

# INSPECTION REPORT

**SAINTS PETER AND PAUL CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wallasey

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105071

Headteacher: Mrs K M Robertson

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara Doughty  
22261

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 196009

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Atherton Street Wallasey Merseyside
Postcode:	CH45 9LT
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Anderson (Acting)
Date of previous inspection:	30 <sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Barbara E Doughty Registered inspector 22261	The Foundation Stage Curriculum Art and design Special educational needs Equal opportunities	What sort of school it is and what it should do to improve further The school's results and pupils' achievements How well the pupils are taught
Mr Paul Widdowson Lay inspector 13485		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
Mrs Kath Hurt Team inspector 24895	English Design and technology	How well the school is led and managed
Mrs Carole Jarvis Team inspector 27276	Science Geography History	How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils are
Mrs Margaret Entwistle Team inspector 30651	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an average size Roman Catholic primary school for pupils aged four to eleven. There are 234 pupils on roll; the balance of boys and girls is fairly equal. Children start school at the age of four and their attainment on entry is broadly typical of that found in most other schools. All of the pupils are from English speaking families; there are none with English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, 10 per cent, is below the national average, although there is an above average number with statements of special need. There is a broadly average number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, usually around 20 per cent. There is little movement too and from the school and mobility is low at two per cent.

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

This is a good school. Standards are above average overall and pupils do well from starting school to leaving. Teaching is effective and leadership and management are good. The head teacher in particular has a clear view of how to move the school forward. There is a shared sense of purpose because of effective teamwork and this means that the school is well poised for further improvement. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils do well from starting school to leaving because teaching is good. It is particularly effective in Reception, where children get off to a good start, and is inspirational in Year 4 where pupils make rapid progress.
- The curriculum is enriched well through visits and visitors and additional learning opportunities.
- The provision for moral development is excellent; it is very good for spiritual, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good mainly because pupils enjoy very effective relationships with each other and the teachers. They sustain good concentration in lessons, usually work hard, and rise to challenge well.
- This is a very caring school to which most pupils enjoy coming.
- The leadership and management of the head teacher are particularly effective in creating a team spirit; staff and governors are moving in the same direction and so have good capacity to bring about further improvement.

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

- Handwriting and work presentation are not good enough. This is because pupils are not encouraged to check on and correct careless mistakes, nor are they taught letter formation from an early age and a legible joined handwriting style later on.
- Teachers do not always challenge pupils to do and learn more once they have achieved what is expected.
- Teaching in some classes does not match the best because effective practice is not shared sufficiently.

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

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

This school has made good improvement since its last inspection in 1997. Standards are rising in English, mathematics and science and the school is more focused and well placed to bring about further improvements. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is much better than it was. The imbalance between subjects has been addressed and the assessment procedures have improved. The weaknesses in the provision for outdoor learning in Reception have been dealt with. Pupils throughout the school are better focused on their work and now behave extremely well.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	D	C	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	B	D	C	B	
Science	C	D	E	D	

Taking English, mathematics and science together, standards by the end of the juniors are rising at a similar rate to those nationally, and early indications, from the work pupils are currently doing, are that the school's targets are likely to be exceeded this year in both English and mathematics. The standards attained in class by the current Year 6 are generally above average in English and mathematics. Standards in reading and mathematics are particularly good throughout the school. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 work confidently with the four rules of calculation. They read with confidence and fluency and their use of letter sounds to read unknown words is particularly good. Results in science have not kept pace with the national trend, but there are signs of improvement this year with most pupils currently working at the expected level and above. Likewise, standards in ICT have improved in the juniors from below those expected to satisfactory overall. The improvements are due mainly to science booster classes and, in both subjects, better curriculum planning and more effective teaching. These improvements are already helping to raise standards in the infants; Year 2 pupils attain above expected levels in both subjects. Standards are broadly as expected and infant and junior pupils make sound progress in all other subjects. However, weaknesses in handwriting throughout the school mean that work is not well presented in English or in other subjects. Pupils make careless mistakes because they are not encouraged to check and alter their work. Nevertheless, pupils do well at this school and their learning over time is good. It is better in the juniors than the infants because teaching is more consistent. Pupils learn best in the Reception classes and Year 4 where teaching is consistently good or better. Reception children have a good knowledge of letter sounds and this gives them a good start in reading. Their numeracy skills are equally as well developed and their knowledge and understanding of the world are good. Standards are broadly as expected in all other areas of learning.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to come to school and eager to learn. They are usually well focused and show interest in what they are doing.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in the classrooms and around the school and because of this they listen carefully and concentrate well on their work.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships amongst pupils are very good and this leads to an atmosphere of support and mutual respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Behaviour and attitudes, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, develop well. Pupils do not have enough of a say in what happens. They have strong opinions, which they articulate well. However, they do not have a role in bringing about changes to school routines and procedures.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils do well at this school, particularly in English and mathematics. The teaching of numeracy and literacy skills is good and subject content is clear and accurate because teachers have a good knowledge of the national strategies and are effective in teaching them. Effective grouping by ability in mathematics means that numeracy skills are well developed in the juniors in particular. Good teaching in English means that pupils do well in reading. Across all subjects, teachers make sure that all pupils are equally involved in lessons and the school meets the needs of all its pupils well. The clear learning targets for pupils with special educational needs in particular mean that support staff know what these pupils are working on and teachers make sure that the work is suitably adapted to meet their needs. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified, and teachers are aware of which pupils are particularly talented in subjects like art, music and physical education. However, little has yet been done beyond this identification.

Throughout the school, lessons are well organised, mainly because of the thorough planning, and move at a brisk pace. When assemblies overrun the subsequent lessons can suffer. They sometimes have to be rushed or some of the planned work has to be missed out. Relationships are very good and this means that pupils enjoy learning and work hard. Lessons are well prepared so little time is lost. Support assistants help pupils of all abilities to learn and make progress. Teachers' clear instructions ensure that pupils know what they are doing and probing questions mean that teachers are aware of what pupils have learnt. However, once this has been established and pupils have learnt what the class was intended to cover, teaching does not go on to extend pupils' thinking and learning further. In addition, pupils are not encouraged to look carefully at their presentation, handwriting style and spelling and make any necessary corrections; sloppy work is often accepted. Not enough checking for careless mistakes goes on and teachers accept too readily what they are given.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, well enriched through a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs. The provision for the youngest children is particularly good because it is based on learning through observation and exploration.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' individual learning targets are well focused and achievable and, most importantly, measurable. Learning support assistants are clear about what these targets are; suitable work and effective teaching strategies ensure that they are met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Moral development is excellent. Classes make their own rules and pupils take responsibility for their behaviour and attitudes. The school promotes Christian values well and pupils have many opportunities to work together.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. A caring ethos promotes caring attitudes and mutual respect.

The school works well with parents and nearly all of them are happy with what the school does for their children.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. The head teacher has established a strong sense of teamwork with a good commitment to improvement and raising standards that involves all staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is supportive of the work of the school and governors are developing their role in shaping its direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school improvement plan is comprehensive and detailed and action plans are relevant to move the school forward.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Educational plans are well supported through budget planning and the school makes good use of other grants to bring this about. The school applies the principles of best value well.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Whilst the head teacher has a clear idea of what needs doing, subject leaders do not monitor teaching and learning effectively enough and do not, therefore, have a clear enough idea of how to bring about improvements to their subjects. This means that their subject action plans, whilst identifying relevant improvements, do not always focus specifically on raising standards. There are some real strengths in teaching but these are not shared and so teachers do not learn from each other about what makes teaching more, or less, effective in some classes than it is in others.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The progress their children make and the way in which the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The way in which pupils behave in school.</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching and the approachability of staff.</li> <li>• The way the school is led and managed and how the school works closely with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The amounts of work children are given to do at home.</li> </ul>

Although there is a very small group of parents who are unhappy with this school, most are very supportive and appreciative of what the school does for their children. The inspection team agree with all of the positive comments. The provision of extra-curricular activities is about the same as most other primary schools and the curriculum is enriched further with a number of additional learning opportunities. Homework is satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The results of the 2001 Year 6 test results were well above the national average in English, broadly average in mathematics, but well below average in science. Although results have not improved at as a great a rate as those nationally in mathematics and science, taking all three subjects together, the rate of improvement over the last five years has broadly followed the national trend. Recent improvements to teaching and learning in both mathematics and science have brought about good improvements to these two subjects in particular and the work pupils currently do in lessons, supported by the most recent teacher assessments, indicate that test results are likely to rise this year in mathematics and science. There is very little difference between the performance of boys and girls in any subject.
2. Last year, this school's test results were compared with schools with between eight and 20 per cent of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This was not an accurate reflection, however, of the circumstances of the pupils in Year 6 last year, where over 27 per cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals and over a quarter of them had special needs. A more accurate comparison with the 20 to 35 per cent free school meals group shows that the school's results were well above similar schools in English, above them in mathematics, and slightly below them in science.
3. The standards of work seen are above the expected level in English and mathematics and broadly in line with what is expected nationally in science. By the time they leave the school, pupils do particularly well in reading and mathematics because of effective teaching in these two subjects. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read fluently and with good understanding, mainly because there is a wide range of books to choose from that are interesting and exciting, with titles that appeal to pupils of both gender. Pupils' knowledge of letter sounds is very good and this gives them the confidence to use this knowledge to build any unfamiliar words that they come across. Dictionaries are always available and pupils use these confidently to look up the meanings of words, securing their understanding and adding to their reading comprehension. In addition, teachers' questions make pupils think hard about what they are reading in the group reading sessions and this also adds interest to their work. Pupils in Year 6 have favourite authors and story styles that they particularly enjoy. Standards in writing are broadly as expected nationally, but pupils do not write neatly enough and their handwriting style lacks fluency and accuracy. This affects the presentation of their work not only in English, but in other subjects too.
4. In mathematics, the work in pupils' workbooks and the standards achieved in lessons show that pupils in Year 6 do well in numeracy and early indications are that the 2002 national tests results are likely to be higher. This is because of the effective implementation of the national numeracy teaching guidelines bringing about better teacher expertise and subject knowledge. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, pupils work confidently with numbers up to and beyond 10,000. They multiply two and three-digit numbers together and understand fractions in terms of percentages and decimals. They measure angles accurately and find perimeters of shapes. They use ICT effectively to record information on graphs and charts and use data handling to solve mathematical problems confidently.
5. Standards in science have also improved this year due in the main to better curriculum planning and more effective teaching brought about through in-service training. In addition, booster classes have helped to prepare pupils for the tests and the school is predicting a significant rise in the number of pupils reaching both the expected level and the higher level, indicating sound progress. This is because much of the pupils' learning is based on investigation and experimentation, which makes it more meaningful and therefore longer

lasting. Their testing of shadows, for example, led to pupils learning that the earth moves around the sun and deepened pupils' understanding of why the size of the shadow lengthens as the day draws to a close. Likewise, their experiments involving evaporation and filtration taught them that materials can be separated and that solids can turn to liquid and back again.

