

INSPECTION REPORT

ST CHARLES' R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Swinton

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 105955

Headteacher: Mrs M. Greaves

Reporting inspector: Mr A.V. Calderbank
[7979]

Dates of inspection: May 22-26, 2000.

Inspection number: 195470

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Emlyn Street, Swinton, Salford.
Postcode:	M27 9PD
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Mgr P.F. Smith
Date of previous inspection:	November 5th, 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
A.V. Calderbank	Registered inspector	Science; Art; Design and technology; Information technology; English as an additional language.	How high are standards? - The school's results and achievements; How high are standards? - Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
M. Milwain	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
J. Watkins	Team inspector	Provision for the under-fives; Mathematics; Music.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
G.J. Yates	Team inspector	English; Geography; History; Physical education; Equal opportunities; Special educational needs.	How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized primary school for boys and girls aged three to eleven.

Number of full-time pupils:	214	[about average]
Pupils with English as an additional language:	0%	[low]
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	15.9%	[broadly average]
Pupils on register of special educational needs:	38	[broadly average]
Average class size:	28	

The attainment level for most children when they enter school is within the average range.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Pupils' attainment by the time they leave is well above average in English, mathematics and science and they make at least good progress in these subjects. However, standards of attainment are unsatisfactory in information technology. The school is very well led by the headteacher and the quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave.
- Children under five are given a firm foundation in basic skills, especially reading and writing.
- Teaching is good overall. Very good strategies are in place for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher who is committed to the raising of standards.
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and behave well.
- Homework provision is very effective. It makes a significant contribution towards the quality of learning and the standards pupils are achieving.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.

What could be improved □

- Standards of attainment in information technology in both key stages.
- The teaching of skills in art, geography, history and music throughout the school.
- The opportunities for Key Stage 2 pupils to use their writing in other subjects.
- The quality and range of resources in geography, history, music, physical education and for the under-fives with regard to large play equipment.
- The information parents receive about their children's progress and what they are being taught.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Good progress has been made in raising standards in English, mathematics and science. However, standards in information technology remain unsatisfactory. The headteacher, despite the lack of support from a deputy, has clarified management structures and responsibilities throughout the school and improved school development planning. The role of curriculum co-ordinators in most subjects has been enhanced. Whilst resources have been improved in some key areas, there are still deficiencies in a number of subjects. The school has worked hard in developing and implementing a successful assessment policy in English, mathematics and science. Good use is made of the information gathered to inform future practice and to set targets for future improvements in these subjects.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	A*	B	B	In the top 5% A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A*	
science	A	A	B	B	

Over the past four years the school's results have been very high in comparison with the national average in mathematics and well above the national average in English and science. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 1 standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national average and well above average by the end of Key Stage 2. The school is on line to meet its high targets for the percentage of pupils to achieve Level 4 this year. A significant number of pupils are on course to reach a higher level.

However, standards in information technology are well below average at the end of both key stages. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards in art, music and some areas of physical education in either key stage or in design and technology in Key Stage 1. Standards in design and technology are well above average by the age of eleven. By the end of both key stages pupils attain average standards in all other subjects and the games aspect of physical education. Religious education was the subject of a separate diocesan inspection.

Progress for the under-fives is good and they are provided with a solid foundation. Most children achieve above the standards expected in personal and social education, language, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. The development of early reading and writing skills is a strength of the school. Standards in physical and creative development are in line with the expectations for the age group.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school □	Very good. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and get on well with each other
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Children respond well to the school's assertive discipline policy and display mature attitudes in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Older pupils are given appropriate opportunities to get involved in the daily routines of school.
Attendance □	Good. The attendance rate is above the national average with very little unauthorised absence.

Most pupils listen attentively to teachers in class. They are keen to take part in question and answer sessions. They are polite and greet visitors cheerfully. Pupils of all ages play well together at lunchtime.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching of the under-fives is good. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is a strength of the school and this is reflected in the quality of learning and the standards pupils are achieving in these subjects. During the week of the inspection there were no lessons that were unsatisfactory overall. Teaching was very good in just over 20% of lessons seen. It was good or better in 55%. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have worked very hard to prepare for the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. There are significant weaknesses throughout both key stages in the teaching of information technology, which is integrated into other lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good learning opportunities in most classes. The quality of learning is good overall throughout the school and pupils' work is usually well presented.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school places a strong emphasis on the teaching of English, mathematics and science. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their information technology skills. Skills in art, geography, history and music are not consistently developed as pupils move through the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school is successful in the early identification of pupils who have special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL [continued]

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Assemblies, especially those led by pupils provide valuable opportunities for spiritual growth. Cultural provision is satisfactory but more could be done to provide pupils with deeper insight into other cultures. The school works hard in encouraging pupils to consider the effect of their actions on others.
How well the school cares for its pupils <input type="checkbox"/>	Good. Pupils' academic and records of personal development are well established. There are effective procedures in place to ensure the health, welfare and safety of all pupils.

The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good in English, mathematics and science and the information gathered is used well to set targets for improvement. Whilst parents are kept well informed about school events, they are less well informed about what their children are learning in school. Reports do not always provide them with sufficient information about progress in all subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction, focused on raising standards. She has successfully led the school without having a deputy in post. During this period she has been well supported by the senior member of staff and other colleagues.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The Governing Body is very supportive of the school. Most legal requirements are met. Reports to parents on pupils' progress do not contain all the necessary information.
The school's evaluation of its performance <input type="checkbox"/>	Good. The school analyses test results and uses the information well to set targets for future improvements and to track pupils' progress. The school has in place procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are limited in some subjects but most are used well. <input type="checkbox"/>

The school is appropriately staffed. The accommodation is generally well maintained. The lack of appropriate resources in some subjects adversely affects the quality of learning and the standards achieved.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Their children make good progress.◆ The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.◆ The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best.◆ Their children like school.◆ Teaching is of a good quality.◆ The amount of homework is right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The range of activities provided outside lessons.◆ The information they receive about; pupils' progress and what they are being taught.◆ The manner in which they are received when approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The inspection team found that teaching is good and appropriate homework is set. Pupils are expected to work hard, achieve their best and they like coming to school. Pupils display mature attitudes and make good progress. The team agrees that the information for parents about the progress children make and about lessons content is insufficient. The range of sporting activities outside lessons is limited compared with that in other schools. During the inspection there was no evidence that parents were made to feel uncomfortable about approaching the school with problems.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly average. This is confirmed by the Local Education Authority's baseline assessment. After a year attending the Nursery full-time and a further year in the Reception class most are obtaining levels which exceed the nationally recommended Desirable Learning Outcomes expected for the age group in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world. This represents good progress and is an improvement on the previous inspection when progress was judged to be satisfactory. Children make sound progress and achieve appropriately for their age in the areas of creative and physical development.

2. In the 1999 reading test for seven-year olds the proportion of children reaching the expected Level 2 and above was well above the national average and the average for similar schools. The percentage achieving Level 3 was above the national average and the average for similar schools. In the writing test in the same year the percentage of seven-year-olds reaching the expected level was above the national average but well above the average for similar schools. The proportion achieving the higher Level 3 was also above the national average and the average for similar schools. Teacher assessments showed speaking and listening standards to be above those found in most schools at Level 2 or above and broadly in line at Level 3.

3. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils in reading at the age of seven has been above the national average. Their performance in writing has been well above average. There has been no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys.

4. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are currently making satisfactory progress overall in English during Key Stage 1 and standards are above average. By the age of seven they are confident speakers and listen attentively to teachers' explanations. Pupils enjoy reading and have the necessary strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. In their writing they are able to form letters correctly and show a good awareness of spelling and punctuation. Most pupils apply these skills to a suitable range of writing, such as book reviews and stories.

5. In the 1999 English tests for eleven-year-olds the overall results were above the national average and the average for similar schools. However, taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together the performance of the pupils in English has been well above the national average. During the same period there has been no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys.

6. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are making good progress in English during Key Stage 2 and standards in the current Year 6 are well above those expected for the age group. The school has agreed a realistic target of almost 90% of pupils to achieve Level 4 and above this year. It is on line to achieve this target. Standards in English by the end of Key Stage 2 have improved significantly since the previous inspection. By the age of eleven most pupils are confident, if not always expressive, readers. However, pupils are given only limited opportunities to use their referencing skills in the library. Attainment in writing by the time pupils leave school is well above average. Pupils organise their thoughts clearly and logically when writing a story and can write for different audiences. Pupils listen well, speak clearly and use good expression. They show proficiency in the use of technical vocabulary.

