

INSPECTION REPORT

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Huyton

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104463

Headteacher: Mrs Pauline Doyle

Reporting inspector: Steve Bywater
18463

Dates of inspection: 21st to 24th January 2002

Inspection number: 196922

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Adswood Road Huyton Merseyside
Postcode:	L36 7XR
Telephone number:	0151 489 3221
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Ian McParland
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Steve Bywater 18463	Registered inspector	English Foundation Stage	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught?
Colin Herbert 09652	Lay inspector		How high are standards? (attitudes and behaviour) How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
Peter Isherwood 20301	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Geography Special educational needs Music	How well is the school led and managed?
Michael Wainwright 11528	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical education	
Jo Mitchell 27477	Team inspector	Art Geography History Equal opportunities	How good are curricular and other opportunities?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Aidan's has 263 children on roll (118 boys and 121 girls of statutory school age and 47 children are attending part-time in the nursery). There has been a general decline in numbers since the last inspection and the school is currently under-subscribed. The school serves a socially disadvantaged area of Huyton which is part of an Excellence in Cities initiative. The number of children receiving free school meals is 49 per cent which is well above the national average. Although the nursery admits children from a full range of ability, not all of the higher attaining children join the reception class and some transfer to other schools. Many of the children who enter the reception class have limited skills in personal and academic development. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Almost one third of the pupils are on the special educational needs register, a proportion which is higher than that found in most schools. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, but a small number also have emotional and behavioural needs. There are six pupils with statements of special educational need. The school has also identified and is making provision for a small number of gifted pupils. The school's standards have improved significantly since the 1997 inspection and this has been recognised by the presentation of a School Achievement Award in 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Parents are justifiably pleased with the education their children receive at St Aidan's Primary School. It is a good school with some very good features. The headteacher is a very effective leader and she is supported by a dedicated team of teachers and a supportive and knowledgeable governing body. The good quality teaching ensures pupils make good progress and have positive attitudes to their work. Pupils behave well. The school promotes pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards are well above average in English and above average in mathematics, when compared with similar schools. Parents are justifiably proud of the education their children receive at St Aidan's Catholic Primary School. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- When compared with similar schools, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average in English and above average in mathematics.
- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress overall.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, personal and cultural development is good.
- The very effective headteacher, with the support of staff, governors and pupils, creates a very good ethos and promotes high standards.
- Pupils have a good attitude to learning. Relationships within school are very good and pupils behave well.

What could be improved

- Despite good progress, standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are below national expectations by the end of Year 6. The school does not always challenge higher attainers in Year 2 sufficiently.
- The activities provided in the reception class are not always planned well enough for young children.
- Pupils' attendance is too low.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has developed very well since the last inspection in July 1997. Through the effective teamwork of all the staff, the school has significantly improved almost all aspects of school life. In particular, the standards of pupils' work in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have improved as a result of the higher quality of teaching and learning. The planning of the curriculum has improved and is now generally well balanced. There are, however, weaknesses in the Foundation Stage. The provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and is now good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains a positive feature of the school. The leadership and management under the current headteacher have improved significantly. The school is well placed to make further improvements, largely because of the enthusiastic and supportive response of staff, governors and pupils.

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	C	D	D	A
Mathematics	D	C	D	B
Science	E	D	E	C

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

The table shows that in the 2001 national tests for 11 year olds, pupils' performance in English and mathematics was below the national average; in science it was well below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, standards were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. The school has improved its performance over recent years at a faster rate than most other schools. Although the results are impressive, the school is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses. The full range of inspection evidence confirms the findings of the test results. Evidence also shows that the attainment of children on entry to the nursery is well below the level normally expected for their age, but includes the full range of attainment. Some higher attainers do not transfer to the reception class. Standards on entry to the reception class are well below those normally expected their age. In the nursery class, children make good progress in all areas of learning. Progress is slower in the reception class in some areas of learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Years 1 and 2 but, by the age of 7, standards are still below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make good progress in the junior department. In information and communication technology, standards at the age of 11 are below national expectations despite pupils' good progress. This is because they have not yet had the time with the computers to reach national expectations in all aspects of the subject. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards at the age of 7 years. By the ages of 7 and 11, the standards of pupils' work in design and technology, geography and history are similar to those found in other schools. Although standards in art and music are in line with expectations by the age of 7, by the age of 11 standards are below expectations. There was insufficient evidence available to judge standards in physical education due to the inclement weather causing some lessons to be abandoned.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. Attitudes are good in nursery, reception and throughout the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around school during lunchtimes and playtimes. They respond well to the school's high expectations.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between all members of the school community are very strong. Pupils respond well to the few opportunities to take on additional responsibilities.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory and disappointing because the school makes rigorous efforts to improve attendance. A small number of parents do not send their children to school on time or as regularly as they should.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	satisfactory	satisfactory	good

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

Children in the nursery are taught well and this gives them a good start to their education. Although the teaching of reception children is satisfactory, it is not building sufficiently well on the broad range of activities that children get in the nursery. The teacher has many strengths, but is new to the Foundation Stage and has yet to attend the necessary training. The organisation of lessons in the reception class sometimes limits opportunities for children to develop their independence to the extent that they should. Teachers teach literacy and numeracy well, although they could provide more challenge for higher attainers in Year 2. Strengths include pupils being actively involved in whole class and group sessions and a good balance in activities that ensure they remain interested. Teachers organise most lessons well and use time and resources efficiently. They work hard to make lessons interesting so that pupils are motivated and are keen to contribute. Teachers pose searching questions. They value and build upon pupils' answers and use questioning skills well to include all pupils and assess how well pupils are learning. They mark pupils' work regularly. In addition to marking which praises and rewards effort there are good examples of marking in English that lead pupils forward to the next stage of learning. Marking is less successful in mathematics and science. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Class teachers and support staff are aware of pupils' learning targets and use them well to plan work for pupils, particularly in literacy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall with some strengths in the junior department. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and teachers provide pupils with learning experiences that engage their interest. Although children in the nursery and reception classes receive a sound education, some of the activities provided for them are not well matched for their age.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' needs are carefully identified and individual education plans are drawn up to guide teaching. Teachers and classroom assistants provide effective support in class, groups and individually.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No pupils in this school speak English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and this is a strong and distinct feature of the school. Pupils are often given opportunities to reflect on their feelings and are expected to follow rules and care for one another. The school values and explores other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of pupils. It checks closely on attendance and behaviour. Day-to-day routines support a safe, friendly environment where children are happy to learn. The staff effectively track pupils' progress in English and mathematics, but they are not as effective in checking pupils' progress in some of the other subjects.

The school widens and enhances its well balanced curriculum with a good range of additional activities including a residential visit in Year 6. The school has satisfactory links with parents and the local community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction and ensures that all staff work together to achieve the school's aims. The pace and range of improvement since the previous inspection have been very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are good friends to the school and are effectively involved in many aspects of its work. They are well informed and take a positive role in monitoring, evaluating and supporting the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective. The school has good procedures to check on pupils' standards and identifies the correct priorities for its own improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is very good. The school makes full use of grants, such as those supporting pupils with special educational needs.

Very good leadership is contributing significantly to the improvements made since the last inspection. There is a strong partnership between staff, parents and governors and this supports the school well. The school uses its money and resources effectively and applies the principles of best value very well to spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like school and they make good progress. The teaching is good and the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. The school works closely with parents and they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. The school is well led and managed. The school is helping their children become mature and responsible. The amount of work pupils do at home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no specific points raised by parents, but a significant number were unsure of the range and provision of extra-curricular activities.