6. Standards in all other subjects are broadly as expected by the time the pupils leave the school and pupils make sound progress from starting school to leaving. There has been significant improvement in ICT. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attainment was below the expected level in this subject and pupils made insufficient progress as they moved through the school. However, good training has brought about better teacher subject knowledge and given teachers the confidence and expertise to teach the subject at least competently. Standards are above those expected by the end of the infants, but there is still a lot of catching up to do in the juniors. Even so, most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of ICT by the time they leave the school. Their word processing skills are good and they use programs confidently to type their work, edit it on screen and print it off. They add pictures to text and understand how ICT is important in the world of, for example, advertising. They use the Internet and CD-ROMs confidently to find information about topics they are studying, but their use of spreadsheets to record and organise the information, although increasing, is still relatively under-developed.
7. Reception children attain the early learning goals in all areas of learning and exceed them in reading, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world by the time they start in Year 1. This puts the school in a good position to raise standards in the future even further. Children's reading and mathematical skills are well developed and many children are already attaining aspects of National Curriculum Level 1 in both subjects. Their knowledge and understanding of the world are very secure, mainly because work is based on first hand experiences, such as growing plants before labelling their parts and travelling routes before drawing maps. Whilst these standards are maintained in the infants, progress slows to satisfactory. This is because not enough is done to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding beyond that planned and some pupils could go on to achieve more than others. This affects the overall progress pupils make in both the infants and juniors, but it has more impact on slowing the overall attainment in the infants where the good teaching is not as consistent. In contrast, this does happen in Year 4, where most pupils make rapid progress, and contributes significantly to higher standards at the end of the juniors.
8. Whilst this slows the progress of the brighter pupils in particular, because the learning objectives are mainly aimed at achieving the expected level, the least able pupils do relatively well and those with special needs make good progress. Teachers pay good regard to pupils' learning targets and the work is adapted well to meet these needs. In addition, learning support assistants work hard to help these pupils to succeed and pupils rise to the challenge. In contrast, however, there are a number of pupils who have just been identified as particularly good at some subjects, such as art, music and physical education, but the school has yet to implement strategies to deal with meeting the needs of these pupils.

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

9. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have good attitudes to learning which impact significantly on their attainment and progress. In lessons throughout the school, pupils enjoy good relationships with their teachers and, given appropriate encouragement and support, are keen to answer questions and participate in discussions. This enables teachers to assess what individual pupils know and understand. Most lessons have good pace and because of this, the majority of pupils find the work interesting and enjoy the lessons. Good teaching and well-focused learning targets mean that, in the majority of lessons, pupils are attentive and concentrate well on the tasks they are given because they understand what they are doing and why.

10. Pupils behave very well. They have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. In the classrooms, pupils settle quickly and respond well to the instructions given by the teachers, which means lessons start promptly and pupils understand the tasks they are given. They work quietly and sensibly on their own, in pairs and small groups. In the playground, pupils are lively and boisterous but they are very well supervised and most of the time they play together well. There is, however, limited space for playing games and occasionally minor disputes occur, such as the one seen between some of the older boys during a football game. There is no evidence of isolation or harassment and most of the time the playground is a friendly and safe place.
11. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. They open doors for visitors and are polite and friendly. The behaviour of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils who went by bus to their swimming lesson was excellent. Pupils of all ages were attentive, quiet and exceptionally well behaved during the 'sharing' assembly on the last day of the inspection, including the younger playgroup children who were visiting. Lunch time is a social occasion where pupils are friendly, polite and well mannered.
12. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults in the school are very good. Staff know the pupils well and there is mutual respect; as a result, pupils feel confident to approach staff with any problems or concerns they may have. The school has in place a paired reading scheme and a 'buddy system' that establishes and strengthens relationships between the juniors and the infants. Friendship and sharing are successfully encouraged at the school.
13. Pupils' personal development is very good because the school encourages independence from an early age. Pupils sensibly and willingly carry out a range of routine jobs, which they take very seriously. In Year 6, for example, the older pupils have the opportunity to volunteer to help in the dining hall at lunch time and prefects are appointed on a rote system to help and support the younger children coming into school and during playtime. Pupils are consulted about some of the major issues that affect the school, for example the recent project to re-develop the playground, and have an input into establishing class and school rules. However, most pupils are sufficiently confident and articulate to become more involved than they are in, say, routine decisions that affect the daily life of the school. The residential visit for Year 6 pupils has a significant impact on personal development in terms of establishing pupils' independence and self-confidence and building team spirit.
14. Attendance at the school is just below the national average. However, a small minority of pupils who are poor attenders and two pupils who are educated off-site part of the time adversely affect the rate of attendance. For all other pupils, attendance and punctuality is good and this ensures a maximum coverage of the curriculum, and a prompt start to each school day.

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

15. Teaching and learning are good overall, but they are inconsistent between classes and subjects. Teaching is particularly good, and often better, in the Reception classes and Year 4. It is better in the juniors than the infants, where it is satisfactory.
16. The teaching in Year 4 is inspirational and pupils make rapid progress in this class in particular. Explanations are lively and the work is interesting; high demands are made on pupils to achieve well. Work is suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and, unlike in most other classes, once the pupils have achieved their target for the day, their learning is, if appropriate, extended beyond that. This is because the teacher's questions probe the depth of pupils' understanding and then further explanations and additional demands build their existing knowledge and understanding even further.
17. Teachers in the Reception classes have a very secure idea of how young children learn through exploration and observation and consequently, there is a wealth of enjoyable and

purposeful learning opportunities in both classes that interest the children extremely successfully. This means that these children become confident and secure learners by the end of their first year in school. The classrooms are bright and colourful and full of interesting things to look at and touch, such as instruments to play and toys to sort into those that are pushed and those that are pulled. Learning is always based on first hand experience, such as collecting, looking at, and talking about treasured possessions before writing about them, and finding a route around the school before drawing a map so that they can retrace their steps later in the week. There are lots of mathematically and linguistically stimulating things around the rooms to look at and touch, such as words and numbers to support learning and opportunities for children to read, count and sort objects. However, children are not encouraged to use the words on display enough to help them with their spelling. Letter sounds are taught particularly well, and this means that children read unknown words confidently and often accurately. However, teaching does too little to move the children from the early stage of writing phonetically plausibly spelt words to applying correct spelling patterns. In addition, letter formation is not taught effectively enough and the teachers' examples of correct letter formation are not always good enough.

18. Throughout the school, very good relationships between pupils and adults mean that pupils are confident and secure learners, who enjoy having a go and are not afraid to make mistakes. This is so successful because teachers work hard to create a positive working environment. For example, in a Year 5/6 English lesson, the pupils were inspired by the teacher's example of writing about her memories of the last school year. They understood exactly what they were expected to achieve by the end of the lesson because the teacher made this clear from the start by saying, "By the end of today, you should have..." Similarly, in an art lesson, the same teacher told them, "This is experimental, and it doesn't matter how well we get on." This gave all pupils the confidence to have a go and not be afraid to make mistakes. Their drawings were of a high standard as a result.
19. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are taught well overall and teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are generally secure across all of the other subjects. This is because teaching is supported well by the clear teaching guidelines and this, in turn, means that clear instructions and explanations give pupils good guidance about what to do and how to do it. The teachers' instructions and explanations are simplified and made clearer by the learning and classroom support assistants for those pupils struggling to understand them. This means that teachers do not have to go over things again and there are consequently no interruptions to teaching. For example, in a Year 4 ICT lesson, the learning support assistant sat with one pupil, quietly asking her questions to keep her focused and checked that she understood the teacher's instructions and explanations.
20. The work of those pupils with special needs is often adapted in line with the pupils' personal learning targets. This ensures that all pupils make equally good progress and is helped by the very precise, achievable and measurable learning targets, such as, "Add and subtract numbers up to and within 10" and "Follow up to three instructions given by the teacher". The way in which these targets are to be achieved is identified clearly. For example, to achieve the last one, the adults working with the pupil are advised to "Repeat instructions; check the pupil's understanding at regular intervals; ask the child specific questions during discussion; encourage pupil to 'listen, think and do'." This gives excellent guidance to the teachers and learning support assistants.
21. Effective lesson planning means that lessons run smoothly and teachers and pupils are clear about what is to be learnt by the end of the lesson. Also, resources are readily available, teaching has direction, and tasks have purpose. However, sometimes lessons are cut short because the afternoon assemblies run over time. Nevertheless, teachers cope with this extremely well, mainly because they are well prepared and know what they are doing. They quickly adapt the lessons rather than try to cover all of the work planned. This happened, for example, in a Year 6 art lesson, where the teacher had to limit the portrait drawing skills to just measuring, for now, where the features would go, and in a Year 2 science lesson when pupils

were supposed to find, identify and draw plants from two different environments and then talk about their similarities and differences. They had to cut short their discussion on similarities and differences and limit their experiences to finding the plants and beginning their drawings of them.