7. Pupils are provided with some good opportunities to use their language and literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum at Key Stage 1. For example, they discuss ideas in history and practice their writing skills well in art. At Key Stage 2 there is too much use of copied text in other subjects or of worksheets that limit pupils answers to a few words.
8. Standards in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 are above average, maintaining the trend of previous years, and pupils make good progress. In the 1999 mathematics test for seven-year-olds the proportions of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 and the higher Level 3 were above both the national averages and the results of similar schools.
9. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together pupils' performance in mathematics was above the national average. Girls performed better than boys.
10. By the age of seven, most pupils know the sequence of numbers to 100. They can calculate mentally using addition and subtraction involving numbers to 20 and collect data to produce graphs and pictograms. They understand simple fractions and can solve problems involving weight and time.
11. Attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is very high and pupils make very good progress. The results of the 1999 mathematics tests for eleven-year-olds show that the proportions of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 were very high in comparison with both the national average and with similar schools. Standards are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection.
12. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils in mathematics has been consistently high in comparison with the national average. During the same period girls performed better than boys but the difference was not significant.
13. The school has agreed realistic targets for the number of pupils to achieve Level 4 and above this year. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the school is on line to achieve these targets.
14. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have developed very good numeracy skills and are able to apply them to complex investigations. Most pupils show good expertise in changing decimals into fractions or percentages. Higher attainers are able to draw a polygon with each vertex lying in the first quadrant, plot its reflection in the axis and name the co-ordinates of the reflected shape.
15. Teachers have worked very hard to successfully introduce the National Numeracy Strategy. Expectations are high and pupils are provided with appropriately challenging work. Pupils are able to make satisfactory use of their number skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, when using sets and sub-sets to classify games enjoyed by their parents. However, there is still scope to increase opportunities for investigational activities particularly at Key Stage 1. Pupils' information technology skills are not well used or developed in mathematics, because of the lack of suitable software.
16. In 1999 the proportion of seven-year-olds assessed to be reaching the expected level in science was above the national average and the average for similar schools at Level 2 and above but broadly in line at Level 3.
17. Inspection findings are that pupils make satisfactory progress and attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 1. They carry out simple investigations and identify push and pull forces. Younger pupils know that seeds need light, warmth and water in order to germinate successfully and grow into healthy plants. However, investigative work is not as well developed as pupils' knowledge in Year 2.

18. Good progress is made during Key Stage 2 and by the time pupils leave school, attainment is well above average. Standards have improved since the last inspection in 1996. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests in science for eleven-year-olds the proportion reaching Level 4 and above was well above the national average. When compared with similar schools, standards were also well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 was above the national average and above the average for similar schools.

19. Taking the previous four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils was well above the national average. During the same period of time there was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys.

20. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can carry out investigations, predict and draw conclusions. Much of the work is pitched at an appropriate level of challenge. For example, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of photosynthesis. They record their work meticulously but much is copied text. However, as at Key Stage 1 pupils' knowledge is better than their experimental and investigative work.

21. No significant difference was seen during the week of the inspection between the performance of boys and girls in English, mathematics or science.

22. In information technology unsatisfactory progress is made throughout the school and attainment is well below national expectations at the end of both key stages. Seven-year-olds have developed basic skills in using the mouse and keyboard but cannot open and exit programs for themselves. They do not have sufficient experience of all the strands associated with the subject. By the age of eleven, pupils know how to type text to create a fair copy but are insecure about cut and paste techniques. Some classes have only recently had access to suitable hardware and, as a result, there are gaps in their knowledge. For example, they have only limited experience of the controlling or modelling strands. The subject has not improved since the previous inspection.

23. Religious education was the subject of a separate diocesan inspection.

24. By the end of both key stages pupils achieve average standards in geography, history and in the games element of physical education. There was not sufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards in art, music and the other aspects of physical education in either key stage, nor in design and technology at Key Stage 1. Standards in design and technology are well above average at the end of Key Stage 2.

25. Subject specific skills in art, geography, history and music are not being consistently built upon as pupils move through the school.

26. The school is successful with in the early identification of pupils who have special educational needs. A clear and well structured system is in place and meets fully the recommendations of the Code of Practice. Good progress is made overall by all pupils on the register of special needs. Good progress is also made by those identified as gifted, for example in mathematics. Teachers ensure that work is suitably challenging.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

27. The previous inspection found pupils' attitudes, values and personal development to be a strength of the school and this continues to be the case. These features have a beneficial effect upon the quality of learning and contribute significantly to the good progress and above average standards found in English, mathematics and science.

28. In the Nursery and Reception classes children under five have very positive attitudes to their work. They have settled happily into the school's routines which are helping to build up their confidence. Children behave very well and can distinguish between right and wrong. They share toys and equipment, take turns and respond positively to adults. In the Nursery children persevere when playing with construction toys to complete a task successfully. In Reception they listen attentively to each other and the teacher. The children show a good level of independence for their age when carrying out instructions. They have a mature attitude and understand that they have to share the teacher's attention with other children in the class. Reception children respond well to the praise and encouragement given in the weekly celebration assemblies.

29. Almost all pupils in both key stages have very good attitudes to their work. They apply themselves well to tasks, concentrating, persevering and remaining on task. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and willingly take part in class discussion. They can sustain their concentration, are eager to learn new skills and most take a pride in their work. For example, Year 6 pupils made some very detailed facial masks out of clay whilst working alongside an artist in residence. Throughout the school they respond positively to the opportunities provided for working in pairs on the computer or by participating as team members in sporting activities during physical education lessons.

30. Pupils with special educational needs work well within most classes. They too have positive attitudes towards their work. Most pupils with learning difficulties are able to persist with tasks because work is usually appropriately matched to their needs.

31. In both key stages pupils' behaviour around the school, in classrooms and in the playground is good. All staff provide good role models for pupils and have a positive approach to discipline. There are firm expectations of good behaviour. The assertive discipline policy is very well managed by the teachers and all other adults working in the school and is consistently applied. As a result pupils accept and respond positively to the school's code of conduct. No bullying was observed. In the last full school year there were two exclusions but no pupils have been excluded during the current school year.

32. The school works hard to develop pupils' self-esteem. This is reflected in the very effective celebration assemblies held each week. Pupils from each class are selected by their teachers for praise and the headteacher explains specifically what it is that they have done well either in terms of work, attitude or behaviour. This has the benefit of reinforcing the school's high expectations regarding behaviour and the values it wishes to teach. Targets are set for individuals and success appropriately recorded in a brick on "The Wall of Achievement".

33. Personal development and relationships are good. Pupils co-operate well together in the classrooms in small groups, as a whole class, in pairs and individually. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. When given the opportunity pupils can take some responsibility for their own learning and share ideas with others. For example, a pupil in Year 4 gave a talk to the whole class in the library about his fascination for dinosaurs. He brought in artefacts to show and confidently answered questions. This is good example of how the school is helping to develop pupils' self-confidence. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sport and to develop a sense of team spirit.

34. Pupils are willing to take on responsibilities. They help with jobs in the classroom and older pupils look after younger ones. They are sensitive to the needs of others in the wider community; for example, they took part in raising funds for CAFOD to help those in need in Burma. These activities contribute to creating good quality relationships and a well ordered community.

35. Attendance rates are good. The rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average. The school works well with parents and all absences are followed up. Very good procedures are in place. The school has a thorough approach to monitoring attendance. Pupils are punctual arriving at school and a prompt start is made to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

36. The quality of teaching is good overall and contributes significantly to pupils' positive learning attitudes and the good progress they make in English, mathematics and science. Teaching was good or better in half the total number of lessons seen and very good in around one fifth. During the week of the inspection there were no unsatisfactory lessons. This represents an improvement on the findings of the previous 1996 inspection when teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in almost one tenth of lessons seen. Across the school there are significant strengths in the teaching of English and mathematics. In these subjects most teachers have high expectations of pupils and work hard to set up tasks which the pupils find challenging. As a result, the quality of learning is good for most pupils in these two subjects. A weakness from the last inspection remains in the unsatisfactory teaching of basic skills in information technology, which is integrated into other lessons.

37. The teaching of children aged under five in the Nursery and Reception classes is good overall. Very good teaching of mathematical and linguistic skills is a strong feature in the Reception class. Baseline assessments are used well to set value-added targets for children's learning. Planning is detailed, there are clear learning objectives and the teacher evaluates regularly the effectiveness of lessons. The curriculum is generally well balanced and forms a good foundation for progress towards the National Curriculum. However, more could be done to develop children's creative skills. Opportunities for children to explore the materials, use their imagination, make a personal response and communicate their feelings are sometimes missed. The two nursery nurses provide an education of high quality for nursery aged children. A key strength of teaching in the Reception class is the way the teacher uses her very good knowledge of phonics to ensure that all children are able to read. Records are comprehensive and well maintained. Regular homework in Reception helps children make good progress.

38. During the week of the inspection the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 was good overall in English, mathematics and science. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work completed from the beginning of the year shows that pupils are making sound progress overall throughout the key stage in English and science. Teaching is satisfactory in these subjects overall. Good progress is made by Year 1 pupils because pupils are challenged to produce their best work. For example, their speaking and listening skills are well developed during plenary sessions. In this class teaching is often very good.

39. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Key Stage 1 have been implemented well and planning is effective. Work in literacy and numeracy is matched appropriately to pupils' needs and in all the lessons seen pupils were benefiting from the direct teaching of key skills. Where teaching is very good in Year 1 pupils are constantly challenged to use their writing skills and to answer questions. Science is well taught and includes a suitable balance of teaching of scientific knowledge and investigative work. A strength of the science teaching in Year 2 is the insistence on pupils writing up their notes. No teaching of information technology was observed but evidence from pupils' work shows that skills are not well taught. Whilst there was no unsatisfactory teaching during the week of the inspection in other subjects, teachers' planning and pupils' work does not show sufficient evidence of the consistent development of subject-specific skills in art, geography, history and music.

40. In Key Stage 2 teaching is good overall in literacy, mathematics and science. There are several examples of very effective teaching. The teaching in Year 6 is consistently at least good and contributes significantly to pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. Good account is taken of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in all year groups. In most of the literacy lessons a brisk pace is enabling pupils to make good progress. For example, in Year 6 very good use is made of a children's fiction novel to inspire pupils to use metaphors in their writing. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects and little use is made of the library for research and personal study. In the numeracy lessons the regular use of mental work is helping to improve pupils' knowledge of number facts. The quality of learning is enhanced by pupils being involved in the self-evaluation of their work.

41. The quality of teaching in science in Key Stage 2 is good overall. Methods used ensure that pupils acquire a good subject knowledge and a sound understanding of fair testing. However, some of the work done in Year 6 is over-directed and pupils are given too few opportunities to explore problems for themselves. Much of the writing in their science books is just copied text.

42. The quality of teaching in most other subjects is satisfactory overall. No teaching was observed in information technology but evidence from pupils' work shows that the subject is not well taught. In other subjects whilst skills are taught soundly in individual lessons there is little evidence from planning that there is any consistent development of skills across the key stage. Very good use was made during the week of the inspection of visiting football coaches and an artist in residence. The high level of knowledge they had was used to very good effect in stimulating the pupils to produce a high standard of work.

43. All classes are usually well managed and pupils are kept on task. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, including teaching to the whole class and to groups formed according to prior attainment. These help to ensure that pupils maintain their interest and keep their involvement throughout the lesson. Good use is made of plenary sessions in several subjects and not just English and mathematics. A strong feature of the most effective teaching was the high expectation in the use of questions. For example, in a Year 6 lesson pupils were encouraged to talk about personification and the possible use of metaphors. High expectations are a key characteristic of other very effective teaching.

44. Lessons are well organised and time and resources are used appropriately. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are good in English, mathematics and science. The use of day-to-day assessment is effective also in these subjects. Throughout the school there are good examples of teachers using their knowledge of pupils to ensure that work is well matched to their needs. For example, a gifted child in Year 1 is given challenging work in mathematics.

45. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for in most classes and due regard is taken of the targets in their individual education plans. However, sometimes in Year 3 they are presented with work which is too difficult for them.

46. In both key stages teachers mark work conscientiously and some set targets for pupils to improve their work but this good practice is not consistent throughout the school. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning, especially in the development of key skills in English and mathematics, such as spellings and tables.

47. Pupils' enter school with average skills and leave with above average skills in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make good progress overall in these subjects as a direct result of good teaching. Teachers' good knowledge and planning, good use of assessment, good management skills impact positively on pupils' quality of learning.

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

48. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are satisfactory overall. The curriculum for the under-fives centres on the six areas of learning, leading to the nationally agreed Desirable Learning Outcomes. Learning objectives are clear and specific and there is a good balance between teacher-directed and independent tasks. This provision forms a firm foundation for the National Curriculum subjects. It is very effective in providing for the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

49. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad and balanced and complies with the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Religious Education is taught according to the local diocesan guidelines and, together with the daily act of worship, this was the subject of a separate inspection. The school has decided against the formal teaching of sex education. It participates in the Life Education Programme, available to local schools, which promotes care of the body, healthy lifestyles and an awareness of drug misuse. Appropriate regard is paid to the development of pupils' personal and social education.

50. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is based on the respective guidelines of the national strategies and provision for both in each key stage is very good. This is reflected in the quality of learning and in the high standards achieved in both English and mathematics. However, opportunities are not always taken for pupils to apply the skills they have learnt in these subjects. For example, in many classes the use of personal research and writing skills is not an integral part of their work in subjects such as history, geography and science. Pupils are provided with some satisfactory opportunities in science to practise their mathematical skills by drawing graphs or recording temperature readings but planning for these is not consistent in other subjects.

51. The school has adopted the guidelines published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority for those subjects where they are currently available. The changes in Curriculum 2000 and their implications are presently under consideration. Long-, medium-term and weekly planning are all very good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and provide effectively for continuity and progression in pupils' learning. This is reflected positively in the standards they achieve in these subjects. Curriculum provision for information technology is unsatisfactory. The level of work in most aspects of the subject is too low. A programme of skills development in physical education has been adopted based on a Youth Sports Trust Scheme. Swimming instruction is provided for Year 3 pupils. However, there is a lack of cohesion in the curriculum in most other subjects. For example, there is no established pattern which ensures that pupils acquire, and practise sufficiently, the specific skills required for the study of art, geography, history and music as they progress through the school.

52. Regular homework, which is well supported by parents, makes a very important contribution to learning for pupils of all ages. The range of clubs offered outside lessons by the school is satisfactory overall. It includes musical but no sporting activities. This is an area of concern for a significant number of parents especially the fact that there is currently little provision for extra-curricular competitive sport, except for athletics, with other primary schools in the area. Additional instrumental tuition is organised on a fee-paying basis provided by the Local Education Authority. A useful notice board informs parents and visitors about events in the Nursery.

53. Provision for pupils with special needs is good. It is evident in the early identification procedures and the provision of appropriate programmes of work. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. No pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum. All pupils are treated equally and the school endeavours to foster an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to achieve in line with its aims. Where pupils are identified as having a particular gift, such as in mathematics, they are well supported.

54. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. These findings are similar to the judgements recording in the previous inspection report.

55. Spiritual development is well promoted. All aspects of the school's provision are underpinned by its mission statement which sets the tone and ethos within the philosophy and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church and which permeates the day to day life of the school. Pupils take part in a daily act of worship. They are encouraged to write their own prayers. Each classroom has a focal point for quiet reflection. A particular feature of the teaching in Key Stage 2 is the encouragement of pupils to give thoughtful consideration about their own learning at the end of many lessons. In both key stages they are regularly encouraged to develop a sense of personal worth through celebration assemblies which reward endeavour and achievement. During the inspection some older pupils were spellbound in a history lesson during a re-enactment of the 'blitz' of World War 2. However, in general, opportunities to develop a sense of wonder, for example, in the natural world and in human achievement are not fully extended.

56. The provision for moral development is good. The school emphasises pupils' self-awareness and they are encouraged to behave towards one another in a Christian way. For example, during the inspection the theme for one whole school assembly was 'forgiveness' and a group of older pupils successfully acted a small scene to illustrate the meaning of the concept in a day-to-day situation. Pupils are aware of what is expected of them. Rules of behaviour are prominently displayed in the classrooms. The assertive discipline policy is proving effective, with pupils responding well to the reward systems which are in place. Relationships between pupils are good and teachers provide many opportunities in lessons for them to practise the art of working co-operatively together. Wider moral issues are brought to pupils' attention through the school's links with charitable organisations such as CAFOD.

57. Social development is good, and the vast majority of parents answering the questionnaire feel that the school helps their child to become mature and responsible. Pupils are encouraged to think of those less fortunate than themselves through links with charities such as the Catholic Rescue Society, contributions to the Samaritan's Purse and Harvest donations of food to 'drop in' centres at the local cathedral. Older pupils take on responsibilities as prefects, sometimes helping to look after younger pupils at playtimes. In both key stages they are given the responsibility of leading assemblies. Year 4 pupils have gained confidence in addressing an audience by giving talks to the class about their own interests. Year 6 pupils were involved in a Children's Parliament Debate held locally. From time to time there are opportunities to enjoy participation in concert performances before an audience of parents and friends. There are good links with the local secondary school which ensures a smooth transition to the next stage of education.

58. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall. It includes the use of the locality for geographical work and learning about people of other times and places such as the Ancient Egyptians as part of their history lessons. During inspection week Year 6 pupils enjoyed working with a local artist. Visits are made to local places of interest. Visitors such as fire-fighters and the school nurse contribute to the Nursery's topic on 'people who help us'. Despite some good features, such as a talk by a visitor about Burma, which enhanced the knowledge of pupils throughout the school about the dress, customs, life and social problems in that country, cultural development is not fully developed. Pupils are provided with only limited experiences to gain insights into other cultures which are part of society in Britain today.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

59. The school is successful in ensuring the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. There is a health and safety policy, which is monitored on a regular basis by the health and safety committee. This group includes the headteacher and a governor responsible for health and safety. The school has recently commissioned and received a risk assessment audit from a private company. All the teaching staff have attended a St John's Ambulance first aid course.