Only four parents attended a meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection and 47 parents and carers (18 per cent) returned questionnaires. The inspection team agrees that parents are right to hold positive views. The school has good leadership and management. Parents receive good information about the life and work of the school. They have ample opportunities to come into school for social and informative events. Pupils do develop positive attitudes and values, and their behaviour is good. The teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. As a result, most pupils make good progress throughout the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Foundation Stage¹ in the nursery class with standards of attainment that are low when compared with other three and four year olds, but there are a small number of high attainers. Although children make a solid start in the nursery class, progress is somewhat slower in the reception class in some areas of learning. They are still well below average in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. In the other areas of learning, children make good progress and are in line to meet the early learning goals² when they join Year 1. The nursery gives children a good start to their education. It provides children with a range of activities to move them on and to develop skills at a rate they can handle. The organisation of the nursery and skills of the staff give children plenty of practical opportunities to develop their skills and confidence. The teachers of reception children do not always build upon the experiences that children have already had and what children have shown they can do. Progress in the reception class is satisfactory. The lack of effective assessment procedures means that work is often not challenging enough. There are times when the teaching techniques, for example in literacy, are too slow to build on skills. The tightly controlled approach does not enable children of all abilities to make progress at a suitable rate.
2. The results attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 in the 2001 national tests and assessments were well below the national average in reading, writing and science, and poor in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards were average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics and science. However, in this year group, seventy per cent of the seven year olds were on the special educational needs register. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls over a period of a few years, but girls have outperformed boys quite significantly in reading and writing in the last two sets of annual results. There are very few pupils achieving higher levels in the national tests for 7 year olds and this is lower than normally expected.
3. The results attained by Year 6 pupils in the 2001 national tests were below the national average in English and mathematics and well below the national average in science. When compared with similar schools, standards are well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is similar in all subjects and when compared with similar schools this is well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The trend in improvement, which is above the national trend, demonstrates the school's success in improving standards at the end of Year 6 since the last inspection. The school sets suitably challenging and aspirational targets in English and mathematics and bases these on normally accurate assessments of pupils. The school has met or exceeded these consistently over the past few years. A difficulty occurred in 2001, when a temporary teacher inadvertently sent inaccurate assessments to the authority. Despite the school's attempts to correct this mistake it was not acceptable to the department.

¹ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include: knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development.

² Early Learning Goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They mainly refer to achievements children make in connection with: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning; for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

4. Pupils make satisfactory progress in learning by the end of Year 2, but it is good in the mixed Years 1 and 2 class and overall in junior classes, where good teaching in the Years 3 and 4 class and the Years 5 and 6 class in particular builds substantially on pupils' earlier learning. Progress is a little slower in Year 2 where higher attainers do not receive sufficient challenge. Good teaching techniques and good subject expertise in English and mathematics are evident overall. Standards in literacy and numeracy, however, are below national expectations by the ages of 7 and 11 years. The school has put appropriate time into establishing good practice through the school and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Teachers encourage pupils to listen carefully and give them good opportunities to present their thoughts and ideas to others. They develop pupils' speaking and listening skills satisfactorily in other areas of the curriculum and children are growing in their confidence to form views and opinions. Throughout the school, teachers place good emphasis on developing pupils' number skills and applying these in mathematics lessons and occasionally in other instances, for example in recording data in science and measuring activities in design and technology. Good planning of daily mental mathematics sessions engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
5. The full range of inspection evidence shows standards in English are below the national average by the end of Years 2 and 6 but standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. Higher attainers do well in the junior classes, but less so in the infant classes. Attainment is below average in reading, writing and speaking and listening despite the good progress made in the juniors. The school has correctly identified raising standards in writing as a priority. Teachers encourage pupils to use correct grammar and punctuation and place good attention on developing their vocabulary. However, the use of vocabulary is limited and reflects the reading experiences of children which are somewhat limited, both in school and especially at home. Progress for some higher attaining pupils in their writing in Year 2 is limited as the teacher sometimes structures the lesson in a too controlled way and uses worksheets which do not challenge all pupils sufficiently. Specific, well-targeted sessions, such as Additional Literacy Support, are provided to boost pupils' reading and writing skills. These are helping to raise standards for lower attaining pupils in some junior classes.
6. Standards in mathematics are below average by the end of Years 2 and 6. However, standards continue to rise as the school has paid careful attention to identifying pupils who need extra help and booster classes have helped pupils to make good progress. Fewer pupils than expected achieve a higher level in Year 2 because work does not challenge the higher attainers enough. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy effectively and teachers use the framework in their planning consistently. Number skills, problem solving and investigation skills are taught well and pupils make good progress because they are clear about what they have to do.
7. Standards in science are below average, but continue to improve. Pupils have positive attitudes to science and they achieve well. Teachers have placed appropriate emphasis on developing skills, but sometimes do not consider sufficiently what pupils have learned before. However, progress is good and pupils are beginning to think deeply about what they are doing and to explain their answers.
8. Standards in information and communications technology have risen significantly since the last inspection. Little evidence was available to make a judgement about standards in the infant classes. For junior pupils, the high quality equipment and teacher knowledge have only recently been available to them and despite their good progress, standards are below expectations.
9. By the ages of 7 and 11, the standards of pupils' work in design and technology, geography and history are similar to those found in other schools. Although standards in art and

music are in line with expectations by the age of 7, by the age of 11 standards are below. This is because the art and music curriculum has become somewhat squeezed as the school has striven to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Insufficient evidence was available to judge standards in physical education because a number of planned lessons had to be abandoned due to the very wet weather.

10. This school is aware that some pupils need additional emotional and academic support. It has very wisely used funding to employ a learning mentor who ensures that poverty and other barriers to learning are overcome to a significant degree. For example, one-to-one work with a number of pupils enables them to overcome their worries and develop self-esteem and confidence. In one such session the learning mentor challenged a pupil to improve reading skills in an extremely motivating way which resulted in an improvement in punctuation and grammar. Pupils identified as being gifted and talented thoroughly enjoy their lesson with a visiting teacher and discuss a range of subjects which deepen their knowledge and understanding.
11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual educational plan targets. Most of the pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work. They concentrate well on their work, for example, in Year 3 when playing a phonic card game in a withdrawal session led by a learning support teacher. In class, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of work set at different levels and extra support given by teachers and support assistants.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The attitudes of pupils to school and to their learning are good overall and their behaviour in and around school is also good. Additionally, relationships between all members of the school community are very good. Pupils have maintained the quality of this aspect of school life since the last inspection. Almost all the parents who completed and returned the questionnaire have positive views about behaviour in school. Those who attended the parents' meeting have similar views on this aspect of school life.
13. Children in the Foundation Stage have developed very good attitudes to school. They come into class eagerly and are confident to let their parents leave them in the care of the teachers and other staff. They behave well and the youngest children are coming to terms with dealing with the little squabbles which sometimes occur when they have to share resources. Reception children have mostly learned to take turns and listen well when they are interested. The school fosters the skills of personal development particularly well in nursery where children make informed choices about the activities they want to do. This helps them to maintain interest for longer periods.
14. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were good or better in 69 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 27 per cent of lessons.
15. Standards of behaviour in and around school, during assembly, in the playground at dinnertime and when travelling to the swimming baths are also good and sometimes very good. At lunchtime, pupils were keen to engage in conversation with inspectors and give their views about Harry Potter or the television programme 'Pop Idol'. There was no indication of any unsociable behaviour whatsoever during the inspection. There have been no exclusions during the last reporting year.
16. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and show respect towards all members of the school community. They hold open doors for visitors and say 'hello' with a cheery smile on their faces. When pupils were playing football in the playground it was noticeable how fairly they interpreted the rules. There was no need for a referee. There was no evidence of graffiti, litter or vandalism in or around school.