22. Pupils usually learn and achieve what was planned, but there are too many times throughout the school when their learning stops at that. Teachers do not move beyond the intended learning goals, although clearly some pupils are capable of achieving more, particularly the brighter ones. This explains why not enough pupils reach the higher levels. For example, teachers have identified pupils in every year group who are gifted and talented in one or more subjects, yet they do not plan different or additional work for these pupils. Speaking skills are not promoted as well as they could be, for example, because teachers do not challenge pupils' answers, asking them for example to think of alternative words or phrases in order to explain themselves more accurately. Presentation skills are not improved because teachers accept too readily the untidy work pupils often produce. Handwriting is not taught systematically throughout the school and careless mistakes go uncorrected too often. Marking does not pick up on inaccuracies in pupils' work and this means that pupils are unaware that their work is sometimes not good enough. Whereas, on occasion, teachers correct pupils' spelling mistakes, there is no expectation on the pupils to do anything about it.

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

23. The school provides a good range of curricular and other learning opportunities that meet the needs and aptitude of the pupils well. There have been some significant improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum now meets the statutory requirements because the lengthening of the school day and reorganisation of teaching sessions now ensure that adequate time is allocated to art and design, geography, history and music. There is suitable large equipment and appropriate time given to physical activities to enable children in the Foundation Stage to make better progress in their physical development. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and the school is preparing well for the implementation of the new code of practice in September 2002.
24. Effective curriculum planning, using the national teaching guidelines for literacy and numeracy, contributes to the rising standards in English and mathematics. This has given staff more confidence and focus in their teaching, which has in turn raised pupils' enjoyment and standards in numeracy and reading in particular. All other subjects are thoroughly planned and this supports teachers very well in their daily lesson planning. Teachers throughout the school identify clearly what pupils are to learn by the end of each lesson or series of lessons and link learning securely to National Curriculum levels. Those teaching parallel year groups, for example in Years 3 and 5, plan together to ensure pupils in the same year group but different classes have the same learning opportunities.
25. The school works hard to ensure all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have full and equal access to all the experiences offered, although some are paid for by the parents, such as instrumental tuition, and this restricts take-up.
26. A significant feature of the school is the very effective use it makes of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum and enhance the pupils' learning opportunities. For example, Year 6 pupils go on a residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre. This is used well to develop pupils' social skills and promote a team spirit in Year 6. Visits to the theatre and the Philharmonic Hall to watch ballet or listen to music enhance pupils' cultural awareness as well as their learning in music and physical education. Frequent visits to places of interest in the locality not only extend pupils' historical and geographical learning opportunities but also develop an understanding of their own community. Other visits to places of educational value, such as museums, galleries, farms and zoos, support pupils' learning well. Visitors to the school include architects, historians, drama groups, an orchestra and the fire service. These

provide expert knowledge and promote pupils' enthusiasm for learning. In addition, there is satisfactory provision of after-school and lunch-time clubs. For example, pupils take part in football and netball clubs and play games against other local schools. Throughout the year, other interesting activities, such as canoeing, judo, yoga and ice-skating, broaden pupils' experiences, promote interest and build confidence.

27. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and health education. The religious scheme, 'Here I am', and the 'Health for life' programme provide structure to pupils' learning and opportunities for them to learn about, discuss, and become aware of health issues. Carefully planned lessons and sensitive handling of themes, such as 'stranger danger', raise pupils' awareness and help them deal with personal issues. The science curriculum augments the provision through discussions on healthy food, growth and the dangers of drug misuse. The school nurse gives talks to Year 6 pupils about growing up and adulthood.
28. Links with the community and other schools are very successful in developing pupils' social awareness, supporting the curriculum further and widening the pupils' learning horizons. For example, pupils have opportunities to extend cricket skills with others from a school for pupils with special educational needs. There are close links with the church and the Catholic community. The parish priest visits classes and supports religious education teaching and other aspects of school life. Some pupils join the Parish Folk Group for music and singing. People from the community give talks and answer pupils' questions on a range of local and national issues. Pupils visit a local supermarket to take part in science and design and technology activities. They join other primary and secondary school pupils for religious education, drama and physical education sessions. Staff from the local secondary school support Year 6 pupils with retreats and the leavers' Mass. These links enable pupils to meet pupils from other primary schools and prepares Year 6 pupils well for their transition to secondary school. Links with schools in Holland, Poland and Norway provide opportunities for pupils to e-mail information about their school and entertain visitors from abroad. This gives them a very good understanding of the wider community.
29. Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The harmonious, caring and happy community provides evidence of this. Daily acts of collective worship provide many opportunities for pupils to reflect on the wonders of the world and the love of God. Thinking of others in their prayers encourages pupils to express their thoughts with sincerity and creates an atmosphere of caring. Special assemblies, such as the celebration of the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, provide opportunities for pupils to show others what is important in their school life. Displays around the school and examples given by staff help to promote Christian values. Religious education lessons enable pupils to develop an insight into the values and beliefs of others. Pupils have many opportunities to help one another around the school and in lessons. Teachers organise group activities and encourage pupils to collaborate in their work. Older pupils act as reading 'buddies' to younger pupils and help them in the cloakroom or dining room. They are encouraged to think of others beyond the school community by performing in concerts to raise funds for the Lonsdale Trust or the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. They collect gifts for children in Croatia, write prayers for people in America, and celebrate World Book Day.
30. The wide range of visits to places of historical and geographical interest extends pupils' understanding of their locality and other aspects of British culture. Study of the Commonwealth countries and links with countries on the European Continent develop their understanding of different cultures around the world and their importance in our multi-ethnic society. Visitors who talk about their own faiths, religious education lessons and assemblies, all provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the major world faiths and different beliefs and traditions around the world. Pupils listen to stories from other countries and learn about world conflict such as World War II. These studies raise questions from pupils that help to develop their understanding of how other people live and what they believe and extend their understanding of a multi-cultural society. Pupils learn to appreciate the styles of famous

painters, such as Kandinsky, and listen to music from different times and cultures, such as Saint-Saens.

31. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was good. The importance of consideration, respect and value of themselves and others, reflected in the aims of the school, is apparent in all aspects of school life. Moral values have a high priority in this Christian school community. Classes make their own rules, stated as a promise to their class teacher. This successfully encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and attitudes. Staff act as very good role models and discuss any inappropriate behaviour with pupils should it arise, so pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss problems as they occur and express their ideas and feelings through the 'Here I am' programme. The caring ethos in the school promotes pupils' very caring attitude to others and develops mutual respect.

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

32. This school provides a safe and caring environment, which creates a good atmosphere for learning for all pupils regardless of their gender, background or academic ability. The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are very effective. This is because there is a detailed child protection policy that is applied consistently and the staff have recently held a training day on child protection issues. In addition, the detailed health and safety policy includes provision for regular checks, including risk assessment. The school has two qualified first aiders and there are well-established procedures for recording and dealing with all accidents.
33. The school has good procedures for recording and monitoring pupils' attendance and punctual arrival at school. Attendance registers are computerised and this makes checking easy. Unexplained absences are followed up quickly and the school works closely with the local authority's education welfare officer. Parents are made aware of the importance that the school places on attendance.
34. The school has a comprehensive behaviour policy with a clear system of rewards and sanctions. The staff focus on rewarding positive behaviour but use detention and other sanctions when and if they are appropriate. Pupils are involved in establishing their own classroom rules and are well aware of the standards of behaviour expected of them. They value the reward system and see the rules as fair and necessary to create an orderly school community. There is a detailed anti-bullying policy and effective procedures for dealing with any reported incidents. All staff, including the lunch-time supervisors, have received training on dealing with bullying, and issues are discussed in assemblies and as part of circle time. As a result, bullying is not perceived as a problem by parents, pupils or teachers.
35. The school provides good support and guidance for all pupils including those with special educational needs. The policy of including every child in what the school has to offer is generally effective, with the exception of instrumental tuition and those who can never receive a 100 per cent attendance certificate because of persistent illness or because they are taught off-site for part of the week.
36. Assessment procedures are better than they were at the time of the last inspection, but they are still new and are not yet fully established throughout the school. Pupils' academic achievements are recorded in all subjects and are passed between teachers at the end of each year. In addition, each pupil has an 'evidence folder' that contains samples of their work from each year and shows how their learning develops and progresses as they move through the school. Staff meet monthly to look at these samples of work and this helps to ensure consistency in their assessments. This information also means that pupils' annual reports provide good detail about what pupils know and understand, and are easy to read. Target



setting for improvement in subjects is inconsistent but reports provide good quality information on personal and social development and include target setting in specific areas.

37. Class records influence planning. For example, teachers are encouraged not to plan individual lessons too far in advance in case pupils do not do as well as expected and the plans need to be adapted. However, some of these contain insufficient detail about what pupils found easy and this means that the work does not always take them onto the next stage of learning as quickly as it could.
38. Teachers analyse the national test results in Years 2 and 6 in order to identify gaps in learning and adjust planning accordingly. For example, last year, investigation skills in science and fractions and decimals in mathematics were identified as needing more emphasis and focus. However, the information that the school has about pupils' test results and attainment at the end of each year is not collated in a format that enables staff to track the progress of individual pupils. They are not sure, therefore, in which years pupils make the least and most progress in order to build on what works well and remedy any weaknesses.

