

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST ALBAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wallasey, Wirral

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105072

Headteacher: Mrs C L Frost

Reporting inspector: Hazel Callaghan  
22254

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2002

Inspection number: 196010

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashburton Road Wallasey Wirral
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr James Collins
Date of previous inspection:	30 <sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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22254	Hazel Callaghan	Registered Inspector	Science Physical education	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9075	Juliet Baxter	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22421	Valerie McGrath	Team Inspector	Foundation Stage Music	How good are the curricular other opportunities offered to pupils?
31029	Peter Thrussell	Team Inspector	Mathematics Geography Special educational needs	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team Inspector	English History Equal opportunities	
29378	Ken Watson	Team Inspector	Art and design Design and technology Information and communication technology	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a bigger than average Catholic aided primary school with 400 pupils on roll. Most of the pupils have been baptised into the Roman Catholic Church and there is strong sense of community from belonging to the same church and school. Children enter the reception classes in the September following their fourth birthday. The vast majority of pupils are of white UK ethnic origin and there are no pupils in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is below average and the proportion of pupils with statements of need is similar to that found nationally. They have a variety of need: most have moderate learning difficulties, four have emotional and behavioural difficulties and a small number have specific difficulties such as dyslexia, autism and dyspraxia. When children enter the school, their standards of attainment are of a similar range to that found nationally. The current headteacher has recently joined the school, having taken up post in January.

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

After standing still for some time, St Alban's is now on the move. The new headteacher has successfully identified many of the areas of weakness in the school and has developed an appropriate range of strategies to improve the quality of education provided and to raise standards. There is now a clear educational direction for the school and, although many of the planned procedures have yet to be implemented, the action already taken has had a positive impact. Standards in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have risen this year. The consistently good teaching in Years 1 and 2, and the new focus on teaching pupils in ability groups in Year 6 for English, mathematics and science, have resulted in pupils' good achievement. The school is providing a sound education for its pupils. It uses its finances appropriately and provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards in English, mathematics and history are good in Years 2 and 6. Pupils' attainment in science has improved through the school and standards in science and geography are good in Year 2.
- Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and pupils achieve well.
- The new headteacher provides good leadership and a clear educational vision for the school.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. Relationships are good and consequently pupils respect each other's views and feelings. They behave well and this creates a happy and harmonious community where pupils feel secure.
- The procedures for promoting and monitoring pupils' attendance to school are very good.

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

- Pupils' standards in science at eleven are not as high as those in English and mathematics. Standards in design and technology, and information and communication technology are not high enough because pupils make insufficient progress in Years 3 to 6.
- There are significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching in some lessons in Years 3 and 4.
- There is a lack of whole-school procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress in some subjects. Data from assessments are not used sufficiently to monitor pupils' achievement, to evaluate the curriculum or to support teachers' planning in providing activities that effectively build on pupils' prior learning.
- Governors and staff have not sufficiently evaluated the work of the school. The management role of the subject co-ordinators is not sufficiently developed to enable them to effectively monitor and further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning so that standards rise.
- The accommodation is in a poor state of repair and does not provide a stimulating environment in which to promote pupils' good learning.

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

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

Overall, there has been insufficient improvement since the school was inspected in June 1997. However, since the appointment of a new headteacher, the rate of improvement has considerably increased. Standards in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science fell in 2001, but there has been a substantial upturn this year. Many of the concerns of the previous report remain as weaknesses, such as the significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, but comprehensive systems for school evaluation and review are currently being finalised and a much improved school development plan is leading the school forward. Co-ordinators are ready to take on a more active part in monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and of pupils' learning in their subjects, and under the leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher they are well set to succeed.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average above    A

average                            B

average                            C

below average                    D

well below average              E

Last year, standards in Year 6 were the lowest they had been in many years. In 2000, standards in mathematics and science had fallen and last year standards in English also declined. In the tests taken recently, standards have risen significantly so that standards in both English and mathematics are now above average. The school has achieved its high target in English because a good proportion of pupils achieved the higher than expected standard. The school exceeded its target in mathematics. Standards in science have also improved to be generally in line with those expected, but fewer pupils attained the higher than expected standard that is usually found nationally. In Year 2, standards have also risen in reading, mathematics and science and they are now good. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level has improved in all aspects of the tests. These improved standards in Years 2, 5 and 6 are due to the good standard of teaching and effective focus on extending pupils' knowledge and understanding. Standards in history are good through the school. In all other subjects, except information and communication technology and design and technology, standards are generally in line with those expected. Pupils make insufficient progress in their learning through Years 3 to 6 in design and technology and information and communication technology, and consequently by Year 6 standards are unsatisfactory in these subjects. Children enter the school with an average range of attainment. They make satisfactory progress overall and most achieve the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils with special educational needs make generally satisfactory progress against their individual targets for learning. Pupils of all ethnic groups make similar progress to their peers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and they have good attitudes to their work. In many lessons pupils show very good levels of concentration and are eager to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are polite and respectful to adults and visitors. They show good levels of care for each other. They work effectively on their own and in groups.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils are considerate of each other and show respect for each other's beliefs, feelings and ideas.
Attendance	Satisfactory rates of attendance overall. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching in the reception classes is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good the children make a good start in their education and make effective progress especially in their early communication, language and literacy skills. Opportunities to develop their personal and social development are good in both classes and so children's independence and confidence in organising themselves are high. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is consistently good and often very good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and have a clear understanding of what pupils are to learn. They provide activities that effectively build on pupils' previous learning and are suitably matched to their needs, so that pupils of all abilities succeed in their tasks and achieve well. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted in most lessons leading to pupils' good achievement. In Year 6, pupils have achieved well in English, mathematics and science because of the effective strategy to provide smaller teaching groups for pupils who are of similar attainment for part of the year. In these sessions, teachers provide pupils with tasks that build effectively on their past learning and extended their understanding. A significant proportion of teaching in Years 3 and 4 is, however, unsatisfactory and this detracts from pupils' overall achievement. A few teachers are not sufficiently clear about what pupils are to know and be able to do at the end of each lesson. Activities do not challenge the higher attaining pupils, so as to extend their understanding or match the needs of the pupils with lower attainment. Pupils of all ethnic groups are well supported in Years 1 and 2 and in the best lessons in Years 3 to 6. The teaching of history is good through the school. Activities are lively and stimulate pupils' interest and motivation to learn. However, teaching in information and communication technology and design and technology has not effectively promoted pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6. Information and communication technology is not sufficiently used to promote pupils' learning in other subjects.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a suitable breadth to the curriculum, but in Years 3 to 6 pupils have insufficient opportunities to acquire the full depth of knowledge and skills in design and technology, and in information and communication technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. The support and guidance provided for individual pupils by the special educational needs teacher is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.	The school has satisfactorily identified the needs of the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language and provides effective support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good and securely based on the teachings of the Catholic Church. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own feelings and beliefs have a very positive impact on creating the harmonious and inclusive ethos of the school. The provision for pupils' social and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral care for the pupils is good. New strategies for promoting pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour are working well. The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents. Assessment is used effectively in English; however, there are insufficient procedures for assessing what pupils know and can do in some subjects. Where tests are used, the data is not sufficiently employed to monitor pupils' achievement or to support planning so that activities build on previous work.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has a clear view of what is needed to improve the school's effectiveness and to raise standards. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher. Co-ordinators are keen to be more involved in managing their subjects but most already provide effective support for colleagues.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school and it now carries out most of its statutory duties appropriately. Governors have not, however, been sufficiently involved in monitoring the school's performance and do not have a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There has been insufficient focus on using the data from assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the school or on monitoring the quality of teaching. Comprehensive procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have been planned, but are not yet in place.
The strategic use of resources	Finances are effectively planned, but there is very little understanding of how to apply the principles of best value. There are very few learning support staff to assist teachers and pupils. Resources are mostly adequate, but many are old and of poor quality. The library lacks an appropriate range of books to support pupils' individual research and there are insufficient computers. The accommodation is shabby and there are several deficiencies that reduce pupils' learning opportunities.

## 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>• Parents say that their children like school and are happy to attend.</li> <li>• Behaviour in the school is good.</li> <li>• There is a strong sense of community, and pupils feel respected and well cared for.</li> <li>• Most parents feel that teaching is good.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the staff with worries and concerns.</li> <li>• Parents feel that their children are expected to work hard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many parents would like to see a greater range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that the school does not keep them sufficiently informed about how well their child is getting on.</li> <li>• Some parents would like the school to work more closely with them.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that homework is inconsistent in its quantity and regularity.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with most of the parents' positive comments. Teaching is predominantly satisfactory, and good in Years 1 and 2, but there are significant weaknesses in the teaching in some classes. Clubs and out of class activities are mostly sporting and give only limited opportunities for pupils to experience a range of extra-curricular activities. The school recognises the weakness and it is being addressed next term. Homework is well planned in Years 1 and 2 and parents are kept well informed and involved. This good practice has not been extended into Years 3 to 6 and there is a lack of consistency in teachers' expectations. At present there are limited opportunities for parents and teachers to discuss the pupils' learning effectively. The school aims to address this concern next year.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the past, pupils in Year 6 have attained standards in English that were usually above the national average. Last year, however, standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 were the lowest they have been in many years. In the 2000 tests, standards in mathematics and science had fallen, and last year standards in English also declined. This year standards have risen through the school due to the good teaching in Years 1 and 2 and the effective intervention in Year 6 where the teaching of pupils in ability groups was introduced in preparation for the tests. Pupils' achievement is once again improving.
2. Children enter the school with a broad range of attainment similar to that found nationally. They settle to school routines well and most make a good start in preparing themselves for learning. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in developing their speaking and listening skills. They make satisfactory progress in mathematical, physical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The vast majority of the children attain the standards expected (the early learning goals) at the end of the reception year. Attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage is average in their physical, mathematical and creative development, and in their reading and writing skills. It is above average in their personal, social and emotional development and in the development of their speaking and listening skills. Lower attaining children and those with special educational needs are well supported in all areas of learning by teachers and classroom assistants. All children participate actively in an inclusive curriculum.
3. In the most recent National Curriculum tests in Year 2, pupils achieved well and attained above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is an improvement on standards attained in 2001 because a greater proportion of pupils attained the higher levels. In 2001, standards in reading were average when compared with all schools and with schools that have pupils who come from a similar socio-economic area. In writing, standards were well above the national average and in comparison with similar schools. Standards in mathematics, however, were below the national average and well below the standards attained in similar schools. This year's test results show a significant improvement because of the very effective teaching strategies now being used to promote pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2. Similarly, the results of teacher assessments in science show pupils' good achievement, with all pupils attaining the expected standard and a good proportion reaching the higher level. This is a significant improvement on standards attained last year in the 2001 National Curriculum tests. Inspection evidence confirms these good results. Pupils in Year 2 are confident learners. They have acquired a good level of skills in reading and writing, which they effectively use to support their learning across the curriculum. In mathematics, pupils have a good range of early mathematical skills and are beginning to see links between numbers, which helps them calculate answers quickly in their heads. In science, pupils show curiosity and are developing their investigational skills well to observe and consider the world around them. Pupils make good steady progress through Years 1 and 2 because of the consistent good quality of teaching they receive.
4. In the most recent National Curriculum tests in Year 6, pupils attained above average standards in English and mathematics, and just below average standards in science. This is a significant improvement in both mathematics and science. In the National Curriculum tests in 2001, pupils in Year 6 attained average standards in English compared to all schools and above average standards compared with similar schools. Standards in mathematics were average compared with all schools,

but below average when compared with similar schools. Standards in science in 2001 were below the national average and well below the standards in similar schools. Last year, pupils in Year 6 made unsatisfactory achievement compared to the standards they attained when they had been in Year 2. This year achievement is much improved as pupils attained mostly average standards when they were in Year 2, and in Year 6 they are mostly above average.

