming to school. • The school helps children to become mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework and activities outside of lessons. • Leadership and management. • Information about how children are getting on and how the school works with parents. • Celebration of pupils' good efforts and behaviour.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views of the school. The majority of parents are happy with the school's work. St Philip's has a good reputation within the community, which is reflected in the increasing numbers of pupils applying for places. Inspection findings do not agree with many of the negative views expressed by parents. Leadership and management, information for parents and activities outside of lessons are all very good. The quality and quantity of homework are satisfactory. More could be done, however, to improve the partnership with a significant minority of parents. For example, there is scope to involve more fully the parents of pupils with special educational needs in setting targets for their children's learning. At present, parents are not involved in the celebration of their children's efforts and behaviour. Parental concerns have not been received and handled uniformly well and this has caused some discontent.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 in 2001, results were well above the national average in reading and writing and above in mathematics. The Teacher Assessments for science were average. When compared to similar schools, results were equally good. Inspection findings are that attainment at the end of Year 2 is above average in reading and science and well above average in mathematics. In writing, many pupils are attaining average and above average standards but one group is having difficulties with certain skills and, overall, the number of pupils working at the expected level of attainment is below average. Nevertheless, all the pupils are making good progress in relation to their prior learning. Inspection findings are that Year 1 pupils are likely to attain standards that are well above average in writing by the end of Year 2. The rate of improvement in attainment for English and mathematics at the school is greater than that seen nationally. The trend of improvement in science is likely to increase, given the much better achievements seen in lessons and the early indications from the 2002 Teacher Assessments and tests. The overall trend in attainment is better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their programmes of support are targeted to overcome problems and ensure good levels of confidence. Gifted and talented pupils are recognised and given extra challenges in the relevant lessons and areas.
2. Results of the tests in Year 6 in 2001 show above-average attainment in English and mathematics and average in science. Attainment levels are the same when compared to similar schools. Trends over time show that attainment in English and mathematics is consistently above national averages but science has been below. The school has identified science as a priority for improvement over the past year and early indications from lesson observations and the 2002 tests show attainment that is above average. Standards in English and mathematics in lessons were judged as above average during the inspection, showing that the school's work on improving writing has been successful. Progress, as measured from the end of Year 2 to Year 6, is consistently good for the pupils who have received all of their education at the school. Comparisons with the results of the National Curriculum tests and assessments for the same year group in 1997, however, show improvement as below average and well below for science in 2001. The school is increasingly popular with parents and there is a high incidence of pupils joining part way through their education. These pupils have not had the same solid grounding in the basic skills that St Philip's provides. Out of the group of pupils who took the tests in 2001, one quarter had arrived at the school after Year 2. A scrutiny of the school's very detailed tracking system shows that the average progress for individuals is generally higher than that expected nationally. This illustrates the school's commitment to ensuring that all new-comers are thoroughly assessed and receive focused teaching to tackle the gaps in learning. On the basis of this analysis, boys appear to be doing better than girls in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. During lesson observations, inspectors found no differences between the teaching of, and provision for, boys and girls; indeed, teachers make a great effort to find books and topics that will be enjoyed by all. Pupils from the different social and ethnic groups make equally good progress. Standards in Years 3 to 6 are higher than at the last inspection and a group of pupils who are talented in mathematics work at levels that would normally be expected of much older students.
3. Children enter the Reception class with widely varying levels of prior experience and learning. Taking into account the skills identified on the baseline assessment when children begin school, attainment is around the expected level at the start of the Reception year. Children make good progress and most achieve the Early Learning Goals and start work on the early stages of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in English and mathematics before the end of the year. Skills in personal and social education are especially well developed and contribute to the enthusiastic response to teaching in future years. Skills in creative and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world match the Early Learning Goals that are expected of pupils at the end of the Reception year. Improvements in learning for this age group have been good since the last inspection.
4. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress overall and very good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Work in these subjects is well planned using the information from the

school's assessment and tracking system. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a very useful range of reading strategies, which they use effectively to help them tackle new books. Their comprehension is very good and the higher-attaining pupils 'read between the lines' to find shades of meaning. Most pupils' writing is well sequenced and accurately punctuated. The majority spell words by splitting them into sounds and know many irregularly spelt key words from memory. One lower-attaining group of pupils are developing their use of capital letters and full stops and are using their knowledge of letter sounds to make good attempts at spelling. In mathematics, pupils compute accurately using pen and paper methods and mental strategies. They achieve good levels of knowledge and understanding in all areas of the science curriculum and, owing to the recent teaching focus, use their investigative skills effectively. In ICT, pupils develop the skills expected and use them effectively when studying other subjects. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2, attainment in all other subjects matches national expectations.

5. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good gains in their learning. Their reading becomes fluent and expressive. They enjoy a very wide range of styles and have favourite authors. Pupils investigate a range of story structures and are beginning to experiment with different techniques to improve writing. In some very challenging work, they give their own views about characters in books, justifying them with examples from the text. Pupils examine non-fiction writing, analysing the structure and linguistic features effectively. Higher achieving pupils have a good grasp of punctuation and grammar and some have the confidence to experiment with extended sentences and the full range of punctuation to produce more sophisticated writing. In mathematics, pupils have a good understanding of number. Their skills of mental computation are good and they have a useful range of strategies to use when problem solving. In science, pupils' skills of scientific enquiry, investigation and fair testing are now well developed and applied across the Programme of Study for the subject. Their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes are good. Pupils make good progress and demonstrate confidence in all areas of ICT and there are strengths in the multimedia work done in Year 6, which is at an advanced level for this age group. Throughout Years 3 to 6 pupils use CD-ROMs and the Internet for research and make efficient use of computers when handling data. By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards in all other subjects match expectations except in design and technology where there is not enough emphasis on planning, evaluation and modification of designs. Progress is never less than satisfactory in the other subjects and, in some aspects of ICT (for example, with Year 6), geography (including field trips), music (as in instrumental work) and physical education, it is good. Pupils identified as having special educational needs or learning difficulties achieve the challenging goals that their teachers set through focused, sensitive support. Good emphasis is placed on challenging the higher-attaining pupils and this is reflected in the above average proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards in their lessons. Gifted mathematicians have additional tuition at the local high school and work at a level normally expected of 14-year-olds.
6. The school did not meet its statutory targets for attainment in English and mathematics in 2001. The figures were based on the National Curriculum results that the group of pupils achieved in 1997. The high number of pupils that arrived to join that year group during Years 3 to 6 means that straight comparisons are flawed. Inspection evidence, from scrutiny of work, lesson observations and the thorough analysis of pupils' progress over time, is that this year's targets are likely to be met.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils show very positive attitudes towards school and their work, behave very well and form very good relationships. The very good provision for pupils' personal development makes a significant contribution to these positive attitudes and values. The good standards identified at the previous inspection have been improved upon with more opportunities for pupils' personal responsibility and initiative.
8. Nearly all pupils say that they like school and feel that it plays a significant part in their lives. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils ranked school ahead of friends and hobbies and only behind family in a list of the important things. Most look forward to returning to school at the end of holidays. Listed among the strengths are the way pupils work so well together; the fact that their views are taken on board by adults; and the very good range of clubs after school. They also like the way that class teachers praise and encourage them and make their learning interesting. In nearly all lessons most pupils listen and concentrate very well and start promptly on their tasks. Pupils' favourite subjects and lessons are those where they are practically involved, such as in physical education, art, design and technology and experimental science. For example, they

vividly recall their practical science work on dissolving and separating materials as well as work on electric circuits. Pupils who have special educational needs value the extra support they receive.

9. Behaviour in classrooms, during lunchtime and playtimes, is very good overall. The very good and reliable behaviour of nearly all pupils is an important element in the prevailing positive atmosphere for learning. In most lessons, nearly all pupils are very well behaved. In a few lessons, teachers still need to address the attentiveness of a small minority of pupils. Pupils form orderly lines and move about school in a calm and responsible way. No sign of bullying or other anti-social behaviour was seen. Any type of exclusion is rare and there were none over the last year. Parents' questionnaire responses fully support this positive picture, with 95 per cent agreeing that pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils take good care of the property and resources and help keep their school clean and tidy.
10. Relationships between adults and pupils and among pupils themselves are very good. Adults are good role models. Teachers value pupils' work and effectively praise their efforts. For example, pupils in Year 6 spoke positively about the fair way in which they are treated: as a result, they are comfortable in expressing their views and asking questions of their teachers. This assists their learning well. Very good relationships among pupils of all backgrounds and abilities, including those with special educational needs, are evident. Pupils become increasingly able to work well in pairs and small groups, supporting each other's learning and offering constructive opinions.
11. Pupils' personal development is very good and well supported by the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils know and follow the daily routines expected of them. In discussion groups, pupils consider views expressed by others, showing good respect for feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils show concern for others, and readily go to their friends' aid if they are ill or upset. The good standards are not solely related to conduct within school. Year 1 pupils showed respect and reverence during their visit to the adjacent church when they were allowed to explore. Pupils regularly and without prompting hold doors open for each other and adults. They become increasingly comfortable taking responsibility for jobs as they move through school. For example, junior pupils work as playleaders with younger infants; they answer the telephone at lunchtime and work hard to keep the library tidy and organised. Pupils show initiative. For example, older ones organise story competitions and help with the collection of money for charities. Members of the well-established 'eco-committee' make significant contribution in getting the views of pupils heard and adopted. Their ideas have led to the introduction of a suggestion box and the provision of water on the table during lessons. Pupils have led a range of environmental projects, such as the introduction of recycling and composting bins and the building of a bird table. They enjoy speaking with visitors and the team appreciated some very interesting discussions with pupils who expressed their views in a mature, confident way.
12. Attendance is very good. It is now well above the national average, and has risen significantly since the last inspection. The level of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average, although the school chases up any unexplained absence as a matter of urgency and in concern for the pupils' welfare. Punctuality is good. Nearly all pupils come to school on time and settle to their work promptly and calmly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. During the inspection, 50 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and in three quarters of the lessons, teaching was good, very good or excellent. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is now a strength of the school and is directly responsible for the good standards of attainment and learning by all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs.
14. There are two teachers in the Reception class because of increased numbers of children entering the school. Overall, for this age group teaching is good. The teachers and teaching assistant work effectively as a team, paying great attention to establishing routines and to developing confidence in their pupils. This sets a very firm foundation for later learning. Emphasis on developing skills of communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding and on pupils' personal development is good. Expectations from all staff are high and, as a result, many

children have progressed to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study before moving into Year 1.

15. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good overall and, in four out of ten lessons, it was very good. Literacy is taught with flair and imagination. Teachers choose interesting books and poems to share with the pupils that motivate them to work hard. As a result, progress is good. Very good teaching of reading strategies uses games to extend pupils' skills in discriminating and blending sounds in the English language. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the activities that promote good skills in reading and spelling. The teaching of mathematics is a strong feature with high expectations and careful setting of appropriate tasks. Teachers assess their pupils' progress in lessons and feed the information into plans for the next session. This leads to good progress for all groups. A good balance of practical and recorded activities in mathematics, including investigations, provides a rich level of learning experiences that underpins attainment. The satisfactory lessons seen were with the older age group of the two. A few pupils in this class have difficulty in maintaining concentration and needed constant reminders to focus their attention. Practical work is well used in science and is effective in developing pupils' skills of investigation and experimentation.
16. In Years 3 to 6, over half of the teaching seen was very good or excellent. The best lessons were in Year 6. Teachers plan interesting activities for the pupils, ensuring very good levels of motivation and sustained concentration. As a result, pupils are fully engaged in their lessons and learning is good. Teachers make good use of exposition and demonstration. They often set open-ended tasks that allow pupils to ask their own questions, investigate and explore, leading to good progress. In practical sessions there are good opportunities for pupils to try out their ideas, make mistakes and find ways to solve the problems encountered. This promotes independence in learning successfully. A commendable feature of teaching for the oldest pupils is the challenging pace of lessons, which are often pitched at advanced levels for the age group and lead to very good progress in some lessons. Teaching in Year 6 proceeds through a series of short, interesting activities. The variety of tasks, both oral and written, helps to maintain pupils' concentration and interest. In the satisfactory lessons across this age range, pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than being actively engaged in learning. Their concentration drifts and learning is not as fast as in the great majority of lessons.
17. Many strengths are evident in the teaching at St Philip's school, across all age ranges. Teachers establish very good relationships with the pupils. They set clear learning goals for children in the Reception class and for pupils in Years 1 to 6. Teachers routinely tell pupils what they are going to learn, thereby providing a clear focus for the lesson. Lessons are usually concluded with a focused session to assess progress, tackle any problems and congratulate individuals on their successes. This encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own work and supports the development of confidence. It also provides very useful information for the teacher that enables the setting of focused tasks to ensure continued progress in the next lesson. Questioning techniques are good and lead to stimulating discussions. The quality of marking varies. In English it is good with comments carefully couched in pupil-friendly language. In Year 6, the teacher encourages individuals and groups to evaluate their own work and this is a useful tactic in getting pupils to focus on what needs to be improved. Sometimes, however, marking is a series of ticks that indicate correct responses but do not tell pupils what is good about the work. Sketch books are well used in art, to help pupils improve their work. Teachers' planning is detailed and shows exactly the expected outcomes of the lessons. Pupils learn to evaluate their own progress, through practical activities in physical education. All ages and groups, including those with special educational needs and gifted pupils, are well catered for, and lessons generally build accurately on prior learning, ensuring that pupils progress well. Teachers encourage pupils to ask questions and provide good opportunities for collaborative work and private study during lessons. This helps to build skills of independent learning and encourages personal development. Class management is mostly very good. Carefully chosen resources are readily available and classroom routines are well established. As a result, no time is lost and pupils, from Year 1 upwards, know where to find reference material to help them complete their assignments.
18. Teachers throughout school have a good understanding of the most effective ways to promote literacy and numeracy and are successful in supporting pupils to develop relevant skills. For example, good emphasis is placed on the use of technical vocabulary in science. Literacy and numeracy lessons are imaginatively delivered and maintain high expectations of class, group and independent working. A rigorous assessment process directly contributes to the setting of future tasks. Teachers' knowledge of ICT has been enhanced through a national training programme. They are confident in delivering the curriculum for this subject and in helping pupils to apply their

skills when studying other subjects. Although staff have completed some training in design and technology, there is little evidence of its impact on lessons, especially in the areas of designing and evaluation. In the Reception class, pupils are constantly encouraged to extend their skills in communication, language, literacy and mathematical understanding in all their activities. Across all age groups, skills in literacy and numeracy are often used to extend learning in other subject areas. There are some valuable opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their competence in non-fiction writing and to use mathematical skills in science and when handling data.

19. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs or who may be experiencing learning difficulty is good throughout the school and enables them to make good gains in learning. Daily activities match pupils' needs and they are often supported by experienced teaching assistants. This ensures that all pupils are able to access the lesson fully and that all develop good levels of self-confidence. Pupils who require additional help are identified in Year 1 after working through a specially designed programme. Their achievements are recorded carefully and monitored at weekly meetings. Parents do not share in the target setting exercise and this is a lost opportunity to secure focused additional help at home. Those pupils who are gifted or show a particular aptitude for a subject have extension activities to match their talents. Gifted mathematicians attend extension lessons at the nearby high school and gifted writers have plenty of opportunities to develop their skills at advanced levels. Teachers are careful to include boys and girls in discussions and often direct questions to ensure a good balance of views from both genders. Those pupils who arrive at the school part way through their education have good support. After a period of settling in, their work is assessed and learning targets are set to ensure that any gaps in attainment are addressed and to move them forwards.
20. Teachers make good use of the school grounds, church and local environment, especially in the teaching of science, geography, history, physical education and religious education. Visiting musicians enhance pupils' musical development. At the parents' meeting held prior to the inspection views on teaching and progress were largely positive but there was some concern about large numbers in classes. Although there are 38 pupils in the Reception class, they are taught by two full time teachers and an experienced teaching assistant, making a good child to adult ratio of 13 to 1.

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

21. The quality of the curriculum is good. It meets the needs of all pupils and gives a high priority to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Planning provides a framework that ensures a wide and relevant curriculum, although there is not enough time given to some elements of design and technology. All statutory requirements are met. The school follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. The governors have an effective policy for sex education and those elements that are part of the National Curriculum are taught within the relevant subjects. The organisation and delivery of the curriculum ensures that there is good provision for equality of opportunity. Features include good provision for pupils with special educational needs, attention to the needs of the different social and ethnic groups and care to include a proportion of boys and girls in all activities. The school has achieved a range of good improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection.
22. A range of new, thoughtful policies encompassing many aspects of the school's work has been produced. The policies successfully incorporate a Christian ethos, which underpins the whole curriculum. The new schemes of work, in most instances, successfully and thoughtfully modify the national guidelines so that they meet the particular needs of the school. These are designed for the demands of mixed aged teaching in Reception to Year 2, when it becomes necessary, or the single age-group teaching in Years 3 to 6. The long-term planning or curriculum map shows clearly what will be taught in a particular half-term. Many units of work are designed to last about six weeks. Teachers produce detailed plans for each half-term, identifying how the skills will build on those developed previously. Staff have taken considerable care to identify the potential for linking one subject with another. This provides good enhancement of both, as, for example, where pupils study both history and geography in their topic on 'Southport'. There are good links with ICT, especially in the study of mathematics, science, English and music that allow pupils to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. With the exception of design and technology in Years 3 to 6, it is now much easier to identify and ensure the systematic progression of skills and understanding in all subjects.

23. The curriculum for children in the Reception class is good. During the inspection, all areas of the Reception classroom were not fully operational owing to building work and some areas of learning were not observed. However, the planning and discussion with the teachers indicate that the school offers an interesting range of good quality learning opportunities linked through common themes. These are based securely on the nationally recommended guidance for the Foundation Stage. There is, in particular, a strong emphasis on speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematical work and personal development. Work is planned to ensure the step-by-step development of what pupils should know, be able to do and understand. Procedures to check how well children are progressing along the recommended 'stepping stones' of learning are very good. In the third term, or when children are ready, elements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are incorporated into the school day to prepare children well for the move into Year 1.
24. Throughout the school, a high proportion of time is devoted to literacy and numeracy. The school makes good use of the national guidelines for teaching these two subjects. Planning is detailed and builds well on prior learning. Pupils are given opportunities to discuss and elaborate their ideas, reading for information across a range of subjects. Pupils have opportunities to write at length for different purposes and audiences. They experiment with different formats such as leaflets or zig-zag books. Likewise, mathematical skills extend work in geography, ICT and science most effectively. The imaginative use of ICT skills in, for example, composing and appraising music is further evidence of teachers using all available resources to extend learning.
25. In Years 1 to 6 there is time for good quality ICT work in other subjects, with a particularly interesting curriculum for geography, religious studies, music and physical education. The blocks of time allocated ensure that the approach to each subject is not too piecemeal and pupils are able to work in depth on the various topics. This provides a wide area of study to support creative and practical skills and allows pupils to develop their talents. Some subjects have a higher profile than others and the school is looking at redressing the balance. From the evidence available, geography appears stronger than history and music is given more emphasis than art. In design and technology not enough emphasis is placed on the skills of designing, evaluating and modifying of products. The work done in ICT covers all the Programmes of Study comprehensively and imaginatively supports learning in other areas.
26. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The activities have been carefully chosen to enhance the timetabled lessons. Unlike many primary schools, some of the clubs provide experiences for Year 1 and 2 pupils. Most parents agree that the younger children in the Reception class would be too tired to participate in clubs after school. Two areas stand out in particular - sport and music. There is an unusual richness in the range of sporting activities, some of which involve competitive elements. There is cricket, tennis, football, netball and athletics. Local expertise is used most effectively to extend the quality of this provision. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to develop an expertise in modern dance, sing in a choir and learn how to play violins. There is also a book club and an off-site after school club. Year 6 pupils benefit greatly from a residential visit and many enjoy concert and theatre trips.
27. The school sets a high priority on ensuring equality of access for all. The adult support for pupils with special educational needs is particularly good and ensures that these pupils play a full part in lessons. However, the individual targets are not routinely shared with parents and this potentially restricts greater progress. Although in some classes there is an imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls, there is no evidence that either is disadvantaged. Boys and girls collaborate very well and strengths and successes appear to be equally shared. The school ensures that all pupils feel included. For example, in Year 6 one or two pupils have long-term problems that prevent them participating in physical education. To compensate, the teacher draws them into the lesson to assess the work of others. They undertake this responsibility with considerable maturity. High achievers are challenged appropriately, particularly through the wide range of open-ended work. This is a marked and good improvement on observations made at the last inspection. The school now has a thoughtful policy for gifted and talented pupils. Across the school as a whole there is clear evidence that teachers' planning includes modified tasks to match the varying needs within their classes.
28. Links with partner institutions and members of the local community are good. One local high school has well-developed ways of working with St Philips. For example, high school specialist staff teach older pupils and, in the case of sports, bring Year 9 or 10 pupils for demonstration and support. At other times, high school teachers participate in residential or musical activities. The

nearest high school provides special mathematics teaching for the most talented Year 6 pupils. The local policeman, a number of talented people in the community and the Vicar all play a very active part in running and sharing a range of events that greatly enhance pupils' overall education. The school is a focal point in the community.

29. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. It has improved since the last inspection. All subject policies explicitly refer to how subject content will contribute to this aspect. As a result, opportunities are systematically built into schemes of work.
30. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Pupils are regularly given a short time to reflect on the theme of the well-planned assembly programme. Across a range of subjects, teachers' skilled questioning allows pupils to reflect on their experiences in a way which develops their self-knowledge, thinking and spiritual awareness. For example, in many Year 6 lessons pupils offer constructive evaluation of the contributions made by others. Year 1 pupils reflect on the beauty of the church and appreciate the dedication of the people who give their time to preserve this special place. In their religious education lessons, pupils tackle some difficult concepts that require much thought and consideration. Pupils discuss what it means to be a friend and consider the effects of name-calling or teasing. Year 5's poems about hope, happiness, love, pain and fear provide good opportunities to develop imagination and empathy. From an early age pupils are encouraged to consider the less tangible aspects in life such as the love and care they receive from friends and families.
31. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school very effectively fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice. The consistent, positive strategies for behaviour management result in an orderly atmosphere. Pupils act responsibly, following the code of conduct in the vast majority of cases. Parents, however, are often unaware of the congratulatory remarks that their children receive because they are not celebrated in assemblies or by awards. Pupils are proud of their school and treat resources carefully. The use of stories in assemblies often addresses moral issues in a way that engages pupils' interest. A sense of right and wrong is interwoven into much of the daily life of the school and made very clear to pupils. Lessons encourage them to contemplate the consequences of their actions on others. Consequently, pupils demonstrate fair play in sport and during leisure time. Parents are very positive about the school's contribution to the development of a strong moral code in their pupils.
32. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. There is a very good range of measures to help pupils share in, and celebrate, each other's achievements, especially in the plenary sessions at the end of lessons. Older pupils learn about responsibility when they help to look after the younger ones. Pupils in all year groups benefit from the school's commitment to involving all members of the community in decision making. The election of the eco-committee allows pupils to engage in the democratic process. The elected representatives have good experiences of community leadership. Residential and other visits, school productions, sporting competitions and visitors provide pupils with a rich range of links with the world of work and the wider community.
33. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good overall. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate and develop their own cultural traditions are very well developed. For example, as part of geography work in Years 3 to 6, pupils develop a very good understanding of the diverse considerations and business activities that have driven the development of coastal towns in the locality. Work done in music, dance and art supports an appreciation of cultures from other times and places. Pupils have visited the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, both as performers and as part of the audience. They rehearse for, and perform in, local arts concerts and school productions, which add an extra dimension to their experiences. There is a good stock of stories and music from around the world that are well used in teaching. In their religious education lessons, pupils study many different faiths and learn about major customs and festivals. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to actively appreciate the diversity and richness of our society by meeting new friends from other cultures. This would be an enhancement to their studies, especially since the area around school is largely monocultural. The staff plan to work on this area, initially by using e-mail facilities, to extend pupils' experiences once the new cabling is completed in classrooms.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school has very good assessment procedures and practices for monitoring and supporting pupils' attainment and progress. These have improved very well since the previous inspection. The assessment procedures for children in the Reception class are now very good and used effectively to plan work to meet the children's needs. Throughout the school there are consistent, very effective procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science. In addition to the National Curriculum tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils take optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5, in English and mathematics. The results that pupils gain are rigorously analysed. Pupils performance is constantly checked against prior learning to give the teachers a clear picture of how well they have progressed. This provides very good information for the school's on-going self-evaluation work. It also informs the target setting for groups and individual pupils, ensuring that learning goals are based accurately on previous learning and represent good challenge for all.
35. Assessments in other subjects provide a picture of the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding that have been acquired. The school intends to develop these systems further to match the very good work in the subjects above. On a day-to-day basis, teachers collect information from completed work, guided sessions and plenaries at the end of lessons to gauge pupils' progress and to plan the next steps. This is a further, important factor in the good progress seen.
36. The school provides for pupils who have special educational needs effectively. Those who are making slower progress than the norm are identified early on and extra help is given. The school operates a screening system in Year 1 where a focused programme of support is provided. Pupils who continue to experience learning difficulties after this intervention are given an individual plan of support and extra help in the classroom. Progress towards their targets is monitored carefully so they can be adjusted and replaced where necessary. The success of the system is seen in the number of pupils with special educational needs who gain the nationally expected levels in their tests or who move on as fast as their peers. The procedures are effective but could be enhanced further through greater involvement of parents in developing their children's learning targets. The school has good working relationships with outside agencies to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. For example, the work of a visiting teacher from the Learning Support Agency is of a high standard and is highly valued by the school. In the case of pupils with medical needs, the school seeks specialist training and advice and maintains good contact with parents.
37. The headteacher is the assessment manager and she has very good expertise. Assessment systems are thorough, comprehensive and updated meticulously. Very detailed information is provided for teachers in forms that are easy to access, such as scatter graphs or highlighted lists. The work enables the headteacher to have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' attainment and of each teacher's performance.
38. The care arrangements for pupils are very good. Staff are successful in promoting pupils' personal development and in preventing all forms of oppressive behaviour. The school's rigorous monitoring system helps to keep the rate of absence low.
39. The school has good arrangements for the introduction of children and pupils to the Reception and other classes. Transfer arrangements to secondary school are well established and help pupils to cope well with the changes. Pupils are well cared for when they are ill or distressed. There are good links with outside agencies such as social and health workers who come into school to advise teachers or talk to pupils on topics of personal interest. Child protection procedures are very good. The procedures, closely linked to the local authority's guidelines, are clear and well known by all adults in the school. They are rigorously followed and provide a secure safety net. Pupils are made appropriately aware of personal safety issues as part of their education and know who they can talk to if they are worried about a situation.
40. Procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are very good. Teachers make pupils aware of health and safety issues in lessons, such as in physical education and science. This effectively contributes to the development of a safety conscious attitude among them. Fire alarm testing and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out. Evacuation drills take place regularly and the governing body checks the reports carefully. First aid arrangements are very good and there are appropriately trained staff on hand at all times during the school day.
41. The monitoring and promotion of good behaviour and discipline are very good. The positive behaviour policy underpins a consistent approach by all staff. The main emphasis is on