60. Satisfactory procedures for child protection are in place. All the staff have been made aware of the procedures by the headteacher, who is the responsible person. Use has been made of the Local Education Authority for advice and training.

61. Attendance is good and is above the national average. The school works closely with parents to ensure that the majority of pupils attend school regularly. Pupils are punctual in arriving in school, and registration periods provide a calm, orderly start to the day.

62. Since the last inspection the school has implemented an assertive discipline policy. This is very effective in promoting good behaviour, and pupils are well mannered and polite. This was exemplified in lessons, and in the way in which pupils behaved around school, and during a Year 6 visit to the receiving secondary school. No instances of bullying were seen during the period of the inspection. Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the behaviour of pupils.

63. Relationships between pupils are good. In lessons pupils working in pairs or in groups co-operate well with each other; they are able to share ideas and organise their work. Pupils have a good relationship with the adults in school, which encourages them to discuss their work in a meaningful way.

64. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the effectiveness of the school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. In English, mathematics, science and design and technology good use is made of assessment to inform future planning. In the remaining subjects assessment is not as well developed. Pupils' records of achievement are kept with identified targets. In some instances pupils make their own contribution towards setting these targets. The results of the assessments carried out are used well to inform future planning. The support and guidance given to pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils' personal development is recognised at weekly whole school assemblies. The contribution made by individual pupils to the school through good work and behaviour, is celebrated on the 'Wall of Achievement'. These help to reinforce the atmosphere of the family community within the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. Since the last inspection the school has maintained the effective partnership with parents. At the meeting prior to the inspection and through the parental questionnaire, the majority of parents expressed satisfaction with the work of the school. The large majority feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems but a significant percentage do not and these parents feel that the school does not work closely with them. However, there was no additional evidence during the inspection to support this minority view.

66. Information for parents is satisfactory overall. Regular newsletters provide details of activities and events. Induction arrangements for children starting Nursery and transferring to Reception are good and enable the children to settle quickly. The school prospectus and annual governors' report to parents contain the required information. There are two parents' evenings each year but pupils' end-of-year reports are unsatisfactory because they do not give parents a clear understanding of the progress children have made in all subjects and of the areas where improvements need to be made. However, parents did confirm that they could discuss concerns with their children's teacher at any time. Satisfactory links are maintained with the parents of pupils with special educational needs.

67. The school has a sound partnership with parents. It has worked well with them in some important areas, notably the behaviour policy. Parents also appreciated the information provided at an open evening held to explain the national end of key stage tests. However, they would like more information about the work their children are doing in class. The partnership between the school, parents and the parish church is being successfully strengthened through the weekly Children's Liturgy.

68. A good contribution to the school is made by those parents who provide regular informed help in the classroom. Parents also provide very good support for their children through their encouragement of the regular use of homework.

69. Parents help to provide equipment for the school through a variety of fund raising events. The circle of support for the school is being broadened to include the wider community by the formation of the 'Friends of St Charles'.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The quality of leadership and management of the headteacher is very good. She is deeply committed to the school, the pupils and the staff and provides a clear educational direction. She has led the school for a long period of time without a deputy being in post to give support. As a result she has had to carry additional workloads. This she has done well. Standards of attainment have not just been maintained but have improved significantly under her leadership. The headteacher receives good support from a senior member of staff.

71. A whole-school approach to key developments has been introduced and the success of this is evident in the good progress made in addressing most of the issues raised in the last report. A weakness remains in information technology, where the lack of suitable hardware and software has restricted development. The school has developed the role of the co-ordinators to include monitoring and evaluation in English, mathematics and science. The School Development Plan has been made more relevant and resources, whilst still not adequate, have been improved.

72. Governors are very supportive of the school. Through the committee structure they meet their statutory responsibilities and keep an informed eye on school developments. The literacy governor, special needs governor and numeracy governor all have a good understanding of their roles. The Governing Body fulfils most of its legal responsibilities. However, the reports sent out to parents on pupils' progress do not all contain the necessary information. Individual governors visit the school on a regular basis and have a good knowledge of the standards being achieved.

73. The procedures for monitoring provision, identifying aspects which could be better, planning for future improvements and reviewing progress towards the targets the school has set itself are good. They are now much better than at the time of the last inspection in 1996. Regular planned monitoring of the literacy and numeracy hours by the headteacher and co-ordinators has taken place. Co-ordinators check lesson planning to ensure that agreed teaching and learning policies are being implemented. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

74. The arrangements for professional development and the support given to newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school are satisfactory. The Governing Body has agreed manageable performance targets for the headteacher.

75. The school is now developing strategies for analysing in detail the data from National Curriculum tests and its own internal tests such as baseline assessments. It notes what has been successful and where improvements need to be made. It had identified, for example, that spelling strategies needed to be improved. New materials were purchased to help staff focus successfully on this issue. Current standards in both mathematics and English indicate that the school is likely to meet the targets set in consultation with the Local Education Authority for these subjects.

76. The School Development Plan has improved since the previous inspection. It is an effective tool for school improvement, especially the raising of standards. It has specific objectives, delegated responsibilities, is carefully costed and contains appropriate success criteria. Governors have approved the plan.

77. Financial planning and management are good. The headteacher, secretary and governors conscientiously follow clear financial procedures. The school secretary deals effectively with day to day administrative matters. Expenditure reflects the priorities in the School Improvement Plan. The budget has been over spent in the last two years but a contingency fund has been used to ensure that there are sufficient funds available. The headteacher and governors are very aware of the need to ensure that in future years spending is carefully monitored. The latest audit report found that procedures in place within the school's financial systems were of a good standard. The few minor points raised have been implemented. The money allocated to the school to support pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately.

78. The school has satisfactory procedures in place to ensure that it obtains best value for money. The Governing Body has access to an appropriate range of value-added measures through a system of annual assessments. In addition, it receives regular reports on progress from the headteacher.

79. The Governing Body has addressed most of the issues raised in the previous inspection report regarding staffing. The school now has a sufficient number of permanent teaching and support staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. There is a wide range of experience amongst the staff, including provision for children who are under five, and for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers work well together as a team sharing experiences and expertise as appropriate. Currently two nursery nurses are supporting teaching in the Nursery. The provision of classroom support is broadly average for the size of school.

80. The accommodation is satisfactory. Classrooms are of an adequate size and the outside accommodation is spacious. There are some good displays of pupils' work but others do not provide an effective stimulus for learning. The school is kept very clean and maintained to a high standard.

81. Resources are satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. There are shortages in the resources in many other subjects, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The areas most affected are art, geography, history, music, physical education and provision for the under-fives with regard to large play equipment. The school also lacks sufficient up-to-date equipment and software for the effective teaching of information technology. These deficiencies are having an adverse effect upon the standards pupils achieve. The library is not well stocked. During the week of the inspection it was not used by pupils for personal study.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the quality of education the governors, headteacher and staff should:

a. improve standards in information technology in both key stages by:

- ◆ implementing fully the school's action plan;
- ◆ ensuring that skills in all strands are developed progressively as pupils move from class to class;
- ◆ ensuring that pupils of all ages have regular access to up-to-date information technology equipment;
- ◆ providing greater opportunities for pupils to apply their information technology skills in other subjects;
- ◆ providing appropriate in-service training to develop staff confidence and competence in teaching information technology and using it across the curriculum;

[See paragraphs 15, 22, 36, 81, 101, 142, 153 and 154 in the main report.]

b. improve pupils' progress in skills in art, geography, history and music by:

- ◆ ensuring that each subject scheme of work provides clear guidance to teachers on the subject specific skills and how these are to be taught;
- ◆ sharing the good practice that exists to devise assessment procedures to track the growth of pupils' skills and using the information to inform planning for pupils of differing attainment;

[See paragraphs 25, 39, 51, 128, 133, 146 and 159 in the main report.]

c. increase the number of opportunities that pupils in Key Stage 2 are given to use their independent writing skills in other subjects of the curriculum:

- ◆ ensuring that planning in other subjects clearly identifies appropriate opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills;
- ◆ Raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of doing for themselves;

[See paragraphs 7, 20, 40, 41, 56, 102, 119, 126, 140 and 142 in the main report.]

d. improve the quality and range of resources in geography, history, music, physical education and for the under-fives with regard to large play equipment;

[See paragraphs 81, 91, 133, 159 and 166 in the main report.]

e. improve information for parents about the progress their children are making in all subjects and about what is being taught.

[See paragraph 66 in the main report.]