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

39. The school has an effective partnership with parents and the vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and the work it does. The school provides good quality information to parents through the school brochure, the governors' annual report to parents, and regular newsletters. There are induction meetings for new parents, half-termly meetings for religious education, a parents' evening to discuss sex education, and curriculum evenings on literacy and numeracy. The school also organised a literacy course for parents to encourage and enable them to support their children at home. Parents are also given information on areas to be covered in each subject and a schedule for homework at the beginning of each year. This ensures that parents know what their children will be doing during the year and encourages them to support pupils' homework, particularly research for topic work.
40. The school maintains effective links with the majority of parents and informs them how well their children are getting on. There are three formal parent and teacher meetings during the year where parents have ample opportunity to discuss their children's attainment and progress and personal and social development with the teachers. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any problems or concerns at any other time and all staff are available to discuss issues with parents at the beginning and end of the school day. Teachers also use the parent book effectively as a two-way communication between home and school, and parents value the response to their comments.
41. There are a small number of parents and grandparents who regularly help in the classroom, specifically in subjects such as art and design, and design and technology, and also with reading. Grandparents also help with religious education and preparing for Sunday Mass. Many other parents make themselves available to help with educational visits and school trips and there is always a willingness to support the school whenever they are asked to do so. Parents support their children with homework and this has a significant impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
42. There is very good support from the parent teacher association who raise more than £3,000 annually to help purchase equipment for the school. Most recently funds have been used to support the re-development of the playground. There is also a 'pool's association' and money raised in this way pays for the leasing of computers. The contribution that parents make to their children's education both in school and at home is both valued and effective.

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

43. The head teacher provides good leadership for the school and is well supported by the staff and governors. She has a clear vision for moving the school forward and has made some significant improvements that are already proving beneficial in raising standards, particularly in English, mathematics, science, and ICT. This has been due to the introduction of better curriculum planning and systems for checking on pupils' attainments, staff training, the introduction of booster classes, additional literacy support groups and setting in mathematics. She has set up efficient systems, including the use of ICT, and has good support from the school administrative staff. This means that the school runs smoothly and efficiently, leaving her free to concentrate on her other managerial tasks. There is a strong sense of teamwork, commitment and hard work among the staff that provides a firm basis for further, continuing improvement. The quality of relationships and the caring atmosphere is a strength in the school, reflecting the high priority everyone connected with school places on them.
44. The governors fulfil their duties and responsibilities satisfactorily. They are very supportive and have a developing role in shaping the direction of the school. They are kept well informed by the head teacher through regular reports. They have a growing awareness of the strengths and areas for development through their involvement in deciding on the priorities in the school improvement plan and are beginning to question the information they receive more effectively. The committees work efficiently, particularly the finance committee, which carefully decides the best ways to allocate the school budget to support educational developments and ensure best value. They monitor spending very closely with a sharp appreciation of the limited funds in reserve. Additional grants, like the ones for early literacy support in Year 2, are used wisely to support improvements and promote rising standards.
45. The school improvement plan is a comprehensive document with clear priorities and carefully costed action plans. Priorities are agreed following an audit of the school's work that involves everyone. Some of the action plans do not specify clearly enough how the developments have or will improve pupils' learning. This means that when co-ordinators review what is happening in their subjects, their evaluations are sometimes based, for example, on improved resources, rather than on how teaching, learning and standards have improved. The impact of the school improvement plan can best be seen in the improvements in planning the curriculum. All the identified weaknesses in the last inspection have been fully addressed and each subject has a suitable time allocation and detailed planning that guides teachers in organising teaching and learning.
46. Another area that has improved as a result of school improvement planning has been the school building and outdoor play areas. There is now an outdoor learning area for the youngest children and the infant and junior playground has been resurfaced. There are attractive play areas like the climbing equipment and quiet areas. However, the playground area is fairly small, and there is limited grassed area and this lessens the opportunities older pupils have for activities like playtime ball games and other physical education activities. The inside accommodation has improved significantly. It is well maintained and kept very clean, with eye-catching displays that create a stimulating learning environment. An effective rolling programme has replaced and added new equipment, books, furniture and other resources that fully support the new curriculum plans. The library, insufficiently stocked at the time of the last inspection, now has a reasonable supply of good quality books for pupils' reference work.
47. There are enough teachers and support staff with the right expertise and experience to teach the curriculum. Their professional development is carefully planned to meet the demands of school priorities and individual needs. Good information in the staff handbook and guidance for temporary staff plus the support of their colleagues help new staff settle quickly into their roles. There are some real strengths in the teaching and the head teacher is clear where these lie. However, the monitoring of teaching is not yet sharp enough to identify what features boost pupils' learning and what hinder it. This means that teachers do not learn from each other what makes teaching more or less effective so that teaching improves throughout the school. The co-ordinators for English have a reasonable overview of their subject but other co-ordinators do not have sufficient opportunities to find out what is happening in teaching and

learning and this limits their influence in bringing about improvements. The school has sound information from a range of tests and teacher assessments that shows pupils' attainments in each year group. This has good potential in supporting the monitoring process. However, it is not yet collected into a format that allows the school to easily check how well pupils achieve as they move through the school. Senior managers rightly see this as a key priority, and are currently working to introduce a better system.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. Staff and governors should now:

- (1) Improve pupils' handwriting, spelling and presentation skills by:
  - i) making sure that Reception children are taught to form letters correctly from an early age and to correct their spelling mistakes by using words around the room to help them;
  - ii) making sure that handwriting is taught systematically throughout the school and that pupils develop a neat and legible handwriting style by the time they leave;
  - iii) encouraging pupils to check their work for careless spelling mistakes and ensuring that when teachers' correct their work, there is an expectation that pupils will not make the same mistake again;
  - iv) making sure that work in exercise books is of an equally high standard to that on the walls;
  - v) ensuring that teachers' marking does not praise sloppy work.

(Paragraphs 3, 17, 22, 53, 61, 68, 80, 97)

- (2) Make sure all pupils, all of the time, are suitably challenged to do and learn more by:
  - i) making sure that teachers, once they have ascertained what pupils can already do, challenge them to do even more;
  - ii) providing for the pupils who are identified as gifted and talented by ensuring that their work is suitably challenging in those subjects where strengths have been identified;
  - iii) encouraging pupils to find alternative ways and to use more accurate words and phrases in order to express their thoughts and feelings more precisely;
  - iv) making sure that teachers' marking helps pupils to see what they can do to improve their work next time and then making sure that they do it.

(Paragraphs 7, 8, 22, 37, 64, 68, 70, 72, 74, 77, 82, 99, 102)

- (3) Check on what it is about teaching that makes learning more effective in some lessons and in some classes than it is in others and share this good practice in order to achieve consistently effective teaching and learning throughout the school.

(Paragraphs 38, 45, 47, 69, 75, 89, 94, 108)

In addition to those identified above there are other minor areas for improvement that are identified in the report that the governors should have regard to when writing their action plan:

1. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to voice their opinions and have a say in bringing about changes to school procedures and routines (paragraph 13).
2. Overlong assemblies cut short valuable teaching time, mean that teachers have to quickly adapt their lessons, and slow pupils' learning (paragraph 21).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	8	19	25	1	0	0
Percentage	4	15	35	45	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils 35 on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	234
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	34

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	24

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

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

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	15	14	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	15
	Girls	12	11	13
	Total	25	24	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (87)	83 (74)	97 (90)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	13
	Girls	13	12	12
	Total	27	27	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (90)	93 (87)	86 (97)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	22	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	12
	Girls	21	15	19
	Total	34	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (76)	68 (64)	76 (81)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	15
	Girls	21	16	18
	Total	35	30	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (76)	73 (71)	80 (83)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	191
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	26.0

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

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	42

*FTE means full-time equivalent*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	455625
Total expenditure	449608
Expenditure per pupil	1813
Balance brought forward from previous year	4963
Balance carried forward to next year	10980

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	234
Number of questionnaires returned	89

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	31	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	24	10	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	38	7	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	40	11	3	1
The teaching is good.	67	23	7	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	30	8	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	20	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	58	34	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	64	33	1	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	33	2	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	40	17	7	6

### Other issues raised by parents

A very small number of parents are very critical of the school and unhappy with what it offers their children. Their concerns centre around:

- parents removing their children from the school;
- the frequency of the head teacher's absences from school;
- the reduction in extra-curricular activities;
- problems with staff relationships and the partnership between parents and teachers.

However, whilst the inspection team appreciate the views of these parents, they could find no evidence to support their claims. There has been some movement to and from the school, but not a substantial amount and most of it explainable. The head teacher does attend meetings and conferences in the course of her work but the deputy is usually present to take responsibility in her absence. The number of after-school and lunch-time clubs is not extensive, but the curriculum is



enriched in other ways. Staff get on well together; there is a real team spirit in this school and teachers go out of their way to deal with parents' concerns.

## **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**

49. Since the last inspection, the provision for children in the Reception classes has improved from sound to good. Effective teaching in both classes and across all areas of learning means that children learn well during their first year in school, and by the end of Reception, most achieve the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional, communication, language and literacy, physical, and creative development. They do exceptionally well in mathematics to exceed the goals for children of their age and their knowledge and understanding of the world are very secure. This is because learning is based on first hand purposeful experiences, which, because they are so interesting, stimulate children to work hard.

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

50. Children are confident and secure learners. This is because they are interested in the activities and excited about doing them. A small group of children, for example, caught the attention of an inspector as soon as she entered the room and proudly showed her the paintings that they had done in the style of Van Gogh. In the other class, children chatted excitedly about how they had 'booked' a holiday to Tenerife in the class travel shop. One child struggled to get his suitcase on the plane, exclaiming, "Whoops, sorry!" to several classmates, as he tried to steer it past them. Children chatter excitedly to each other whilst they work and negotiate roles, such as, "Who will be the pilot today?" They listen quietly during carpet times, for example when talking about things precious to them. The adults encourage them to talk about their own feelings. For example, one teacher told the class that she has a very special rose bush that was planted in her garden by her late father and every time it blooms, it reminds her of him. This prompted the children to talk about what is precious to them, such as one child's special marble and another child's birthday cards saved over the years. Classmates listened attentively as each child shared their thoughts with them.

51. Starting the day with a prayer gives a calm beginning and the excellent relationships enjoyed between children and adults mean that children enjoy school. Staff are very sensitive and thoughtful towards the children's feelings. For example, when one child came to school upset, one of the teachers talked quietly with her so that very quickly she felt much happier and able to face the day. This sensitive approach reflects the high level of care staff have for the children. Children are made to feel special because of the attention they get; staff look directly at each child when talking and listening to them, showing interest in all that they say and do.