recognising and rewarding good behaviour and nearly all pupils respond positively. On-going praise is evident in lessons and around school. Unusually, praise for good behaviour is not a feature of celebration assemblies, when they are held. Some parents are unaware of the effective approach to discipline and believe that most attention is given to those who need to improve. This is most certainly not the case in practice and it would be useful for the school to make the positive measures more obvious once the family assemblies are resumed. Behaviour improvement plans are well used to support pupils who need extra guidance.

42. Governors are provided with a termly profile of incidents, by level of seriousness, as part of the headteacher's report. There is a clear, agreed set of sanctions to deal with classroom and playground misbehaviour and with bullying. The lunchtime staff feel well supported by teaching staff and the headteacher in dealing with playground incidents. Parents are very effectively involved where concerns arise. Pupils confirm that they would feel comfortable reporting any incidents that upset them. Parents and pupils confirm that the measures taken to resolve such cases are very effective.
43. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality are very good. The prospectus contains a very comprehensive outline of expectations. Contact with parents is a routine feature, where weekly attendance falls below 90% without a good medical reason. The secretary checks records daily using the computerised system and the headteacher is alerted very quickly about absences that are not explained. The educational welfare officer is effectively involved in helping to resolve the few cases where there are persistent attendance difficulties. Generally speaking, parents recognise the efforts made and understand that they contribute to their children's safety and to good progress. Recognition of termly and annual high and full attendance has a very high profile at celebration assemblies. A perfect punctuality record is also recognised positively.
44. Pupils and their needs are well known to staff. Pupils' achievements, when representing school and outside of school, are regularly celebrated in assemblies. This recognition provides pupils with public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise their self-esteem. Rewards for good effort and behaviour are not so publicly acknowledged. The personal, social and health and citizenship programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. In classes, pupils take on responsibilities for a selection of jobs. The very good range of extra-curricular activities and sporting competitions provide extended opportunities for social interaction. Parents are very positive about the school's part in helping pupils become mature and responsible.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The partnership between home and school has some very good features, and makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved. The vast majority of parents support the school, appreciate the good quality of provision and help their children at home. A significant minority of parents, however, expressed dissatisfaction with some aspects of the school's work in the questionnaires returned, that represented about 30 per cent of those sent out. Those who attended the parents' meeting itself were largely supportive and had mainly positive views.
46. Taking the questionnaire replies and comments made at the meeting together, combined with the interviews carried out during the inspection, most parents confirm that their pupils like school and make good progress. They consider that school has high expectations and helps pupils become more mature and responsible. They are very positive about the teaching and generally commend pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
47. Most parents say that they feel comfortable approaching school with concerns but there are inconsistencies in the way that issues are received and handled. The school readily accepts that this could be improved. A significant minority consider that school does not work closely with them. Some parents have difficulty in supporting and complying with school's commendable insistence on high standards of behaviour and attendance and do not fully appreciate the reasoning behind the policy. The governors feel that better publicity could go a long way to explaining the benefits in terms of improved attainment and thereby, to extending the partnership.
48. A significant minority of parents who returned the questionnaires do not feel well informed. The team finds that the level of information they receive, both about children's progress and about school life, is very good and has improved since the last inspection. More could be done,

however, to involve parents in setting targets for pupils who have special educational needs. Termly parents' evenings create purposeful opportunities for regular updates on progress and to keep parents informed about their children's targets for learning. The discussion time allocated is above the norm for most primary schools. The quality of pupils' written annual reports is very good; they convey a clear sense of what pupils are doing and give a clear indication of the progress they are making. Targets are systematically identified together with areas for improvement, where appropriate. Parents are invited to comment, in writing, on the reports and to provide their own observations about pupils' progress during the year. This is very good practice. Teachers are readily available to discuss any queries out of school time and the headteacher gives priority to requests by parents and sees them as soon as possible within her tight schedule. Regular newsletters, supplemented with many other letters and notes, keep parents well informed about school life. The prospectus gives a clear outline of school's expectations, work and character. The governors' annual report effectively informs parents on the success of plans for improvement. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting agreed that this is an 'open school'. Curriculum courses for parents are a regular feature and provide a good insight into modern teaching methods and developments in educational matters for those who attend. The school provides very good information for parents about the National Curriculum tests in Year 6. The booster classes after school are well attended by pupils and their parents who both benefit from the additional provision.

49. Inspection findings are that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons, open to all from Year 1 to Year 6. This was an area that received 25 per cent 'disagree' statements out of the replies. Reception children are not invited because, at this young age, it is felt that they are often too tired to cope with additional activities. The team agrees with this sensible decision. Parents also had some concerns about the variations in homework between classes. The school has a clear policy and progressive time allocation for homework, which is published in the prospectus. Evidence shows that this is generally complied with. Most parents are happy to support learning at home and fill in the homework diary and reading log alongside their children.
50. In a good improvement since the last inspection, parents have been consulted, through a school questionnaire, on a wide range of issues and the information has been effectively used to shape the school development plan. As a result, the school has very successfully responded to parents' concerns about the lack of extra-curricular activities. The recent building work has caused disruption to school routines. Family assemblies were cancelled because of sensible safety considerations. The parents look forward to the reintroduction of this weekly event so that they can share in their children's achievements. Teachers use praise for effort and good behaviour with discrimination and to good effect but pupils' achievements in these areas have not traditionally been celebrated at the assemblies or through awards. As a result, parents do not know when their children have been congratulated on their work or conduct and do not experience the very positive nature of the discipline policy. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to overcoming the weaknesses in the relationships with a significant minority of parents and are looking at ways to extend the good partnership that exists with the majority of parents to all families. The area is a key issue for the inspection.
51. Parental involvement makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and the life of the school. This aspect has been maintained since the last inspection. Parents are keen for their pupils to do well and appreciate the quality of education provided. Nearly all respond to individual requests to discuss issues such as pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Discussions with pupils indicate that most have someone at home who checks that homework is done. Nearly all pupils are represented at the parents' evenings and most make written comments on pupils' progress and the annual reports. Many parents attend and enjoy events at Christmas, performances and sports days. All parent governor positions are filled. Whilst there is no fund-raising group, parents provide good support for the social events that are organised as a combined project between school and church.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. Together with a very effective team of governors, she has developed an ethos of pride in the school and a commitment to continuous improvement. Whilst recognising the importance of high academic standards, the headteacher, governors and staff also place a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development.

As a result, there is an atmosphere within the school of mutual respect, understanding and high expectations. The strong Christian ethos supports this area well. All pupils, regardless of social background, race or learning difficulties, are fully included in all aspects of school life. The headteacher, senior management team and governors have a strong corporate approach and share a vision of excellence. These features reflect very good improvement since the time of the last inspection.

53. The leadership has been very successful in ensuring a clear educational direction for the school by setting challenging targets and developing a rigorous system of monitoring and assessment. The school's evaluation of its performance is thorough and action is taken promptly where issues arise. Members of the senior management team work together effectively to ensure that the school's policies are carried out on a day-to-day basis. There are good, established procedures for meeting with the teaching assistants and non-teaching staff, and for securing the views of pupils, so that communications between members of the school community are good.
54. The level of delegation of responsibility to subject managers is very good. They check the quality of planning, and of pupils' completed work. All have a good insight into the teaching and learning in their subjects through lesson observations and have worked hard to develop resources. Managers evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum by checking assessments completed at the end of each unit of work. They keep very detailed action plans for developments in their areas and notes of the outcomes. They have initiated a series of regular curriculum evenings for parents and governors, which are well attended. For example, there have been informative evenings focused on the teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy, art and information and communication technology. Subject management is continuously being developed within the school and is an important factor in the high standards attained. The headteacher and managers for English, mathematics and science constantly check on levels of attainment as part of the very good self-evaluation cycle.
55. Classroom practice for supporting pupils with special educational needs is effective and enables them to make good progress. The teaching assistants are well briefed in their support work and have a clear idea of what to expect from each pupil. The management of the support programme is good and meetings are held each week to update the detailed records of pupils' progress. Parents are informed of targets for learning but there is scope for better parental involvement so that they can provide specific help.
56. Governors are very effective in fulfilling their statutory duties and they have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their active involvement in the school's self-evaluation procedures. They are intensely proud of the school's achievements and yet are constantly looking for ways to improve further. They are active in general management through their work in various sub-committees. This system is efficient and effective in helping them to discharge their duties. There is strong involvement in curriculum issues. Together with the headteacher, governors analyse a range of statistical information to check how well the school is doing and to inform their decision making processes. The school benefits from the wide range of experience, expertise and local knowledge that the governing body represents. They undertake training in educational developments, make regular visits to classrooms and help out on educational visits. The governors have an agreed policy on race equality and monitoring arrangements are in place. After the inspection of June 1997 governors responded very positively to the key issues for action set out in the subsequent report. They have worked hard, in co-operation with the senior management of the school, to ensure that appropriate action has been taken, and have kept themselves fully informed about the good progress made.
57. The school development plan is based on the goals identified through school evaluation and agreed by staff, senior managers and governors. There are focused areas for improvement that are very well known to all concerned. The summary plan is kept to a simple format and constantly referred to in staff and governor meetings. The detailed action plans are kept by individual managers and progress is closely monitored by the headteacher. In this way, the plan is an active document that informs the school's work throughout the year.
58. Another important factor in the school's success is the good level of financial planning exercised by the governors and headteacher. Spending is carefully targeted on the priorities of the school development plan. The school's day-to-day finances are very well managed by the school secretary, who provides detailed reports directly to the headteacher and the governors' finance sub-committee. This frees up the headteacher's time to get involved in educational rather than

financial matters. All the recommendations made in the last local authority audit report have been dealt with. Specific grants are used effectively by the school for the purposes for which they are given and best value for money is routinely sought when making purchases. The high reserve brought forward to this financial year is targeted for improvements to the accommodation. This has been a long-term project that is aimed at providing more space for this popular school where the intake number is now 40 pupils. The building work is very close to completion and the school's contribution has not yet been paid. There are also outstanding items on the asset management plan that will have to be dealt with once the building is handed over. The new cabling for Internet access in each classroom is a further expense that is held in the budget until it can be carried out. The governors' policy on reserves is to keep approximately one teacher's salary, which is around 3 per cent. Looking at the outstanding expenses, this will be achieved. The school has good and rising standards, good teaching and very good leadership and management. Expenditure per pupil is slightly above average. St Philip's, therefore, provides good value for money.