5. Pupils' achievement through Years 3 to 6 is far more variable than in Years 1 and 2 because of the range and inconsistency in the teaching quality. Where teaching is good, pupils' achievement is also effective. In Years 3 and 4 progress slows and pupils' learning is often unsatisfactory. Pupils' achievement improves in Years 5 and 6. The introduction in Year 6 of teaching pupils in English, mathematics and science in three smaller groups had a significant impact on raising their standards. Teachers were effective in matching tasks to the capabilities of the pupils in the group and the concentrated focus on preparation for the tests for half a term enabled pupils to achieve the higher standards. Pupils' literacy skills are used effectively across the curriculum in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' speaking and listening skills and their reading skills continue to be well developed and so standards are mostly above average. There are still too few opportunities to use mathematics in other areas of the curriculum and this is restricting pupils' good understanding in some classes. In science, a recent focus on improving the teaching of investigations and promoting pupils' enquiry skills is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding. It is still underdeveloped in some classes and, in this aspect, pupils in Year 6 are still not secure. Their acquisition of scientific knowledge is satisfactory, but their ability to use their knowledge to explain what has happened in their tests or to develop experiments for themselves, is less well developed. The school has achieved its high target in English and exceeded its target in mathematics this year. Most pupils attained standards in line with those expected in science, but fewer pupils attained the higher than expected standard.
6. In the other subjects, standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are mostly in line with those expected. Standards in history through the school are, however, above those expected nationally. Pupils make insufficient progress in their learning through Years 3 to 6 in design and technology and information and communication technology and consequently by Year 6 standards are unsatisfactory. Planning ensures that the basic curriculum is covered in design and technology, but it does not lead to a steady progression of skills, knowledge and understanding. At present information and communication technology is taught primarily through other subjects, but because there are only one or two computers in each classroom it is difficult for teachers to deliver the full curriculum in sufficient depth. In many classrooms, the computers are not effectively employed to promote pupils' learning and are often left unused. Standards in physical education are mostly in line with those expected in Years 2 and 6, but aspects of the curriculum are not sufficiently developed in Year 6 because of the limitations created by the accommodation and the lack of a school field. Standards in Year 6 in athletics and games for most pupils are below average.
7. The provision for equal opportunities is satisfactory. The school has a clear commitment to equal opportunities and pupils of all ethnic groups are enabled to reach similar standards to their peers. Pupils' results are monitored by gender, as well as ethnicity, and boys are performing well in English in comparison with the national picture. Girls at St Alban's are achieving in line with the standards achieved by girls nationally in English. There is little difference between girls and boys in mathematics and science. The higher achievement of boys in English may be the result of a larger proportion of boys than girls in some classes, but during the inspection there was no inequality in terms of teaching imbalance to the different gender groups.
8. The school has satisfactory strategies to promote the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs so they make good progress in meeting the targets set on their individual education plans that are written by the learning support teacher and effectively followed up in withdrawal sessions. The progress made within class lessons is satisfactory overall but not as

effective as in the focused special educational needs group sessions. Lessons are not always planned to provide appropriate activities for pupils with special educational needs to enable them to make better progress. This is because the individual education plans written and used by class teachers are variable in quality, with targets sometimes not reflecting the pupils' special needs at all. For example, a Year 5 individual education plan gave learning the seven times table as a numeracy target. This was appropriate for many in the class, but did not reflect the needs of the individual child.

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

9. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting said that their children enjoy attending school and this certainly proved so during the inspection week. Pupils are keen to get to school each morning and this results in a satisfactory attendance rate that has been maintained since the previous inspection and remains in line with the national average for primary schools. Pupils are punctual and waste no time in settling down to work in their classrooms. Absence is due to the normal reasons for illness and the growing number of pupils whose parents take them out of school for holidays during term time. Unauthorised absence remains consistently below the national average for primary schools.
10. This enthusiasm for school is also reflected in pupils' mainly positive attitudes towards their work and play. They know the school's routines and procedures and follow these rigorously each day. During the inspection, pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups were mainly positive towards their work, although it was very noticeable that on the occasions when they found topics unexciting and teaching less than challenging, they became bored and restless. Nevertheless when this happened, with the exception of a small number of incidences when behaviour became really poor, pupils continued to behave naturally well and remained courteous towards the teacher. Pupils at St Alban's are friendly and polite. They enjoy talking to visitors and do so in a natural and relaxed way. They are very keen to help and offer to do so frequently. They stand aside to allow adults to pass and hold doors open for others to go through. The shared faith of the pupils at St Alban's creates a particularly strong family atmosphere, but this does not mean others are not fully included in all its activities. Indeed this is a welcoming and inclusive school at all times. Pupils like to talk about their favourite subjects and also their families and friends. They are very keen to do well and their positive attitudes are a strong contributory factor in their success.
11. Pupils' behaviour in classrooms, in the school grounds and around the school generally, is good for most of the time. The school rules are displayed in the main corridor on the ground floor and class rules in individual classrooms, although to the outsider it is not always easy to spot these at first glance. Pupils know what their teachers expect of them and they respond well on most occasions. In assemblies behaviour was exemplary throughout the inspection week. Pupils clearly value and look forward to these corporate celebrations, which they treat with respect and reverence. The weekly school Golden Assembly of celebration of effort and achievement is prized and valued by all pupils. It is a joyous occasion when pupils have the opportunity to applaud and congratulate their friends – and themselves – when awards are given not only for academic achievement but also for hard work, effort, good behaviour and acts of kindness and caring for others.
12. On several occasions during the inspection pupils had to take breaks inside the school because of the wet weather. Inside and outside they were observed during these breaks and this showed exuberant children at normal, noisy, play and there were no signs of oppressive behaviour or bullying. Social integration in the school is good and pupils play well together. One pupil was excluded permanently in the autumn of 2001 by the previous headteacher and since the new headteacher has been in post there has been one, temporary, two-day exclusion. Nevertheless the overall rate of exclusions remains low and more or less static.

13. Relationships at St Alban's are good. Pupils enjoy their friends and they like to do things together as, for example, when they excitedly showed an inspector photographs taken on the occasion of their recent First Communion. Pupils relate well to their teachers, and relationships in most classes between staff and pupils are warm and harmonious. Pupils were seldom, if at all, observed to work in pairs or groups during the week of the inspection. They sit at the same tables but work individually at the same work. This was because teachers did not give sufficient, or indeed any, opportunities for co-operative tasks and sharing of work. Thus it is difficult to judge how pupils would respond socially to this sharing of work experiences as witnessed in most schools. There was no sharing of ideas or discussion of problems, as for the vast majority of time pupils worked individually from textbooks. However, pupils enthusiastically took part in all-class discussions and often applauded the efforts of their friends.
14. Pupils' personal development is generally good. Helpful tasks are allocated mainly to the older pupils to include taking registers to the office, helping to prepare the hall for assemblies, retrieving litter, distributing internal school mail and looking after younger pupils in their playground. These are helpful jobs and similar to those found in a large number of schools. Pupils at St Alban's show a degree of maturity that is appealing. The school could promote this further if pupils were given tasks of greater responsibility, allowing them to develop their sense of initiative and so they would welcome challenge. These pupils can be trusted to respond positively and well.
15. Pupils' attitudes, good behaviour, personal development and relationships make a significant impact on the standards attained and their progress in learning. It is an aspect of the school's work that has been well maintained since the previous inspection.

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

16. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage it is satisfactory overall, and in Years 1 and 2 it is good. In Years 3 to 6, although pupils make satisfactory achievement overall, a significant number of lessons in the lower part of the key stage are unsatisfactory. Pupils' learning is reduced and they make less achievement than they should; consequently teaching in the key stage is judged as unsatisfactory overall.
17. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, but it is better in one class than in the other. The lessons observed ranged from unsatisfactory to good, with the majority of lessons demonstrating satisfactory teaching. Where teaching is good the start of lessons are stimulating, with very explicit teaching of knowledge and basic skills which the children are encouraged to use and apply in their play and practical activities. For example, the teaching linked to the 'Holidays' theme and their reading of 'We're All Going On A Bear Hunt' was delivered through a rich range of activities which were exciting and relevant to the children. Children wrote their own versions of the story, used remote control cars to promote their understanding of control in information and communication technology, created paintings of the seaside, and engaged in role-play in the attractive 'John Lennon Airport'. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the teaching at the beginning of the lesson was not clear or well structured and consequently children did not develop their understanding of punctuation, as planned. The writing tasks set for two groups of children were too challenging for the pupils' abilities and so they struggled. Both teachers use suitable assessment procedures at the beginning and end of the reception year, but ongoing assessment to track children's achievement is not consistently used to good effect for matching the level of challenge in numeracy and literacy to the children's stage of development.
18. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well because of the consistently good teaching they receive. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, history and geography and satisfactory overall in all other subjects. There are several factors that add to the success of lessons in Years 1 and 2.

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and they set challenging tasks so that learning is effective. Relationships within classes are good, with teachers offering plenty of praise and encouragement, bringing about good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. In the most effective lessons throughout the school, teachers make lessons interesting and this stimulates pupils' motivation to learn and to understand. In the very best lessons, pupils' concentration and perseverance are high. Both during the introduction to lessons and during activities, questioning is generally rigorous, with teachers expecting pupils to explain their ideas and to probe their understanding. Incorrect answers are used as positive teaching points so pupils feel no loss of self-esteem.

19. Good teaching is also evident in Years 3 to 6, but it is not as strong or consistent through the key stage. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 slow pupils' learning but it improves in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is mostly satisfactory and often good. In the most effective lessons, many of the good qualities observed in Years 1 and 2 are also present. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 4, the teacher effectively demonstrated the techniques the pupils were to use and his good levels of support enabled pupils of all abilities to successfully produce a wide range of colorful patterns. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall in English, mathematics, science, geography, art and music. Teaching is good in history, but unsatisfactory in design and technology, information and communication technology and aspects of physical education.
20. The majority of teachers through the school have a secure understanding of all aspects of the teaching of English and mathematics and they are confident in teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. These skills are mostly used and further developed appropriately in other subjects. The teaching of history is good through the school. A history lesson observed in Year 6, for example, was well planned and the activities were well structured, using a good variety of resources so that all pupils continued to effectively build their knowledge about the Apollo 11 mission. Activities are lively and stimulate pupils' interest and motivation to learn. However, teaching in information and communication technology and design and technology has not effectively promoted pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6. Information and communication technology is not sufficiently developed in its own right or used effectively to support pupils' learning in other subjects. At present information and communication technology is taught primarily through other subjects, but use of the computers is not well managed and they are often left unused and so insufficient learning takes place.
21. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the pupils did not have a clear understanding of what they were doing. There was no clear link to the objective of the lesson, as it had not been effectively explained to the pupils. In the lessons observed, the teachers' management of pupils' behaviour was not effective and they often became very badly behaved when they were expected to stop what they were doing and to listen. Planning in the unsatisfactory lessons and in the less effective lessons does not take sufficient account of the range of ability within classes nor relate to levels at which pupils should be working.
22. The previous report identified that assessment was not being used effectively by some teachers to plan activities that matched the needs of the range of pupils' capabilities in the class, and this remains a concern in many lessons. Many teachers are not proficient in providing tasks that build on pupils' prior learning and appropriately extend their knowledge and skills. A weakness in the teaching in many classes is the narrowness of expectation in what pupils are to do and record in terms of their capabilities. The lower attaining pupils are often supported in their recording, but the tasks do not always enable them to work independently. Higher attaining pupils are often expected to do more work, but it is not sufficiently challenging and pupils' understanding is not sufficiently extended through the exploration of new ideas.

23. Teachers in the same year groups plan their lessons together so that pupils have the same opportunities for learning, but the standard of work is inconsistent across the year groups because of the differences in the confidence and expertise of the teachers. In the past, staff have not had sufficient opportunities for essential in-service training to address weaknesses in their subject knowledge. The skills of the recent National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have not been appropriately disseminated, so a few teachers are insecure in these aspects of their teaching. In planning activities for pupils, some teachers rely too heavily on published texts in both English and mathematics, following through exercises rather than using them when they fit particular learning objectives.
24. Pupils of all ethnic groups are well supported in Years 1 and 2 and in the best lessons in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in individual withdrawal sessions, enabling them to make good progress in meeting targets set on their individual education plans. Within class lessons, teachers do not always plan appropriate activities for those pupils with special educational needs. The Reading Recovery sessions for groups of lower attaining pupils have a very positive impact on their achievement and progress in reading, as do the effective use of national strategies to support pupils in the development of their literacy skills, such as the Additional Literacy Strategy and the Early Literacy Strategy.
25. The quality of teaching is enhanced by the effective use of additional adult support in class. In some classes, for example in reception and in Year 1, appropriately trained and qualified support and ancillary staff assist teachers well, and they provide good support and encouragement for children so they make good progress. However, in the majority of lessons support is not available and this is frequently when children are being taught literacy and numeracy. Because of the shortage of teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs do not have full access to the curriculum as they have to be taken out of lessons in other subjects, such as science, physical education or art, for support sessions in English.
26. The use of homework is inconsistent through the school. The parents of Year 1 pupils have been closely involved in setting up a scheme, as well as helping their children with work brought from school. They are encouraged to use opportunities around the home, for example shopping and cutting up sandwiches, to develop numeracy. This is being built on in Year 2, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress. As yet there is no overall school policy that develops this practice consistently in the older classes.
27. Work is regularly marked, but there are very few comments that refer to learning objectives and inform pupils of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.