17. All pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic to participate in class activities. For example, in a Year 6 numeracy lesson, pupils were persevering to complete the task although they were finding it difficult. Additionally, in a Years 4 and 5 lesson in design and technology, pupils were keen to complete the task of building a simple model to demonstrate levers, pivots and linkages. They all completed this task well and in time.
18. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good and pupils collaborate very well in all aspects of school life and enjoy working and playing together. It was particularly noticeable how the school has integrated all the non teaching staff, including the school secretary, site manager and learning mentor, into the school team. They all have good quality relationships with the pupils. In a Year 5 lesson on information and communication technology, pupils were involved in a good discussion on spreadsheets. In a Year 4 physical education lesson, pupils were very keen to participate in the lesson and discuss and devise various balances with their partners. The high quality of these relationships has a positive impact on pupils' learning as they are all included in all school activities.
19. The opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in school are satisfactory. Year 6 prefects have a number of monitoring responsibilities around school and perform them enthusiastically. Pupils are also very aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and make generous donations to a variety of charities such as Catholic Aid For Overseas Development, Good Shepherd and Poppy Day. Additionally, pupils donated over 100 shoeboxes for the Samaritans Christmas Appeal. During the inspection, pupils listened very attentively to a presentation in assembly about the life of children in Namibia. They demonstrated a very good understanding for the feelings and values of African children who sometimes have to walk in excess of four miles a day to and from school. As a result of what they heard, they hope to raise approximately £1,000 later this year to improve the lives of those children.
20. Although the school works hard to encourage regular attendance, the rates are unsatisfactory and below national average. However, the school has broadly similar rates of attendance when comparisons are made with other schools in the local area. Additionally, a small number of families do not make the education of their children a priority and they condone excessive absence. The level of unauthorised absence is well above national average and during the last reporting period, three family groups were responsible for 50 per cent of it. A significant number of pupils are consistently late for school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now good with some strengths.
22. In the Foundation Stage, children make a solid start to their education. The main shortcoming is that the difference between the nursery and reception classes in the quality of teaching and learning experiences is currently too wide. In the nursery class the teaching is consistently good, whilst in the reception class it is mostly satisfactory, but occasionally falls short of the minimum standard expected. The school recognises this and already plans action to develop further the many skills of the reception class teacher so that they transfer to the special requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
23. A large proportion (47 per cent) of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good or better and a small amount (13 per cent) is very good. Overall, the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. In the junior classes the quality of teaching is better and is good overall. Fifty seven percent of lessons in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 were good or better and 21 per cent were

very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2. There was high quality teaching in the mixed Years 5 and 6 class, the mixed Years 1 and 2 class and the mixed Years 3 and 4 class.

24. Children in nursery and reception classes receive different experiences. Some weaknesses in reception are resulting in children underachieving, either because the work is insufficiently challenging or, on occasions, too difficult. The quality of planning is of a similar, satisfactory standard, but the way the planning is put into practice is markedly different. In the nursery the teacher and nursery nurse have a thorough understanding of the learning of young children. They use this to organise the classroom and the small outdoor area into stimulating environments that rightly encourage play, investigation and the development of children's independence as central features. There is an appropriate balance between the activities children choose for themselves and those organised and led by adults. There is also good organisation in the reception class, but although children get opportunities to make choices about the activities they are going to undertake, these contain very little structure. The result is that play is aimless and children learn little; moreover, their involvement, concentration and perseverance soon wane. The quality of teacher involvement differs too. The best is characterised by clear explanations, demonstrations and questioning and by staff intervening productively in 'child-chosen' activities and children's play. For example, they model spoken language. They verbalise what they are doing as they play alongside children. They pose questions that encourage children to talk about what they are doing and they provide sufficient time for activities to develop. Intervention is less effective when the role of the teacher is mostly supervisory, too much questioning is superficial and time is not used as well as it could be.
25. Teachers' secure subject knowledge characterises the best lessons in the infant and junior classes. This is evident in their clear and detailed explanations, demonstrations and instructions to pupils and in their use and promotion of technical vocabulary, especially in science lessons. The best lessons also included very good use of questioning and discussion and a fair amount of direct teaching to the whole class at a brisk pace. This kind of teaching was common in many mathematics lessons where teachers ensured numerous pupils were involved in answering questions and explaining their work. In almost all lessons, teachers manage pupils well and expectations of behaviour are high. Adults and pupils show a high level of respect for each other and everyone is treated with courtesy and consideration. Adults provide good role models for pupils and there is a calm, happy environment in the school which reflects the school's aims. Because pupils feel secure and cared for, they are happy to learn.
26. The quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy is good throughout the school. The school has implemented both of the national strategies successfully. Teachers have taken time to evaluate suitable techniques to ensure that they teach basic skills well. Teachers in most classes are working hard to develop writing and this reflects teachers' raised expectations. In Year 2, there is sometimes an over-emphasis on the use of work sheets which do not extend the higher attaining pupils in their writing and lack sufficient challenge. Number work is taught well. Pupils enjoy the challenge teachers provide through their mental mathematics sessions which start and often end lessons. The 'competitive' nature of some of these activities generates interest and enthusiasm and motivates pupils to make good progress. In a number of lessons, the teachers make good use of the final session to reinforce teaching points. However, this is not always consistent and some teachers tend to share what pupils have done without really consolidating the objective of the lesson. Teachers satisfactorily encourage pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, pupils have opportunities to weigh and measure in design and technology and they use their writing skills well in history where they write reports and stories. Teachers do not plan so well the opportunities to use numeracy skills in science. They now promote pupils' information and communication technology skills in many

lessons and pupils recognise that computers can be a useful tool to help them research and present their work more effectively.

27. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and this is an important factor in helping to motivate pupils in doing their best. In the better lessons, high quality questioning matched to the needs and prior attainment of different pupils helps them to extend their learning through challenging tasks. For example, in an excellent mathematics lesson in the mixed Years 1 and 2 class, the teacher's open-ended questions enabled pupils to explain their strategies and ensured every pupil was fully included in the lesson.
28. Marking is often good and includes comments to pupils about their work which strike the right balance between celebrating and encouraging their efforts and giving them achievable targets and developmental points to help them improve. For example, comments in a pupil's English book in Year 6 included, 'You have a very good grasp of character and back up your opinions....' and 'Think of another way to put this, maybe speech marks'. In mathematics and science, however, there are insufficient comments in the marking to reinforce and progress pupils' understanding.
29. There is early identification of special educational need, but in the Foundation Stage there is sometimes a lack of clarity for the reasons of concern. There are many good quality individual education plans. Most targets are clear and measurable, for example being able to read a certain number of words or work with particular numbers in mathematics. Occasionally, targets are too general and, as a result, it is difficult to measure progress. Individual education plans are linked particularly well to the English and mathematics aspects of the National Curriculum. Teachers usually set work at the correct level to meet the individual pupil's need, but occasionally in mathematics they set it at too high a level and pupils struggle. Pupils with special educational needs get good support both from teachers and support assistants. This support ensures that these pupils make good progress in their learning.
30. Teachers set homework regularly. The amount set is generally satisfactory and relevant to the work pupils are doing in class. Parents are encouraged to support pupils with their homework, but parental support varies greatly. Ninety two per cent of parents are happy with the homework provided by the school.