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

52. Reception children are confident communicators, mainly because of the example set them by the adults. They send e-mails and faxes to others, take turns in conversations, and respond well to questions. Their reading is particularly good. The book areas in both classrooms are inviting and attractively laid out, and books are prominently displayed around the room, promoting interest and intrigue. Letter sounds are taught well and consequently, children use their knowledge of these and letter blends to read unknown words. Because they can read a range of words confidently and have a good go at reading those that they do not know using their letter sound knowledge, they enjoy looking at books. For example, a group of four children were browsing through a selection of books. They told each other excitedly about the story they were reading and enticed each other to "come and look at my book". They all ended up reading one book, laughing together as they joined in the repetitive lines.

53. Their good knowledge of letter sounds also helps them to become confident writers. Children write, for example, stories, lists and instructions. They have a clear understanding of how to construct a sentence and made up some good ones incorporating the word 'go', such as "Do I have to go to the shop" and "Can I have a go on the see-saw". They spell words that they do not know just as they sound, such as 'moovd' for 'moved' and 'hopd' for 'hopped'. This means that those reading it understand their writing. However, although the teacher sometimes writes the correct spelling underneath these words, they do not often ask children to correct their spellings using words in books and on the walls. Nor is handwriting taught systematically enough; many children do not hold their pencil in a comfortable way and their letter formation is inaccurate. Teachers do not consistently encourage children to write letters that are the same size, nor do they expect children to write in a straight line. Untidy handwriting is too readily accepted. For example, children were encouraged by the teacher, after writing letters ranging from two to eight inches tall on the whiteboard, to "squeeze the last few words onto the end", rather than encourage them to think about what they could have done to make sure that they could comfortably fit all of the words into the available space.

### **Mathematical development**

54. Mathematics is taught particularly well. Teachers have high expectations about what the children can achieve and because of this challenge them well. Consequently, many children can already do some National Curriculum work by the time they start in Year 1.
55. This is because both classrooms are full of mathematically stimulating things to do such as sorting and counting objects, handling money in the class shop, and weighing and measuring activities. Many of the children work confidently with numbers up to and beyond 20. They double numbers up to 10 and some can add two single-digit numbers together by holding the first one in their heads and counting on. They count in twos, the brighter ones up to 50. They use the computer confidently to access a counting program on the Internet and work together well to identify missing numbers and count on. They sort objects according to size and weight and record their findings through either words or symbols. They understand how things that move by pushing or pulling can be sorted between two hoops and those objects that move through pushing and pulling go in the interlinked section.

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

56. Children develop lively and enquiring minds because of very good provision for this area of learning. A wide range of activities fosters children's knowledge and understanding in, for example, design and technology, history, geography, and science. These experiences are based appropriately on learning through observation and exploration, helping to develop children's understanding.
57. Teachers encourage children to look at how, and ask why, things happen. For example, when lighting candles, they prompt children to think about what happens to the wax when it melts and to consider if and how it can be changed back to its original shape. Children plant seeds and watch them grow over time, recording the changes in drawings and diagrams. They know that some things are powered by electricity, whilst others work on batteries. They pick things up with magnets and observe objects and living things more closely through magnifying glasses. They investigate books with flaps to push and pull, and questions on displays make children think, such as, "What happens when you push this?" and "How can you make the doll (in the jewellery case) turn round?" This encourages children to ask why and how.
58. Children's understanding and use of ICT is particularly well advanced. Having explored digital cameras, headphones and Dictaphones, mobile phones and floor turtles, children successfully program the floor robot to move in different directions such as "Two spaces forwards, turn 90 degrees to the right, and move two spaces forward". Classroom computers are in constant use and children have good access to the one in the library. They operate the

tape recorders when listening to music and stories and when they recorded, for example, their route from the 'hidden garden'. They listened to these directions back in the classroom and drew a map from them to use later in the week to find their way back there.

### **Physical development**

59. The provision for physical development has improved since the last inspection. There are plenty of opportunities now for children to run and climb and use the wheeled push and pull toys outside. During one lesson in the adventure play area, the teacher used every opportunity to draw children's attention to the effect that exercise has on their bodies. Questions and prompts such as, "Put your hand here (on the heart) ... is your heart beating faster .... why?" encouraged the children to think carefully before deciding, "Yes, because we've been running".
60. Most children move confidently, swinging by their arms from the pole and moving along it 'monkey fashion'. They confidently balance on logs and even on a rope suspended between two posts! They clamber over stepping logs and up steps. Their awareness of space is good; most of them walk and run in different directions, watching where they are going and avoiding bumping into others.
61. Back in the classroom, the children manipulate small objects, like dolls and small building equipment, with good control. Cutting with scissors is well developed and most children cut out accurately. They use spreaders and paint brushes confidently to stroke glue and paint across the paper. However, pencil control is less well developed. Some of the children hold their pencil awkwardly and because of this find it difficult to see what they are doing and this spoils their writing.

### **Creative development**

62. Children are encouraged to be creative in their work. They work with lots of different materials such as paint, fabric and modelling dough, learning how to use these in different ways to make, for example, three-dimensional models, paintings, and collages. Their music making is especially good; they move imaginatively to music and love to make music using the class instruments. They sing songs from memory and have a good sense of beat and rhythm. In one very good music session, the teacher showed the children how to 'read' music so that they could successfully play on the chime bars the tune to the song they had just learnt. They thoroughly enjoyed this and it gave them much pleasure to be able to read musical notation and recreate the tune. By following step-by-step instructions, children make good, well-proportioned models with the construction equipment and building bricks, and sun hats with fabric neck protectors to give them shade from the sun.

### **ENGLISH**

63. Standards in English have improved in the time since the last inspection and are now above average by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well overall because the teaching is generally good. It is sound in the infants where, by the end of Year 2, standards are as expected because some of the teaching, though satisfactory, does not challenge pupils enough to reach the higher levels of which they are clearly capable. The school places a good emphasis on the teaching of reading, and standards are good throughout the school. This impacts well on achievement in other subjects, where literacy supports pupils' learning effectively.
64. Pupils reach the expected levels in speaking and listening by the end of Year 2. The majority speak clearly and confidently when talking with adults about their work. They listen carefully so that they know what they have to do. Teachers check their understanding and encourage them to think hard by their careful use of questions. However, pupils sometimes speak briefly and quietly and more could be done to encourage them to extend their explanations. An example of

this was seen in Year 2 when pupils were discussing a book they had read together. "What is that stuff in that thing?" asked a pupil. A good opportunity to stimulate his speech was missed when he was asked, "Show me" rather than "tell me" what he meant. Such opportunities are used effectively in some lessons. When pupils in Year 6, for example, were discussing the best ways to dissuade people from smoking in a written argument, their teacher encouraged them to explain their ideas fully. She and the other pupils listened intently as pupils discussed the use of statistics, warnings and repeated words and phrases that catch the reader's attention. These kinds of discussions are a strength in teaching in the oldest classes, and help pupils become confident articulate speakers, with good skills in explaining and putting forward their point of view. Good use is made of assemblies to provide further opportunities for pupils to practise speaking for a wider audience. Pupils from several year groups spoke confidently and audibly about their class achievements during the past year in a moving 'Celebrations' assembly whilst others listened intently.

65. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented so that teachers are confident and plan their lessons well. They have a good rapport with their pupils who behave well and work hard. As a result, literacy lessons are particularly effective in the good teaching of reading. The school has spent wisely on extending its stock of books and there are now enough good quality books for reading and reference. Boys and girls show a keen interest in reading because teachers choose exciting books for shared reading sessions and there are titles that appeal to everyone, including fiction and non-fiction texts. Older pupils help younger ones by acting as enthusiastic reading partners. There is now a good emphasis on developing pupils' skills in all lessons so that from an early age pupils learn to recognise letter sounds and use them to try to read unknown words. Their understanding of what they read develops equally well. Pupils in Year 1 were encouraged to think hard about a 'Holiday Diary' they had been reading. When the teacher asked why dad and mum were grumpy they explained that it was because of "the cloudy weather" or "the long journey". When they came across a word they did not understand, "Where can we find out?" guided them to use the dictionary. Excellent teaching boosted pupils' reading skills considerably in Year 4 when pupils were reading 'The Great Man-eating Shark'. Pupils worked very hard as a result of brisk questioning. "Where does it tell us?" and "How do you know that?" challenged pupils so that they skimmed through the text, seeking out the words and phrases to back up their observations. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6 they are mature, enthusiastic readers who explain clearly the kinds of books they particularly enjoy. They have good 'can do' attitudes and the necessary skills for reading and research.
66. Pupils with special educational needs and those needing extra practice are well supported. Their needs are clearly identified and targets are set. Good teaching means that these pupils make good progress and are sometimes close to attaining the levels expected for their age. A good example was seen in the Early Literacy Support group in Year 2 where the lesson was carefully planned to move pupils on in small manageable steps. They were enthusiastic and concentrated hard so that they learned to recognise rhyming phrases and to read and spell basic key words. Effective teamwork by all the adults means that these pupils are well supported and encouraged in lessons. An example of this was seen when a pupil in Year 4 eagerly worked on an electronic typewriter with a support assistant so that she was able to produce her own story alongside other pupils.
67. The majority of pupils reach the expected levels in writing by the ages of seven and eleven years, but too few reach the higher levels. Effective teaching boosts pupils' writing skills considerably in Years 4, 5 and 6 so that by the time they leave the school pupils write successfully in a wide range of styles. The teachers in Years 5 and 6 grasp every opportunity to engage pupils in purposeful writing tasks, like writing letters to the Queen offering sympathy for her mother's death or writing 'rap' poetry. Good use is made of homework, for instance when pupils produced a well-organised diary of their Oakland residential visit. Sound word processing skills are evident in some of this work as different fonts, colours and graphics are used to good effect. The teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, adding comments that clearly show them what is effective and what needs improving in their writing. In Year 4, pupils benefit

from challenging teaching. In one lesson, they enjoyed writing stories with a dilemma that the characters had to resolve. Having planned and produced a rough draft, they worked hard on their final presentation. The teacher established high expectations from the outset. Pupils were particularly well motivated and took care with their writing because they had discussed who might read it, like the pupils in another class. "Remember, we are in Year 4; we need to think of more complex words and phrases," said the teacher. When they set to work they wrote neatly and their spelling was accurate. They structured their stories carefully, using such phrases as 'dark lionish eyes' to good effect.