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

28. The curriculum offered to children in the Foundation Stage includes all six areas of learning and gives appropriate emphasis to personal, social and emotional development and to promoting speaking and listening. However, the amount of time given to activities which support children's physical development is insufficient, and there is inadequate access to an outdoor environment in which children can experience all areas of learning. Towards the end of the reception year children are introduced to the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy. The provision prepares children effectively for the National Curriculum and the next stage of learning.
29. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6. The curriculum is appropriately broad, but imbalanced in the provision for design and technology and information and communication technology in Years 3 to 6. In physical education, art and music, where pupils need more time to complete practical tasks, there is evidence that lack of time in lessons also constrains pupils' learning.
30. A policy for the teaching of personal, social and health education has recently been drawn up, and a suitable curriculum has been implemented to support pupils' learning in this subject. All the necessary elements are in place, including sex education, drug awareness and citizenship. Although the sex education curriculum is suitably delivered, the governors have not as yet agreed the sex education policy. Currently parents are not informed of their right to withdraw pupils from these sessions if they wish.
31. The quality of the curriculum has improved in several respects since the previous inspection. The National Literacy Strategy has been recently established, with some good practice evident. Effective opportunities are made for the use of literacy in other subjects such as history and science. The school has also implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. This is having a positive effect, on improving standards in mathematics. Many pupils have secure number skills, although there is little evidence of the use of numeracy and measurement skills in other subjects. Since the previous inspection the school has developed the use of the playground for the teaching of games, and pupils now access the full physical education curriculum, although some aspects of athletics and games for the oldest pupils are not fully developed.
32. The curricular opportunities provided for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. The school implements the Code of Practice, although some of the planned targets, in individual education plans, are not sufficiently detailed to enable good progress. Teachers generally provide adequate support within lessons, although they do not always plan specific activities for these pupils, and this results in a slowing of progress. When pupils are withdrawn for individual support they frequently miss parts of lessons in a variety of subjects and this restricts their access to the full curriculum. At present the school does not identify gifted and talented pupils and has no policy or procedures for pupils of the highest potential attainment. In some classes teachers match classroom activities to the aptitudes of pupils but often there is insufficient challenge for the highest attaining pupils.
33. For each subject there is a suitable plan of curriculum coverage for each year group, and teachers within each year plan collaboratively to ensure that there is parity between parallel classes and that pupils of all ethnic groups are provided with equal opportunities for learning. Procedures for monitoring the implementation of these plans, however, are still underdeveloped. This was an issue from the previous inspection report and insufficient improvement has been made. The key issue from the previous inspection, to develop the use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects, has also not yet been sufficiently addressed.

34. The programme for extra-curricular activities has improved since the previous inspection, but a large number of parents expressed the view that there are still insufficient. The inspection team think the provision is satisfactory, but agree that the range of opportunities for developing new skills and interests is a little limited as only sporting activities are provided and these are for pupils aged seven to eleven. This weakness has been recognised by the school and a greater range is planned for the next school year.
35. The school is situated in a large urban area and its strongest links with the immediate community are with the Roman Catholic church situated next door. The priest pays regular visits to the school and pupils attend services in the church at different times of the year. There is a good relationship with the secondary school to which nearly all of the pupils transfer at the end of Year 6 and there are visitors to the school from outside, for example, the local police, librarians and the school nurse. Good use is made of the wider local community, making visits to the Wirral Country Park, Wigan Pier and Royden Park, for example.
36. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development, and satisfactory provision for their social and cultural development. Overall the provision is much the same as it was at the time of the previous inspection.
37. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well. Pupils are encouraged to explore their thoughts and feelings in a number of ways and to explore the wonders of the world around them. Assemblies pay a large part in pupil's spiritual development. They realise clearly that these occasions are an important part of their school lives and the school day. They display a sense of the importance of such occasions that are valued and cherished. In daily corporate acts of worship the school comes together in groups to discuss, listen and pray, reflecting on things that are important and meaningful to individuals. On one occasion when the headteacher brought in a basket of her favourite treasures for pupils to enjoy and discuss, they were able to express their feelings about the special things and people that they treasure in their own lives.
38. Provision for moral development is also good. Through religious education lessons, pupils develop a clear sense of moral awareness and understanding of what is right and wrong. They discuss choices, good and bad decisions and how they can be helpful and care for others. They discuss how they can help those less fortunate than themselves and are well aware of the issues surrounding Third World countries. In one Year 2 class pupils correspond with a pupil living in Kenya and they raise money for the poor and those in need. Every week in each class in the school there is a prayer service of about 20 minutes during which pupils think of their neighbours, those in trouble, fairness and their sense of duty to others. Frequently they take responsibility for planning and organising these services. A local drama group attends St Alban's on occasions to make presentations on such issues as bullying and the importance of good attendance.
39. Provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory. As already discussed, the school could do more to encourage pupils' sense of social responsibility by creating more opportunities for them to use their own personal initiative around the school and by ensuring they work together more co-operatively as groups in lessons. There is no school council and at the moment there is no opportunity for pupils to socialise together by means of residential visits for the older children as happens in most schools. Several occasions are provided that enables the older pupils to socialise outside their immediate school environment. One occasion is when the Year 6 pupils transferring to the main secondary school join Year 6 pupils from many other feeder schools making the same transfer in a church service to mark this important change in their educational lives.
40. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' cultural education and development. They visit galleries and museums in Liverpool and compare the architectural differences between that city's two mighty cathedrals. Preparation for living in a multi-cultural society is made through the study of

different faiths, for example Hinduism and Judaism. Pupils celebrate occasions such as the Chinese New Year and learn to develop an awareness of the differences and similarities that bring people together in friendship and how to appreciate those differences and similarities.

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

41. There is a warm and caring atmosphere at St Alban's School that illustrates clearly the manner in which pupils are looked after, thus ensuring that they flourish physically, emotionally and spiritually. This is an extension of the family atmosphere that pervades both the school and its church. The aspect of the school's work has been sustained well since the previous inspection. It is an inclusive school and harmonious community that celebrates the success of its pupils from all cultures, backgrounds and all levels of potential attainment. This approach to inclusion is apparent as soon as one enters the school because of the display of Islamic artefacts and books in the main hallway. The school has a clear policy statement on racial equality and harmony. The ethos of the school is one that values and cares for everyone. The recent development of discrete lessons in personal, social and health education is already strongly underpinning the school's pastoral care and support for its pupils.
42. There are good induction procedures for children in the reception classes that support their emotional development. Staff encourage parents to attend a half-day session with their children, and a curriculum evening, dedicated to informing parents about the teaching of reading and how they can support their children.
43. Appropriate procedures for child protection are in place and known to all staff although there has been no formal in-service training in child protection of late. The headteacher is the named officer for child protection. One member of staff has up-to-date training in first aid and there are plans to increase this number as soon as possible. All remaining staff have had basic training in first aid.
44. The health and safety unit of the local authority visits the school once a year and a number of governors walk the school site with the headteacher at intervals. The health and safety issues identified at the time of the previous inspection have been rectified. Fire drills take place once a term and the caretaker tests the fire bell regularly each week.
45. Attendance and absence are recorded accurately in the school's computerised registers and monitored weekly by the headteacher and the administrative officer. As stated already the rate of attendance in the school is satisfactory. The monitoring of attendance is very good. Checks are made with home as soon as a pupil is absent without explanation. If a pupil is late then that is recorded instantly on the computer before the pupil leaves the office for the relevant classroom. The promotion of the need to attend regularly is good and pupils are eager for their class to receive the good attendance trophies, but many parents choose to take their annual holidays in term time and this reduces the overall attendance rate of the school.
46. The school promotes pupils' attendance also very well. The importance of consistent attendance is put in newsletters to parents. Each week at the Golden Assembly certificates and a cup are awarded for the best and good attendance. Pupils really value this and do their best to produce a good rate of personal attendance.
47. The monitoring of pupils' behaviour and personal development is not formally recorded in any way. Any monitoring of this nature is through the good personal knowledge the staff have of their classes and the outcome in awards at the special assemblies. Where appropriate, behaviour is monitored through individual education plans for those pupils that have them but this is not rigorous and it is not clear from these plans how involved parents are. There needs to be a more detailed and vigorous

approach to monitoring this aspect of pupils' development so that they can all receive the best quality of educational and personal support and guidance.

48. The overall procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Reception teachers use suitable assessment procedures at the beginning and end of the reception year, but ongoing assessment to track children's achievement is not consistently used to good effect for matching the level of challenge in numeracy and literacy to the children's stage of development. Assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science are good. The results of national and other end of year testing are used to set future learning targets and to track pupils' progress through the school. Satisfactory procedures are used in science, recording teacher assessments that level pupils' attainment against key learning objectives. However, in other subjects procedures are not sufficiently developed, apart from to inform parents of pupils' general progress at the end of each year. Test results are not yet being carefully analysed for strengths and weaknesses or for variations between classes and different groups of pupils, with a view to informing future organisation and planning for subjects. The school is now planning to use nationally approved optional end of year tests, so that an analysis can be carried out more easily and areas of pupil progress more clearly identified.
49. Results from tests are being used to help form ability groups within lessons in English, and mathematics, although the work planned for different groups does not take sufficient account of assessments, resulting in some lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils and some inappropriate work being set for lower attaining ones. The school identifies pupils with special educational needs at an early stage. Staff are alert to the needs of pupils with behavioural or learning difficulties, and take satisfactory action to support such pupils. The special educational needs support service reviews termly those pupils for whom their help and support has been requested, providing clear guidance for the learning support teacher when writing individual education plans. Teachers also write their own individual education plans for all pupils on the register, with targets to be met in lessons. This use of two individual education plans does not assist in giving a comprehensive and clear picture of the full provision being made for individual pupils, showing how they are to be supported and their needs met. Pupils with behavioural targets are handled sensitively, but the school does not yet have clear guidelines, beyond its behaviour policy, for how these needs should be met. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive their entitled support and the very few pupils who are admitted to the school with English as an additional language are satisfactorily supported in learning English and they achieve satisfactorily.

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

50. The previous inspection report judged that there was an effective partnership between the school and parents and this remains the case. Nevertheless, the school has identified this as an area for improvement in its future plans. It is right to do so because whereas the overall picture of parents' views of the school at the time of this inspection is positive, there are some areas which need strengthening.
51. The pre-inspection meeting for parents and the returned questionnaires present a picture of solid parental support, but with some highlighted concerns. As already stated, parents feel there are insufficient extra-curricular activities and the inspection team agree with this view, noting that the school is addressing this at the beginning of the autumn term. A number of parents feel they are not sufficiently well informed about how their children are getting on, and also feel that the school does not work closely with parents. The new headteacher had already identified the timing of parental consultations as being unsatisfactory and plans had already made for making changes from the coming autumn term. The school will continue to ensure that staff are available to parents at the beginning and end of the school day and that they can make an appointment at any time to see the

headteacher or a class teacher. Parents also feel that the setting of homework is inconsistent across the school and this, again, is an issue that the school has taken steps to address in the near future. The inspection team recognises teachers' good liaison with parents about homework for pupils in Years 1 and 2, but this good practice is not continued into the older classes.

52. Information for parents is satisfactory. A regular newsletter is sent home to parents to keep them informed and abreast of what is happening in the school, and giving them details about forthcoming events. The quality of pupils' annual reports is satisfactory and the school has already identified some minor improvements it wishes to make. Although parents receive copies of individual education plans for those pupils receiving withdrawal support for special educational needs, there is little recorded on them to indicate how they could themselves support their children in meeting the targets set. The school recognises that both the contact with parents of children with special educational needs and their supportive role are areas for development. The parents of the very few pupils with English as an additional language are satisfactorily informed and involved in the provision for supporting their child's learning of English.
53. There was little evidence of parental involvement in children's learning in the reception classes after the induction period, except with reading homework. Staff encourage parents to attend a half-day session with their children and a curriculum evening, dedicated to informing parents about the teaching of reading and how they can support their children. Parental partnership is an area identified for development by the Foundation Stage co-ordinator.
54. The school has a thriving Home School Association that works hard to raise a substantial sum of money each year through its efficient organisation of social and other events. These raised funds are used wisely to improve resources and thus benefit all pupils.
55. The school is fortunate to have some elected parent governors, and foundation governors who are parents, on its governing body. Discussion with these parents during the inspection made it extremely clear that they understand the school well and are strongly committed to both its continuing success and future improvement. They see one aspect of their role, rightly, as a further channel of communication between parents and the school and are eager to get to grips with this and their other duties as members of the governing body.