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

31. Since the last inspection the school has made good improvements in the curriculum for infant and junior pupils. The curriculum is wide-ranging and balanced. It meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.
32. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. While children in the nursery work within a curriculum that provides them with a wide range of experiences that match the needs of very young children, when they move into the reception class the structure of their day is too formal.
33. The school has fully addressed weaknesses identified in geography, design and technology and information technology and the curriculum in these subjects is now satisfactory. By adopting schemes of work that provide a framework for the development of skills and combining these with improved resources and staff training, teachers now have a secure framework in which to teach.
34. The school has introduced successfully the National Numeracy Strategy. It is having a positive impact on the raising of standards. The National Literacy Strategy has been equally effective in raising the overall standards in literacy.

35. The school makes good provision for extra curricular activities through the involvement of a large number of staff. All junior pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a range of games and the school enters teams in local tournaments. The homework club gives pupils good support for independent study. A good range of outside visits enhances the curriculum, from younger pupils experiencing a Victorian Christmas to residential visits for the older pupils. The school makes good use of its membership of the National Trust. It makes bids to join workshops where available. For example, pupils in Year 6 attended a paper sculpture workshop and now have work on display at the local library. However, the school has yet to secure a visit to support pupils' work on transport: a trip on the latest tourist bus that turns into a boat!
36. The school has developed a comprehensive scheme for personal, social and health education. Although this is in its early stages, staff are enthusiastic about the positive effects it is having on pupils. The provision of a discussion period called Circle Time provides a good opportunity for pupils to talk over issues that face them as part of everyday life. This is established in all classes and staff are skilled in giving pupils the confidence to contribute. During a session where the visitor was invited to join the circle the theme was choices and chains of events that might spring from a choice made. Almost all pupils contributed after the teacher had given a very simple example of the consequence of a decision she had made.
37. The governors have approved the teaching of sex education but the school has yet to finalise its policy. The school is in the process of joining the 'Healthy Schools Scheme' which will introduce drug awareness through the curriculum. Outside agencies such as police and school nurse visit and contribute. The school has drawn up a draft policy, but it is not yet fully in place.
38. The school has developed good links with the community. Pupils make numerous visits to local places of interest such as art galleries and museums in Liverpool and Norton Priory and Speke Hall. Community visitors include 'PC Brian', the local community policeman, who talks to pupils on all aspects of personal safety, and Sister Miriam from the parish who assists in the nursery on a regular basis. Another welcome guest in school is the representative from the 'Reading Volunteer Project'. All these activities are clearly linked into the curriculum and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Strong and effective links have been developed with local secondary schools and these provide good preparation for pupils moving into the next stage of their education.
39. The school ensures equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils have full access to all the subjects taught in school. This has a positive effect on their learning. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons, this is part of a well thought out programme. The school offers very good curricular opportunities to the identified gifted pupils and these have a very positive effect on learning. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive good support; they are fully included in all aspects of school life. This has a very positive effect on both academic and social development.
40. Provision for all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This successfully supports the development of the quality of pupils' attitudes and respect for others. It contributes well to the ethos of the school, clearly reflecting the mission statement. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection.
41. The school encourages pupils to respect and value others. Year 6 pupils work in groups to illustrate how they can show consideration for others. In collective worship, pupils behave respectfully, well aware of the purpose of their meeting together. Music sets the tone for the assembly. There is time for quiet reflection and prayer. All adults and pupils share this.

They pray for their friends and for the less fortunate. In lessons such as mathematics, pupils voice different ideas for solving a problem. All contributions are valued. In science, pupils look at the habitats of small beasts and become aware of the wonders of nature. While the Christian ethic is most evident throughout the school, pupils also learn to respect other faiths.

42. All pupils are aware of the school's values. They know what is right and what is wrong. In lessons, teachers make quite clear how they expect pupils to behave. Good classroom management includes opportunities for all to participate and to do their best. Very effective use is made of praise for both effort and behaviour. In circle time, Year 3 pupils discuss the consequences of making the right and wrong choices. Rules for behaviour do not dominate the school, but are well understood so that pupils playing football at lunchtime know exactly what the boundaries are and observe them fairly. Pupils are developing an awareness of the need for self-discipline and responsible behaviour.
43. Relationships in school are very good. Teachers provide fine role models and pupils generally emulate this behaviour towards each other. Small acts of kindness and politeness take place constantly. 'Friendship' is the theme in an assembly and the school has set aside a week to focus on this. All the teachers volunteer additional time to provide the pupils with a range of opportunities other than in lessons. They care and pupils value this. In many lessons the teachers plan for pupils to share materials and collaborate in their tasks. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to enjoy a residential visit. Many staff visit and share in this. Pupils are reminded of their responsibilities to the wider community. Charitable contributions provide for the less fortunate.
44. Many cultural aspects are studied. Pupils visit Norton Priory where they are involved in re-creating a Victorian Christmas. Visitors to the school include authors and dance groups. During physical education lessons, pupils learn dances of Japan and Africa. They learn a Divali dance, which links well with studies of other faiths. Some art lessons focus on the work of native Australians and Ghanaian fabric printing. The visit of a local teacher when she recounts her experiences in Namibia not only heightens pupils' awareness of other cultures, but also stimulates fund-raising for building a new school there. Pupils' awareness of the many ethnic cultures in their own locality is an area for development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school takes good care of all its pupils and there has been an improvement in this aspect of school life since the last inspection. At their meeting, parents expressed the view that St Aidan's provided caring support to their children.
46. The policies for both health and safety and child protection are well established and effective. Staff have received training in child protection and a nominated member of the governing body is in post. Effective arrangements also exist for first aid and for the emergency contact of parents or carers in the case of an accident. Additionally, regular fire drills take place. Regular health and safety inspections take place in and around school. However, members of the governing body now realise that they must take a more proactive part in the monitoring and evaluation of health and safety matters in school through their site committee.
47. A very good example of the care that staff take of their pupils was when a pupil developed a serious nosebleed at the swimming pool. A class teacher looked after her very well and arranged for first aiders to attend immediately. The learning mentor also provides very good one to one support for pupils with particular emotional and behavioural needs. There is also good supervision of pupils at dinnertime and in the playground. The welfare staff are an important part of the school family.