Other weaknesses that should be considered by the school:

- ◆ Implement a consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work. [Paragraphs 47, 107 and 126]
- ◆ Making more effective use of the library. [Paragraphs 6, 41, 100, 106.]
- ◆ Providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills in mathematics and science. [Paragraphs 15, 17, 20, 41, 113, 122 and 124.]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0%	25%	34%	41%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	18	196
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/a	35

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	38

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	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	14	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	17	17
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	32	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97% (100%)	94% (100%)	94% (100%)
	National	82% (80%)	83% (81%)	85% (84%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	18
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	32	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97% (100%)	97% (87%)	97% (90%)
	National	82% (81%)	86% (85%)	87% (86%)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	13	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	19	19
	Girls	10	12	12
	Total	26	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81% (86%)	97% (89%)	97% (93%)
	National	70% (65%)	69% (59%)	78% (69%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	18	17
	Girls	10	11	10
	Total	26	29	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81% (86%)	91% (89%)	84% (93%)
	National	68% (65%)	69% (65%)	75% (71%)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	179
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.8
Average class size	30.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	2	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.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
	£
Total income	323,790
Total expenditure	333,484
Expenditure per pupil	1,483
Balance brought forward from previous year	27,829
Balance carried forward to next year	18,135

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	214
Number of questionnaires returned	43

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67%	29%	0%	4%	0%
My child is making good progress in school.	69%	20%	7%	2%	2%
Behaviour in the school is good.	47%	49%	0%	0%	4%
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49%	38%	4%	0%	9%
The teaching is good.	62%	27%	7%	0%	4%
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31%	42%	20%	7%	0%
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67%	16%	13%	2%	2%
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
The school works closely with parents.	36%	44%	9%	9%	2%
The school is well led and managed.	58%	29%	7%	0%	7%
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47%	44%	2%	0%	7%
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13%	22%	20%	22%	22%

Because of rounding not all rows may 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

82. Children enter the Nursery at the age of three with a variety of experiences. Their competencies are within the average range, which is confirmed by the Local Education Authority's baseline assessment. After a year attending Nursery full-time and a further year in the Reception class most are obtaining levels which exceed those normally expected for the age group in the agreed Desirable Learning Outcomes for personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. This represents good progress and is an improvement on the previous inspection when progress was judged to be satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately for their age in the areas of creative and physical development.

Personal and social development.

83. Children in both Nursery and Reception are happily settled into the routines which help to build their confidence. They behave well and can easily distinguish between right and wrong. They share toys and equipment, and learn to take turns. They respond well to the adults who care for them. Nursery children become absorbed in the play activities provided for them and persevere, for example when using construction toys, until the task is finished to their satisfaction. Reception children listen well to each other and to the teacher's instructions, which they carry out showing good levels of independence. They display an understanding, which is mature for their age, that they must share her attention with other individuals and groups in the class. In both classes there is an expectation that children will care for equipment and help with tidying it away after use. Reception children participate fully in the school's achievement assemblies which successfully promote their self-esteem.

Language and Literacy.

84. A good introduction is made to language and literacy in the Nursery. A 'Book Corner', 'writing area', together with teacher-focused activities such as sound recognition, letter formation, regular story time and keeping a personal 'diary' ensure that children become fully aware that print carries meaning. By the end of the Reception year all are able to read simple passages and write at least one sentence independently. Many accomplish more. Their phonic skills, ability to build words and knowledge of vocabulary is very good. For example, when asked to supply words containing the sound 'ea' as in bread, those who suggested 'wealthy', 'meadow' and 'sweater' were able to spell them correctly, with very little support. This owes much to the skilful teaching they receive. Good levels of support from parents in hearing their children read at home are a further contributory factor to the good progress which is made.

85. The quality of teaching is good in the Nursery and very good in the Reception class. Planning is detailed, there are clear learning objectives and teachers regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their lessons. The Reception teacher has very good expertise in teaching the basic skills of literacy. Regular homework in Reception helps children make good progress.

Mathematics.

86. The Nursery provides children with a good range of mathematical experiences in the course of their play. Adult intervention, for example in the water-play, encourages children to develop their counting skills and to understand concepts such as "bigger", "smaller" and "the same as". Specifically focused activities where children sort, match and order objects for size, colour and shape, counting songs and rhymes and simple number games help to gain their attention and contribute to their learning.

87. By the end of the Reception year almost all can count, order, add and subtract numbers, when solving problems involving up to ten objects and can read and write the numbers involved. Many can handle numbers to 20. They have a good knowledge of the properties and positions of plane and some solid shapes, and have been introduced to the concept of symmetry. This represents good progress.

88. The quality of teaching is very good in both classes. Expectations are high. Activities are appropriate and there is a good balance between teacher talk and children's explanations. Comprehensive records are kept about what children know, understand, and can do.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

89. Nursery children talk about their families and people who work in the locality. They enjoy visits from members of the community such as the parish priest, nurse, fire-fighters and the school crossing patrol, as part of their project on 'people who help us'. In both classes they observe features of living things such as the growth of daffodils, tadpoles and the germination of seeds. Good progress is evident in the recording of their observations which take the form of pictorial records in the Nursery and sequenced writing by the end of the Reception year. In both classes they select and use materials which require cutting, folding, sticking and building for a variety of purposes. Nursery children use mechanical and technological toys such as fire engines, trains, workbenches and telephones as part of their play. Information technology is successfully used in Reception to reinforce other areas of learning.

90. The quality of teaching is good in both classes. Visits and visitors contribute substantially to the provision of good learning opportunities. Activities which are provided develop pupils observational, investigative and recording skills well.

Physical development

91. By the age of five children are meeting the expectations of the age group. However, provision of large play equipment, for example, which allows children to climb and balance in safe but adventurous situations is not readily available. Storage facilities for outdoor equipment are poor. Reception children benefit from weekly sessions in the hall for gymnastics and dance but the equipment available to them is not satisfactory. For example, the benches are too heavy to allow young children to set up the equipment safely for themselves.

92. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There is appropriate recognition of health and safety requirements. In the Nursery a range of play, together with teacher-focused activities help children to develop their physical skills. In Reception planned lessons in physical education successfully promote development of specific skills such as travelling and landing.

Creative development

93. Standards are satisfactory in creative development. Both Nursery and Reception children are offered opportunities for creative play, for example, in the role play area set up and equipped as a clinic. They enjoy exploring different textures such as sand, compost, pasta and soapy water. Painting materials and malleable mediums such as plasticine and clay are regularly made available.

94. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Tasks which involve the use of colour, texture and shape are also planned for Reception children. However, these are often included as part of an activity whose first intention is to promote linguistic or mathematical skills. As a result, opportunities for children to explore the materials, use their imagination, make a personal response and communicate their feelings are sometimes missed.

95. The Nursery and Reception classes operate successfully as an Early Years unit, and the staff work closely together. The planning systems are thorough, especially for literacy and numeracy, and learning objectives are clear and specific. There is a smooth transition from Desired Learning Outcomes to the National Curriculum. A baseline assessment is in place to establish children's attainment when they start Nursery. This is revisited to show the progress made. Records are comprehensive and are systematically maintained. Induction arrangements for children starting Nursery and transferring to Reception are good enabling the children to settle easily. Information provided for parents through the Nursery brochure and the use of the notice-board is clear and helpful.

ENGLISH

96. Good improvements have been made in the subject since the time of the last inspection. Standards have risen and are now above average in both key stages. The reasons for this have been an improvement in teaching especially of the basic skills of literacy and the successful introduction of the literacy hour. The school's documentation and overall level and quality of resources are better and both are now of good quality. However, the library is still not well stocked. Inspection evidence shows the teaching of basic skills to be one of the strengths of the school. In most of the lessons seen during the week of the inspection the quality of learning was good as a result of well planned lessons based on the literacy hour strategy.

97. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 the performance of pupils was above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of the pupils in English has been well above than the national average. During the same period the performances of both boys and girls were well above the respective national averages. The current pupils in Year 6 have made good progress over time and their overall attainment is well above average. Over 40% of the cohort is on course to reach Level 5 and most pupils will attain Level 4. Standards are high because teaching is of good quality, with appropriate emphasis given to pupils' development of basic skills, and homework is used well to reinforce learning.

98. In the 1999 tests for seven-year-olds the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 was well above the national average and the proportion at Level 3 was broadly in line with the national figure. Reading standards were well above the national average and writing standards above the national average. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of boys and girls has been well above average in reading and writing. Inspection evidence shows that the percentage of pupils on line to achieving the expected Level 2 is above the national average and a significant number are on course to reach the higher Level 3. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, with better progress made in Year 1 because of the high quality of teaching in that age group, clearly focused on allowing pupils to use and develop their reading and writing skills across the curriculum. All lessons seen in this class were taught at a fast pace. The inspection found no major differences between girls' and boys' achievements in either key stage.

99. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in both key stages and standards are above average. By the age of seven, pupils listen attentively to teachers' explanations, to stories and to each other. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to use their speaking skills. Most lessons include appropriate opportunities for pupils to answer questions and talk about their work. For example, in Year 2 pupils read out tongue twisters about 'Betty Bother'. They speak clearly and use good expression. In some classes pupils prepare talks at home and then speak to the rest of the class on various subjects. Year 6 showed good proficiency in the use of technical vocabulary using terms such as "personification" with ease.