59. The headteacher takes her responsibility for the professional development of the staff very seriously and there is a good level of performance management within the school. Personal targets for improvement are discussed and agreed with individual teachers and non-teaching staff as a result of classroom observations, school evaluation and improvement targets and national initiatives. A lot of time and effort has gone into ICT training this year, with the school taking full advantage of the government's scheme. Systems for sharing expertise are good. For example, the new science manager has injected confidence and enthusiasm into the teaching of the subject. The success of her work is seen in the indications of much improved National Curriculum test and assessment results for 2002. New members of staff are introduced to the school through good support procedures. The deputy headteacher acts as a mentor and the newly qualified teacher in school feels herself fortunate to have received a thorough induction into the profession.
60. The number of teachers and teaching assistants, to cover expertise across all areas of the National Curriculum and to provide out-of-school activities, is good. Specialist teachers enhance provision further, especially in music, dance, physical education and for the higher achievers in mathematics. The staff work very successfully together, planning and sharing information. Experienced teaching assistants provide sensitive support for pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to take full advantage of lessons and to make good progress. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and versatile and often work with average and above average groups to promote their learning effectively. The level of supervision at lunchtimes is good and adults know the pupils well. School administration is very effective and efficient. The school secretary discharges a varied range of responsibilities and makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. Additional administrative help ensures that the headteacher's time is freed to deal with educational matters. There are no agreed school procedures for the reception of visitors or for dealing initially with parents' concerns. The inconsistencies have led to some dissatisfaction among parents in the past. A very good standard of maintenance and cleanliness is ensured by the caretaker and cleaning staff, who take a pride in their work.
61. The school has adapted itself very well to the introduction of new technology in enabling it to function more efficiently. For example, the use of optical marking to monitor attendance and a computerised assessment programme to record pupils' progress are both effective and time saving. Overall, there is a satisfactory supply of resources for teaching and learning and in mathematics, art, geography and physical education, they are good. Since the last inspection, resources for ICT have improved but the computers in the suite are now relatively old in electronic terms and are beginning to experience operating faults. This is not having a detrimental effect on learning at the moment but could do so in the future if the situation becomes worse. The subject manager is aware of the problem and there are plans to supplement provision with new computers and better cabling of classrooms. The provision of a non-fiction library is not satisfactory and some books are old, worn and outdated in the information they contain. The stock of reference books and number of dictionaries are not sufficient to support the older pupils' learning. In particular, the older pupils do not have enough dictionaries that show word derivations to help them with their spelling. Opportunities for personal research are limited owing to the restricted choice of books in some areas of study.
62. The accommodation is satisfactory and, once the new building is handed over, will provide adequate space for the increasing numbers of pupils who have joined the school. The headteacher and governors have made some imaginative improvements to the outside areas to screen the noise from the traffic on the very busy dual carriageway that is very close to the school fence.

Trees, shrubs and lawned and planted areas create attractive play and 'quiet' facilities for pupils' recreation.

63. High quality displays of work are used very well to celebrate pupils' achievements and to create a stimulating environment for learning. The area for the Reception class will include plentiful areas for practical activities once the work is finished, and will provide easy access to the outside facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain and support the drive for further improvement in this good school, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

(1) Improve standards in design and technology for pupils in Years 3 to 6 by:

- improving the quality and detail of pupils' designs so that they inform the making process effectively;
- providing more emphasis on the evaluation and modification processes and improving teachers' confidence in the subject.

(paragraphs 5,22,25,102,103,104,105)

(2) Improve the partnership with parents by:

- **developing consistent, effective procedures for receiving and handling concerns and complaints and for reporting back to parents;(paragraphs 47,60)
- involving parents more actively in the celebration of pupils' good behaviour and effort; (paragraphs 31,41,50)
- involving parents in the setting of targets for pupils who have special educational needs so that they can help more effectively at home.

(paragraphs 19,27,36,48,55,79,88)

The items marked ** have already been identified as areas for improvement by the school.

In addition, when drawing up their action plan, the governors should give consideration to the following:

Improvement of the non-fiction library for pupils in Years 3 to 6 by:

- increasing the shelving space so that books are more accessible;
- discarding old, worn and outdated books and ensuring that replacements include good quality reference material, such as encyclopaedias and dictionaries. (paragraphs 61,81,110,115,121,125,137)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	16	16	13	0	0	0
Percentage	10	32	32	26	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 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)		223
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		31

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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	13	23	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	23	23	23
	Total	35	35	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (91)	97 (89)	100 (97)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	13	12
	Girls	23	23	22
	Total	34	36	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (86)	100 (97)	94 (94)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	18	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	12
	Girls	15	14	17
	Total	25	25	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (87)	78 (71)	91 (87)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	12	12
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	25	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (68)	84 (71)	84 (84)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	222
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	28.1

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	116

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	533508
Total expenditure	495096
Expenditure per pupil	2221
Balance brought forward from previous year	58596
Balance carried forward to next year	97008

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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	223
Number of questionnaires returned	69

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	39	6	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	39	3	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	46	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	35	17	4	6
The teaching is good.	55	33	4	4	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	25	22	9	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	23	10	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	30	7	4	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	30	16	19	0
The school is well led and managed.	39	33	10	13	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	35	3	4	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	35	14	10	7

Some figures have been rounded up or down and therefore totals do not always add up to 100.

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

64. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage, or the Reception class as it is known in the school, is good and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Children are supported effectively by two teachers and one teaching assistant. The building extension to the classroom, completed two weeks ago, has caused some disruptions to the normal timetabling and not all areas of the curriculum were observed. However, the planning and discussion with the teachers indicate that the school offers an interesting range of good quality learning opportunities linked through common themes based on the national guidance for the Foundation Stage. These are planned to provide a range of practical activities to support the children's gains in learning.
65. Overall, the teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The good teaching, particularly the focus on speaking, reading, writing and personal skills, has a positive impact on children's learning. There is effective liaison between the two Reception teachers and the teaching assistant, which provides a consistent approach. The continuous assessment of pupils' learning ensures that all stay on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the year. Children enjoy their time in the Reception class. They are very enthusiastic, listen carefully to their teachers and make good gains in their learning. Their attitudes and their behaviour are very good because they are managed well and do not have the opportunity to become disinterested. Very thorough assessments at the beginning and end of the year are used effectively to track the progress of individual children. Day-to-day assessment information is well used to determine the next stage of children's learning. Very carefully maintained records show that the children make good gains in their learning. The school is aware of the need to purchase and organise some large outdoor activity equipment for regular use. There is a dedicated 'safe play' area but it remains unfenced. Homework activities such as reading and 'key word' spellings are shared with parents and used effectively to consolidate and extend children's learning in class. Accommodation is satisfactory and the additional extension to the classroom, when fully established, will allow enhanced, creative opportunities for the children and further flexibility in management of time and the activities provided.
66. Children join the Reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. During the inspection there were thirty-eight children attending full time. When children start school, most have skills broadly typical for their age. All children have access to the same curriculum activities and all children, including those who have special educational needs, make good gains in their learning from their starting point. They are fully included in all aspects of the Foundation Stage. Most children will have achieved the levels expected for their age and many will have exceeded them in personal and social education and mathematical development by the time they leave the Reception class. Attainment in communication, language and literacy is especially good. As a result, many of the higher-attaining children are already working within the early National Curriculum level of attainment in all three areas. In physical and creative development and in knowledge and understanding of the world the children are making satisfactory progress and are on track to reach the Early Learning Goals. There is a good induction programme to the school, which starts a good six months before entry and includes several visits to the classroom. A 'starter pack' for parents makes the transition from home to school easier, as it explains how the teachers will gradually ease the children into the daily routines. It also informs parents about the administrative procedures of the school and sets an agenda for partnership between home and school.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. The teachers place great emphasis on developing personal and social skills. They are aware of individual needs and provide opportunities for these aspects to be fostered through a range of activities. The children are interested, play collaboratively and are keen to contribute in lessons. They concentrate, without direct supervision, for an appropriate length of time and express opinions clearly. This is because of good teaching from adults who are good role models and treat each other and the children with courtesy and respect. Children learn quickly and generally feel secure in this supportive environment. Activities during lessons are generally well thought out and organised, but in some lessons seen, such as in a physical education lesson, opportunities to make choices and take decisions were limited. However, teachers' planning indicates that, across

the week, children are encouraged to become independent through making informed choices. Effective routines are established quickly and are well maintained. This helps children to build up confidence and become self-reliant. They take registers to the school office, dress and undress themselves for physical education, choose library books, and walk to other areas of the school in an orderly fashion. Most children have formed good relationships with friends and adults. The majority look after themselves responsibly, reflect upon their actions and behave very well. Children are given opportunities to reflect on the beauty of nature. They care for flowers and insects found on visits to Orrell Mount and in the school garden. Most children will have reached standards above the level expected for their age in personal development by the time they leave the Reception class.

Communication, language and literacy

68. Children make good progress in language and literacy: many reach standards above that expected when they enter Year 1. Teaching is good and most children talk about their experiences with confidence in front of the class. Most get off to an early start in acquiring skills because staff are effective in providing opportunities for the children to use talk to clarify their thoughts, ideas and feelings. As a result, they make good gains in their learning in lessons. Standards in this area have improved since the previous inspection. Speaking and listening skills are taught through songs, jingles, games and stories. Children participate in discussion sessions, for example, when they shared ideas about the people that they trust. Teachers are careful to use the relevant vocabulary throughout all activities and to check that all understand new words. No role-play was seen during the inspection, but planning indicates that areas such as 'The Three Bears' Cottage' or 'The Park Keeper's Hut' give good opportunities for children to use their imagination and extend their vocabulary. The children listen attentively to stories and love to join in with repetitive phrases such as in 'The Gingerbread Man'. They listen with interest to taped recorded stories on their own. In a few lessons, children were required to sit and listen to adults talking for an inappropriate amount of time, such as in a mathematics lesson and a writing session, resulting in some restlessness.
69. Adults instil in the children a love of books. Reading activities are used well to promote children's understanding. All children are given many opportunities to appreciate the main characters and events in books and poems. Adults read stories and poems expressively and, through good questioning, heighten children's awareness of the pictures and story content. As a result, children listen carefully when adults read a story and respond appropriately to the characters in the book. For example, one child remarked, after studying the animal's face, 'It's a happy cat'. Occasionally, the pace of the reading is too fast and, as a result, some children are unable to follow the printed text. Teachers extend early reading skills by stressing the need to follow the text in the correct order, word by word, making sure that the print is read from left to right and from top to bottom. Children learn the sounds and names of letters and associate them with the initial sounds of common words, such as 'at', 'is', and 'sun'. As a result, most are beginning to identify individual letters in words and some children are able to sound them out, successfully bridging reading and spelling. Most children recognise a number of common words and many are beginning to read simple texts confidently. Parents make an effective contribution to their children's progress in reading and spelling.
70. The children are given many early opportunities to develop their writing talents and handwriting skills are introduced methodically. Most children write their own names legibly and produce short sentences. Some higher attaining children wrote the story of 'The Elves and the Shoemaker' and 'The Gingerbread Man' in their own words. They write short sentences, such as 'Stop I won't eat you', and use 'speech bubbles' and 'writing frames' to support their work. Other children are supported well by adults, who help them to find the words they require from 'key word' cards or scribe children's original ideas for them to copy. Handwriting is developing well. Teachers draw children's attention to the correct formation of letters such as 'long ladder letters' and 'caterpillar letters' and most children have very good pencil control. The computer is used effectively to improve reading and writing. In one session, children wrote their own names using different fonts. Resources are good overall but non-fiction books are under-represented in the class reading area.