68. The improved systems for checking what pupils can do in English mean that teachers have valuable information about what pupils need to work on next, but they do not always use this enough in their lesson planning. More able pupils often start with similar work to other pupils. This does not challenge them to work on more advanced writing skills and so attain the higher levels in writing. For example, in one lesson this meant that they marked time writing out similar word lists to others with too little time left to actually use these in their own poetry writing. Too often, pupils' work is marred by untidy handwriting, and careless mistakes in spelling and punctuation, because they are not challenged to check and correct their work enough. There is a handwriting policy, but not enough emphasis on teaching good letter formation in the youngest classes. More could be done to ensure that pupils develop and consistently use a joined handwriting style as they move through the school.
69. The leadership and management of English are good overall. There is a strong awareness of areas in need of improvement, like the systems for checking on the progress pupils make as they move from class to class. The school has established the right priorities that will move this aspect forward. The monitoring of teaching is not yet sharp enough, as it does not highlight the successful features of very good and excellent teaching that significantly boost pupils' learning. This means that opportunities for others to incorporate them into their own teaching are missed.

## **MATHEMATICS**

70. Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection and pupils are now working at above nationally expected levels for pupils aged seven and eleven. Good teaching across Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, and the Year 6 setting arrangements and booster classes help to explain the rise in standards in the juniors. Although the infant test results seem unlikely to be much above the national average this year, the work pupils do in class shows that standards at the end of Year 2 are better than those of most seven year olds, especially in number and calculation, again because of effective teaching. However, although pupils in Year 1 enjoy and respond well to the challenges set them in numeracy lessons and make good progress, the progress of the most able pupils slows in Year 2 because they are not always set challenging enough tasks. Consequently, although over half of the pupils attain a higher Level 2 and above, too few attain Level 3, limiting standards overall.
71. Nevertheless, the majority continue to learn at a good pace. By the end of the infants, pupils have a good recall of number facts because teachers give them the opportunity to practise this often in a host of different and amusing ways. Consequently, most pupils make a sensible choice of calculation methods to solve problems, such as doubling, halving, rounding up and estimating. They explain their methods clearly using correct mathematical language, for instance, "I know half of 12 is 6 because  $6 + 6 = 12$  and 12 divided by 6 is 2", "I doubled ten", and "I used the digits on my number line".
72. Pupils continue to make good progress from Year 3 to Year 6 and, by the age of eleven, can work out more complex calculations, such as long multiplication using two and three digits. They understand fractions and decimals and positive and negative numbers and are developing their measuring skills, for instance of angles. They are less secure in making sensible estimates and checking answers, however, because the teachers do not often enough ask them to do this kind of work. Throughout the school, pupils are less confident with

the wider aspects of problem solving, seeking a pattern, investigating, reasoning, logical thinking and consequently, higher attaining pupils do not reach the peaks of achievement that are possible. Pupils of all ages apply their mathematics effectively in other subjects such as science and geography and this enhances their learning across the curriculum.

73. The teaching of mathematics is good across the school. Teachers' good understanding of the principles behind the National Numeracy Strategy is making a significant difference to standards. The well-structured lessons start with a mental arithmetic session followed by a well-focused main teaching activity. In the main part of the lessons, teachers make sure that the pupils understand and know what to do. For example, a very clear explanation by the Year 4 teacher of how to set out a formal multiplication sum meant that because the pupils followed her step-by-step instructions, they were able to do the work. She used the flip chart to model the working out and show pupils how careful setting out helps them to calculate accurately and arrive at the correct answer. Teachers also recognise the need for variety of teaching approaches within lessons so that the pupils stay alert and interested. For instance, the teacher in Year 1 made excellent use of the first 30 minutes during which pupils practised coin recognition, collected data about favourite fruits by selecting and posting picture cards, and worked as a class to construct addition sentences about stars, galaxies and space rockets. They stayed alert throughout and learned well. The incorporation of ICT into lessons is good because teachers use suitable computer programs that fit the lesson objectives, such as the one used to practise rotation of shapes in Years 5 and 6.
74. Teachers set work at three levels of difficulty. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and those who find mathematics difficult make at least as good progress as the rest of the year group and sometimes better. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to lessons by supporting individuals and groups well because they know and understand what pupils are to learn. The school arranges the Years 5 and 6 classes into three teaching and learning sets for numeracy. The high expectations and supportive teaching of the lower attaining Year 6 set, in particular, helps to explain the overall rise in standards in mathematics. However, throughout the school, teachers do not always set tasks that are at the highest level of challenge. Teachers assess pupils against what pupils of their age are expected to know and do and record their attainment carefully. They also measure what individual pupils understand during lessons. However, the pupils' records do not show in detail what it is exactly that pupils find easy. Consequently, although different work is set for different attaining groups, it is not always challenging enough to take them onto the next stage. Similarly there is no system of setting specific mathematical targets for individual or groups of pupils so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. Marking often contains positive comments, but only in the higher attaining Year 5/6 set and in Year 4, do teachers regularly point out to the pupils how their work can be improved.
75. The subject is well led and managed by two subject co-ordinators, each of whom has good subject knowledge. The shared role helps with the huge workload involved in giving advice and support to colleagues, and is partly why the implementation of the numeracy strategy has been so successful. Both subject leaders are involved in analysing test results and identifying gaps in pupils' learning, as they did last year when they discovered that pupils' understanding of fractions and decimals was an area of weakness, that has now been put right. They have monitored teaching in the past but have not done any lesson observations this year, so that with recent staff changes, their knowledge of what is happening in classrooms is out of date. This makes it harder for them to be certain about the current strengths and weaknesses of teaching and how best to approach raising standards in the subject further.

## **SCIENCE**

76. There has been slower improvement made to the test results in science in comparison with what has happened nationally over recent years. However, standards have risen this year and are now broadly as expected by the end of Year 6, similar to the time of the last inspection. This is because effective strategies have been put in place to improve standards. Teaching is

more effective, curriculum planning is better, and booster classes enable pupils to reach higher levels. The co-ordinator analysed the test results to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning and organised training to improve aspects of science teaching. The school recognised that little time was given to science in booster lessons previously and redressed the balance.

77. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average because most pupils reach the expected level. However, only an average number of pupils achieve higher levels because not all tasks for the more able pupils are set securely at a higher level. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school make good progress because they receive good support.
78. Pupils in the infants make sound progress because much of their work concentrates on observation and investigation. For example, Year 1 pupils eagerly searched the school grounds for mini-beasts and used terms such as 'dry' or 'damp', 'shady' or 'light', to describe habitats. Although the school grounds had a restricted range of creatures, effective use of photographs and sketches ensured pupils recognised and named a good range. By the end of Year 2, pupils carry out simple experiments; for example, they use water and ice lollies to show the effect of freezing and warming. They record their findings and describe their observations.
79. Overall, pupils in the juniors make satisfactory progress. Pupils' progress in Year 4 is better than that, however, because the teaching is very effective. Very good teaching was seen when pupils were investigating the best conditions for decay to occur. The use of planning sheets, adapted for pupils working at different levels, reminded pupils what to take into consideration and encouraged them to make predictions. Effective organisation of groups, with good support for pupils with special educational needs, ensured pupils worked hard to decide what to do and set up their investigation quickly. Pupils clearly understood the importance of keeping all factors constant whilst varying one, in order to make a fair test. They understood how to carry out a controlled test to enable them to compare conditions affecting decay.
80. Practical lessons promote pupils' interest and enthusiasm for science. Satisfactory teaching in Years 5 and 6 consolidates the learning in Year 4. Booster classes prepare pupils for the national tests and provide opportunities for higher attaining pupils to work at and achieve higher levels. For example, they record their observations and measurements using graphs where appropriate. However, throughout the school, presentation of work is variable with many examples of untidy writing and diagrams. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of how work should be organised and presented in pupils' books.
81. The teaching is sound overall with very good teaching in Year 4. Teachers pay good attention to safety aspects of their lessons, ensuring pupils know how to handle insects or mouldy food, for example. Effective planning identifies what different pupils are to learn and the activities needed to achieve them. Teachers make a point of sharing with pupils what they will learn by the end of lesson. This contributes to purposeful learning because pupils are clear about what they are to do and what teachers expect of them. Probing questions reinforce earlier learning and enable teachers to assess pupils' attainments. However, teachers do not always use questions effectively to extend pupils' learning and challenge their thinking beyond the planned work. Clear explanations of new learning and accompanying tasks encourage pupils to listen carefully and carry out activities effectively. They provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and take responsibility for planning their work. A brisk pace in lessons means that pupils maintain good concentration.
82. Although there are effective systems for assessing pupils' achievements, not all teachers use the information consistently to plan work for the more able pupils. This affects the rate of progress these pupils make, so they do not always reach the higher standards of which they are capable.