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

56. The headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement and has set in motion procedures that will support this process. The wide range of expertise and experience now in the school is being effectively encouraged and supported through the implementation of clear management strategies. As a result there is eagerness from all staff to further develop with the school and so raise standards.
57. The role of the senior management team has been effectively reviewed and new roles and responsibilities planned for the new school year will ensure a stronger and more purposeful management structure through which the crucial aspects of school improvement are to be promoted. The very appropriate priorities set out in the interim school development plan show an effective prioritisation and clear resolve to address them through a manageable structured process. An appropriate focus on developing a more consistent strategy to promote pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes has been effectively established and ensures that the school continues to develop as an inclusive and harmonious community. The quality of the school development plan was a concern at the previous inspection but it has been significantly improved and it now provides an effective management tool.

58. Other aspects of concern identified in the previous report have not been effectively addressed. There has been insufficient improvement overall since the previous inspection, but over the last few months there has been significant improvement under the leadership of the new headteacher.
59. Standards in English, mathematics and science dropped in the last two years. In the past, insufficient focus has been given to monitoring standards to ensure pupils make appropriate achievement. Consequently, staff have not been aware of weaknesses in pupils' learning compared to standards achieved nationally. The new headteacher has a much greater grasp of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the school's standards and has introduced co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science to the realisation that standards need to rise.
60. The unsatisfactory quality of teaching in some classes, that was a major concern at the previous inspection, remains. The need for greater monitoring of teaching was identified in the previous report, but this has not yet been addressed. These weaknesses have been recognised by the headteacher and, with the deputy headteacher, comprehensive procedures have been planned to introduce effective systems for school self-evaluation that will support staff in identifying areas of weakness and provide strategies of support and improvement. The school now has a commitment to the professional development of staff and an appropriate system for management of staff performance has been implemented in a way that ensures acceptance and ownership. Professional development is linked to the school's aims and priorities and performance management is now an established aspect of management although it has not yet had a full impact on the school. Strategies for appraisal and performance management are satisfactory. The headteacher plans that future targets for teachers are planned to be part of the whole-school development focus as well as linked to the individual teachers' professional development so that the procedures reinforce the process of school self-evaluation.
61. The previous report identified that assessment was not being used effectively by some teachers to plan activities that matched the needs of the range of pupils' capabilities in the class, and this remains a concern in many lessons. Many teachers are not proficient in providing tasks that build on pupils' prior learning and appropriately extend their knowledge and skills, especially of the higher attainers. This has been recognised by the headteacher in her monitoring of teachers' planning and in her analysis of the school's test results. Good progress has been made in addressing the concern in Year 6 by the introduction of teaching pupils in ability groups for English, mathematics and science, and this has had a significant impact on raising standards. Good support has also been provided by the local education authority in helping staff become more aware of what is needed to improve their teaching in mathematics and science. This has had a good impact on raising standards through the school and shows that staff are prepared to try new ideas and to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. The school is now in good hands and has much potential to make the necessary improvements.
62. Many of the school co-ordinators are new to their role, but with guidance from the headteacher, they have all drawn up initial action plans for their own subjects. They effectively set out the areas for review and development, which suitably guide the co-ordinators' early management strategies. The management of some subjects in the past has not been effective. The co-ordinators provide advice and support for colleagues, and in monitoring resources, but most are not yet involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in order to raise standards. Some co-ordinators monitor teachers' planning to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study, but as there is no agreed overall progression of skills in many subjects and a lack of consistent assessment procedures, it is difficult for them to have a clear view of the quality of education provided.

63. The governing body are very supportive of the school and carry out most of their responsibilities effectively through an appropriate range of committees. They have yet to agree a policy for the teaching of sex education. They have relied considerably in the past on the professional expertise of the headteacher and staff, and have not been sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of education provided by the school. They have not ensured that sufficient progress was being made towards addressing the concerns identified in the previous report or compared the standards achieved by the school to other schools nationally or in the local area. They do not have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, several new governors are eager to extend their roles, and to be better informed and more fully involved in the management aspects of the school.
64. Governors have been efficient in the management of the school budget. Finances are effectively planned, but there is very little understanding of how to apply the principles of best value. The finances are very tight, but the three-year long-term financial plan provided by the bursar has ensured that the school works within its set budget. Day-to-day management and control of the finances are efficient, but office staff members are overburdened with a variety of roles because the school has insufficient administrative support.
65. The school admission policy puts emphasis on admitting pupils who have been baptised into the Catholic Church, but its ethos promotes the inclusion of pupils of all abilities and different ethnic groups. It has recently introduced the required policy on race equality. The school makes full and proper use of the funding to support special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides sound leadership and management, although the school management system does not allow her any regular time to carry out her administrative duties, for example maintaining contact with parents and the agencies involved in supporting pupils with special educational needs. The new Code of Practice is only just starting to be implemented. Although there is good adult help for pupils withdrawn for individual support, this could at times be used more efficiently and effectively to provide group support where pupils are working towards similar targets. Adult help within classes is insufficient to support and meet the special educational needs of pupils within the school.
66. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Although most teachers are well qualified and have many years experience some classes are being taught by teachers who have not had the benefit of recent training in skills and who are not sufficiently aware of the requirements of the literacy and numeracy strategies. This adversely affects the quality of learning in those classes.
67. The school building is large, but it has limited playground space for its large number of children and no grassed area for either recreation or sporting facilities. Classrooms are generally of a good size and provide appropriate space for providing the full curriculum. The school's hall is small and on the few occasions when the school meets as a whole it is extremely overcrowded. It is not possible to invite parents to attend a whole-school assembly, as there simply is not sufficient room. The small size of the hall does not enable physical education to be taught effectively. There is a small library on the upper floor that houses non-fiction books. Fiction and other books are situated in very small libraries in the corners of each classroom. This library is gravely inadequate for a school of this size and the books are in poor condition. There are colourful displays in all the classrooms and in most of them there is a celebration of pupils' work. In public areas there are big displays reflecting an area of study as, for example, on one of the staircases where the Tudors are depicted in vivid colour and detail.
68. Maintenance and decoration of the building have been left unattended for years and it is in a very poor state of decay with peeling paint, cracked stairs and a general feeling of sad neglect. The

caretaker and his small staff do their utmost to keep the school clean. One of the spin-offs of the attractive good displays throughout the school is the fact that they cover up tired walls and brighten up the building that is in great need of repair and refurbishment.

69. Another poor aspect of the school's unsatisfactory accommodation is the lack of an appropriate outside play area for Foundation Stage children, who need sufficient outside play space to ensure their full physical development and provide opportunities for imaginative play.
70. Since arriving at the school the headteacher has spent a lot of time assessing the large amount of work necessary to restore the school building to a reasonable state of repair. The school plans to put some improvements in hand as soon as possible, but there is much costly work to be done.
71. The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils but there are significant weaknesses, especially in the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4. The new headteacher is fully aware of the areas of weakness that need to be addressed and has already identified, and in some instances implemented, the action required. It is her good leadership and clear educational direction that is providing the necessary impetus for improvement.
72. Taking all things into consideration, such as:
  - children enter the school with attainment which is broadly similar to that found nationally;
  - standards at the age of eleven are above those expected in English, mathematics and history, but below those expected in information and communication technology and design and technology;
  - although pupils make good achievement in Years 1 and 2 and in Year 6, there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 3 and 4 where pupils make often insufficient progress in their learning; and
  - the budget is satisfactorily managed and the school has average unit costs,

the school is judged as providing satisfactory value for money.



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

The governors, headteacher and staff should now:

### **1. Raise standards in science to equal those in English and mathematics, and standards in information and communication technology and design and technology in line with those expected for pupils in Year 6.**

(see paragraphs 1-6, 101-111, 117-121, 135-139)

Raising standards in science and information and communication technology are priorities in the school development plan.

### **2. Improve the quality of teaching by:**

- sharing the good practice in the school;
- providing in-service training for staff so that their subject knowledge improves;
- ensuring that information from ongoing assessment is effectively used to provide activities that build on pupils' previous learning and provide appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils;
- ensuring resources are used to stimulate pupils' interest and provide first hand experiences to extend their learning;
- ensuring that information and communication technology is used more regularly and effectively to promote pupils' learning across the curriculum.

(see paragraphs 16-27 and 60)

### **3. Improve the quality of assessment in all subjects so that:**

- there are manageable systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment in all subjects;
- teachers use the information to evaluate the curriculum and adapt it to build on pupils' prior learning;
- data from assessments is used to track pupils' achievement and ensure they are making appropriate progress.

(see paragraphs 48-49 and 61)

Developing and improving assessment procedures are priorities in the school development plan.

### **4. Improve the quality of monitoring of the effectiveness of the school by:**

- implementing the plans for school self-evaluation;
- ensuring governors are more involved in monitoring the work of the school;
- developing further the management role of co-ordinators so that they have a secure knowledge of standards in their subjects, are given time to monitor teachers' planning and to support colleagues, and so are able to promote improvement.

(see paragraphs 59, 62-63)

The implementation of a plan for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is already well underway.

### **5. Improve the quality of the accommodation so that**

- it provides a pleasant and stimulating environment in which to work and learn;
- there is better provision for pupils' research and independent learning by improving the quality and range of the school library and resources for information and communication technology;
- children in the Foundation Stage have an appropriate outside area in which to work and play.

(see paragraphs 67-70, 79)

The improvement of the school building is a key issue of the school development plan.

**In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses need to be considered for inclusion in the action plan:**

Ensure that all statutory requirements are met through the governing body's agreement of a sex education policy and the governors' use of the principles of best value.  
(see paragraphs 30 and 63)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

71

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

30

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	25	29	9	0	0
Percentage	1	10	35	41	13	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YrR-Yr6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	400
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	74
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YrR-Yr6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	36
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.6

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.4
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	24	24	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	23	22
	Girls	22	25	24
	Total	45	48	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (81)	98 (89)	94 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (89)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	23	23
	Girls	23	25	24
	Total	44	48	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (85)	98 (89)	96 (90)
	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	31	28	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	24	28
	Girls	26	21	27
	Total	52	45	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (83)	76 (75)	93 (88)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	28	29
	Girls	26	25	28
	Total	52	53	57
Percentage of pupils	School	88 (85)	90 (82)	97 (91)

at NC level 4 or above	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)
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*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	397
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	2	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of 0 pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YrR-Yr6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.5
Average class size	29

#### **Education support staff: YrR-Yr6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	130.5

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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	674,717
Total expenditure	660,272
Expenditure per pupil	1626
Balance brought forward from previous year	13,717
Balance carried forward to next year	28,162

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	401
Number of questionnaires returned	120

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	33	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	38	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	47	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	48	12	6	2
The teaching is good.	57	39	3	1	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	45	20	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	32	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	38	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	32	47	18	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	42	46	7	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	38	8	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	10	22	33	24	10

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

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

73. Children begin school at the beginning of the school year in which they become five years of age. The older children attend full-time from September and the younger children attend part-time until Christmas. The assessments made at the start of the school year and the inspection findings indicate that the full range of attainment is represented across the two reception classes, similar to that found nationally.

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

74. The teaching of children's personal, social and emotional development is good. In a calm and supportive way, teachers set high expectations for children's behaviour. The daily routine promotes personal, social and emotional development very effectively. A wide range of play activities enables children to interact socially, make their own decisions and develop their concentration and perseverance. Children are expected to plan the order in which they will complete tasks for the day and initiate their own activities in creative, construction, role-play, sand, water and small world play. The level of concentration and perseverance in independent activities is good. Opportunities for children to develop their independence further, however, are limited in some creative activities, because choices of materials and tools, and the techniques to employ, are sometimes made for the children. Teachers respond positively to children's own ideas in discussions, however, and give individual support to children displaying less confidence. This promotes children's self-esteem. On a daily basis, children effectively collaborate in pairs and small groups, and join in whole-class sessions. They show respect for each other, share resources and help each other when clearing away. These opportunities contribute to the above average standards attained in social development.