48. The school reviews its special needs register regularly. It identifies special needs at an early stage. Teachers complete a concern form and consult the special educational needs co-ordinator. If the action taken is not successful, an individual education plan is put in place. The special educational needs co-ordinator and class teacher regularly review the plans to ensure that pupils are making progress towards their targets. The school has contact with the educational psychologist, learning support services and behavioural support service. The school uses the very good advice and support from these services well, for example, when working with Year 3 pupils in withdrawal groups.
49. The procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good, but they are not yet having the expected impact on attendance levels. The learning mentor works very closely with local support agencies and is trying hard to encourage parents to ensure the regular attendance of their children. The introduction of class awards has had some impact on pupils' views on attendance and a group of Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their team spirit and desire to win the weekly award. The school maintains very good tracking records of both attendance and punctuality and it is able to focus its attention on those family groups where improvement is necessary. However, in many cases families disregard the encouragement to improve. The procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are good and the school makes good and effective use of a behavioural specialist to work with specific pupils.
50. The school has made good improvements in assessment procedures since the last inspection, so that in the infant and junior classes, the arrangements to assess and monitor pupils' academic progress in English mathematics and science are now good. The school fully analyses pupils' national test results. Staff now identify areas of general weakness and use this knowledge for future curriculum planning. Assessment in information and communications technology is at an early stage of development. As at the last inspection, assessments are not yet secure in some of the other subjects.
51. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is not satisfactory. The school assesses children informally on entry to the nursery. Subsequently, however, it does not assess them systematically and it does not note regularly the strengths and weakness. Consequently, it does not set targets for improvement either for individuals or the whole class.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. The school promotes itself well to parents and they have a good opinion of the school. All the parents who responded to the questionnaire or who attended the meeting have very positive views about all aspects of school life.
53. The involvement of parents in school life is satisfactory. With the exception of a parent who acts as library co-ordinator, no parents currently work in classes. However, many assist on visits into the community or to sports events and the headteacher says that she is 'inundated with support'. The school is optimistic that the courses being run by the Brookhouse Project covering such topics as 'help your child with homework' will encourage more parents to become involved in school life. Although there is no formal parent teacher association, parents are very supportive of the events that are organised by the school. For example, a recent raffle raised £250 and parents were generous in their sponsorship of their children for a Treasure Hunt and they raised £1,000. All the activities undertaken by parents and carers make a positive contribution to school life.
54. The information produced by the school for its parents is good. Teachers in the Foundation Stage provide a useful booklet to welcome parents and children to St Aidan's. This gives very helpful information about school routines and how parents can support a child's learning at home. For example, it suggests ways to help them to guide their children to sound out letters correctly. The school publishes regular, informative newsletters for

parents and these contain interesting news on activities within school or visits. The quality of annual reports is satisfactory, although they do not always contain developmental comments. However, half-termly reports to parents of pupils in the junior classes do set one target for each pupil. Additionally, the school takes the opportunity to comment specifically on attendance and punctuality. Teachers inform parents at an early stage if there are problems with a child's learning. It keeps them informed about their child's progress. The individual education plans include a section which says what parents can do to help their child. The school invites parents to take part in reviewing their child's individual education plan. It involves them fully in the statementing procedures and annual reviews of statements of special educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The quality of leadership and management is very good overall. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, which found that the leadership was unsatisfactory. The headteacher, appointed just before the previous inspection, has worked very hard with her colleagues to address successfully the issues raised in the previous report. The school reflects its aims and values very well and has a commitment to good relationships, educational and social inclusion and equality of opportunity.
56. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and has had a significant impact upon the improvements made in school. At the time of the previous inspection the headteacher was new to the post and had not had time to establish effective working procedures. Since that time she has worked with clarity of purpose to make good improvements in many aspects of the school's life. She has established a clear educational direction for the school firmly founded on raising standards and maintaining the strong Catholic ethos. She has worked with determination to bring about an improvement in the role of senior staff, quality of teaching and curriculum planning and, as a result, standards have improved significantly since 1997. Staff clearly share a commitment to improve and the capacity to succeed further is good.
57. The school has put careful thought into developing its management structure. After 18 months of discussion and reviews it has recently established a senior management team. The role of team members is clear. The deputy head and senior management team support the headteacher well. The school makes good use of the local education authority officers to help develop the management skills of the team. For example, the school improvement officer has worked with the deputy head on the formulation of a curriculum grid. Subject co-ordinators are effectively developing their management skills. All co-ordinators carry out audits, submit action plans and are responsible for a budget allocation. The current weakness is in the management of the Foundation Stage. The school recognises this and has already planned to provide support and training to enable the drawing together of nursery and reception into a coherent and improved 'early years' department.
58. There are very good procedures in place to monitor teaching and learning and these are having a positive effect on raising standards. Classroom observations of teaching and learning are well structured with verbal and written feedback to the teacher and headteacher allowing individual targets to be set. The headteacher also uses the information to address more general points in whole staff meetings or training sessions. The procedures for performance management are good and fully meet requirements. There are good procedures for the induction of new staff. These allow teachers to settle quickly into school routines and develop their role effectively.
59. The school has addressed the issues regarding the school development plan raised in the previous report. The good quality plan is well matched to the needs of the school. All

targets are appropriate. There is regular monitoring of the targets to ensure the school is meeting them.

60. Use of educational support staff was a concern in the previous inspection report. The school has successfully addressed the issue. It uses support staff very effectively throughout the school. They have a very positive impact on improving standards.
61. The special educational needs co-ordinator performs her role very effectively, meeting fully the recommendations of the Code of Practice for special educational needs. There are very good clear procedures in place which have a positive effect on helping staff and enabling pupils to make good progress. There is a commitment to ensure that they overcome all barriers to learning. When producing the high quality special educational needs policy, the co-ordinator makes reference to the 'Index for Inclusion'. There has been good improvement in the provision for special educational needs since the previous inspection. The school is in a very good position to move to the new Code of Practice for special educational needs³.
62. The role of the governing body in fulfilling statutory duties and shaping the direction of the school is good. The governors are involved in school development planning, contributing to the plan and later ensuring that the school is on course to meet its targets. They monitor the curriculum and finance effectively. Subject co-ordinators are invited to governing body meetings to talk about their subject. This gives the governors a good insight to what is going on in the school. They show very good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school, for example that standards in mathematics need to rise. The chair of governors is aware of the strengths and areas for development in teaching. Governors offer the headteacher good support and guidance and fulfil well their role as critical friends.
63. There is an effective match of experienced and more recently qualified teaching staff in school. This enables teachers to teach the curriculum well. The non-teaching staff also provide effective support in the classroom. In particular, the learning mentor is closely involved with all staff in removing barriers to the education of pupils. The school has developed good procedures for staff development and the induction of new teachers. It has introduced its performance management policy effectively and all teaching and support staff are part of it. The majority of staff are now in the second cycle of this process.
64. The adequacy of classroom accommodation is satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient outside play for reception children to use and restricted access to this area. The school is well maintained and very clean due to the hard working site manager and cleaning staff. In particular, the entrance area is bright and welcoming to visitors.
65. The adequacy of resources in school is satisfactory overall with particular improvements seen since the last inspection in information and communication technology and geography. There are shortages in particular in the number of fiction and non-fiction books in the library and classrooms. However, the library is a suitable environment for pupils to learn and read.
66. The quality of financial management is very good. Priorities for spending are linked very closely to the school development plan. The school makes very good use of the financial resources at its disposal. The school uses the specific grants and additional funds it receives very effectively to raise standards, for example in the use of the Excellence in Cities grant. The support given by the learning mentor and provision for gifted children are having a very positive effect on developing both academic and social skills. The school

³ [Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.](#)

uses money received for staff in-service training effectively. Very good targeting ensures that it meets the needs of the individuals and also matches its identified priorities accurately.