100. Most pupils have above average reading skills by the age of seven. Pupils make sound progress overall. When faced with difficult words they have the necessary strategies to work things out for themselves. They make good use of both pictorial and contextual cues. Teachers use the literacy hour well and have a good knowledge of basic skills, which enables them to provide a wide range of activities for pupils to undertake. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 2 and standards in Year 6 are well above those found in most schools. Most pupils are confident, if not always expressive, readers and can explain the key features of a plot. Those who have difficulty with reading are supported well and make good progress.

101. In Key Stage 1, pupils use their writing skills well both in English and in other subjects, especially in Year 1. The percentage of pupils by the end of the key stage achieving the expected level is higher than that normally found. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but are given insufficient opportunities to use and develop their information technology skills. They write with letters correctly formed and show a good awareness of spelling and punctuation. Most pupils successfully apply these skills to a suitable range of writing such as book reviews, story settings, lists, summaries and stories. For example, when making a list of six things they did in school the day before a holiday. Year 1 pupils successfully answer comprehension questions concerning the story of the Rainbow Fish and write their own accounts of the lives of famous artists such as Van Gogh. They write in complete sentences using correct punctuation. Year 2 pupils are good at writing up their own accounts of scientific investigations.

102. Pupils make good progress in writing throughout Key Stage 2 and standards are well above average by the end of the key stage. Pupils organise their thoughts clearly and logically when writing a story or an account. They work well in groups to review the writing of a famous author. Some good examples of writing include pen portraits, game reviews, leaflets, diary writing and play scripts. Pupils are encouraged to write for different audiences. For example, Year 6 pupils are writing their own adventure stories that will be eventually read to younger pupils. In Year 3 pupils have a good opportunity to use their writing skills by recording their thoughts about someone in their class who has been kind to them in school. Satisfactory use is sometimes made of writing in other subjects. For example, in religious education by writing their own prayers. However, there is too much use of copied writing in other subjects or of worksheets that limit pupils answers to a few words. Poetry writing is a feature of the work in most classes. In one class a child included the line "my life is what I want it to be". Pupils' handwriting and spelling are satisfactory overall and in most classes work is usually well presented. Pupils' drafting skills are appropriately developed.

103. The school makes good provision for supporting pupils with special educational needs. Most teachers are good at planning work that matches pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils usually make good progress in literacy and in speaking and listening. Class teachers and learning support staff work well together to ensure that the precise targets identified on pupils' individual educational plans are being met.

104. Pupils concentrate and behave well. They participate enthusiastically in whole-class discussions, settle quickly to group tasks, and persevere to complete work. Pupils enjoy explaining what they are doing. They follow class rules.

105. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. During the week of the inspection some very good practice was observed in both key stages. Where practice is very good the teacher makes the lesson come alive. For example, in Year 6 very good use was made of the book, 'The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler', in motivating pupils to use metaphors and personification in their writing. Throughout the school lessons are very well planned according to the learning objectives of the National Literacy Strategy.

106. Good management of pupil behaviour is evident in all lessons in both Key Stages. High expectations and challenging questions to extend pupils' thinking are important features of the very good teaching observed. For example, in Year 1 children respond well to the well established routine of 'now that we are done, we can have a little chat' and it has become a key feature of the plenary sessions. Teachers' subject knowledge is good throughout the school. Resources are used well but not always well stored. Book corners in classrooms are unattractive and pupils are not given enough opportunities to use the library for personal research purposes.

107. Teachers mark work on a regular basis. Whilst there are some good examples of comments that indicate to pupils what they need to do next to improve their work, there is not a consistent approach across the school. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. The co-ordinator is new in post but has already successfully monitored classroom practice. She has a very good knowledge of the subject. The development of the National Literacy Strategy has been very effectively managed. Assessment procedures are good and the information gathered is carefully recorded and used in further planning and to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils.

MATHEMATICS

108. Mathematics is a strength of the school. Attainment in mathematics by the time pupils leave the school is very high and this is the result of the good progress made throughout the school. Results are very high when compared with national levels and with those of schools of a similar type. This is confirmed by the most recent test results when 97% achieved the expected Level 4 with the significant proportion of 56% reaching Level 5. Inspection findings are that the present age group is on line to achieve similarly high levels. The school's results improved significantly in 1997 and have remained fairly constant since then. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.

109. Test results in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average, maintaining the trend of previous years. In the most recent test results 94% reached the expected Level 2 and 22% achieved Level 3. Children in the present Year 2 are on line to improve slightly on these performances, with the entire year group on target to achieve the expected Level 2 and around a quarter of these to achieve the higher level.

110. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils know the sequence of numbers to 100. They can calculate mentally using addition and subtraction involving numbers to 20 with a significant number of higher attainers handling more complex numbers. They have a good grasp of number facts and have benefited from daily mental mathematics sessions to improve their speed of recall. They understand that a quarter, half and three-quarters are part of a whole shape. Most use standard measures to draw lines of differing lengths, and can solve simple problems involving weight and time. They construct solid shapes using nets. They collect data such as weight of pets and favourite holidays to produce graphs and pictograms.

111. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils numeracy skills are very good and they are able to apply them to complex investigations. For example, during the inspection higher attaining pupils in Year 6 were able to produce reports about the discovery of patterns relating to the sum of consecutive numbers and the difference between their squares. Many were able to make predictions about the relationship between three consecutive numbers. They accurately and confidently work with large numbers using a variety of methods for their calculations, in some cases to one million. Most pupils show good expertise in changing decimals to percentages or fractions and demonstrate good understanding of probability, the properties of three-dimensional shapes and of reflective and rotational symmetry. Higher attainers are able to draw a polygon with each vertex lying in the first quadrant, plot its reflection in the y-axis and name the co-ordinates of the reflected shape.

112. The quality of learning is good in Key Stage 1 when children build on the good start they are given in the Reception class. Very good progress is made by most pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupils with special needs make good progress throughout the school. Those identified as specially gifted in mathematics are well provided for with additionally challenging activities. Homework is systematically and regularly undertaken by pupils of all ages and this contributes positively to the standards they achieve. There are good links with the local secondary school. For example, during the inspection week Year 6's visit included problem-solving activities. There are some satisfactory examples to be found of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other curricular areas. For example, in Year 1 they use sets and sub-sets to classify games enjoyed by parents and which children continue to enjoy, and to group toys which are pushed and those which are pulled.

113. In science, mathematical skills are used to plot graphs of favourite foods, to compare hand spans and to show the time taken for pieces of ice to melt in various parts of the classroom. Measurements are taken of the distance which objects travel, timing pulse rates, and by reading temperature using a thermometer. However, there is still scope to increase opportunities for investigational activities, particularly in Key stage 1 and to review the number of planned occasions when mathematics can be used and applied in other curriculum areas. Calculators are used appropriately in both key stages. The application of information technology within mathematics is unsatisfactory, for example in the development of key skills such as number bonds and data handling.

114. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Most are keen to learn. They work co-operatively in pairs or groups when required to do so. They usually listen carefully to teachers' instructions, concentrate well and persevere with their given tasks. Their knowledge of number facts and recall of tables reflects the effort they put into learning them. Most present their work neatly.

115. The quality of teaching is good and there are some very good features. Very good strategies are in place in both key stages for the teaching of numeracy. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. Planning is focused, time is well managed and most lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Activities are well planned and match pupils' attainment levels. Most classrooms are well organised, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, allow them time to develop their explanations and give them good verbal feedback on their work. The majority of teachers demonstrate good questioning strategies to check on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Self-evaluation by pupils of their work is a particularly effective feature in Key Stage 2. Pupils are managed very well and relationships are good. Appropriate homework is set on a regular basis.

116. A good action plan is in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the numeracy strategy. Assessment procedures are comprehensive. The information is well used to inform future planning, provide for pupils' individual requirements and to set targets for the future. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Resources are satisfactory and include a number of recent purchases. National Curriculum requirements are met.

SCIENCE

117. Standards of attainment in science are well above the national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and have improved considerably since the last inspection in 1996 when they were judged to be in line. The school has introduced the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines and improved planning and assessment procedures. These changes have contributed significantly to the good improvements which have been made in pupils' achievements. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and above in the National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 was well above the national average. An above average percentage of pupils achieved the higher Level 5. These results are above average when compared to similar schools. Taking the previous four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils was well above the national average.

118. Inspection evidence shows that teacher expectations remain high and that a well above average proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard. Girls perform better than boys in science but the difference is not significant.

119. During Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress and by the age of eleven they are able to carry out detailed investigations, predict and draw conclusions. They carry out a good range of activities that help them to learn more about the world around them. Much of the work they explore is pitched at an appropriately high level of challenge. For example, in a study about plants pupils demonstrated a good understanding of photosynthesis. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 know how to set up an investigation to find the best material for making a roof to keep out water. Older pupils understand the importance of keeping to a healthy diet and taking regular exercise. They are able to measure pulse rates before and after exercise and draw a graph to record the results. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' work in their science books is well presented and shows a very good coverage of the programmes of study. They record their work meticulously in the form of written reports graphs and diagrams. However, much of the writing is copied text and does little to extend their literacy skills.