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

75. Teaching in this area of children's learning is satisfactory overall and in one class it is often good. Children's attainment by the end of the Foundation Stage is in line with those expected in reading and writing, and in speaking and listening it is above expectation. The vast majority of children are able to link sounds to letters, retell stories and read common words. Children enjoy sharing their reading books with parents. Staff conscientiously record reading achievements and communicate with parents about how they can help their children in a home/school reading diary. A range of reading books, which are well matched to the children's' early reading needs, is used to reinforce frequently used words and provide stimulating picture cues. The writing areas in each classroom are adequately resourced, and letters and words are displayed for easy reference. The quality of strategies used for the teaching writing is varied. In one class, during a small group activity led by the teacher, most children were encouraged to build their own words by sounding out syllables, and they constructed their own simple sentences. This was effective in developing children's understanding of the link between sounds and letters. In another class, emphasis was placed on children copying sentences, which had been written by an adult or built by the children using printed words. This gave the children insufficient experience of hearing sounds in words and led to some reinforcement of incorrect letter formation. Children engage in early writing confidently as they play; for example, they make passports, greetings cards and shopping lists. Throughout the routine children's verbal contributions are promoted and valued. Adults listen respectfully when children are speaking, and regularly engage children in conversations. This contributes to good progress in speaking and listening. There are an adequate number of picture, fiction and non-fiction books in classroom book areas. The range and quality are insufficient, however, to maintain the children's interest throughout the year.

#### **Mathematical development**



76. In the reception year, children are given daily opportunities to count, recognise numbers, calculate or develop mathematical vocabulary for shape and measurement. In the two lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory, but a pattern of insufficient challenge for some children emerged in the groups' activities. Children completed tasks very quickly, and were able to demonstrate number skills higher than those demanded by the tasks. The pace of lessons, during whole-class teaching, was rather slow and consequently some children demonstrated boredom as they waited for their turn to respond. Time and classroom assistants could have been used more effectively in two smaller groups. Teaching overall is satisfactory in this area and children make satisfactory progress so that by the end of the year most attain standards in line with those expected. Children have developed a good range of mathematical vocabulary and use the correct names for solid and plain shapes. They use comparative language for weight, length and capacity. Most children are able to record numerals to 10, and count in ones and tens to 100. During the week of the inspection, opportunities to add and subtract small numbers were provided but they offered insufficient challenge for many. There was little evidence of children working in practical situations or for real purposes.

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

77. Teaching in this area is satisfactory overall and children make satisfactory progress so most attain standards in line with those expected by the end of the year. The children's ability to observe and investigate is constrained, however, by a lack of access to an outdoor learning environment. The provision of an outside teaching area has been identified by the co-ordinator as an aspect of provision that needs to be developed. Samples of peas and pea pods, flowers and other artefacts for the children to handle and observe were displayed. The objects lacked relevance to the children, however, and their interest in the materials was low. In discussions the children demonstrated little understanding of growth as they looked at the seeds and flowers, or of reflection as they handled mirrors. Their skills as early researchers, promoted by observing the natural world, finding information in books, and using the computer, are currently underdeveloped. However, children regularly engage in construction activities, using structured and found materials. They develop an understanding of journeys by sharing their photographs and experiences of holidays. They frequently discuss significant events and people in their lives. They discuss the control of equipment used at home and use computers as they direct remote control cars. They enjoy using the 'Tonka Workshop' program on the computer to generate and print images, although there was little evidence of information and communication technology being used to support learning in literacy and numeracy during the inspection.

### **Creative development**

78. In this area of learning children are given opportunities to engage in music making, appreciation of music, role-play, creating pictures, constructing, designing and making. Teaching is satisfactory overall and children make suitable progress to attain expected standards by the end of the year. The opportunities for singing, listening to music and using musical instruments are good. Children concentrate well when following signals to introduce musical instruments and when using instruments to accompany recorded songs. There are large spaces available for art and construction activities, and children have easy access to tools and materials. The construction area, however, currently offers an insufficient range of construction equipment to enable children to explore forces and to create large models. The area lacks photographs, books or models to stimulate children's ideas for building and joining. However, the stimuli to encourage creativity are good for the visual arts and children's pictures are lively, bright and colourful. A good example is provided by the work based on the story of 'The Rainbow Fish', where children have worked collaboratively using many different materials and techniques to achieve an impressive display. In child-initiated activities, such as playing with sand, water and small-world toys, access to a wider range of materials and adaptable resources is needed to stimulate sustained child participation.

### **Physical development**

79. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although in the physical education sessions observed teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. Children show good whole body control as they climb on, over and under the low level apparatus. In the most effective lesson, they responded with excitement and good body control as they changed direction, stopped and started again in a large space. Children enjoyed chanting words from 'The Bear Hunt' and took real pleasure in relating their movements to their current reading. Children lack direct access to an outdoor environment and they use the school hall or playground only once per week. This offers insufficient time or frequency of opportunity to engage in physical activity. Currently, the outdoor opportunities for physical activity, including running, jumping and balancing on low-level apparatus, offer limited challenge and insufficient time for developing collaborative and imaginative experiences. This an area identified by the school for development. Typically, children in the Foundation Stage use wheeled toys, and balance, swing, slide and climb on a daily basis and the children at St Alban's lack these opportunities. Children's physical development, as they handle tools and materials, is well supported by the range of modelling, painting, and constructing experiences offered. Overall, the children's achievement is satisfactory through the year and they attain the expected standards.

### **ENGLISH**

80. In 2001 tests, standards of pupils in Year 2 in reading had been satisfactorily maintained since the previous inspection and were generally in line with those found nationally. There was a clear improvement in writing, however, and pupils in Year 2 reached standards above the national average. Standards in Year 6 were close to the national average in 2001, although relatively few pupils reached the higher levels.
81. In the most recent tests in 2002, standards have significantly improved and are above the 2001 national average in both Year 2 and Year 6. There is also a large proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in Year 6. The overall trend is towards improvement. Pupils achieve well at both key stages in relation to their standards on entry to the school and to the standards attained in Year 2. The work produced by boys is often good and they achieve well in comparison with national standards. Standards observed during the inspection confirmed the results in the national tests.
82. Standards in speaking and listening are above average across the school and pupils' achievement is good. Pupils are confident and articulate. They express their ideas well and they listen to others. In all year groups, speaking and listening skills are developed through discussion activities and pupils are able to speak confidently to adults and to each other. Pupils successfully generate ideas in brainstorming sessions, and this contributes to their success in writing. In Year 1, for example, they particularly enjoy oral work related to poetry about dinosaurs. They can also listen intently to a story about a bad-tempered ladybird and identify characters as mini-beasts that they have studied in science. The work planned for in the literacy hour fosters the development of skills in speaking, and other subject areas, including history, also make a valuable contribution. By Year 6 oral work is of a good standard and the majority of pupils discuss a poem such as that written by Roald Dahl with real confidence. However, no drama or role-play was observed during the inspection and pupils were involved in discussion about their own and others work in only a few lessons.
83. Standards in reading are above average across the school and achievement is good or better for the majority of pupils because there is a thorough approach to the teaching of reading in reception and in Years 1 and 2. This effective start provides a secure basis on which pupils of all ethnic groups progressively develop their knowledge and skills through the school. Most pupils enjoy books and take pleasure in reading. The majority of younger pupils effectively use a variety of strategies to support their reading, such as the use of phonics and picture clues. By Year 2, the majority of pupils are fluent and confident readers. However, some pupils do need more support in using these

strategies to read unfamiliar words. In the majority of literacy lessons in Years 1 and 2, learning support assistants provide good levels of support and this helps pupils to make good progress. The lack of this additional adult in classes in the older classes reduces the opportunities of good progress for some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. Resources for reading are in need of updating and the classrooms have only a limited range of fiction books. Parents make a valuable contribution by hearing pupils read at home; this is very well organised in Year 1. Pupils who find reading difficult also receive additional literacy support and attend Reading Recovery sessions where they have individual support. For these reasons, despite the lack of resources, pupils achieve well in reading because of the emphasis on basic skills and on reading comprehension. Pupils enjoy using fiction and non-fiction texts. By the end of their time in the school they have experienced a satisfactory variety of literature including a wide range of poetry. However, the range of work of pupils in Year 6 has been affected by intensive preparation for tests. For example, they know less about Shakespeare's plays than pupils in other schools because they have only read one short extract from Macbeth.

84. Library skills are appropriately developed in that pupils can talk about how to find a book and to use an index. However, the small and inadequately stocked school library provides limited opportunities for pupils to develop skills in research and does not prepare them well for work at the secondary school. Some pupils with special educational needs have difficulty in reading but they are monitored and make secure progress when they work with support teachers. Higher attaining pupils have good skills in skimming and scanning texts for information. Pupils of average attainment read and enjoy a variety of books and have well-established reading strategies to help them decode unfamiliar words. However, not all pupils are clear about the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Individual pupils are developing the use of computers, usually at home, to further their skills in some aspects of reading and research and they understand that valuable information is available on the Internet. Computers are insufficiently used for this purpose at present.
85. Standards in writing are good. Written work is often presented well, with pupils using joined-up writing, rather than printing. However, this is not consistent, because the skill of joining letters has not been introduced early enough and so some pupils persist in printing despite the regular handwriting lessons. Pupils tend to use pencil rather than pen and this can affect the presentation of their work. The higher attaining pupils write about and illustrate their ideas very well and many produce good pieces of extended creative writing. Pupils are clear about the use of capital letters and the spelling rules when asked. However, teachers insufficiently reinforce the expectation to use this knowledge and many pupils throughout the school fail to follow the rules that they have been carefully taught. The range of written work is good. Pupils of all ethnic groups write creatively and with imagination. The writing of pupils with special educational needs shows that they benefit from the support teachers who work with them. Pupils also write and illustrate their own stories and poems. Work on display in classrooms shows that pupils effectively use formal and informal language, and that many of them are particularly good at writing persuasive letters. In Year 3, for example, pupils wrote to the wolf in the story of Little Red Riding Hood, explaining clearly why its behaviour was unacceptable. In that lesson several pupils did use a computer to express their ideas, but in general pupils have insufficient opportunity to use word processing and desktop publishing skills to improve and illustrate their written work.
86. During the inspection the quality of teaching was found to be satisfactory. It was good in the lessons observed in Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils respond well to their work and behaviour is good or very good in Years 1 and 2. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work because they are taught well. They are prepared to experiment and to think for themselves. They work well in pairs and groups and they take an active rather than passive role in learning. The approach to work in the most effective lessons promotes participation and inclusion through the sharing of ideas. Pupils take part in group and whole-class, as well as individual, activities and this promotes effective learning for all. A

similar picture is seen in the majority of lessons further up the school, but in some classes in Year 3 and Year 4 behaviour is unsatisfactory and pupils fail to contribute in class. This is because the teaching is unsatisfactory and tasks and resources do not match the needs of the range of pupils in the class.

87. The majority of teachers have a good understanding of all aspects of the teaching of English and they are confident in teaching the basic skills in all aspects of reading and writing, and these skills are used well in other subjects such as history. Teaching is effective in small groups and with the whole class. The teaching of reading and writing is good and teachers have high expectations of the work of their pupils. In the most successful lessons, pupils make very good progress because of the pace and rigour of the work, the high quality of questioning and the exciting range of activities. However, in less successful and unsatisfactory lessons, the time available is not used well enough and pupils are not kept firmly on task. All pupils whatever their level of attainment use the same resources or, for example, are tested on the same list of spellings. Not all teachers are sufficiently aware of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy or of how to manage pupils effectively. This weakness in teaching English is having a negative impact on learning and therefore achievement in some classes in Year 3 and Year 4. In Year 6, however, pupils' achievement is good because of the effective strategies used to further develop their knowledge and skills.
88. Pupils' learning is effectively monitored. Assessment procedures are good and areas for improvement are identified. This information has been used to set targets and to improve standards in national tests through an intensive revision programme. In the most successful lessons effective systems of assessment and recording of information about individual pupils have clearly been used in the planning for groups and activities within the class. In these lessons there is a good match between the teaching strategies in use and the needs of the pupils and this helps them to learn. However teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are given the most suitable resources and tasks. Pupils with special educational needs do not always have the kind of individual support that enables them to learn well.
89. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The English co-ordinators provide good leadership and they have identified the major areas for development. The literacy strategy has now been fully implemented, but a system for the monitoring of all aspects of work in English has not yet been established. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Planning and assessment procedures have improved. Some new resources have been provided, although the quality of some resources is still poor and pupils do not have sufficient access to computers.