67. The day-to-day financial control and school administration are very good. The school administrator, clerical staff and site manager carry out their roles very efficiently and effectively, allowing the headteacher and teaching staff to concentrate on educational matters. There are very good procedures in place to monitor spending and ordering of goods.
68. There is very good application of the principles of best value both when ordering goods and when looking at academic progress. The school compares prices when ordering goods and services. Comparisons of attainment levels are made with similar, local and national schools and the school shows a commitment to compete to raise standards. The targets set in English and mathematics are challenging and reflect the school's aim to improve. Consultation with parents and pupils is carried out, for example over the proposed changes in school uniform. Given the low level of attainment on entry, the good quality of teaching and learning and progress made by the pupils, the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) raise standards

- (i) in English, by:

- continuing to improve the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy;
- improving the level of teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do;
- improving the teachers' awareness of levels and subject knowledge;
- making more use of on-going assessments to refine teachers' lesson planning so that pupils get tasks to complete that are well matched to their individual learning needs;
- ensuring that the school increases its stock of books substantially and pupils choose books which closely match their reading ability;
- raising teachers' expectations of handwriting and spelling;
- providing more opportunities for pupils in Year 2 to develop longer pieces of writing across the curriculum;
- providing more opportunities for them to correct their work after it has been marked so that they learn from their mistakes;

(paragraphs 2, 4-5, 26, 91-92 and 95)

(ii) in mathematics, by:

- continuing to improve the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy with specific attention to improving the quality of the plenary session;
- continuing to provide opportunities for pupils to pursue mathematical investigations and word problem solving to improve independent thinking;
- continuing to develop pupils' knowledge of multiplication tables to improve their ability to solve mathematical problems;
- developing further the use of mathematics across the curriculum;

(paragraphs 2, 4, 6, 26, 98, 102 and 104)

(iii) in science, by:

- continuing to implement the scheme of work which systematically develops pupils' skills, knowledge, understanding and scientific vocabulary and builds on pupils' previous learning as they move through school;
- providing more opportunities for pupils to pursue scientific investigations and to think for themselves;

(paragraphs 2, 7, 107, 109 and 111)

(iv) in information and communication technology by:

- continuing to improve and develop teachers' knowledge and expertise in information and communication technology;
- continuing to make sure that pupils get opportunities to use information and communication technology across the whole curriculum;

(paragraphs 8, 134 and 137)

(2) improve the quality of learning for pupils in the Foundation Stage by:

- making sure that the Early Years co-ordinator recognises her role and the importance of school's Foundation Stage and collaborates more fully with reception classes;
- making sure that reception teachers pay greater attention to children's prior learning and experiences in nursery;
- raising teachers' knowledge and expectations of what children should be expected to do in each of the areas of learning;
- providing more resources for both nursery and reception classes (for example, the nursery class needs a computer);
- giving children more opportunities to work independently and to select and evaluate their work;
- making more effective use of assessments to decide which individual children are ready to move on to their next stage of learning;
- improving the outdoor accommodation for children in the reception classes by providing more access to an enclosed outdoor play area so they can practise physical skills in an informal setting;
- extending the programme of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that children's needs are met.

(paragraphs 1, 22, 24, 29, 32, 51, 70, 72-73, 76, 78, 80-81 and 83)

In addition the school should:

- continue to stress the importance of attendance and punctuality and take action to raise the rate closer to the national average.

(paragraph 20)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	7	20	22	1	0	0
Percentage	2	14	39	43	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24 FTE	239
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	Not applicable	118

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	83

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	25	15	40

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	16	19
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	31	31	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (76)	78 (76)	80 (91)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	30	17
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	30	33	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (70)	83 (94)	75 (70)
	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	26	19	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	13	22
	Girls	13	12	14
	Total	32	25	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (73)	56 (68)	80 (78)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	14	22
	Girls	9	13	15
	Total	18	27	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	40 (62)	60 (70)	82 (78)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	203
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	94.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	582,858
Total expenditure	573,067
Expenditure per pupil	1,873
Balance brought forward from previous year	1,485
Balance carried forward to next year	9,791

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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 18%

Number of questionnaires sent out	263
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	23	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	74	21	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	30	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	30	0	2	6
The teaching is good.	77	23	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	38	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	21	0	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	26	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	53	38	4	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	72	23	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	23	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	28	9	2	21

Some rows may not add up to 100% due to rounding

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

70. At the time of the inspection, 83 children were in the Foundation Stage. There were 47 attending the nursery on a part-time basis and 36 children were attending full-time in one reception class and one mixed reception and Year 1 class. When children start in the nursery, many have very low standards in communication, language and literacy and in mathematics. Effective teaching in the nursery class results in these children making good progress. However, despite the good progress, the low standards on entry to the nursery mean that for many children, standards are still below average when they begin the reception class. Many of the higher attaining children do not transfer to the reception class in this school and transfer to another nearby primary school. Progress is slower in the reception class because teaching is mostly satisfactory and very occasionally unsatisfactory. As a result, some children are not achieving as well as they could. However, the school's management is aware of the situation and is planning a monitoring and support programme including in service training for teachers to ensure that children do not under achieve. It is fully understood by the school that there is a need for closer collaboration between nursery and reception classes. Currently, most children are on target to achieve the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. However, most children will fail to meet the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

Personal, social and emotional development

71. Teaching and learning are good overall. All adults are very caring, supportive and encouraging, which promotes children's good attitudes and enjoyment of the school and ensures all children, for example those who might be nervous or upset, are fully included. There is very little evidence of any distress when children come into school; indeed, many run excitedly to the door on arrival. Teachers, the nursery nurse and the support assistant constantly promote children's behaviour, which is good. Children learn simple rules and routines for working and playing together. For example, they are taught to share, take turns and think about others. Children know that only a limited number can play in the 'role-play' areas and on the carpet and they sensibly choose an activity elsewhere if their first choice is full. Children in reception classes learn to cope with new experiences of attending school full-time. They develop skills of independence, including making choices about aspects of their work, choosing games and equipment and tidying away resources. When they have a painting activity they put aprons on and after completing their task they take them off and leave their paintings to dry on a rack. Boys and girls do not need reminding to sweep up any spilt sand from the tray and do so as a matter of routine. The staff also help children to become independent in managing aspects of their personal care, such as going to the toilet and washing their hands. All the adults provide very good role models, listening with genuine interest to children and praising their efforts. This supports children's self-esteem and confidence very well. Staff promote social development constantly. For example, when listening to the story 'I'm Special', children are encouraged to listen carefully and think about people who are special to them and to recognise that they themselves are special to someone. Some children have difficulty in sitting still and listening carefully; they call out their answers to questions. However, they do respond to staff and are encouraged to take turns. They co-operate well in pairs and small groups when sharing equipment and taking turns in using apparatus.

Communication, language and literacy

72. By the time children leave the reception class, standards are below those normally expected for their age. The majority of pupils make good progress in the nursery and satisfactory progress in the reception class across a range of activities. Children identified as having special educational needs make appropriate progress towards the individual targets set. However, some of these targets lack sufficiently fine focus in the activities provided. Children who enter the nursery with poor or delayed speaking activities make good progress. Teaching and learning are variable, being very good in the nursery and satisfactory overall in reception.
73. Children listen attentively to adults and respond appropriately, if a little over enthusiastically, to questions. A significant number are less responsive when listening to other children in the group and are not always able to take turns when speaking. Many children are happy to initiate conversations with adults and show confidence when expressing their thoughts. However, they react less well to other children in the role-play in the 'shop' and there are times when children are unsure of their expected roles and sometimes speak less confidently or elect to work alone.
74. Most children have positive attitudes to books and reading because teachers and other adults promote this aspect well. They make story-time special by reading books which are relevant to children's understanding of the world and which interest and excite them. Children enjoy the story sessions. The re-reading of familiar books such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar' is common practice and helps pupils to recognise that print carries meaning. 'He (the caterpillar) gets fat when he eats all the fruit' explained one nursery child when recalling the story. Teachers read expressively, showing illustrations, pointing to the print and encouraging children to join in with repeated sections and rhyming words. In the nursery, short sessions focusing on letter sounds are working well. In the nursery, the teacher and nursery nurse help children to recognise their names on a card. The school offers good guidance to parents about reading. For example, it advises them to say 'l' as in 'lemon'.
75. The teacher and nursery nurse provide well structured activities for children in the nursery to develop writing skills. Staff carefully supervise children so that they learn to hold pencils correctly and form letter shapes carefully. In the reception class, children's handwriting improves further with more accuracy and control developing over size and orientation of letters. Lower attainers, who make up a majority of the reception class are still unsure of the difference between letters and words.
76. The weakness in the teaching of communication, language and literacy in the reception class is mainly due to the inappropriate method and organisation of teaching a 'National Literacy Strategy' type lesson. The children are not ready for such a structured and lengthy session. The pace of the lesson slowed as children were expected to sit for extended periods on the carpet to answer questions and do activities insufficiently graded in difficulty for such a wide range of ability in the class.