120. The 1999 end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments in science showed that the percentage attaining Level 2 and above was above the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. Percentage of pupils reaching Level 3 was broadly in line with the national average and similar schools. Inspection evidence indicates that these standards have been maintained and are above average. Progress throughout the key stage is satisfactory overall but good in Year 1.

121. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils carry out simple investigations and identify push and pull forces. They have learnt that heat can have a permanent or reversible effect upon certain materials such as chocolate. They know that flowering plants produce seeds which are dispersed by the wind and animals. Younger pupils understand that these seeds need light, warmth and water to germinate. They are able to name parts of the body and have a good knowledge of how the sense of touch and sight help us.

122. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Evidence from previous work completed shows that pupils are acquiring a good understanding of key scientific concepts. Through the study of a variety of interesting topics pupils are developing the skills of enquiry. They are provided with the opportunity to observe closely and to make accurate measurements. For example, in an investigation into the evaporation of water Year 5 pupils had to time how long it took a pool of water to disappear. In Year 4 they carefully measure out different amounts of water to be given to plants. The pupils are able to draw inferences from the results of their investigations. However, sometimes the work of the oldest pupils is over-directed and as a result their ability to set up an experiment for themselves is not as well developed as it could be.

123. Pupils' attitudes to science are good. In all the lessons seen, pupils worked together well and the more they were allowed to be involved the more they responded. For example, Year 3 pupils successfully practised their observational skills as they looked closely at how the coloured water had been transported through the veins in the stem of the celery to other parts of the plant.

124. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good overall in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1 there is good coverage of most of the attainment targets but experimental and investigative work is not as well developed as pupils' knowledge in Year 2. However, the teacher does insist that pupils write up their own accounts of any investigations they engage in. Throughout the school most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have high expectations. Lessons are well prepared with resources readily available. They are carefully planned and the work that pupils are expected to complete usually takes due account of all ability groups.

125. This is an improvement on the findings from the previous inspection when it was reported that at Key Stage 2 some of the activities provided did not always extend the more able pupils sufficiently and teachers' knowledge of science was not always secure. The standard of work observed and the results from National Curriculum tests show that higher attaining pupils are now being appropriately challenged.

126. Good teaching results in effective learning taking place with pupils gaining new knowledge and developing a greater understanding of scientific investigation. At the beginning of most lessons the aims are explained clearly to the pupils. The majority of teachers use questioning very effectively to challenge pupils' thinking, to extend their knowledge and to assess their understanding. However, Key Stage 2 pupils are provided with too few opportunities to write up their own science notes and work is often copied from the board. Teachers conscientiously mark books and comments are usually supportive but rarely do they inform pupils what to do next in order to improve their work.

127. The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator reviews medium-term planning but does not monitor the quality of teaching. The school uses the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines which provides a good structure to the work in science and ensures that the knowledge and skills are built upon as pupils move through school. Assessment procedures are good and the school is in the process of analysing the information in order to set targets and to improve planning. Resources are satisfactory. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

ART

128. During the period of the inspection it was only possible to observe one lesson in each key stage. There was insufficient evidence available from pupils' work to make a judgement about standards by the end of both key stages. The previous inspection report recorded that the development of skills and techniques lacked progression. The school has made insufficient progress in addressing this issue. Though a scheme of work has been introduced, subject-specific skills are still not being consistently developed as pupils move through the school. The standard of work done with an artist in residence was of very good quality. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate support and make satisfactory progress.

129. By the age of seven pupils can work with a range of suitable media including pencils, finger paints and crayon. They produce their own observational drawings of pots and vases. Very good progress is made in Year 1 in the development of a good range of artistic skills. For example, they are taught how to mix primary colours to produce new colours and shades. They learn about the different techniques of famous artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and George Seurat, and produce effective paintings in their style. Pupils enjoy discussing their work and telling you what they know about the artists they have been studying. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their literacy skills as they write about the lives of the artists.

130. Current work in Key Stage 2 shows that though progress overall is satisfactory there are inconsistencies in the development of pupils' artistic skills and understanding between classes. During the week of the inspection Year 6 pupils worked with a visiting specialist art teacher to make a face mask out of clay. They first had to sketch out the features using charcoal. The quality of this work was high and showed just what the pupils are capable of producing when they are given the opportunity and pointed in the right direction.

131. The quality of pupils' learning was very good in both the lessons seen. This was because in one the teacher made good use of the paintings of George Seurat to introduce a new painting technique. In the other lesson the specialist teacher demonstrated clearly the necessary skills first before allowing the pupils to try them out for themselves. In these lessons the pupils were provided with opportunities to experiment and practise in an unhurried way. They were given time to think for themselves and solve problems increasing their understanding of the possibilities of materials and techniques. The pupils' behaviour was very good and the finished products demonstrated the pride they took in their work.

132. It is not possible to make a judgement about the overall quality of teaching because too few lessons were seen. Teaching was very good in the two lessons observed. Teacher demonstration was well used to introduce pupils to new techniques. Both lessons had been conscientiously planned and all resources were at hand. This had a positive impact on the quality of learning enabling the lessons to run smoothly and at a good pace.

133. There is no co-ordinator for art. As a result no monitoring and evaluation of either standards or teaching is taking place. A satisfactory scheme of work has been put in place since the last inspection. However, it is not being consistently put into practice by all teachers to ensure that pupils' skills are being systematically developed as they move from class to class. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution towards pupils' cultural development. Resources are satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

134. The previous inspection found that standards in design and technology were in line with national expectations. However, work produced during the annual "Technology Challenge" at Key Stage 2 was judged to be of an excellent standard. The school has decided to extend the challenge to Key Stage 1 this year and to block the teaching of design and technology into a two week period starting towards the end of the summer term. As a result, it was not possible to observe any design and technology lessons and so no judgements can be made about the quality of teaching. Judgements about standards are based on photographic evidence, an examination of teachers' planning and discussions with the co-ordinator. The school has maintained the standards observed at the time of the previous inspection and by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are achieving well above average standards. No judgements can be made about pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 because of insufficient evidence.

135. An examination of work completed during the "Technology Challenge" in previous years shows that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they follow a well structured design process. For example, Year 5 pupils used a clearly laid out booklet that took them step-by-step through the process of designing a moving model using gears and cams. They had to list the materials and tools to be used. When pupils had completed their models they were expected to evaluate the effectiveness of the finished product based on their original designs and suggest how it might be modified or improved. The pupils understood that each stage would be filled over a period of time and they had to keep a daily log recording their progress.

136. The schools' approach to teaching design and technology is a good example of how to make the best use of the time available. The challenge successfully incorporates all the elements of good technology teaching because it is very thoroughly planned and executed. It makes a valuable contribution towards the development of pupils' writing skills as they fill in their booklets. Good links are also made with mathematics as pupils purchase materials from "the shop" and measure accurately before sawing wood or cutting card.

137. All pupils talked with enthusiasm about the “Technological Challenge” and for many it was the highlight of the school year. They enjoy very much the practical nature of the subject and could explain with confidence how they had gone about making their models.

138. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and provides effective support and guidance. The amount of detail in the planning booklets shows that teachers have a good understanding of the content of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Completed products are assessed according to the criteria set by the challenges. These procedures are an effective way to monitor the quality of pupils’ experiences and to determine their progress. There is a small central store containing minor items such as plastic tubing and wheels but often resources have to be brought in from home. The school ensures that there are adequate resources available for pupils to complete their projects.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

139. During Key Stage 1 pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in history and standards are in line with those expected for their age by the end of the key stage. Pupils know, for example what a devastating effect the direction of the wind had on spreading the fire during the Great Fire of London. They write their own accounts of the life of Florence Nightingale making good use of their writing skills. Pupils learn to identify similarities and differences between earlier times and today by, for example, comparing pictures of Blackpool taken fifty years ago with pictures taken in recent times. Year 1 pupils use their observational skills well in a topic about homes old and new by looking at the features of terraced houses, built in the nineteenth century. During the week of the inspection pupils in this age group demonstrated a very high standard of learning as a result of the very good teaching they received. The teacher successfully used a range of resources, which she had brought in, to develop pupils’ understanding of a Victorian washday and how it differed from washing methods today.

140. Satisfactory progress, including that made by special educational needs pupils continues to be made in Key Stage 2 and standards are in line with those expected for their age by the end of the key stage. However, pupils are not consistently given enough opportunities to use their writing skills. At times there is too much emphasis on copying the teachers’ writing or on using work sheets. Pupils are encouraged to consider the impact that different people and cultures have had on present day. They are able to describe the features of life in a past society. For example, they have learnt about life in Egypt and understand why the Egyptians used mummification to preserve the dead. Pupils in Year 6 use source materials well such as photographs, biographies, books and other artefacts to gain an understanding of life at the time of the Second World War. In one lesson during the week of the inspection they used their writing skills well in producing newspaper accounts of an incident from the Manchester Blitz. Good use was made of homework to enable them to finish their work.