83. The co-ordinator has a clear of vision for further developments in science. She identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning through analysis of national test results and examination of pupils' work. Collaboration with consultants from the local education authority identified areas for improvement and resulted in further training for the staff. There are plans to extend the monitoring and evaluation of teaching as little has taken place this year.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

84. Standards in art and design are broadly as expected nationally by the ages of seven and eleven. Displays of pupils' artwork are extremely attractive and care has gone into showing pupils' work in a celebratory manner. Photographs of pupils doing artwork personalise these displays as well as remind pupils about what they have done. Sometimes, pupils' pictures are expertly framed in an equal way to those of the famous artists next to which they hang. This shows how staff value pupils' efforts and gives the message to pupils that they too are artists.
85. Artwork is sometimes used to support work in other subjects such the stories of 'The Old Woman and The Red Pumpkin' written in English and the geographical work done during the pupils' study of Kenya. There are some effective Golden Jubilee plaques displayed around the school to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Queen's accession and some very effective cartoon characters drawn by Year 4 pupils of, for example, 'Piglet in Winter' and 'Sad Sydney'. There are also some superb religious Year 4 paintings of Saints Peter and Paul, in which the pupils used watercolours well to create a hazy, halo, spiritual effect.
86. Pupils throughout the school, and especially those in Year 6, enjoy their work in art. Pupils in Years 2 and 6, for example, talked excitedly about art "being fun", and working with a range of media, including fabric and clay. In one Year 6 lesson seen, pupils learnt how to draw portraits in accurate proportion by measuring distances between scalp and chin and ear to ear, so that they were sure to get the facial features in the correct place. This was done because most of the pupils' pictures up to now have mostly been cartoon-like and, as the pupils explained, "The teacher wants us to make our pictures more realistic". "We've got to make them look like they're looking back at us," explained one; another said, "They have to stand out, like in 3D". These pupils find particular aspects of drawing difficult and talked amongst themselves about what they each struggle with, reflecting the excellent relationships they enjoy with each other. "I get stuck on the eyes and mouth" said one to his classmates, whilst another announced, "I can't do the nostrils".
87. In another Year 6 lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to try to draw different parts of shells, reminding them, "This is experimental ... it doesn't matter how well we get on". This gave those pupils with less confidence the enthusiasm to have a go. They managed this successfully and used shading well to create shadow and depth; some of the results were extremely pleasing and very effective. This was because the teacher encouraged the pupils to look carefully at the detail of the shape and texture of the shells, which they described as "fragile", "delicate" and "sharp at the edges", and to recreate these precisely.
88. It is clear from the planning and talking with pupils that those in parallel year groups do the same work and this means that pupils of the same age taught in different classes have equal opportunity to make appropriate progress. The curriculum imbalance highlighted in the last inspection report has been successfully dealt with and the good teaching of drawing techniques, then found only in the infants, has been extended to the juniors. Teaching in the other aspects of art and design is satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared and a brisk pace is usually maintained. There was an excellent lesson in Year 4 where pupils were looking at the work of Claude Monet and recreating his style. Pupils knew more about Monet by the end of the lesson than they did at the beginning. For example, that he was an impressionist painter and that one of his paintings recently sold for £13,500,000! The teaching was inspirational, the explanations accurate, and the demonstrations extremely precise.



89. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has dealt with the areas of weakness identified in the last inspection report but because the school does not monitor teaching and learning in this subject, she has only a vague idea about what is and is not working and what to do to raise standards further.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

90. Standards in design and technology are broadly in line with national expectations throughout the school, as they were at the time the school was last inspected. Interesting projects mean that pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. The planning for design and technology has improved, and provides opportunities for pupils to work with a wide range of materials on practical tasks. There is useful guidance in the form of lesson planning advice that is giving teachers greater confidence in their teaching. New assessment systems have recently been introduced. They are still at a developing stage but are successfully focusing teachers' attention on the key skills that pupils need to develop.
91. The teaching of design and technology is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 gained a sound insight into how toys with a winding mechanism work when a good range of different toys was set out for them to investigate. The teacher's probing questions encouraged pupils to explain how each mechanism worked. This strengthened their own and others' understanding. They developed a good grasp of the correct technical terms, using words like 'friction', 'winders' and 'mechanisms' because the teacher emphasised the new words in her own explanations. They drew simple diagrams and labelled the important parts to show how the toys worked.
92. These skills develop steadily as pupils move from class to class. Sketchbooks are used to good effect in some classes, particularly extending pupils' designing skills. In discussions older pupils show a good appreciation of the need to be precise in their drawing, and to specify the angles and lengths of the materials used in their designs. Good links with subjects like science and music in well-managed discussions meant that pupils in Year 6 had a good understanding of how different musical instruments work, which they used effectively as a basis for drawing a design for their own instrument.
93. Pupils make particularly good progress in the Year 4 class because topics are covered thoroughly and teaching is good. Pupils carefully identify and sequence the stages needed to produce a range of products, such as a photograph frame, a money container and a sandwich. They learn to use joining techniques like corner supports to provide strength and stability and attach materials using glue or a lever mechanism to create interesting 'pop up' books for younger children. They begin to evaluate their work, but at a simple level. Pupils in Year 6 evaluate the quality of products like different types of sandwich, reporting on their taste, appearance and value for money in a chart. However, this is an area that is relatively under-developed and more could be done to encourage pupils to judge their work critically to identify what worked well and what could be improved next time. In some classes, teachers over-direct projects so that pupils do not become as independent as they might in such aspects as planning and selecting their own materials and joining techniques.
94. The subject co-ordinator provides a good lead for others in her subject expertise, teaching example and the support she gives her colleagues. Her monitoring role is currently under-developed, so that she does not have an accurate overview of the strengths and areas for development in the subject. However, plans are in place to develop her role in the coming year.

## GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

95. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils attain standards in line with national expectations in geography as they did at the time of the last inspection. The school has addressed the weaknesses in resources, particularly atlases, the termly plan and the time allocated to geography identified in the last inspection. As a result, pupils develop secure mapping skills, teachers plan work based on the termly plans so there is little repetition across year groups and time allows for depth of coverage. There were no history lessons seen. However, from talking to teachers and pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work, standards are as expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is lower than at the time of the last inspection when they were better than those expected nationally. History has not been a priority in the school although teachers are still enthusiastic and pupils benefit in both subjects from a wide range of visits and visitors to enhance their learning.
96. In the infants, teachers use stories, real or imagined, to extend pupils' historical and geographical understanding. For example, Year 2 pupils learn about life on a Scottish island and begin to compare life there with their own locality, through listening to the story of 'Katie Morag'. They develop an understanding of the cause of, and events that occurred during, the Great Fire of London, through listening to and reading excerpts from 'Samuel Pepys' diary'. Teachers successfully base activities on these stories to develop pupils' understanding of chronology or mapping skills. For example, pupils placed the events of the Great Fire in the correct order and they planned a journey to Struay showing the different types of transport.
97. In the juniors, pupils extend their mapping skills and knowledge of places soundly. By the end of Year 6, pupils use and understand maps in a range of scales. They demonstrate a sound understanding of places round the world and know how change can affect the lives of the people living there. Investigations into the countries of the Commonwealth present pupils throughout the school with opportunities to find out about the history of countries such as Mauritius, the economy in Australia, animals in Canada or transport and religions in India. Pupils work for the walls is presented neatly either using computers or handwriting. However, although teachers expect this work to be well presented, they do not have the same high expectations of presentation in pupils' books where work is often untidy and carelessly presented.
98. Good use of the local area enables pupils to understand the effects of historical events such as World War II and the environmental changes caused by regeneration of land use. In Year 6, pupils know about important events, such as why the war started, the effects of bombing, and reasons for evacuation. They know the names of some prominent people at the time, such as Edward VIII, Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler. When listening to a talk given by a local architect, they ask sensible questions such as, "Why has it (the land) been left derelict so long?" and offer their own suggestions about what could replace the old Victorian bath on New Brighton front.
99. The teaching of geography is sound overall and sometimes good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. From the limited evidence, teaching of history is satisfactory. Teachers use effective questioning to probe pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. For example, when Year 4 pupils were comparing the lifestyle of children living in a town and a village in Kenya, the teacher asked, "What causes the muddy roads in Kenya?" This encouraged pupils to describe the climate accurately. Good use of vocabulary, such as 'Shamba', extends pupils' understanding and use of appropriate terms. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from classroom assistants to enable them to take a full part in lessons and make sound progress. For example, when Years 5 and 6 were listening to a visiting speaker, effective support enabled a pupil with special educational needs to make notes. Teachers and visiting speakers provide clear information for pupils and encourage them to ask questions. This enables pupils to investigate historical and geographical themes for themselves. All teachers mark work in books regularly and many respond with positive comments such as 'good' or 'well done'. However, this does little to indicate how pupils could improve and gives

them a false value of their work, especially when presentation may not be good enough. Although teachers use the termly planning to support their weekly plans, they often rely heavily on worksheets. This limits the opportunities for pupils to express their own ideas or write down what they know.

100. The co-ordinators support their subjects satisfactorily. Detailed plans for each year group ensure pupils progress soundly. Although they monitor standards informally through talking to teachers and looking at displays, there is no formal monitoring of standards or teaching. Therefore, they do not have a secure view of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

101. Standards in ICT are broadly as expected by the end of the juniors. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when pupils attained below the nationally expected level. Although the school does not have an ICT suite, pupils' experience of ICT is sufficiently broad through their use of the classroom computers and portable laptops. The recent purchase of five new computers has improved opportunities for computer skills' teaching further as well as Internet and e-mail access. Pupils have benefited from the school's success in putting right the "lack of confidence of many staff" identified in the last report. Staff training has been very effective and the national teaching guidelines for ICT are now in place, and understood and implemented consistently by all of the teachers. In addition:

- In-service training by an external trainer and by the lead and support co-ordinators has significantly increased staff expertise and confidence.
- Resources are improving yearly, and are well organised and intensively used; and there are plans for more laptops and an interactive whiteboard and digital projector.
- The national teaching guidelines for ICT are in place, well understood by teachers and very well supported through the local authority guidelines, and lead to well-focused teaching of skills .
- Teachers are active in widening the pupils' experience of and through ICT, seeking out external support, community and training links such as the local City Learning Centre and Technology College, and e-mail links with school as far flung as Norway and Australia.

102. Pupils aged seven reach a level of competence just above that expected for their age. Building on the successful work in Reception, the Year 1 pupils become very ICT-literate at an early age, which they sustain satisfactorily through to the age of seven. An effective feature of the ICT provision is the good variety of ICT tools and resources available. Year 1 pupils learn how to use the keyboard space bars, enter and save work, and use the keyboard independently to write a sentence. Year 2 pupils can program a floor turtle to move in a sequence of different directions and create graphs from sets of data. Their overall skill level at seven years of age is good. However, records of attainment are not maintained; insufficient detail is kept about what pupils know, understand and can do to ensure that pupils are always challenged at a consistently higher level. This means that although they do well, they do not always do as well as they could.