Mathematical Development

71. The children make good progress in their mathematical development. The majority are working at the recommended level of learning for this age group with some higher-attaining children having advanced into the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Good teaching ensures that children

are given many opportunities to develop and practise mathematical skills and knowledge. A good selection of practical activities, number rhymes, games and songs reinforce their understanding. Most can recite numbers to 20 and many up to 100. Higher-attaining children order and use numbers to at least 20, count forwards and backward in ones and twos, and add and subtract. Teachers use jigsaws, construction bricks, bead threading and puzzles to encourage recognition of similar shapes. Work is usually well matched to the children's prior learning but in one lesson seen, this was not the case. The work given on time did not sufficiently stretch the higher-attaining children whilst some had not fully understood the concept of 'o'clock'. As a result, the pace of learning slowed but was satisfactory overall. Many children are beginning to use a number line to find 'one or two more'. Vocabulary such as 'more or less', 'add on', 'greater or smaller' is well established. Teachers use a variety of resources such as 'wipe cards', die games and play dough to enhance the teaching and reinforce learning. Photographs show that children have opportunities to use circles, squares, rectangles and triangles and sort and match objects into large, medium and small sizes. They use mathematical vocabulary of number, time, shape, pattern and measurement appropriately. The teaching assistant supports effectively both groups and individuals during mathematical activities to ensure that all children are fully engaged. The use of sand and water play to extend mathematical development was not seen because the new practical area is not in full use. Resources are good.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

72. The children make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and the majority are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when attainment was below that expected. Few sessions were seen but planning, displays and chats with children indicate that teaching is at least satisfactory. The children learn about themselves and the world through topics. Teachers provide many opportunities for learning within the classroom, during outdoor activities, and on visits out of school. Children are encouraged to find out about living things and to investigate and question why things happen. As found in the previous inspection, science resources, such as magnifying glasses or simple microscopes, are not readily accessible for children to spontaneously investigate specimens and artefacts. The range of non-fiction books, although improved, is still limited. Children gain a sense of the passing of time through sequencing significant events of the day and days of the week. They learn about major events in the calendar and the church year, such as Harvest and Christmas. Children design and make objects they see in their every day life, such as the swings, tables and benches they observed on their walk to the local park and use a computer generated device to follow routes. All children enjoy using their ICT skills and make good progress. Most are able to log on, find a program and use the space bar, shift key and the delete button, with only a few children needing support. Higher-attaining pupils change the font and size of letters independently when writing out short sentences. Visits to Orrell Mount, St Philip's Church, the local park and the school garden enhance children's knowledge and understanding. The study and celebration of festivals, such as Divali, help to extend children's cultural development.

Physical Development

73. All children make satisfactory gains in developing physical skills and are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area. However, at present, there is a lack of specific provision for climbing, sliding and balancing and for promoting energetic, outdoor play. This area has been affected by the recent building work and the school is aware of the need to supplement resources once the fenced outdoor playground is completed. Children learn to develop control and co-ordination, to express their feelings and emotions and to work co-operatively in groups through dance and physical education. The children learn to take turns and share resources well, using the space considerately. The children acquire satisfactory skills in movement, and have a developing sense of space. They use tools and equipment with precision and have opportunities to roll, squeeze, push and knead malleable materials. Their manipulative skills are developing appropriately. In one food technology lesson they mixed the relevant ingredients to make gingerbread biscuits, which they decorated attractively with cherries and angelica. Children make good use of a variety of tools for drawing, colouring and cutting and show very good dexterity as they work with pencils and crayons. Skills in letter formation, colouring, cutting out, and sticking are very good because of the attention given to this aspect of the children's physical development. No painting was seen during the inspection. This was because just one weekly afternoon session is timetabled on a Friday. This results in a lack of opportunity to develop and extend skills on a frequent basis.

Creative development

74. Children have a satisfactory variety of opportunities to develop their creative skills and to express their feelings through exploring media and materials, music, dance, story making and imaginative play. Progress is satisfactory and children are on line to achieve the Early Learning Goal by the end of the year. Displays in the classroom and around the school show that they experience colour, texture, shape, form and space in two-dimensional art and have opportunities to explore colour through painting, printing, collage and crayoning. Teachers ensure that activities are connected to the main topic of the week. When working on the theme of 'Myself', for example, children made creative prints from the soles of their shoes. Children sketch daffodils in vases and snowflakes and draw the people who help us in our daily lives. They paint attractive blossom pictures, print wrapping paper using sponges and construct attractive collages entitled 'the jungle'. Children use a range of constructional equipment to design and build models and have varied opportunities to cut, stick and join. They recognise, and join in with, familiar songs, nursery rhymes and jingles. The teaching of music is good and for the rest of creative development it is satisfactory. For example, in one lesson the children used body actions to copy and build up a musical pattern. They listened attentively to the 'Dragon Song', and discussed what they liked and disliked about it. In composition, the children used shakers and bells and displayed a very good sense of rhythm. Photographs and teachers' planning show there are satisfactory opportunities for children's creative development. However, these are not integrated in the daily activities, but are timetabled for one afternoon per week. Once the new practical area is in use, there will be more scope and space to include creative work alongside other activities to enhance learning further.

ENGLISH

75. Inspection evidence is that standards at the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. This reflects the good results of the National Curriculum tests in 2001, when one third of the pupils achieved the higher Level 5. The results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests in Year 2 show that attainment in reading and writing was well above the overall national average and the average for similar schools. Lesson observations during the inspection indicate that high standards are maintained in Year 1. In the current Year 2 group, the percentage of pupils working at the expected level in writing is lower than last year and lower than the national average. This is because one small group of pupils is receiving help with their specific difficulties in this subject. The majority of pupils are attaining standards that are at least average and sometimes above this. Throughout Years 3 to 6 there are above average standards in reading and writing. Most individual pupils progress well and achievement overall is good. However, the Year 6 results in 2001 were not as good as might be expected from the Year 2 results, obtained by the same year group in 1997. This is because many pupils entered the school during those years and not all had the same solid grounding in reading and writing that St Philip's provides. Nearly one quarter of the pupils in Year 6 fell into this category in 2001 and therefore the cohort was quite different from the one that took the tests in 1997. Detailed tracking records show good progress year on year. Improvements in teaching and learning in English since the last inspection have been good.
76. Standards in speaking and listening throughout the school are above average. Pupils express their ideas clearly and listen well to others. All readily engage in conversation about their work. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils talked about the plot in the story of 'Ollie the Octopus', organising events in the correct sequence. In Years 3 to 6 pupils talk at length about a range of topics and respond sensitively to their classmates' ideas. They speak with clarity and assurance. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils showed maturity when discussing their reactions to the characters in a novel. Their ideas were original and thought-provoking, and contributed well to the overall level of understanding achieved. Progress for all groups of pupils is good with the higher achievers able to clarify statements and speak with assurance.
77. Pupils' achievement in reading is good. Those who have special educational needs achieve standards that are good in relation to prior attainment and make equally good progress. Pupils who have been in the school's Reception class often enter Year 1 with good skills. Guided reading is used effectively in Years 1 and 2 and there is a good match of texts to pupils' prior attainment and developing expertise. Skills such as the recognition and articulation of letter sounds are especially well developed and help pupils to tackle unfamiliar text. Most pupils recognise the features of both fiction and non-fiction books and know how to use the contents and index sections to find information. Without exception, pupils take reading books home regularly

and are well supported by parents. This makes a significant contribution to learning. By the end of Year 2, pupils talk at length about the plot and characters in a story, and predict what will happen next. In a very good lesson in Year 2, pupils read poems with expression and great confidence, fully appreciating the humorous content. By the end of Year 6, pupils read fluently and show very good levels of comprehension. The majority of pupils recall in detail what they have read, and skills of inference and deduction are very well developed. This enables pupils to 'read between the lines' and to detect sub-plots within the story. Pupils state their preferences for favourite books and authors, justifying their views very clearly. They extend their reading experiences by bringing books from home or borrowing from the class libraries. Pupils are very discriminating when choosing books to read. They have favourite authors and usually check the book description and part of the text to see if it appeals. Some are in the habit of referring to book reviews on the Internet. They understand library classification systems and can locate information effectively and efficiently from books and electronic systems. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, due to the very good quality of teaching and the positive attitudes fostered by the school.

78. In Years 1 and 2, pupils practise writing in logically sequenced sentences. They apply their knowledge of letter sounds very effectively when spelling simple words. By the end of Year 2 writing is well structured for the average and above-average attaining pupils. For one group of pupils standards are below average because they are experiencing difficulties in this one subject. They are making good progress towards their targets and are well supported. Most pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of punctuation, including the correct use of speech, question and exclamation marks. Writing shows a good range of fiction and non-fiction work. Year 1 pupils plan and write their story, and, at this early age, are already using good connecting words such as 'first' or 'next'. The 'mini beast' books they have produced include a contents and index sections. Good examples of writing from Year 2 included some fun poems where pupils used alliteration and played with language to create humour. They enjoyed developing their ideas about 'chunky chocolate' or 'crunchy crisps'. Earlier in the week they had made a book of their own tongue twisters that included such good examples as 'Jamie the jelly fish jumps on jelly'. Pupils write at length in other subjects. Their reports on the life and work of Florence Nightingale were of good quality and their instructions to make play dough cakes were easy to follow. The higher-attaining pupils write in longer sentences using adjectives and adverbs to create effect. Handwriting is becoming well formed and legible. In Years 3 to 6 pupils write imaginatively in different styles. Most have a secure grasp of punctuation and grammar. Those in Year 3 make notes and understand how to use abbreviations. They spell accurately using a good range of strategies. When trying to write 'ornamental', for example, pupils split the word into syllables and then 'sounded out' the parts. They have a good grasp of first and third person accounts. By Year 6 pupils' writing is often lively and thoughtful. They use simile and metaphor to create effect, and often model their writing on the work of significant authors. Higher-attaining pupils use clauses effectively to add interest and imagery. They show an awareness of the reader and subject matter in their choice of vocabulary. Pupil-made books are common in all classrooms and contain very interesting material. Some excellent standards of writing were seen in the recent competition organised by the librarians. Pupils created suspense and intrigue through such sentences as 'There was a stone gargoyle staring hungrily at the girls'. Handwriting is usually good and pupils often use word processing facilities to enhance presentation.
79. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in class. As a result, many reach the expected levels in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6. In lessons, teaching assistants provide sensitive support through an additional commentary in whole-class sessions. They set focused tasks in group work. Progress is recorded daily to ensure that all pupils are on track to achieve their targets. Parents are kept informed of progress but are not involved in setting targets for learning and developing the programme of support. This limits their ability to provide specific support at home, whether it be with reading, spelling or writing.
80. The Literacy Hour has been very successfully implemented in the school. In the lessons seen, teaching was never less than good, and much was very good with excellent practice seen in Year 6. The high quality of teaching positively and directly impacts on pupils' learning, resulting in the good attainment in the school. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use it very effectively to plan and prepare lessons. The early emphasis on phonics or learning sounds in the English language pays dividends throughout school in the good standard of reading and spelling seen. Teachers are very skilled in developing writing. They link the work very successfully to books the class have read so that pupils have a bank of ideas to use. Opportunities to extend non-fiction skills are provided through study in other subjects, such as geography, science or history. Marking is very good in this subject. Detailed comments point the way forward for pupils

and congratulatory remarks explain specifically what is good about the work. There is a good emphasis on self-evaluation and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by reviewing their success at the end of lessons. In Year 6 groups of pupils work together to assess each other's writing in a mature and helpful way. This also encourages pupils to be constructively critical of their own work and to find ways to improve. The information gathered from the teachers' regular assessments is used to check each individual's progress and to ensure that all are on line to attain their goals. Problems are dealt with quickly.