Mathematical development

77. At the end of their time in the reception class, children's attainment in mathematics is well below the level normally expected, but children make good progress during their time in the nursery and reception. In the nursery they learn the principles of simple number operations through practical activities and in number rhymes and games. Children begin to recognise and copy patterns. By the second term in the reception class, most children can name two-dimensional shapes such as square, rectangle, triangle and circle and about half of the children confidently name three-dimensional shapes including cube, cone and sphere. Some children consolidate their understanding of mathematical vocabulary using a

computer program to select the correct size of clothing to match to different sizes of teddy on the screen. Staff promote mathematical vocabulary well from the children's early days in the nursery. Children begin to use words like small and large and then move on to use comparative language such as 'bigger' and 'heavier' when comparing objects. They write numbers and recognise them well as they showed when matching items on a shopping list and acting out how many items they bought when their shopping list was added up. A few higher attainers in reception can count to 20 and order and match objects.

78. Teaching of mathematics is satisfactory overall and has many good features. Teachers prepare a broad range of practical activities which are mostly appropriate, but are sometimes not sufficiently well matched for all children to develop and extend their skills and understanding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. Teaching and learning are good in both nursery and reception classes and children are in line to meet the early learning goals in this aspect of the curriculum. The teachers provide a stimulating environment where children can use their senses to explore a wide range of natural and made objects. These provide suitable activities for children to use their developing scientific skills of observation and description. For example, they investigate wet sand and coloured water and they learn how grass grows as they make their own 'Mr Greenhead' by using an old sock filled with compost and grass seeds. In the nursery class, children learn about change as they consider how the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar' transforms into a butterfly. Nursery children make fruit salad and give reasons why fruit should be washed before being eaten. In baking activities they learn how material changes when they melt cheese on their pizzas. When working with baking ingredients children in the reception class describe the texture and when working with playdough they discuss how it feels and reacts when they mould and shape it. They learn to use simple tools and techniques competently and appropriately, although there are some occasions when children are over directed and not allowed to experiment for themselves. While it is understandable and perfectly reasonable to be concerned over health and safety, children can be given more independence, for example when using scissors.
80. Play with construction apparatus occurs in both classrooms on most days. Children learn how to join pieces of commercial products to make models, although the equipment is pretty basic and the activities could be more demanding with a more extensive range of resources. In the nursery and reception, children make good use of waste materials such as boxes and tubes which they join with glue and sticky tape.
81. Children in reception are interested in computers and other technology and are making good gains in learning how to use this. While children in reception develop their skills in using the computer and consolidate their skills in language and mathematics, children in nursery do not have equality of opportunity since they do not have a computer in their classroom.

Physical development

82. Teaching and learning are generally good in both nursery and reception classes. By the end of their time in the reception class, most pupils achieve the levels normally expected for their age. Overall, all children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.
83. Nursery children have good daily opportunities (weather permitting) to use a suitable range of equipment to support the development of running, jumping, climbing and balancing. They enjoy and gain confidence and skills in riding and manoeuvring bicycles and other pedalling, pushing and pulling toys. Children in reception do not have the same equality of

opportunity to access the outdoor equipment. However, in addition to the limited use of the nursery's outdoor area, children are given ample opportunity to use the apparatus in the main school hall. Children thoroughly enjoy using the large apparatus and show good awareness of space as they rock and roll with confidence. They begin to recognise the effect that exercise has on their bodies and feel their heart beat.

84. Teachers provide a range of interesting activities for children to handle small implements, tools and other equipment safely. The majority of children hold paintbrushes correctly when applying paint to paper. Cutting skills are developing satisfactorily, but teachers and other staff need to let pupils practise without directing them and helping them so much. Children are aware of the need to be sensible and are careful with their tasks.

Creative development

85. At the end of their time in the reception year, attainment in creative development is in line to meet the early learning goals and teaching in the nursery and reception is satisfactory. Some of the activities lack a little imagination and are somewhat narrow and results are satisfactory rather than good and expressive. Some tracing and colouring tasks are too simple and progress is more satisfactory than good. Many children know the names of colours and express their preferences. However, although most children have opportunities to use a variety of different brush sizes, they usually complete a painting using one brush and do not mix colours. The children do collage work, but the range of materials provided is a little narrow and restricts their choices and expression of ideas. Although the choice of activities available during the inspection week was limited, there is evidence of a range of activities to allow children to experiment with different media and techniques.

ENGLISH

86. Standards of work seen in English in Years 1 and 2 are below national expectations and similar to standards found in the national tests for 7 year olds in 2001. In the junior classes, standards are also below national expectations as they were in the national tests for 11 year olds in 2001. However, this school serves its pupils well and standards have risen steadily and significantly in recent years. Considering that children enter school with poor attainment in communication, language and literacy, they make good progress overall. When compared with all schools nationally St Aidan's has improved more than the national trend and when compared with similar schools, standards in English were well above average at the age of 11 years.
87. From an early age pupils are encouraged to listen to each other and to their teachers and to take turns in speaking. In Years 1 and 2 such activities are encouraged not only through the literacy hour but also through other aspects of the curriculum such as 'circle time' where pupils are given an opportunity to express their own views and feelings. Across the school there are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. The pleasant atmosphere created cultivates trust and confidence and encourages a free exchange of views. Occasional opportunities in class assemblies also provide scope for pupils to express themselves to a wider audience more formally. Throughout school, teachers and support staff take care that pupils develop an understanding of new words and by the age of 7 most pupils have an average range of vocabulary.
88. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils speak with confidence and reasonable clarity. Occasionally, their speech is unclear because the dialect is strong and they misuse some words. Teachers often correct mispronunciations and misuse of some words. This approach to the correct use of standard English could be a little more consistent. Some teachers do not always set a good example themselves. However, confidence in speaking

and careful listening is encouraged not just in the context of the literacy hour or in other English lessons, but also in other areas of the curriculum.