## **MATHEMATICS**

90. At the ages of seven and eleven, pupils attain overall standards in mathematics that are above the national average. This shows an improvement since the previous inspection when standards were broadly satisfactory and a big improvement on the standards attained in the tests in 2001. It is due to the improved quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2, and to the significant effect of a revision programme for Year 6 pupils, this year, which enabled the pupils in the two classes to work as three different ability groups, with activities well focused to the different levels of ability. This programme was introduced as part of the school's interim school development plan that recognised the need to raise the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels. Pupils in Year 6 have therefore been able to make good progress from their prior average level of attainment at the age of seven. Throughout Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress. Overall progress through Years 3 to 6 is also good, but greater in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is better. Pupils with special educational needs, however, only make satisfactory progress, due largely to the work set for them not always being sufficiently appropriate to their learning needs. Where they are withdrawn for work on individual numeracy targets, they achieve well.

91. By the age of seven pupils work confidently with numbers up to a hundred, recognising patterns in number, understanding place value and rounding numbers to the nearest ten. They recall addition and subtraction facts to ten, with higher attaining pupils working out the answers correctly when adding tens and units in their heads, recalling times table facts and seeing the link between multiplication and division. Pupils use simple fractions in their work on number and shape. They describe the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes satisfactorily, recognise right angles and half and quarter turns, and start to use standard measures for length, capacity, mass and time. They sort and classify information, for example data on eye colour, and display and compare it using pictograms and bar charts. Where opportunities are provided in lessons, pupils discuss their work confidently, using mathematical vocabulary correctly.
92. By the time they are eleven, pupils show a good understanding and use of numbers to 1000 and beyond. They multiply and divide numbers, including decimals, by ten, 100 and 1000. They use efficient written methods to set out their calculations and express fractions of numbers correctly as percentages and decimals. In their work on shape and measure, they calculate the perimeter and area of simple shapes. They measure angles accurately and know that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees. Pupils collect and order data, displaying it and comparing their results. Much of their recorded work demonstrates that computational and other skills are developed and practised well, sometimes to excess. However, both within numeracy and other subjects, there is insufficient evidence of pupils applying these skills and using taught strategies for themselves to find solutions. As a result they lack confidence in talking about what they are doing and explaining their methods.
93. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In Years 1 and 2 it is good but in Years 3 to 6, although satisfactory overall, a significant number of lessons in the lower part of the key stage were unsatisfactory.
94. There were several factors that added to the success of lessons in Years 1 and 2. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and they set challenging tasks so that learning is effective. Relationships within classes are good, with teachers offering plenty of praise and encouragement, bringing about good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. Both during the introduction to lessons and during activities, questioning is generally rigorous, with teachers expecting pupils to explain their answers in order to further their understanding and confidence in numeracy. Incorrect answers are used as positive teaching points so pupils feel no loss of self-esteem. The provision for homework is also good. The parents of Year 1 pupils have been closely involved in setting up a scheme; as well as helping their children with work brought from school, they are encouraged to use opportunities around the home, for example shopping and cutting up sandwiches, to develop numeracy. This is being built on in Year 2, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress. As yet there is no overall school policy that develops this practice consistently in the older classes.
95. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the main contributory factor was a lack of subject knowledge, both of the mathematical concepts being introduced and of the subject vocabulary used. For example, a teacher referred to irregular shapes as 'unregular' and was confused about what constituted the properties of a regular shape. Unfamiliarity with the National Numeracy Strategy also resulted in lessons where pupils made insufficient progress. In these lessons pupils were not always managed well.
96. Planning in both the unsatisfactory lessons and others does not take sufficient account of the range of ability within classes nor relate to levels at which pupils should be working. Frequently work is set and introduced to the whole class, with higher attaining pupils expected just to record more than the rest, and lower attaining pupils less. For example, from the analysis of past work a higher attaining Year 6 pupil completed 91 short division sums within the lesson! This shows that teachers' ongoing

assessment of pupils does not sufficiently recognise the range of ability within classes and the progress being made by different groups of pupils, resulting in lessons that do not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils nor meet the learning needs of the lower attainers. In a Year 3 lesson introducing Venn diagrams, the work for the majority of pupils was little more than a repeat of the work on sets covered in earlier years. This lack of challenge is also evident where the work of higher attaining pupils is almost always totally correct. Where work is not sufficiently appropriate for lower attaining pupils, much of the work is incorrect, sometimes showing negative comments from the teacher. In planning activities for pupils, teachers often rely too heavily on published texts, following through exercises rather than using them when they fit particular learning objectives.

97. Pupils' work is generally well presented, showing positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils generally concentrate well on what they are doing. However, few opportunities were seen for pupils to work co-operatively, sharing ideas and talking about their work in order to gain greater understanding. Although learning objectives are generally displayed and shared with pupils, where lessons are summed up at the end these objectives are not always referred to so that pupils are able to evaluate their own learning and recognise the progress they have made. Work is regularly marked, but there are very few comments that refer to learning objectives and inform pupils of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.
98. There are too few opportunities to use mathematics in other areas of the curriculum. The use of information and communication technology has only just started to be developed in mathematics. Programs are used for entering, displaying and comparing data, and for practising basic skills, for example *Function Machine*.
99. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' achievement. National testing, end of year tests and termly tests, set by teachers, enable pupils' progress to be tracked as they move through the school. This identifies groups of pupils of differing abilities. Although planned, the results are not yet being carefully analysed for strengths and weaknesses, with a view to informing future planning that supports the learning needs of pupils of different abilities, ethnicity and gender. This is an area of improvement planned for next term under the guidance of the local education authority. Opportunities have not been provided to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, with a view to improving their quality and raising standards, a key issue at the previous inspection. Resources for the subject are insufficient. The school has recognised the need for additional resources for practical work, and to ensure that the basic equipment for numeracy sessions is readily available in all classrooms.

## SCIENCE

100. Standards in the most recent tests have risen in Year 2 and Year 6 and are better than those achieved for the last two years. In Year 2 they are better than the standards found at the previous inspection, and standards in Year 6 are similar.
101. In the 2001 teacher assessments, pupils in Year 2 attained average standards compared with all schools. In the most recent assessments, all pupils attained the expected standard, with a good proportion attaining the higher than expected level. This good achievement and above average standards were confirmed by the inspection findings. Standards of pupils in Year 6 in the 2001 National Curriculum tests were below the national average, whereas this year, standards have risen and are generally in line with those expected. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall. It is now good in Years 5 and 6.
102. The reason for the improved standards is the good teaching now evident in many classes, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers have responded very effectively to the recent guidance provided by the advisers from the local education authority who identified the weakness in the provision for pupils to investigate and experiment. This is an element that now has a much greater focus within teachers' planning and is satisfactorily provided in most lessons. Pupils are consequently developing a more secure understanding of scientific phenomena, and they use their knowledge to predict what might happen and to explain why things occur. The attention to learning scientific information is appropriate. Greater emphasis is now placed on pupils recording their ideas and findings in their own words so consolidating their understanding, and developing an effective use of scientific vocabulary and appropriate scientific terms. These improvements are still very recent and have not yet had sufficient impact on raising standards to equal those achieved in English and mathematics in Year 6. The small group lessons for pupils of similar attainment in Year 6 have also had a significant impact on raising standards this year. Teachers were able to focus more closely on individual needs so pupils were well supported and yet also challenged in their work. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 also focus pupils' attention on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve and achieve higher standards.
103. In Years 1 and 2, teaching of science is good and pupils are provided with a rich variety of experiences that extend their learning. Visits to the local church garden to hunt for mini-beasts in Year 1 and to the local beach to research habitats in Year 2, for example, provided pupils with good opportunities to observe creatures and plants in their natural positions. These experiences were then effectively explored in class lessons enabling pupils to discuss their ideas. The teachers planned activities that successfully extended pupils' knowledge so that in Year 1 the higher attaining pupils developed an understanding of how mini-beasts are classified by their differences in body parts, and other pupils learned to recognise the differences between insects and spiders. Pupils in Year 2 were excited by their new knowledge. Several pupils explained that they had never realised that slugs could not live on a beach because seaweed was too salty for them. Higher attaining pupils understand how slugs move and explained that the sand would also make it difficult for them to slither along.
104. In Years 3 to 6 teaching is satisfactory overall, but it is more variable than that found in Years 1 and 2. Where it is good, pupils of all abilities are given suitable opportunities to investigate and to explore new ideas. In a Year 3 class, for example, the teacher's probing questions, while the pupils were exploring the speed of their reactions in catching a falling ruler, ensured that pupils understood that the higher the number they recorded actually meant slower reactions. This led the pupils to suggest hypotheses for why their reactions were changing. They used the simple graphs produced to suggest that practice was making their reactions faster or that pupils were distracted during the test and this made them less effective. A lower attaining pupil showed his good understanding and

achievement by suggesting that his reactions might be getting slower because he was getting tired. The enjoyment created during the experimentation meant that all pupils concentrated well and were all involved in thinking about the reasons for their results.

105. A recent focus on improving the teaching of investigations and promoting pupils' enquiry skills is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding. It is still underdeveloped in some classes and, in this aspect, pupils in Year 6 are still not secure and this reduces their overall attainment. Their acquisition of scientific knowledge is satisfactory, but their ability to use their knowledge to explain what has happened in their tests, or to develop experiments for themselves, is unsatisfactory because it is less well developed. In a lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils used their knowledge of forces to explain why their spinners fell to the ground and suggested possible methods of how to change its speed. They have not had many opportunities to plan their own investigations in the past and many found it difficult at first to isolate the variables to ensure a fair test, although the principle of fair testing was well understood. The teacher's well-focused questions and the use of an effective planning sheet, however, helped them to plan an experiment into the various methods they could use to change the spinners fall. Pupils in Year 5 have had a good introduction into making experiments fair in their exploration of the most effective medium in which to grow plants. They explained clearly that the amount of water, number of seeds and the quantity of earth, sand or compost must be the same if the experiment was to be accurate.
106. In less effective lessons pupils do not have the opportunity of first hand experience and the resources available do not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to observe and explore things for themselves. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the pupils did not have a clear understanding of what they were doing. They were not clear, for example, why they were counting up how many small cubes they could hold and trying the test three times. There was no clear link to the objective of the lesson, as it had not been effectively explained to the pupils. In the lesson observed, the teacher's management of pupils' behaviour was not effective and they became very badly behaved when they were expected to stop what they were doing and to listen.
107. A weakness in the teaching in many classes is the narrowness of expectation in what pupils are to do and record in terms of their capabilities. The lower attaining pupils are often supported in their recording, but the tasks do not always enable them to work independently. Higher attaining pupils are often expected to do more work but it is not sufficiently challenging so they have to use their knowledge to explore new ideas. This weakness in pupils' recording was recognised by the local education authority adviser who suggested a greater variety of activities to develop pupils' recording skills.
108. Generally the teachers make science lessons interesting and this stimulates pupils' motivation to learn and to understand. In the very best lessons, pupils' concentration and perseverance are high. They work effectively in pairs or in groups to test their hypotheses and discuss their ideas. Most pupils present their work with care.
109. The curriculum for science is appropriately broad and, with the greater focus on investigation apparent in pupils' work, it is now satisfactorily balanced. All aspects of the expected areas of work are suitably taught and are planned effectively. Teachers in the same year group plan their lessons together ensuring that pupils of the same age have equal opportunities in learning. Pupils' literacy skills are satisfactorily used to record their work in Years 1 and 2 but they were limited to copied sentences in many of the older classes until recently. A greater range of skills is now being employed. Information and communication technology is not used appropriately in science to do research or to record pupils' findings. Until recently, pupils' numeracy skills have also been insufficiently used and further developed. During the inspection, however, there were many appropriate opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge and skills in measuring and recording



their findings. Pupils' achievement in the different areas of learning are assessed appropriately and compared with the standards expected for their age. The different grades are not as yet amalgamated into one level so that overall achievement can be tracked. Data from the National Curriculum tests is not as yet analysed so that weaknesses in the curriculum are identified. This is an area of improvement planned for next term under the guidance of the local education authority.