81. The drive towards higher attainment in English is managed well by the subject manager and informed by the headteacher's detailed analysis of pupils' test results. All pupils have personal targets in English, which are regularly reviewed. The success of the strategy is seen in improvements in standards as pupils move through Years 3 to 6. The manager tackles issues as they arise and has a detailed action plan for future developments. The non-fiction library provision is weak. It is well sited alongside the computers in the suite and has the potential to be a good resource for pupils' personal research and study. At present, books are too cramped on the limited shelving and some of them are old and torn. There are not enough modern reference books. The library is well organised and classified according to the junior Dewey guidelines. The librarians are very knowledgeable and work extremely hard to ensure that new books are entered on to their electronic system and to keep everything in the right place. They promote reading among their peers by organising competitions and finding out about new books from the Internet. Their conscientious approach is exemplary. The reading areas in the classrooms for Years 1 to 3 are attractive and include listening centres. There is a selection of books in Years 4 to 6 but these are not inviting for young readers and there is no comfortable area where pupils can curl up to enjoy a story.
82. The use of ICT to support learning is good, especially in the application of word-processing and use of the Internet for research. Resources for English are adequate overall but there are variations. There is a satisfactory selection of big books and guided reading sets that teachers use within the Literacy Hour. All are carefully stored and easily accessed. Dictionaries are too simple in some classes and many are old and worn. Because of this, older pupils do not have the correct support for spelling, especially where they are using advanced strategies such as word derivations or adding prefixes and suffixes to word roots. The range of non-fiction books in Years 1 and 2 is limited and there are few playscripts for pupils to read in class libraries. The subject manager is aware of most of the resourcing issues.

MATHEMATICS

83. Pupils progress and achieve well in mathematics. At the end of Year 2, standards in the 2001 National Curriculum tests were above the national average when compared with all schools nationally and with those in similar circumstances. At the end of Year 6, using the same comparisons, the standards reached were above average. The school noted that expected progress for the year group as a whole since Year 2 was not as high as it should have been. A careful analysis of class rolls demonstrates that the school experiences a considerable degree of mobility. Almost a quarter of pupils joined the school sometime between Years 3 and 6. This means that the school always has to work with pupils who have not necessarily had the same systematic grounding that their classmates have had, in all aspects of mathematics. This year the inspection evidence shows that standards across the school have continued to rise. The overall attainment in Year 2 is well above average and in Year 6 it is above average with an improved number of pupils working steadily at a higher level. The school has benefited from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the systematic progression built into this approach. Standards and provision are better than at the time of the last inspection.
84. Pupils in Year 1 are developing a sound understanding of addition and subtraction. They confidently sorted words such as 'altogether', 'plus', 'total', 'less than' and 'difference' into two columns, one representing addition and the other subtraction. They then worked together in pairs using this information to work out simple word problems. The teacher encouraged the pupils to identify key words, think of the mathematical rule and explain how they would work out the answer. Some very enlightening discussion took place between the groups. Year 2 pupils tackled a similar concept at a more sophisticated level. Besides addition and subtraction, pupils are also working with multiplication and division. They express a mathematical sentence in different ways, using words or numbers and visual symbols. In both years, the teachers ensure that the demands of the lesson are modified to meet the understanding of different groups. Pupils manage best

when they have access to blocks and counters to create a tangible representation of what they are trying to do.

85. In Years 3 to 6 pupils develop a good understanding of how numbers relate to each other. They explore the patterns that are created by manipulating and organising them according to particular rules. Throughout the school there is an effective emphasis on talking about what a problem means and how to tackle it. This ensures that there is a secure conceptual understanding underlying what pupils are doing. In Years 3 and 4 pupils were investigating fractions and decimals, using their understanding of one to extend their investigation of the other. As a result, most children in each class grasped quickly the new elements under discussion. Teachers match tasks to the different levels of understanding so that all can participate in the general topic, yet work at a level appropriate to their understanding. At times this needs some fine-tuning in both classes. Nearly all the pupils in Year 4 felt that the work was easy so expectations were not sufficiently high. In contrast in Year 5, pupils were building on a previous understanding of subtraction and using this to investigate and develop an understanding of the method known as 'decomposition'. The teacher's well thought out class lesson led them to apply prior knowledge to the new methods so that each step was built up and developed logically. As a result by the end of the lesson the higher-attaining pupils were working quickly and accurately with increasingly complex examples. Those who needed to work more slowly used exactly the same procedures, starting with tens and units and then with larger numbers. Year 6 pupils are working on a national project to improve the effectiveness of the transfer to secondary school. Pupils were challenged to investigate numbers, solving problems that required them to use all they knew about mathematics. This session demonstrated just how solid the understanding is across the class. Higher-attaining pupils were well challenged, often applying a principle that worked in one instance to another related problem. Collaborative work and sensitive prompts from the teacher kept all on track.
86. Inspection evidence from all classes illustrates that the work on number and algebra is of a particularly high standard. All aspects of mathematics are covered and most teachers show increased confidence in encouraging pupils to investigate effectively. Care is taken to teach pupils how to sort out the mathematical problem behind 'a welter of words'.
87. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was mostly good with some very good practice seen. All lessons had elements that were good. In the best lessons, the class teaching element is quietly and systematically presented, with good visual demonstrations and explanations. Unexpected or incorrect answers are explored. As a result, pupils are not afraid to make a mistake and continue to contribute confidently because they are helped to see why they have got a wrong idea or wrong number. Skills in numeracy are extended across the curriculum, especially in science and ICT. Marking is often no more than a series of ticks, but where it is most effective it suggests that pupils try something more challenging or prompts them to consider other approaches. Expectations are high in most lessons and well matched to pupils' abilities, demonstrating that teachers are making accurate evaluations of pupils' understanding. Teachers ensure a good pace, design tasks that match the amount of time available and expect these to be finished. Related homework is set and marked regularly. Opportunities are created for pupils to use ICT to enhance their mathematical understanding. Work on angles and practice at writing a simple computer program resulted in attractive patterns. Pupils often use computers to handle and present data efficiently. They produce detailed graphs and the older ones use spreadsheets to aid their calculations.
88. Pupils respond well. They clearly enjoy mathematics, work well in pairs or small groups and take care with the presentation of their work. They contribute enthusiastically to question and answer and demonstration sessions. Those who find mathematics more challenging are well supported by teaching assistants working with them on carefully designed tasks. Across the school the use of a 'mathematics recovery' assessment is used effectively to identify exactly what a particular pupil's problems are, so that an appropriate support programme can be put into place. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are not involved in setting their children's targets for improvement, although they are well informed about the progress made. Because they do not have access to the learning programme, the type and amount of help they can provide at home is limited.
89. The subject manager has a very strong grip on her subject. She has been instrumental in developing the mathematics recovery programme and providing professional support for her colleagues, including demonstration lessons. Target setting is developing well. She has produced

a valuable action plan to push mathematics forward further still. With the Year 6 teacher, she is evaluating the outcomes of a project to send the most mathematically gifted pupils for additional mathematics tuition at the local high school.

SCIENCE

90. Standards seen in lessons during the inspection were above those expected nationally at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is better than at the last inspection when pupils were performing in line with the national average. Inspection findings are higher than the results of the National Curriculum tests in 2001, when Teacher Assessments for Year 2 were average and results in Year 6 were in line with the national and similar school average. Higher-attaining pupils now have more challenging work and are making especially good progress by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the additional help and support they receive and all pupils are included in all science activities.
91. Pupils learn to think and act like scientists and this has a significant effect on the progress they make. Pupils, from Year 1 onwards, learn to plan their own investigations, predict the outcomes and carry out fair tests to explore their hypotheses. As a result, pupils learn effectively from appropriate research and first-hand experience. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 1, pupils predicted the size of different children's hands, measured their own by using cubes, then put all the hands in order to compare them. In the following session pupils constructed a block graph to illustrate their findings. Very good questioning and discussion extended their scientific vocabulary. Work was well matched to prior levels of learning and the pupils made very good progress in understanding how human features differ. In an excellent lesson, Year 6 pupils engaged in a high quality investigation on forces in action. They drew excellent conclusions of how, in some situations, there is more than one force acting on an object. They related their findings to what happens to a diver, and very concisely stated, 'Gravity pulls him down, but water buoyancy pushes him up', indicating a thorough knowledge of the effect of competing forces on an object.
92. Teachers encourage pupils to use correct scientific vocabulary as they move up through the school. In the Year 5 lesson on exercise and its effect on the pulse, the teacher repeatedly used scientific terms to extend pupils' understanding. She emphasised vocabulary such as 'oxygen' and 'sensor', and checked that all understood. During the lesson pupils were able to conduct a 'fair test' arriving at the conclusion that, after exercise, a high pulse rate comes down quicker if a person is fitter, because of the amount of oxygen carried in the blood. Where teaching was satisfactory in the school there was a loss of pace during the lesson, because of a lack of appropriate reference books and because the teacher's questioning did not extend pupils' learning far enough. Assessment has improved and enables teachers to be clear about what pupils know. This information is used well to ensure that the work closely matches the needs of both the higher-attaining and lower-attaining pupils. Pupils tabulate the results of their investigations well, and many are beginning to make good use of computers to work on data efficiently and to record the results of their investigations in graphs and charts.
93. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is very good, overall, with excellent teaching seen in Year 6. There is now a good emphasis on practical and investigative work. Teaching has several other very good features. Lessons are planned carefully, with appropriate learning objectives, drawn from a scheme of work based on national guidelines. Improvements in planning since the previous inspection ensure that pupils develop skills and knowledge in a logical order as they progress through the school. The majority of teachers have a secure understanding and knowledge of the subject and this helps them to explain scientific ideas clearly. They manage pupils' behaviour well, and, as a result, pupils concentrate hard, are very keen to answer questions and have very good attitudes towards their work. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and classroom assistants, and consequently make good progress. The subject is generally well resourced, though more non-fiction books are needed to assist teaching and learning. Equipment and materials are carefully organised and stored for ease of access.
94. The management of science is very good. The subject manager evaluates the teaching and learning through the examination of teacher's planning and pupils' work and there are plans to begin observations of teaching later this term. Assessment has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Assessments of pupils' tests and work are analysed and the resulting

information is used to set targets and helps to give the teachers a clearer picture of how well the pupils have progressed and how to plan future work. There is a very good portfolio of pupils' work that shows good coverage of all Programmes of Study.