141. During the week of the inspection only one geography lesson was seen but evidence from pupils’ work and discussions held with pupils and staff provides enough evidence for judgements to be made. Throughout the school pupils make satisfactory progress in geography and standards are in line with those expected for their age by the end of both key stages. Pupils in Key Stage 1 learn to identify the countries in the United Kingdom. Mapping skills are developed well and imaginatively as pupils draw their own plans of ‘Captain Plank’s Treasure Map’. They include a key.

142. In Key Stage 2 pupils learn about their own locality. They study how water arrives in the school and how it is distributed around the building. They produce diagrams of good quality. Pupils look at what effect the building of a by-pass would have on life in a rural village. Whilst there are some examples of pupils using their writing skills, for example, a letter to a friend about a holiday, there is too much emphasis on copying out text. Very little use is made of information technology.

143. Pupils enjoy their history and geography lessons. They have good attitudes to work and are eager to contribute to class discussions. Pupils are particularly interested in how people lived in past times. They are keen to explore new ideas and exchange these with each other.

144. Teaching in history in both key stages is satisfactory. In Key Stage 2 there is evidence of good teaching at the end of the key stage. Teaching is particularly good when words and first-hand materials bring the subject alive. In a lesson on World War 2 excellent use was made of archive material. Pupils were stimulated to feel awe and wonder at the devastating effect of the bombs. In lower Key Stage 1 teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned and pupils are encouraged to write their own accounts, making use of dictionaries where appropriate. Where teaching in both key stages is less successful pupils are not given enough opportunities to use their writing skills, which limits their progress. It is not possible to make any overall judgement about the teaching of geography as only one lesson was seen during the week of the inspection.

145. At the time of the last inspection standards in both subjects were found to be in line with those found in most schools and this standard has been maintained. Resources for geography and history were found to be limited and this is still the case. Though the school does have access to some artefacts and archive materials for history, resources are still unsatisfactory overall.

146. Both subjects have clear policy guidelines. Co-ordinators are willing to give help when required, but the school does not have any system to evaluate classroom practice in the subjects. Evidence from teachers' planning shows that there is little evidence of the consistent development of skills across the school.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

147. At the time of the previous inspection standards of attainment in information technology were reported as being satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 pupils' skills in data handling, graphics and word processing were judged to be not sufficiently developed.

148. The subject is planned to be integrated into other subjects across the curriculum. As a result, it was not possible to observe any specific information technology lessons. However, observation of individuals and small groups working at computers, scrutiny of a small sample of unlevelled work across the school and discussion with the co-ordinator, teachers and pupils provide a satisfactory evidence base for judgements to be made.

149. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory and standards in information technology are low. Throughout both key stages pupils make unsatisfactory progress and attainment by the ages of seven and eleven is well below the national expectation.

150. By the age of seven most pupils have acquired a range of appropriate mouse and keyboard skills but cannot open and exit programs for themselves. They understand that what they type on the keyboard appears on the screen, can be saved, changed and printed off but they are not able to do this without adult support. Pupils do have access to tape recorders and were observed operating them for themselves. This aspect of information technology has improved since the previous inspection. However, their experience of other aspects of the subject such as programmable toys is very limited.

151. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can type texts to create a fair copy but are insecure about using cut and paste techniques. They load CD ROMs and use the menu to access a particular piece of information when undertaking independent research. Pupils have only just been introduced to spreadsheet modelling but have little experience of control and using databases to interpret information. Their knowledge and skills often reflect their use of computers at home rather than skills developed at school.

152. Pupils respond well to the subject and work with interest, concentration and enjoyment. They handle the equipment carefully and are able to share and collaborate in small groups or in pairs. Some show independence and initiative in their work, particularly those who have access to a computer at home.

153. No specific information technology lessons were timetabled during the inspection. An examination of teachers' planning and observation of practice indicate that the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall in both key stages. The teaching of skills has been inconsistent and is the major weakness throughout the school. The teachers have lacked the support of a structured scheme which clearly identified the progression of skills and ensured that all strands were being addressed at an appropriate level. The amount of time spent using computers, and the amount of focused application, varies between classes. As a result, older pupils have only limited experience on which to build. Where teachers pass on their knowledge, pupils are quick to adopt the techniques and make marked progress. Discussions held with staff show that some of them lack confidence in teaching certain strands of information technology and would benefit from training.

154. The school has increased the number of machines available since the last inspection and now has a computer in each classroom but this is still barely adequate and provides only limited opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. The range of software is unsatisfactory and limits the opportunities pupils have to use information technology to support other subjects. Moreover, one or two classes have only recently had regular access to their own computer whilst some of the equipment is outdated. As a result, most pupils, including those with special educational needs have not made the progress they could, particularly in Key Stage 2.

155. The subject co-ordinator is aware of the need to raise standards and with the support of the headteacher has produced a good quality action plan that clearly sets out the priorities for the next three years. A new scheme of work is being introduced based upon the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidance. The school has successfully bid for National Grid for Learning funding which should increase the range of resources substantially. It has good links with its receiving high school which has been beneficial in the development of information technology. The school is now well placed to implement its information technology plan and to address the imbalance between the strands of the subject and the inconsistencies in the development of skills.

MUSIC

156. During the inspection week only one music lesson was observed therefore no overall judgement can be made about the quality of teaching, nor was it possible to gather sufficient evidence to make a judgement about current standards in music. The previous inspection reported that in both key stages standards of achievement were satisfactory, although progress was limited by teachers' lack of subject knowledge, particularly in Key Stage 1.

157. Since the previous inspection, a co-ordinator with good specialist knowledge has been appointed. Teaching arrangements show that the normal pattern is for her to deliver planned half-termly music topics to each class in Key Stage 1 through lessons which take place on a fortnightly basis. She also takes Key Stage 2 classes for music lessons and singing practice in the hall. However, at the time of the inspection she was undertaking a different role from normal. Her timetable of music teaching to classes other than her own was in abeyance, with a consequent negative effect for most pupils on their opportunities to develop musical skills.

158. Additional music activities are provided by the co-ordinator for those with a particular interest or aptitude in the subject. These include a successful music club which participated in the recent 'Voice of Promise' by composing and performing their own work and enjoying a workshop led by a visiting local, professional composer. Recorder groups, taken at lunch time, are well supported by Key Stage 2 pupils. The school arranges for pupils to be taught a wide range of musical instruments, including guitar, clarinet, violin, piano and flute, by visiting music specialists. Lessons are subsidised and these pupils are given the opportunity to perform before an audience.

159. Evidence from staff discussion shows that most teachers lack confidence in the subject. Some Key Stage 2 teachers have benefited from observation of lessons, led by the co-ordinator. This has gone some way towards improving their subject knowledge. An appropriate music policy is in place. It is planned to implement a scheme of work based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines at the start of the next school year. Resources are unsatisfactory. The quantity of musical instruments is insufficient for the size of the school and the range is limited.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

160. No overall judgement on standards in physical education can be made as only a limited range of the activities on offer could be observed. The quality of performance levels in games skills throughout the school is satisfactory. School records show that standards in swimming are above average. These findings broadly reflect the judgements made at the time of the previous inspection.

161. By the age of seven pupils demonstrate satisfactory levels of accuracy when throwing and catching a ball. They work well with a partner. The quality of learning is better when the teacher demonstrates ball throwing skills to the pupils and then gives them time to practise. Warm up activities with younger pupils were vigorous involving hopping, skipping and jumping. The teacher led by example and as a result the pupils demonstrated good control. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in the development of games skills.

162. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 2 in developing games skills. Their range of experiences is widened by the school's involvement in the Sport in the Community project. Pupils become increasingly more adept in ball skills and develop a sound understanding of the strategies associated with attack and defence games. For example, Year 4 pupils demonstrated an above average ability to control, dribble and pass a ball as a result of high quality teaching they received from visiting qualified coaching staff as part of the school's involvement with the local "Football in the Community" scheme. Pupils are developing a sound understanding of the effect exercise has on the body and show a concern for the safety of themselves and others. Boys and girls are equally skilful in throwing, catching and fielding.

163. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

164. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes in physical education lessons and work with enthusiasm. They perform sensibly on their own and collaborate well in pair or group activities. Pupils make good use of opportunities to practise, to modify and to consolidate their physical skills. Behaviour is good and they respond immediately to instructions and suggestions from their teachers.

165. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Teaching standards have improved since the last inspection and teachers are more confident in the subject. Instructions are clear and pupils are given positive encouragement to do well. However, few opportunities are provided for pupils to look at what makes some performances better than others and to use these ideas to improve their own standards. Very good use is made of the skills of visiting sports coaching staff.

166. The subject is currently co-ordinated by the headteacher. A scheme of work provides a framework for teachers' planning. Resources are unsatisfactory, especially those for younger pupils. The hall, as at the time of the last inspection, is used for storing furniture which limits the space available. Large apparatus, for example the climbing frame, is of a poor quality. The previous inspection report recorded that resources were insufficient and this remains the case. Currently pupils are not given the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular sport, apart from athletics, and this is a concern to some parents.