103. Pupils in Year 6 have not had the full benefit of the improvements to teaching and resources since the last inspection, but nevertheless, their skill level is at a broadly satisfactory level. Although there are some gaps in their learning, their attainment is similar to that of most other eleven year olds. By the end of Year 6, pupils can access a range of programs on the computers. They can pull down menus, open programs, move between sections, and cut and paste clip art onto text pages. They are particularly good at word processing and sometimes use ICT to compose as well as publish final drafts. A weaker aspect is in their use of spreadsheet programs and simulations to investigate patterns and relationships, although some of this work is being developed in mathematics.

104. An exciting strength is the pupils' understanding of how ICT in its broadest sense can be used to communicate ideas and information. The school works with a number of local partnerships and initiatives such as the 'Learning Lighthouse City Learning Centre' initiative and the 'Wallasey Regeneration Programme' and has recently won two prizes, one for the quality of a *PowerPoint* presentation by Year 5 pupils.
105. Pupils confidently use the Internet and CD-ROMs to find information to support their work in other subjects. For example, they search for information about their topics of history, geography and religious education. There are gaps in pupils' learning about how to use ICT to monitor and control events and pupils are only just beginning to take a critical approach to the use of ICT and to evaluate their own work. As yet Year 6 pupils have not been able to access the school's partial e-mail connection.
106. Evidence from the two lessons seen and from conversations with teachers and pupils shows that teaching is good in both the infants and juniors. Teachers 'set the scene' for skills learning through their use of the computer whiteboard and then plan for 'focused tasks' for groups of pupils to practise the skills during the week. They use the fixed computers and the portable laptops. In both of the lessons seen, teachers used a good balance of clear explanation, questioning and direct instruction so that pupils were clear about what they should do when their turn came. Pupils are used to this approach and listen intently. However, more hands-on opportunities bringing about faster learning would mean that pupils could try out new procedures there and then, instead of waiting until later in the week when their turn to use the computers comes around. Another inhibiting factor is that light cannot be effectively screened out from the ceiling windows, making the projection very faint and the image on screen difficult to see.
107. Assessment is improving quickly: adaptation of the school's class record sheet helps teachers to see what is expected; a newly adopted local education authority skills sheet helps teachers to get a better sense of criteria that distinguish between levels, although this is not yet being used to plan for different levels of attainment in the class.
108. Co-ordination of the subject is very good and has made a major contribution to the raising of standards. Both co-ordinators have good subject knowledge and share this well with other staff. The lead co-ordinator is hard working and extremely well organised, keeping her finger on the pulse of national, local and school developments. To date she has not had opportunity to monitor teaching, or to share her own very good practice sufficiently with other teachers, and this limits her influence in bringing about changes.

## **MUSIC**

109. Standards in music are well in line with those in most other schools, and music presents a rich tapestry of experiences that make a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development in particular. Music enriches the pupils' time at the school and contributes to its sense of oneness.
110. Singing is good throughout the school. Pupils sing tunefully in assemblies, accompanied by teachers playing guitars and by pupils playing string and wind instruments confidently. From an early age, pupils learn to perform with others so that they are able to start and finish together and keep to a steady pulse. By the time they reach Year 3, they are capable of practising together to improve, as was observed in a lesson during which the singing of 'Barges, Barges' became more tuneful and well timed with practice. Years 5 and 6 pupils showed good articulation as they created a tricky staccato effect to emulate computer sounds. From Years 1 and 2, pupils become involved in rehearsing and performing for others through joining in a music festival at a local primary school. The school choir meets after school throughout the school year and their performances enhance various celebrations linked to the church's year and the religious education syllabus. It has joined with choirs in other local primary schools to make a compact disc of Christmas Classics and also contributed to the

famous group S. Club 7's, recording of 'Have you ever'. Although not a group that meets weekly, the choir is a regular feature of school life.

111. Pupils make good progress in listening to music. They learn to appraise what they hear and know that music is made in different ways for different purposes. In a design and technology lesson on making musical instruments, Year 6 pupils correctly named a wide range of musical instruments, classifying them as 'wind', 'brass', strings' and 'percussion' and could explain the sounds they made using correct terms such as 'pitch'. In all of the lessons seen, reflection was an important element, so that Years 5 and 6 pupils were able to confidently express their feelings about the 'syntax error' computer song. They are less good at analysing their own performance, however, because the teachers do not encourage this approach often enough. Composing skills are taught as part of every lesson, so that pupils build up experiences of using tuned and non-tuned instruments. However, in the lessons seen, time was too short for this element to be fully developed.
112. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school and good in some classes. This is because much has been done since the last inspection to improve teachers' level of confidence and subject knowledge in teaching music. This has been achieved through advice and support from the two subject leaders and by all teachers' increasing familiarity with the teaching guidelines. The useful checklist of skills' development that accompany these guidelines means that teachers can check for progression towards National Curriculum levels as they plan their lessons. They take care to ensure that lessons teach the pupils something new and are enjoyable as well. All of the lessons are carefully planned to include an appropriate balance of performing, composing, appraising and applying musical knowledge, and teachers prepare carefully so that there are no technical hitches to slow down the pace. They also make sure that their personal knowledge is at a level that allows them to question appropriately and to introduce musical vocabulary and ideas at the right level for their age. The school has built up a good sound system for hall and classrooms and the curriculum is fully resourced with a good range of compact discs of instrumental music and song. The stock of instruments and their storage have recently been improved and although not extensive they are used very frequently.
113. The school is rightly proud of its active and regular musical events that raise pupils' appreciation of the place of music in their lives and those around them. Examples of this are visits by pupils and their families to the Philharmonic Hall and to the ballet, followed by dancers working in school; a visit to school by the police band; and singing by the choir at various local venues for charity. Peripatetic music teachers visit to teach violin, cello and flute, and these lessons contribute effectively to the standards achieved by the selected pupils. There is a weekly recorder club for Year 2 pupils that welcomes all who wish to join and creates early enthusiasm for instrumental activity.
114. There are two subject leaders for music who continue to approach the subject with enthusiasm and commitment. They have made sure that the teaching guidelines are properly followed by talking through planning with colleagues, although there is no formal monitoring of teaching and this means that the areas for development are not as clear as they could be about how to raise standards further.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

115. Standards in physical education are typical of those for seven and eleven year olds. This is much the same as at the time of the last inspection although weaknesses in teaching noted in the last inspection have been dealt with.
116. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build their gymnastic skills at an appropriate rate. Year 1 pupils working on low equipment in the hall showed that they could use space well without bumping into others, and could balance, jump and roll with well-controlled movements. Year 2 pupils learn to create linked sequences of movements at various levels and speeds. It was not

possible to observe an indoor physical education lessons in Years 3 to 6 because most lessons were set outdoors. The school has recently placed a focus upon dance, so that teachers are more confident and pupils across the school create or perform dances to a reasonable level of skill. Year 3 pupils learned the steps for 'Brighton Camp' and made good progress in using the slip step, in light footwork and responding to the beat.

117. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils develop an appropriate range of skills in games. In a Year 4 games lesson, pupils chased, picked up and rolled a ball with improving skill, although their throwing and catching skills were less strong. However, by Year 6 they were able to bowl accurately for a small-sided team game of rounders. Catching skills varied and were stronger in boys than in girls yet all were able to explain what they needed to do to improve. When taking part in team games, they showed a sense of position and tactics in fielding and worked well in their teams to keep the game going.
118. Swimming continues to be a strong aspect of physical education because the school promotes this well. Pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 each have a full term of swimming yearly and pupils make good progress as a result; standards of water safety are particularly good. The current Year 2 class have also attended swimming lessons during the summer term. Their lesson was well taught with a good mix of activities that improved confidence, developed skills and maintained fitness and stamina in the water. Approximately one third of the class have progressed to 'beginner's certificate' level in one term. A residential visit that includes canoeing, orienteering and abseiling helps pupils to face up to challenges set by the outdoors.
119. Teaching is satisfactory and better than at the time of the last inspection. In most lessons pupils listen very attentively to instructions. In only one lesson did pupils find it hard to concentrate and settle to the task and this was put right quickly. In all lessons, pupils worked well when on task. Lessons are firmly structured because of the support given by medium-term plans and by local education authority guidelines for lesson planning that provide ideas for activities and teaching points. A weakness in the teaching of skills teaching is that teachers do not model and demonstrate how to carry out actions often enough, or use the improving techniques of certain pupils to show others what is possible. A strong feature is the way that teachers insist that pupils think about what they find difficult and evaluate their own performance. This happened most evidently in outdoor games activities as pupils were asked to recall what they learned last time and difficulties encountered in order to improve on or gain new skills during the subsequent lesson. There is no formal assessment of physical education. Teachers know the particular strengths and weakness of pupils and sometimes form groups of different ability within lessons and challenge them accordingly, but this is not a strong feature.
120. At the present time, games activities are inhibited by the lack of a grassed area outside the school and the small size of the playground used for games. The school does its best to overcome this by encouraging pupils to attend after-school clubs such as the cricket club at the local special school, making use of its grassed field. There are also football and netball clubs, and when matches are played against other schools, pitches are sometimes loaned by the neighbourhood secondary school. Yoga and judo sessions are held for Years 5 and 6 pupils on a voluntary basis.
121. The co-ordinator is experienced in leading physical education and has worked hard to improve the quality of physical education throughout the school. She supports staff well and helps them with their planning. She has a fair overview of the subject's strengths and weaknesses although the complete picture of teaching across the school has not been gained. Two years ago physical education was a focus area for the school and monitoring and demonstration of teaching techniques were featured. Now, monitoring of physical education has temporarily stopped so that the co-ordinator's knowledge of teaching approaches across the school is only partial. For the subject to grow it will be important to keep physical education firmly upon the development agenda with enough resources to help teachers push up standards further.