110. The co-ordinators have provided effective support for colleagues and shared new information and expertise gained from their discussions with the local education authority. They have not as yet monitored standards or the quality of teaching and so do not have a clear view of how the provision can be improved.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

111. Standards in art and design have been satisfactorily maintained since the previous inspection when they were judged as being in line with national expectations at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. The evidence from the four lessons seen, from display work and from planning documents, shows that this is still broadly the case. Pupils' achievement is generally satisfactory, and in some classes there is some very good work going on. Resources have been improved so that pupils are now experiencing a good range of materials and techniques.
112. Pupils in Year 1 have successfully experimented with mixing colours and using different materials to achieve particular effects. They have used watercolours, pastels and charcoal as well as a wide variety of materials to create colourful collages. A good example is the sea collage, displayed in the corridor, that uses a wide range of materials to good effect. This, and many other examples around the school, shows that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are enriching their experience through art. In their observational drawings, and in their work inspired by other artists, they show at least sound and sometimes good levels of skill. In one lesson where pupils were producing repeat patterns in the style of Andy Warhol, they showed good appreciation of the qualities of watercolour and pastels, and the different effects that could be achieved. By the end of Year 2 pupils are showing a good level of skill when weaving various materials inside a frame constructed of twigs, or when tackling the intricate task of knotting and threading beads during the making of a 'dream catcher' in the manner of North American Indians.
113. In Years 3 and 4 this sound start is built upon and pupils are experiencing a wider range of opportunities to increase their skills and understanding. Pupils in Year 3 have used the technique of 'batik' to produce some high quality wall hangings including one on an 'under the sea' theme displayed alongside poetry and collage on the same subject. They have also produced some very accomplished paintings in the style of Monet using collage, pastels and paint mixed with glue. Through their collaborative work pupils are developing personal and social skills, and through their appreciation of the qualities of the work of different artists, enhancing their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils in Year 4 have produced mono-prints of images such as flowers, faces and insects, which show a good appreciation of texture and pattern, and their developing expertise in working with different materials is clearly shown in some lovely 'character heads' modelled from plastic bottles and cartons. There is some good cross-curricular work here, with each head on display accompanied by a lively piece of descriptive writing. Good cross-curricular links are also made in lessons in Year 5, where large portraits and a huge mural bring alive the time of Henry VIII. Although there is some very good work on display, particularly that produced during a successful art week, there is a lack of consistency across the year groups with the standard of work depending on the confidence and expertise of the teacher. Given the high quality of some of the work lower down the school, it would be reasonable to expect the more able pupils to be producing work of a higher standard by the end of Year 6. The good teaching provided by the co-ordinator in

Year 4 has not yet been sufficiently shared through the school to maintain pupils' good achievement. It is satisfactory overall.

114. In the best lessons, teachers succeed in inspiring and motivating the pupils to produce varied and interesting work. Where pupils know what they are trying to achieve, and have the necessary skills and confidence, some very good work is done. For example, in one lesson where pupils used a variety of materials to complete a collage mini-beast, they showed a very good appreciation of the different effects that could be achieved by using different materials, patterns and textures. At the end of the lesson they were able to comment constructively on these different qualities. In another lesson, younger pupils used paints and pastels with great care to colour previously prepared images, and clearly appreciated the different qualities of each medium. Where lessons are less successful it is because the teachers are not sure what they want the pupils to achieve, learning objectives are too vague and expectations for excellence are not high enough. Pupils invariably enjoy lessons and behave well, but learning is not even across all classes.
115. The co-ordinators, who act as very good role models, need to find ways to ensure that the good and sometimes very good teaching evident in some classes is spread throughout the school. They also need to ensure that teachers' planning and pupils' work is monitored, so that a steady progression of skills, knowledge and understanding can be promoted throughout the school. The curriculum should be more explicit in identifying opportunities for cross-curricular work. For example, little use is made of information and communication technology, and opportunities are missed to relate work on patterns to mathematical symmetry.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

116. Only one lesson in design and technology was observed during this inspection because of timetable constraints, but from scrutiny of displays, analysis of planning and talking to pupils and staff, it is clear that standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2, but below those expected by the end of Year 6. This means that the school has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection when standards were found to be in line at the end of both years. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the first two years, but as the demands of the curriculum become greater, they fail to make the expected progress after that, particularly in their understanding of the planning and design process.
117. In the early years, pupils investigate the use of technology in simple ways, such as looking at the design of storybooks with moving parts or using construction apparatus to investigate wheels and axles. Many of the units of work are related to other subject areas, for example, through art looking at the design of Christmas cards or through literacy, designing a rotating sea picture. By the end of Year 2, they are beginning to describe their designs in pictures and words, and suggest things that might have improved their work. They demonstrate sound skills in making, for instance in the use of textiles when weaving various materials and knotting and threading beads as they created a decorative artefact in the style of North American Indians.
118. From Year 3 onwards pupils tackle a variety of tasks that involve more advanced making skills. In Year 3 they have made a simple percussion instrument and are making a wooden picture frame to mount their designs for a Roman mosaic. Pupils in Year 4 have made a three-dimensional character face, some of which show flair and imagination, and Year 5 are designing and making a Tudor house which successfully uses some of the techniques employed when they made the picture frame. By the end of Year 6 pupils are aware of the need to fit their design for a purpose, to evaluate as the work progresses, and to identify where this evaluation has led to improvements. For example, when designing a fruit cocktail, they show an appreciation of the need to make the product attractive and interesting as well as ensuring that it will taste good.

119. Each class completes one design project each term. This ensures that the basic curriculum is covered but it does not lead to a steady progression in skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers are not challenging pupils to plan and evaluate their products with increasing sophistication and precision. The same planning sheet is used throughout the school, and the evaluative comments on these sheets do not show a developing depth of understanding. For example, in their project to design a fluorescent armband, Year 6 pupils make comments such as “the cutting went a bit wrong” or “I’ve learned that most people can’t sew”. In the one lesson observed, pupils were all making exactly the same wooden frame, and there was no sign of pupils being encouraged to think for themselves, for instance by choosing tools, materials or techniques.
120. Design and technology has had a very low profile in the school, and the co-ordinators have given priority to their other areas of responsibility. This means that the potential for the subject to make a significant contribution in other areas of the curriculum, and to the pupils’ personal development, has not been fully realised. Opportunities to enhance learning in subjects such as English, mathematics and information and communication technology are rarely exploited. There are pockets of good practice and some of the products on display show clearly that pupils of all ethnic groups and including those with special educational needs have enjoyed the activity and gained from the experience. However, if the subject is to take its proper place in the curriculum, the co-ordinators will have to find ways to boost staff confidence, and to monitor more closely the way pupils’ knowledge and understanding are systematically developed throughout the school.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

121. By Year 6, pupils of all ethnic groups, including those with special educational needs, attain standards in geography that are in line with national expectations, showing that they have been maintained since the previous inspection. In Year 2, however, pupils are now attaining standards that are above those found in most schools. They now achieve well in Years 1 and 2, because of the good teaching, but in Years 3 to 6 pupils’ achievement is only satisfactory.
122. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 recognise and name a variety of buildings and know how they are used. They recognise different features of the landscape, such as hills and rivers. They have visited, for example, the local park and looked in some detail at its features, observing closely those aspects that make it a good park. They understand that some aspects can also have a downside. For example, pupils thought it would be good to have an ice-cream shop, but that could result in more litter; people can exercise their dogs but dog dirt is unpleasant. They start to develop an awareness of places and localities beyond their own, satisfactorily comparing, for example, life in Wallasey with that in a Kenyan village. By drawing a plan of their own school and looking at aerial photographs of the locality they begin to understand how maps are made, and begin to use them when drawing in a route on a map of the park. When planning their own park, they know how to use symbols and a key.
123. In Years 3 to 6 pupils look more closely at their own locality, comparing the different boroughs of Merseyside and finding out about their rural, urban and industrial make-up. They look at the natural and man-made changes in New Brighton, writing persuasive letters to suggest improvements in the environment. They make further comparisons with other places, for example, by contrasting the local environment and economy with those of a Greek town. When preparing holiday brochures for Sri Lanka and the Caribbean, they begin to understand the effects of different world climates on lifestyles. Some opportunity is provided for individual research when finding out information and facts about different European countries.

124. From an analysis of past work, displays and lessons observed, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 1 and 2, where an excellent lesson was seen, teaching and learning are good. In this lesson, learning objectives were very clear and the work was very well planned and prepared for the range of ability within the class, taking account of the range of pupils' literacy skills. There were very good opportunities for speaking and listening that challenged pupils to think and develop ideas about the good and possible bad features of parks. They were able, as a result, to suggest why parks are important, for example to people without gardens and to elderly people. The lessons seen in Years 3 to 6 were generally well planned and prepared, but the activities did not always take sufficient account of previous learning, and therefore did not always provide sufficient challenge, particularly for higher attaining pupils. For example, the work on parks in Year 1 overshadowed that of Year 3. Although pupils in Year 3 were attempting to survey their favourite features and to graph their findings, their prior knowledge and understanding of the different features was not drawn upon or developed, either through discussion and questioning or in the work produced. These lower expectations were also evident in a Year 4 lesson where pupils were looking at Egypt. The lack of a clear focus to the lesson and some vagueness about the activities created a slow pace and some problems with class management.
125. Although there are opportunities to use literacy skills in geography, these do not take sufficient account of the range of skills within classes, especially when work is copied or all pupils are given the same passage to fill in words. The use of information and communication technology is limited, although a program that displays aerial views of the area is being used to support local studies.
126. Co-ordination for geography is currently unsatisfactory. There is a temporary co-ordinator for Years 1 and 2 and a recently appointed one for Years 3 to 6. There is not yet a clear picture of how the subject develops across both key stages. A revision of the scheme of work, using national guidelines, is being considered, with a view to providing greater continuity and progression in learning. There has been no monitoring of teaching or of the curriculum, both key issues at the previous inspection. Teachers' informal assessments are reported annually to parents, but there are no whole-school procedures for assessing and recording pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, to inform future planning or to monitor pupils' achievement. However, personal correspondence with a Kenyan child, and trips within the locality, for example to a landfill site and to an aquarium and beach, enhance the curricular opportunities provided.

## **HISTORY**

127. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected of pupils of similar age nationally. These standards are an improvement on those at the previous inspection and pupils now achieve well.
128. In Year 2 pupils are able to understand that every day life has changed for ordinary people and that individuals such as Samuel Pepys have made a vital contribution to our understanding of specific events in the past. The work of pupils in classes in Years 1 and 2 shows that they can compare aspects of life today with life in the past and that they are aware of the ways in which life has changed. They understand how historians find out about the past from eyewitness accounts and that catastrophic events such as the Great Fire of London are part of the process of change over the centuries. Learning is effective because pupils are introduced to a variety of sources of evidence about the past, including the logbooks of their own school, and this helps them to understand change in a familiar context. In the same way they have compared New Brighton in the past and present.
129. Pupils in Year 6 show a good level of understanding of the role of key figures of past centuries and of how historians find out about the past. They are very clear about the value of asking people who lived through the last war and the major events of the twentieth century about their memories of the past. Standards in written work are good in both year groups because pupils have high standards in

literacy. However, pupils have only limited experience of individual investigations in history because the school has poor library facilities and has only recently been able to develop computer-based research work.

130. As pupils move through the school they study life in the ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome and this helps their understanding of cultural development. Work on the Vikings is given a particular relevance because of links with names in use on the Wirral – pupils understand that they may be of Viking descent. Pupils in Year 6 are able to talk about their studies of the early part of the twentieth century, including work on World War II. They have gained an understanding of the effect of rationing on peoples' lives and the impact of the policy of evacuating children from the towns. They are particularly knowledgeable about fashion, music and major events in the 1960s because they have used a variety of interesting sources of information. The pupils interviewed showed a secure recall of detail and a real understanding of the skills required by the historian. The higher attaining pupils in Year 5 are able to produce written work which uses factual information very well, for example to explain why the Mary Rose is such an important source of information about life in the Tudor period. Most pupils are able to produce timelines of events and understand the difference between primary and secondary sources of evidence.
131. Pupils were seen to learn well and make good progress in well-structured lessons, for example when considering information about the Apollo 11 mission to the moon. The subject is taught in a way that ensures that pupils are able to progress at their own level and the resources used stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity. In some lessons, however, there is no clear extra challenge for higher attaining pupils and only a limited amount of individual research work. Pupils with special educational needs make only satisfactory progress, because they are not always being given extra support or resources and tasks that are matched to their individual needs. The use of information and communication technology is now being developed. Video is used well and pupils do now use computers for research at times.
132. Teaching observed in lessons was good. Individual teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and they have a 'skills and understanding' based approach to teaching. Pupils learn well because they enjoy their lessons in history and they benefit from a variety of experiences that enhance their learning. For example, they study Tudor portraits and then make life-sized pictures of Tudor monarchs. Links with art are particularly good and the corridors are decorated with whole fleets of Viking ships. The subject is used effectively for developing skills in reading and extended writing. In finding out about food eaten by the rich and poor in Tudor England, pupils were also able to consider whether our modern diet is more or less healthy than that eaten by our ancestors.
133. The leadership of the subject is good. Teachers develop resources and teaching strategies well and there is a clear focus on planning for all year groups. Pupils in Year 6 have clearly been well prepared for work at secondary school. Aspects of management of history are, however, unsatisfactory. Pupils' work indicates some variations in teaching quality and as yet teaching and learning are not being effectively monitored. Assessment procedures have not yet been developed and there is a need to make more use of computers. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection both in standards and in the overall quality of teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

134. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2, but below expectations by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 but achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6. This indicates that the school has made unsatisfactory progress in this curriculum area since the previous inspection, when standards were

found to be in line through the school. There are a number of reasons for this, notably the difficulties experienced in purchasing adequate resources and the lack of room for a computer suite, but even allowing for this there has not been sufficient progress in this subject. Efforts have been made to remedy this by recently purchasing ten laptop computers, which are timetabled for use throughout the school, but these are not yet having a significant effect on standards.