ART AND DESIGN

95. In the previous inspection it was judged that the standards in art and design were above the expected level for pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. Inspection evidence from an analysis of teachers' planning, talking to the headteacher and scrutinising examples of pupils' work, photographs and displays indicates that the standard of attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is at the expected level. This represents a decline in standards but pupils are making satisfactory progress. No lessons were seen and therefore no judgement on teaching can be made. Since the previous inspection the school no longer has a subject manager and the headteacher and the teachers have a corporate responsibility for the provision in the subject. The key elements of art and design are taught, the statutory requirements are met and some of the work is linked to other subjects, providing additional opportunities for pupils to use their artistic skills.
96. Observational drawing and sketching form the basis of pupils' two-dimensional work, throughout the school. Sketchbooks are effectively used and pupils' planning shows their ability to develop their ideas and indicates that they have a good understanding of application techniques using pencils, pastels and paints. In this creative subject, pupils who have special educational needs often do well and enjoy the experience of expressing themselves imaginatively. Pupils' still-life drawings are of good quality and carefully represent what they observe. They draw self-portraits to good effect. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are given opportunities to explore colour, pattern, texture, line and tone, and to combine and organise them for different purposes. They experience a range of media and apply colour effectively in pastels, chalk, paint and crayon. The work undertaken in textiles and fabrics and three-dimensional art is less well represented.
97. Pupils in Years 3 to 6, including those who have special educational needs, build successfully on the knowledge and skills acquired earlier. Pupils' work indicates an increasing knowledge of the work of artists, such as Degas, William Morris and Victor Hartmann. Year 3 pupils recreate interesting circle patterns in the style of Richard Long. Their ancient Egyptian tomb paintings show a good understanding of the historical and cultural influences on art. Some models of people in action and containers made from coil pottery indicate a use of clay as a medium throughout the school but this is fairly limited. By Year 6, pupils express their own ideas and interpretations with increasing confidence and sophistication. Work on textiles develops satisfactorily, demonstrating a range of embroidery techniques. Computer programs are used well to support study. For example, pupils in Year 2 use a graphics program to make drawings of owls and Year 6 produce landscapes and seascapes recreating the style of J.M.W. Turner.
98. The curriculum is well planned to make good use of a wide range of resources. Art from around the world is represented satisfactorily, with some Aboriginal work giving a good insight into a different culture. Visits are used to stimulate creativity and are often linked with other subjects such as history.
99. Pupils enjoy their art lessons, including the work on the computer. They talk enthusiastically of the collaborative project to create a large sized 'St Philip's Phoenix' collage, representing the resurrection of Jesus and the rebirth of life. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural and spiritual development.
100. Currently, there is no subject manager but one is ready to take over in September. There is an updated policy in place and a detailed scheme of work. This provides useful guidance about the knowledge, skills and techniques that pupils need to know and teachers need to teach. School and classroom displays are attractive and the digital camera is well used to record and celebrate pupils' achievements. Three-dimensional work and clay is, overall, under-represented in the curriculum. There are few books on the subject in the non-fiction library. Assessment is developing and teachers identify areas where pupils are experiencing difficulties and base future lessons on the skills that pupils need to develop. The school recognises that the monitoring of teaching and learning needs further development, once the new manager is in place. Other planned developments include more visits, specifically to art museums. Resources are good and are used well to extend pupils' experiences. The subject has good potential for improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. By the end of Year 2, standards in design and technology are similar to those expected nationally, but at the end of Year 6, they are below. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but standards achieved and pupils' progress are unsatisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6. Very few lessons took place during the inspection. Evidence was gathered from photographic evidence, samples of pupils' work, teachers' plans and discussions with pupils and the subject manager. Pupils have enjoyed and completed activities suitable for their age but their skills and knowledge are not fully developed in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs reach similar standards to the majority of the class.
102. The policy and scheme were reworked in 2001, drawing on the national guidelines. However, the units selected are not organised and interpreted in such a way that the skills acquired in one year are built upon and refined in the next. Elements such as the drawing of a design with increasing accuracy and detail; joining skills; accuracy in cutting and measuring; handling increasingly sophisticated tools and meaningful evaluations of the process are not addressed in a sufficiently systematic way in order to ensure appropriate development and progress. Pupils' experience of a range of materials, particularly rigid ones, is limited. Thus they do not have enough knowledge with which to make reasoned choices about materials. Tasks are often over-directed and outcomes uniform except for the final decoration. Expectations are not high enough and progress is not satisfactory. The subject has not moved forwards since the last inspection and the inherent weaknesses noted then are more evident now.
103. Various 'design and make projects' are timetabled for each year group. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making vehicle chassis after examining model vehicles. Year 6 pupils have worked on some original slippers. As part of their research in Year 3, pupils looked at packaging and opened some of these up to explore how they were made. Some food technology was seen in Year 5 where pupils investigated, made and decorated biscuits. There is evidence, in every class, of pupils thinking about the nature and purpose of the object that they are to make. They explore commercially related items. However, the quality of the designs produced as pupils move through the school does not improve markedly and would not sustain and support quality construction across a range of materials. Comments by pupils about the selection of materials indicate that colour features highly in the factors for choice rather than suitability. In the finished articles, the quality of stitching in Years 4 and 6 is not markedly different and shows very little progress. Pupils have the opportunity to evaluate and suggest modifications to their work but this critical factor is underdeveloped. Written examples show that they do not really appreciate the significance of this element in the design and making processes. Pupils who have special educational needs make equal progress to their classmates in this practical subject.
104. The school has selected units of work that use a limited range of materials and skills. There would appear to be few opportunities for pupils to use pneumatics, incorporate circuits to power switches or integrate the use of ICT to control models. This suggests that the teaching is less ambitious than in other subjects and that some staff lack confidence.
105. Individual staff have been on practical courses, returning with examples of more challenging work that require a greater range of tools and joining techniques. However, these are not filtering through in any systematic way into the challenges presented to the children. The subject manager is aware of this and agrees that the emphasis is almost entirely on the end product rather than the processes of design and technology. There is insufficient emphasis on sharp, well-focused teaching sessions to develop a range of skills that would underpin designing and making. The use of ICT is at an early stage. The range and quality of books in the non-fiction library are poor.

GEOGRAPHY

106. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils reach standards in geography that are similar to those expected nationally. Mapping skills and the development of geographical enquiry are particularly well developed and there is good progress in these two areas. Although very little geography teaching was actually observed, there was plenty of evidence of interesting work, which the pupils clearly enjoy. Planning shows blocks of time allocated to geography each alternate half-term. It ensures adequate coverage of the Programmes of Study and a good amount of time each week

for teachers and pupils to get involved with the subject. This encourages work at some depth and there is satisfactory progress in knowledge and understanding across a wide range of topics.

107. In Years 1 and 2, geographical understanding develops from studies of the area around school. Pupils visit places of interest, such as local parks. They focus on the route and note features of the area. Their work demonstrates a secure grasp of the first principles in making and following a map and of evaluating their own environment. The displays on geography make very good use of photographic evidence, which, in itself, becomes a very good resource for further work. Pupils are encouraged to use the digital camera themselves and do so confidently, extending their ICT skills. The field trips, together with good discussions and use of evidence, ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, play a full part in the work and make good progress.
108. In Years 3 to 6 learning is based on clearly defined geographical principles and develops systematically. Year 3 pupils investigate the docks as part of their project on transport. This is of immediate relevance because of the siting of the school so close to the Seaforth Container Base. They contrast this local study with one of Keswick in the Lake District, drawing out comparisons between life in a rural and an industrial environment. Through good use of the Internet and CD-ROMs, they engage in personal research and study projects. In this way the higher attaining pupils are really stretched and achieve above average standards. During their work on natural disasters, they use a good range of sources, such as maps, first-hand accounts and information provided from a professional geographer.
109. Underpinning the work is a well-developed scheme of planning that draws together very good guidance and resource support from the local authority. This allows for good teaching within the structure and expectations identified in national guidelines. As a result, skills, knowledge and understanding are systematically taught and there is good emphasis on map work. Year 4 pupils were deeply engrossed in their work, finding information from Ordnance Survey maps and local street plans in their exploration of the geographical features of Southport. The physical and social aspects of geography are tackled through every locality studied. It is this cohesive approach that enables pupils to formulate their own questions, demonstrating a secure grasp of geographical enquiry.
110. Although it is not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching throughout school from so few lesson observations, the plans and completed work demonstrate that teachers find interesting ways to develop their lessons and to help pupils achieve what is expected. Staff assess how well pupils' understanding is developing at the end of each unit of work so that they can pitch further work at the right level of challenge. Teachers in several classes use geography studies as the starting point for writing for different purposes. In Year 5, for example, pupils looked at traffic congestion along the Sefton coast and then used their findings to write a persuasive text. All teachers plan for the effective use of ICT and pupils' work demonstrates their success. The Internet is a crucial tool in Year 5 weather studies. The stock of books in the library is limited and some atlases are out of date.
111. Pupils have a keen interest in the subject and, by Year 6, they demonstrate confidence and independence in their work. They collaborate well, approach their work systematically and understand how to question source material. All these factors are significant in ensuring that those pupils with special educational needs are fully included and benefit from the work in geography.
112. The management of the subject is strong. The manager has a clear view of where the subject study is going and of the standards and skills across the whole school. She is constantly looking for improvement. Future targets include evaluating and adapting the planning programme, increasing the resources, and exploring even better use of ICT. She has strong links with the local authority subject advisor and ensures that staff have appropriate training. The range of study covered has improved notably since the last inspection.

HISTORY

113. Standards of attainment are similar to those expected of pupils of this age by the end of Years 2 and 6 and overall progress is satisfactory. Inspectors were unable to see sufficient lessons to make a secure assessment of the quality of teaching. In the previous inspection it was judged that

the provision for history was satisfactory and that the standards were at the expected level for pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Inspection evidence from an analysis of teachers' planning, talking to the subject manager and looking at examples of pupils' work, teachers' documentation and displays shows that both provision and standards have been maintained. The majority of pupils attain an appropriate quality of work in relation to their age and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, gain the required knowledge. They learn, use and extend an appropriate range of historical skills and vocabulary.

114. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about significant periods and events of British History, such as the Great Fire of London, the associated Samuel Pepys' diary, and the Victorian era. Pupils gain understanding and knowledge about the past by contrasting and comparing the lives of their grandparents with life today. Their skills in historical enquiry are appropriately developed by researching into aspects of domestic life in times gone by, such as clothing, heating, and education. Good use is made of visitors who can give 'real life' accounts of what it was like to live in 'olden days', such as grandparents who visit to talk about their personal experiences. Practical, first-hand study is now more evident in the history curriculum, but much of the recording is restricted to work sheets, with few opportunities for pupils to write at length.
115. Year 3 pupils learn to use different sources of information to gain an understanding and knowledge about Ancient Egypt. In discussions with Years 5 and 6 pupils, they demonstrated a sound understanding of chronology. Pupils in Years 5 have learned about the personalities and major events of the Tudor period. By Year 6, pupils talk knowledgeably of the events and life at the time of the Second World War. For example, they explain the changing role of women and know why the evacuation of children took place. Pupils use the Internet well to enhance their knowledge and skills but little use is made of the library for research and the stock of books is only basic. Pupils enjoy finding out about the post 1930's and gain a developing insight into the introduction of the National Health Service, the developing economy and the new fashions of the rock and roll era. Older pupils select and organise information effectively as they list the advantages and disadvantages that major changes in history have brought about. History makes a positive contribution to the pupils' cultural development.
116. Pupils enrich their learning through visits to places of historical interest. For example, Year 5 pupils visit Speke Hall to study the architecture and life of Tudor England and those in Year 4 visit the Victorian resort of Southport to discover changes in buildings over time. This good practice is to be extended and is marked as a priority for development. History is taught through study units linked to a detailed scheme of planning that accurately reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum. This forms a helpful guide to teachers and is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment has improved and is now based on the skills as well as knowledge gained. However, there are no assessed samples of work for teachers to use as criteria when judging achievements. Resources are generally adequate and there are plans to enhance them further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Attainment in ICT matches national expectations for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils of all ages have a good level of confidence when working on the computers. There is a much wider range of study and experiences than those noted in the inspection of 1997 and improvements since then are good. Pupils' make consistently sound progress as they move through the school with some examples of good learning, especially in word processing and handling data. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is as good as that of the rest of the class and they often have support to help them work through any problems that they encounter.
118. By the time they reach the end of Year 2, pupils are proficient in using the standard keyboard and the mouse. When using computers, pupils access the initial menu and find the facilities or programs they require by using the on-screen prompts. They use tool bars efficiently to change font, print size and colour. Most are confident in the use of graphics programs to create or amend pictures. In a good lesson for Year 2 pupils, they experimented with different techniques to decorate 'Elmer the Elephant', whose story they had read. They made a 'stamp' and repeated it to create interesting patterns. They used the 'flood fill' capacity effectively to inject colour and create impact. Pupils choose the mouse, cursor or the arrow keys to find the quickest way

around the screen. All use the correct terminology to communicate their ideas. In collaborative work they advise their friends to 'delete', 'insert' or 'drag'.

119. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils are confident in using information and communication technology to handle, analyse and present information. Older pupils make a spreadsheet to help with their calculations. Using this facility, some had created a quick and efficient way to work out the perimeter of different, and sometimes irregular, shapes. Pupils use graphics programs to good effect and import pictures to illustrate their written work. When presenting their writing, pupils use a very good range of fonts, colours and borders to attract and interest their potential readers. Typing skills develop well and most of the older ones work confidently and quickly. In Year 6 pupils access the Internet to look at book reviews before choosing material to read and have used the advice available on one website to help them revise for their recent National Curriculum tests. Graphics programs are used well to support work in art, such as the 'tribute to Turner' pictures that were developed using different electronic effects. Year 3 pupils worked on their music skills using the computer as they organised and amended sounds to create an original composition. In Year 4 pupils showed good skills in organising data when they made a branching data base. This work extended their English skills as they framed questions carefully. Since they were sorting musical instruments into categories, it also linked well with their studies in music. This cross-curricular approach is a prominent feature in lessons and provides meaningful tasks and good consolidation of learning. Year 5 pupils enhance their scientific skills by using computerised sensing equipment to monitor changes in environmental conditions. Work at an advanced level was seen in an excellent Year 6 lesson when pupils produced a multimedia presentation, drawing on resources from websites and CD-ROM's. Progress was rapid and pupils showed very good confidence in their work. There is some work on control technology but this area requires further development to bring it up to the standard of that seen in the other parts of the Programmes of Study.
120. The school has done a great deal to enrich provision for the subject and to use computer facilities to support and extend studies in other subjects. Both factors are having a positive impact on the level of pupils' attainment. The suite of computers allows teachers to focus on developing skills, knowledge and understanding and also to provide opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. Teachers have completed their nationally funded training programmes and are now more confident in their approach. Teaching is good and there are some very good elements. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and explain quite complex procedures in ways that are easily understood. They use revision sessions effectively to remind pupils of what they have covered in previous lessons. One very good feature of the teaching is seen in the preparation sessions. For example, pupils in Year 4 had completed their research into musical instruments and recorded their findings on cards. They had also revised the relevant mathematical principles before starting their work on branching data bases. The result was a fast pace to learning once they began to work on the computers because they knew exactly what to do and were well briefed. Teaching assistants provide good support that is targeted at the pupils in most need. They are careful not to provide simplistic answers. Instead, they encourage pupils to think problems through by asking pertinent questions and offering suggestions. This promotes progress and confidence. The pupils are very enthusiastic in their approach to the subject and work with sustained concentration. They willingly share ideas and discoveries and this is a significant factor in the good rate of learning seen.
121. The subject manager is very knowledgeable and provides very good leadership and management for ICT. He has a very good overview of teaching and learning in the subject and has been instrumental in supporting staff training and developing the good level of expertise in the school. The suite provides a good facility but the computers are a few years old and some have operating faults, despite the efforts of a specialist technician who visits weekly. This can reduce the pace of lessons when pupils are unable to save or retrieve work. There is just one colour printer that is not reliable. The Year 4 pupils were not able to print out their databases and this affected the opportunity for class evaluation. At present, there is no whiteboard or projector and pupils have to crowd around one computer for demonstration purposes. The subject manager is well aware of the problems and has an action plan to improve facilities once the building work is completed and funding is available. Technology is very well used throughout school. Younger pupils have listening centres where they enjoy stories and the cataloguing of books in the library is now computerised for better efficiency. Good use is made of CD players and tape recorders in music and the digital camera is very effectively used to record work, especially in practical subjects such as design and technology. The stock of books in the library is inadequate and none of the new interactive books that draw text and electronics together are available. The assessment and recording of

pupils' progress is thorough and ensures that all pupils gain a wide range of experiences in the subject.

MUSIC

122. During the inspection, all the lessons observed were in Years 3 to 6. From evidence gained in discussions with teachers and pupils, by looking at planning, attending assemblies and listening to pupils sing, it is apparent that the school provides a stimulating programme of work throughout the year. Inspection evidence shows that, overall, attainment matches national expectations for pupils at the ends of Years 2 and 6. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is good. Some pupils who have additional instrumental tuition attain standards that are above expectations. In Years 1 and 2, there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on learning over time. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to provide a wide range of experiences and there has been good improvement. Pupils benefit from their lessons with specialist teachers, who add an extra dimension to learning and promote excellent progress and standards. There are opportunities for pupils to perform in various settings and to experience musical productions of a very high professional quality.
123. By the end of Year 2, pupils use their voices expressively when singing. They enjoy listening to music and express their likes and dislikes, using a developing vocabulary of musical terms. Pupils learn to sing simple songs from memory, to use their voices confidently in a variety of ways and to modify tempo and dynamics. In discussions, they talk about favourite pieces of music and explain their preferences. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn about a range of instruments, exploring different ways to play them and create effect. In an excellent Year 3 lesson, the teacher and visiting specialist tutor split the class so that they could concentrate on composition and evaluation skills. After listening to some music called 'The Chase' one group chose untuned instruments to recreate the 'chase' effects. They combined and organised musical elements, concentrating on rhythmic patterns and dynamics. They rehearsed, evaluated their work and refined it to a high standard. The other group used the electronic keyboard to create the same effects and experimented with some unusual sound combinations. Throughout school pupils have good opportunities to experience music from a wide variety of times and cultures. This is evident when those in Year 6 worked on a very challenging lesson where they identified how historical influences have affected musical development. Pupils enjoy performing and do so with confidence when they visit the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall or the local high school. The school's Christmas productions are a further avenue where pupils can develop their talents.
124. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 have good understanding of the subject and teach with confidence. The use of specialist teachers enhances provision. These include musicians from the local high school, a tutor from the authority's music service and a visiting violin teacher. The school takes every opportunity to enrich pupils' cultural experiences. For example, a composer recently worked with the Year 4 pupils to prepare for a public performance. Recent visitors have included a drummer and a musician who treated the pupils to a performance on the didgeridoo. Pupils who attend the dance club experience an interesting range of music and have opportunities to interpret what they hear through movement. Visits to professional productions enrich pupils' experiences even further. Teaching in the lessons seen was very good overall. Learning moves at a fast pace and lessons include a series of short activities to maintain pupils' interest. There are good opportunities for pupils to share ideas and talents. Teachers often set open-ended tasks that allow pupils to express themselves imaginatively. Pupils with special educational needs do well in this subject, developing their talents and interests. Music has a high profile in the school. It is played quietly as pupils enter the hall for assemblies, creating a calm, spiritual atmosphere. Resources for the subject are satisfactory with an appropriate selection of instruments and recorded music from around the world. The clear, detailed scheme of work helps to develop confidence in non-specialist staff and creates a good balance between listening, composing and performing.
125. The subject manager keeps a watchful eye on teaching and learning through lesson observations. She checks on progress and assesses work according to National Curriculum levels. This helps her to evaluate the effectiveness of the planning scheme and to make adjustments where necessary. Extra-curricular opportunities include the choir and a recorder group planned for the autumn term. ICT is very well used in this subject with pupils using the computer to compose music and the Internet to find information. The electronic keyboard, tape recorders and CD

players are regularly used to support learning. Too few books about music and composers are available in the library.

126. All pupils thoroughly enjoy their music and sing with feeling in assemblies, often uplifting the cultural and spiritual dimension.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach standards in physical education that are similar to those expected nationally. Some pupils reach particularly high standards in swimming and are selected to represent the authority. The school has benefited from a continuing investment in a national initiative to improve resources and provide professional development for staff in this field. As a result, all aspects of the subject are comprehensively covered and pupils make consistently sound progress. In Year 6, work is also undertaken in conjunction with their partner high school. Staff and high school pupils work most effectively with the primary pupils to extend skills and understanding.
128. There is a definite improvement in the range and quality of provision since the last inspection with pupils experiencing a broad range of experiences. A good selection of after-school clubs further extends pupils' experiences and skills. These include tennis, tag rugby and quick cricket. Pupils benefit from instruction by professionals. They also have many opportunities to play competitively in athletics, football, netball and swimming, which support their social as well as their physical development.
129. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were developing skills in dribbling the ball. They demonstrated good perseverance and made marked progress within each lesson. Year 4 pupils worked at a series of structured exercise such as the 'standing long jump'. They recorded their scores or 'times', trying to beat their previous performance. Year 6, under the direction of high school staff and students, did something similar. At regular points in the lesson they learned how to take their pulse rate. They then reflected on the changes to the body and the implications for developing strong heart muscles. In a very good link, this data would be used the following day as a basis for ICT work. Year 6 were also working on co-ordinating movements with a partner, initially devising a 'floor sequence' and then extending this to moves over equipment. As a group they had to select and arrange large equipment, thus challenging their creativity and originality. The outcomes demonstrated a secure awareness of safety issues. Full participation is a major consideration. Three pupils, who for medical reasons could not take an active part, were assigned to be assessors. They observed their classmates critically, assessing and grading their originality and interpretation of the teacher's directions. This was clearly a well-honed routine and was done well. The open-ended nature of the tasks and sensitive interaction from the teacher ensured that those who were less well co-ordinated were well supported and made progress whilst those with a natural aptitude were challenged.
130. The quality of teaching was good overall and some excellent practice was seen. All the lessons demonstrated the benefits accruing from the structure of the planning and teachers' professional development. In the best lessons pupils interpreted the tuition with flair and were encouraged to use their initiative. Where lessons had not reached this high level, pupils were either noisy, which held up proceedings, or learning was restricted by the organisation or use of time. Staff use ongoing evaluation well. They select individuals to demonstrate, identifying the elements of good quality. This is a significant factor in helping those less confident to benefit from others' expertise and encouraging the most able to challenge themselves appropriately.
131. The subject manager is knowledgeable and extremely enthusiastic. She has taken every opportunity to make the most of all local initiatives. She actively finds people in the community with particular expertise to work with the pupils and explores every avenue of additional funding or resourcing. Her achievements in securing funds and equipment are noteworthy. A new activity fitness trail is to be developed in the playground at no cost to the school. Displays keep the development of various skills to the forefront of pupils' minds and give the subject a high profile. Parents rightly value the range of provision that the school offers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. Attainment in religious education, for pupils at the ends of Years 2 and 6, meets all the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and the breadth of study has improved, providing pupils with a good insight into the different faiths that are represented in modern society. Progress is satisfactory throughout the school. The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
133. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a secure knowledge of Bible stories and of their significance to everyday life. They write their own prayers, showing a developing awareness of the less tangible aspects of life. Pupils are beginning to appreciate the differences between religious beliefs and practices. They compare and contrast different customs, symbols and significant artefacts between the Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish faiths. They learn about festivals such as Holi and compare the celebration of harvest in Christian and Jewish faiths. In a good link with personal and social education, pupils consider their families and explore the concept of 'belonging'. Links with the church are good and make a significant contribution to learning in this subject. In a series of lessons for Year 1 pupils, they are exploring church furniture and significant artefacts, asking appropriate questions and showing a keen interest in their studies. The vicar has a very good relationship with the pupils and they enjoy listening to him and meeting church helpers. There was a very strong spiritual element to the lesson seen as pupils talked about the beauty and peace of the church.
134. During Years 3 to 6 pupils gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of different beliefs. They explore the use of symbolism in religion. Pupils in Year 3 study the significance of the cross for Christians and look at other religious symbols. They drew the olive branch representing life and the dove to indicate peace. Pupils created some good quality art work that clearly showed a good understanding of a difficult concept for this age group. Older pupils have made a collage of the phoenix and studied its relevance in religion. Throughout Years 3 to 6 pupils show good empathy with people in difficult situations and a great respect for opinions and beliefs that are different from their own. They consider human rights and the responsibilities that go alongside them. This makes a good contribution to pupils' moral development. In a very good lesson in Year 6 pupils looked at the expression of religious belief through art. They have a well-developed understanding of the relevance of different events in the church calendar. As they designed a new vestment decoration depicting the year 2002, they showed reverence and a good understanding of the colours associated with religious seasons. Pupils study other faiths in depth, looking at places of worship, prayer and customs. There is a good link with moral education as they talk about the commandments and explore how they inform the rules of modern society.
135. The daily acts of worship supplement learning and provide further opportunities for reflection. Pupils attend church services, such as at Harvest, Christmas and Easter, and provide some interesting art work for the congregation to admire.
136. Pupils' attitudes in lessons and assemblies are very good. They take part eagerly and listen well, showing a very good respect for beliefs, opinions and traditions that are different from their own. Most offer views and opinions confidently and their responses to questions are thoughtful. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Those who have special educational needs enjoy the fruitful discussions and have clear views, which they express well. Lessons often cover elements of citizenship and equip pupils for life in a multicultural society.
137. On the basis of the lessons seen and the scrutiny of pupils' work, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers follow the good scheme of planning that covers the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The range of topics studied is interesting and teachers bring the subject to life by planning different activities, including meaningful discussions, debates and practical opportunities to explore and investigate. Some good use is made of ICT as pupils use CD-ROM's to research specific topics. The selection of books in the library is very limited and, as a result, this facility is not used regularly to support study. Resources are satisfactory and include some good video material. The range of artefacts is too basic and could usefully be extended to include a better selection for studies of the Christian, Islamic and Hindu faiths. The subject manager is knowledgeable and provides informed support for colleagues. She maintains a sound overview of learning in the subject by looking at teachers' planning, pupils' work and the evaluations completed at the end of each unit of work. The subject has a suitably high profile in the curriculum and reflects the Christian ethos and the aims of the school very well.