135. At present information and communication technology is taught primarily through other subjects, but because there are only one or two computers in each classroom it is difficult for teachers to deliver the full curriculum. Teachers are more successful in the early years, where, because curriculum demands are simpler, it is possible to deliver an adequate curriculum with the limited resources available. A good start is made in Year 1 where pupils are learning to access information using the Internet, to carry out simple word processing tasks and to use a variety of software to enhance their learning in other subjects. By the end of Year 2, pupils have practised a satisfactory range of skills including using a word processor to write and re-draft sentences, animating a character using a graphics program and finding information in connection with the topics they are learning about. Most are able to describe the main features of a computer and how they can use it to record their work or produce different effects such as changing font size or colour. They have produced simple graphs about the different types of houses they live in using the new laptop computers, and have used a software package to successfully compose sea music. They have given instructions to a floor turtle so that it traces geometric patterns on large sheets of paper.
136. By the end of Year 6, pupils have built on this sound early learning and continued to practise and in some cases to learn new skills. For example, Year 6 have been working with a multi-media package to produce a story with graphics and sound effects aimed at pupils of infant age. They have produced computer-generated line graphs to show changes in temperature over a 24-hour period and compared them with hand-drawn graphs. Pupils in Year 5 have used technology in science, producing graphs to show the different heights of growing plants. Throughout the junior stage, pupils are beginning to use a range of programs to enhance their learning in subjects such as history, science and mathematics, and are developing their word-processing skills in a variety of ways. For example, pupils in Year 5 have written letters for and against fox hunting. They are beginning to make good use of the newly installed Internet link to find information in connection with different topics. They are not, however, systematically developing the skills, knowledge and understanding that are expected of pupils at this stage. There are few opportunities to develop higher order skills such as framing appropriate questions when finding information or independently comparing and evaluating different methods of presenting the information. They have little experience of using information and communication technology systems to control events or to sense physical data such as temperature. No use has yet been made of email to exchange information or ideas with, for example, schools in the area or further afield.
137. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2 but unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Pupils throughout the school are invariably given the same tasks to complete regardless of ability or previous experience. This means that the higher ability pupils are not being challenged and skills are not being systematically built on. The ratio of computers to pupils is unsatisfactory, but the hardware that is in place is not being used to maximum effect. In many of the lessons observed, the class computer was either not switched on or was used by very few pupils. Pupils do not use the computers outside lesson times, so opportunities to develop independent learning are lost. The technology is not used to support pupils with special educational needs in any systematic way, so although these pupils are fully included in all class work, their learning is not effectively enhanced in other subject areas.
138. The co-ordinators are well aware of these weaknesses and have made great efforts to remedy the situation. New computers have been installed which are now networked to give Internet access. A

good range of software has been purchased for use in other curriculum areas, and a whole-school plan concentrating on the basic skills has ensured that at least minimum coverage of the statutory curriculum is now in place. A programme of government-funded training for all staff has begun, and long-term plans are in place to develop a computer suite and improve resources to a point where delivery of a balanced curriculum is possible. Given the enthusiasm and expertise of the co-ordinators, and the willingness of staff to undertake training, there is every reason to believe that when resources have been improved, there will be a rapid improvement in standards.

## MUSIC

139. Standards have been satisfactorily maintained since the previous inspection and pupils are working at the levels expected in Years 2 and 6. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in acquiring an appropriate range of knowledge and skills.
140. Throughout the school pupils sing well. By Year 2 they have developed a good understanding of pitch and recall songs satisfactorily from memory. They are able to listen carefully, identify changes in pitch and illustrate their understanding on simple recorded scales. Most pupils are able to name instruments such as glockenspiel, triangle, tambourine and cymbals.
141. In Years 3 to 6 pupils develop a secure sense of the pulse of music and sing with increasing control. They are able to compose short pieces of music using a range of untuned instruments. They are able to appreciate pitch, tempo and texture in music as they listen to a wide selection of music from their own and other cultures. A small number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to learn to play brass or string instruments taught by specialist teachers. However, for the size of the school, the take-up of this opportunity is relatively low.
142. Pupils' response to music is satisfactory in most lessons. For example they are attentive to their teachers and show enjoyment when singing. They use a good range of technical vocabulary to describe changes in music and express their views and emotional responses to pieces. The opportunities offered to pupils to respond by composing and appraising their own work are constrained, however, by lack of time in most of the lessons observed. During discussions with pupils in Year 6, they said that the opportunity to perform music was the aspect of the subject they most enjoyed. They satisfactorily compose music, using untuned instruments, but the brief time available for composing and appraising their work does not lead to pupils improving and refining their performances.
143. The teaching of music ranges from satisfactory to good. Where the teaching is good there is effective demonstration and explanation of musical terms. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were effectively taught how layers of sound can be added to a musical piece. This was well illustrated in the examples of music used to teach the concept, and then four pupils demonstrated how clapping rhythms build, layer on layer, as they clapped different rhythms within the same rap song. Good teaching was also exemplified by the encouragement given to pupils to express their own views, feelings and ideas when discussing texture in recorded musical pieces. For example, in Year 6, new vocabulary was introduced and modelled effectively by the teacher, and emphasis was placed on valuing the pupils' suggestions and views. Where the teaching is satisfactory the pace of the lesson is slowed when time used for managing behaviour erodes the short time available for pupils' learning. Singing during assemblies is promoted well, with high expectations placed on all pupils to participate, and praise is used well to encourage good quality singing.
144. Pupils satisfactorily apply their literacy skills when they read songs during singing sessions and as they read and write technical vocabulary related to pitch, dynamics, duration, tempo, timbre and texture in music. There was no evidence of information and communication technology being used

to support learning in music during the inspection. Music contributes well to pupils' cultural development as they listen to a wide range of recorded music and enjoy live musical performances such as those given by an Australian musician and the local education authority music service orchestra. Opportunities are provided for pupils to share their skills in performances in school and out in the community. They perform in assemblies and participate in local musical festivals and performances for the elderly and at local schools. Currently there is no extra-curricular provision within school for music.

145. The co-ordinators provide good, clear educational leadership for this subject. A published scheme of work enables non-subject specialist colleagues to access good examples of recorded music for lessons. The detailed planning guidance supports teachers' understanding of musical terminology and offers clear guidance for providing opportunities for composing. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when teacher confidence was insecure and subject leadership responsibilities were unclear. However, there are no procedures in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and assessing the progress of pupils, and therefore in this respect the management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinators have worked hard to improve teaching resources, including the published scheme of work, the introduction of CDs and ensuring there are sufficient instruments, which are accessible to all classes. The range of instruments available to pupils remains narrow, however, particularly tuned instruments.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

146. Satisfactory improvement in the provision for physical education has been made since the previous inspection, but further developments are limited by the constraints created by the school accommodation. Set beside a busy main road and with no grassed area for pupils in Year 5 and 6 to use for games and athletics, appropriate achievement towards the expected standards is restricted and standards in Year 6 are unsatisfactory. In gymnastics, dance and swimming there are no similar problems and so standards are generally in line with those expected in Year 2 and Year 6.
147. There is only one area indoors suitable for physical education lessons so when it rains, if the hall is already in use, lessons are cancelled. This happened on two occasions during the inspection. It was only possible to observe games, dance and athletics lessons due to the rota of activities in the school and this also created difficulties in gaining the full range of evidence. However, from the lessons seen and from general observation made and in discussion with pupils, judgements on their attainment and progress have been made.
148. Pupils attain satisfactory standards in dance in Years 1 and 2. They develop good spatial awareness and use their bodies satisfactorily to express ideas, and reflect the mood and tempo of the music. In Year 1 pupils are gaining appropriate control of their movements and try hard to improve their performance by talking about new ideas and in using the space and the different levels around them. Teachers suitably provide a warming up and cooling down session in each lesson. Pupils are accustomed to these routines and have a satisfactory understanding of their purpose.
149. By Year 6, most pupils have attained the expected standards in swimming. Regular tuition in Year 4 by trained swimming teachers enables pupils to swim 25 metres or more. They are confident in deep water and swim both on their front and on their back. Pupils gain effective skills of throwing, aiming, catching and controlling balls ready for games in netball, rounders and football. They develop a satisfactory understanding of working as a team in both defending and attacking. Invasion skills are taught effectively using a variety of small team games, but because of the lack of field, full-sized team games are rare and most pupils do not have regular opportunities of developing an understanding of the rules of games, such as netball. The school is, however, successful in the local school's football league, having reached the final this year. Such sessions have a positive impact on



developing pupils' social skills, as does the annual swimming gala with other local schools. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 also have the opportunity of attending a satisfactory range of sporting clubs after school such as short tennis, football, cricket, netball and gymnastics. The support of a sports coach for tennis and gymnastics has proved an asset to running these clubs. No gymnastics lessons were observed, but the school has the appropriate large and small apparatus and equipment for these lessons.

150. By Year 6, pupils have suitable opportunities for developing running, jumping and throwing skills using a variety of apparatus including junior javelins, in preparation for the athletics sessions taught at the secondary school, but they do not have the equipment or safety surfaces to enable pupils to extend their skills to more than standing jumps and this sometimes limits pupils' feelings of success. No dance lessons were observed in Years 3 to 6, but in discussion with pupils in Year 6 it is obvious that this is a form of physical education much enjoyed by the pupils and in which they feel they have made good progress. One boy said, much to his own amazement, that the dance lessons had been his favourite; he did not think he was much good at it at the start, but by the end, he felt he was pretty good. The use of the music 'Thriller' motivated the pupils and was obviously a prime reason for their enjoyment and full involvement, as they worked as individuals, then in groups and as a whole class.
151. Overall teaching is satisfactory, although some teachers are not secure in their knowledge and find difficulty in providing appropriate coaching so pupils' performance improves. Pupils of all capabilities are encouraged to improve their skills and do so satisfactorily. Teachers use pupil demonstration effectively so that pupils learn to judge each other's performance and put new ideas into action. Pupils usually respond very well to the teaching. In the Year 1 dance lesson seen, for example, the pupils showed almost total absorption in their tasks and consequently all developed their own style of dance and made good progress in developing their creative expression and range of movements. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils in most classes have a positive impact on pupils' learning. In a Year 3 class, for example, the pupils were eager to put the teacher's tips on how to improve their running into action, even when it proved difficult and often confused them. In the most effective teaching, activities are structured well to build pupils' skills through the lesson, but as each lesson is only half an hour the development of a range of skills is sometimes limited. Teachers give good attention to health and safety issues and pupils are encouraged to look for potential dangers in their working.
152. In many aspects the co-ordinators have provided good leadership. The curriculum for physical education is now suitably broad, but it is unbalanced in some areas because of the limitations in the accommodation. The co-ordinators have tried to overcome the difficulties as best they can. Now the playground has been resurfaced there are better opportunities for games sessions outside, but the lack of high fencing on the busy road causes some difficulties in using footballs. The co-ordinator in Year 4 hopes to arrange sessions at the local secondary school for pupils in Year 6 so they can use their facilities and develop greater skills in athletics and games. He arranges the annual sports day in the local park, in which all the pupils participate, promoting their sense of competing as a group and finding success. The Home School Association also plays a big part in arranging the day so it is fun for all the family.
153. Although there is an appropriate focus on pupils' self-evaluation, there are no whole-school procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and so teachers do not sufficiently focus on developing their skills from year to year. The co-ordinators have not been involved in monitoring the provision for physical education and so do not have a secure understanding of standards attained or how they need to be improved. Teachers use the scheme of work in their planning and this provides some support for the less confident, but there has been insufficient in-service training for some teachers.