89. Teachers ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a secure grounding in basic literacy skills, but by the age of 7 standards in reading are still below national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress and standards this year are higher than last year. Approximately one third of the Year 2 pupils read at the higher Level 3 which is much improved on the proportion in 2001. Pupils recognise a good number of simple words by sight and use their knowledge of sounds and the illustrations on the page to help them to understand the text. Support staff identify those pupils who require additional support with their reading early and give them sensitive support. Pupils enjoy reading a range of texts. While only a small number express a preference in their reading material, they can all name a favourite book and they are happy to discuss the characters from the stories and explain why they like or dislike them. Although average and higher attainers read fluently with sound expression and understanding, lower attainers generally read accurately, but lack fluency, expression and understanding. Higher and average attainers know how to use a simple contents page. All pupils questioned knew what an index was and the average and higher attaining pupils could use their knowledge of alphabetical order to locate information.
90. Pupils make good progress in reading, but due to the large proportion of pupils with a special educational need in language development, standards of attainment in reading at the age of 11 are below national expectations overall. However, a small number of pupils achieve standards that are good for their age. Most pupils say they enjoy reading, but are not enthusiastic. Higher attaining and average readers read with confidence. The lower attaining pupils are more hesitant. Most pupils understand the significant ideas and events of what they are reading and can deduce accurately what is being inferred by the text. They refer to the text when explaining points of the story and express forthright opinions about the book they have read. Most pupils have a favourite author and speak about their reading preferences. When reading unfamiliar text they use a variety of skills to work out meanings, although not all are secure in the use of punctuation as an aid to reading with expression. Pupils have developed well their library skills and confidently demonstrate how to access fiction and non-fiction books using the index, context page and glossary. Project work in subjects such as history shows that pupils have been able to collate information from more than one source. In both key stages, pupils take books home to read, but many say their parents do not hear them often.
91. Writing is below average in Year 2. Many pupils write at the level expected, but few exceed it. Teachers provide a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to write. By the end of Year 2, many pupils have developed a sound understanding of how to structure different types of writing such as stories and reports. The use of basic punctuation, however, other than by the higher attainers, is not always consistent. Handwriting is neatly printed, but there is little evidence of any pupils using joined letters. A small number of higher attaining pupils are able to sequence one or two sentences and spell common words such as 'can' and 'went' accurately and make a good attempts to spell unknown words. Lower attainers struggle to spell even the most familiar words correctly and write very little. Pupils have some opportunities to practise and develop writing skills in other subjects. For example, in their history work they write about old and new toys. However, such opportunities are limited in the infant classes and pupils need more of them. Teachers use too many worksheet exercises. Many of these are identical for all the class, whether they are higher attainers or have special educational needs. This slows pupils' progress.
92. Pupils make better progress in Key Stage 2, especially in the high quality teaching of the Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6 classes. However, attainment in writing is still below average at the age of 11 due to the high number of pupils with special educational needs

(almost 30 per cent of Year 6). By the time they reach Year 6, around 25 per cent of pupils are achieving well and exceed the national expectations. Higher attaining pupils produce well-organised, imaginative and clear writing in a variety of forms, for example letters, stories, poems, play scripts and reports. Most pupils present their written work neatly, although many pupils have not yet developed a fluent and consistent style of joined writing, often mixing their printed and joined letters in the same word. Spelling is below average and although some pupils spell everyday words with ease, using their knowledge of letter sounds to help, a large number of pupils continue to spell common words incorrectly. Most pupils give proper attention to sentence structure and simple punctuation such as capital letters and full stops in their writing. They link sentences coherently and show sound understanding of grammar. Pupils plan their stories effectively, but would benefit from more opportunities to reorganise and develop their ideas in a more creative way. Writing across other areas of the curriculum is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2 and there are occasional good opportunities for extended and creative writing such as the Year 6 writing about life as a chimney sweep in Victorian times.

93. The use of information and communication technology to support English work is satisfactory overall with some good examples, such as the multi-media presentations produced in Year 6. However, all classes benefit from the improved provision in information and communications technology. Programs are used to consolidate pupils' spelling in both key stages and the word processor is confidently used by most pupils to draft and redraft their work.
94. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.
95. Teachers have enhanced their skills and knowledge well by literacy training and they are secure in their ability to teach literacy skills. Teachers have a good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy. They apply this effectively and skilfully, ensuring pupils are aware of what is to be learned during the lesson and then soundly recapping on pupils' learning at the end of the lesson. In the better lessons, which make up over half of those observed, teaching moves at a good pace with lively stimulating and challenging work being set. In the very good lesson in the Years 5 and 6 class, the teacher expertly developed pupils' understanding of the different types of poetry by involving pupils thoroughly in all parts of the lesson using very good resources and asking questions that encouraged deep thought before answering. For example, she played pupils a modern song with a strong beat and asked 'Why did I play this song in our poetry lesson?'. The whole class listened with interest and one responded 'Because that is a rap poem and a poem is like a song without music'. Many teachers are skilled at asking a good range of open-ended questions. Expectations of achievement and presentation are usually high, but could be higher in Year 2. In this class, higher attainers are not always given sufficiently demanding work and occasionally have copying tasks that do little to motivate them. Classroom support staff provide good support to pupils with special educational needs and this enables them to make good progress. Some of these pupils have behavioural problems and sometimes find it difficult to concentrate. Support staff skilfully and sensitively encourage and cajole even the most reluctant pupils to attempt their work. All staff recognise the importance of developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence in their English work and they use praise very well to encourage pupils to attempt work and share their views. Teachers mark pupils' work well and in addition to praising effort and achievement they give good pointers as to how the pupils can improve their work. However, there is little evidence that pupils follow up the teachers' comments.
96. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour in English lessons are good throughout the school and only slip to satisfactory when pupils are bored and restless on the few occasions when work is not well matched to their needs. Pupils settle to work quickly and they are generally well motivated and hard working. They respond positively to teachers'

instructions and explanations. They are beginning to be more aware of their own learning as they aim to achieve the individual targets that teachers have set for them.

97. The quality of leadership in English is good and is leading to improvements. Effective strategies are now in place to raise standards, especially through the setting of writing targets for all pupils and the careful tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress from the reception class through to Year 6. Specific, well-targeted sessions such as Additional Literacy Support are provided to boost pupils' reading and writing skills. These are helping to raise standards for lower attaining pupils. The new planning and assessment procedures are now bedding in well and these are ensuring that pupils learn skills and knowledge progressively. This is a large improvement since the previous inspection where teaching in Key Stage 2 was described as relying too much on commercial schemes and the oldest pupils did not cover the National Curriculum well enough. A weakness highlighted during the last inspection still remains; the school has a poor stock of books. While this is recognised by the headteacher and governing body and a significant sum is earmarked to replenish library and classroom books, it will take a very significant amount of money to bring the book provision to a satisfactory level.

MATHEMATICS

98. Standards in mathematics are below national average at the ages of 7 and 11 years. Given the low level of attainment on entry the pupils achieve well. The school has worked hard to improve standards in the subject and with the exception of last year when there were a large number of pupils with special educational needs in the cohort, standards have risen steadily for pupils aged 11. Standards have not risen at the same rate for pupils aged 7, where work does not always challenge the higher attainers fully. The most recent national test results showed that standards were well below average when compared to all schools. By the age of 11, comparisons with similar schools show standards are above average. Pupils make good progress throughout the school, although there is some variation between different classes. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress overall because of work set at a different level and additional support. There are some occasions when work is set at too high a level and pupils with special educational needs and others struggle to answer questions.
99. The recent improvement in pupils' achievement is the direct result of better planning, improvement in the quality of teaching and the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. The school has received support from a numeracy consultant. There has been a systematic approach to training. A number of teachers have attended five-day courses; these have helped them improve their teaching skills and, as a result, pupils' learning has improved. Careful analysis of test and assessment results has enabled the school to identify and start to address areas of weakness including identifying important facts in written problems, place value and understanding ratio.
100. By the age of 7 years, pupils show a secure knowledge of place value to 10, with the higher attaining pupils confident up to 100. Few are able to solve problems using larger numbers. Most confidently add and subtract single digit numbers, but a number need to use aids and have support from adults. Pupils recognise patterns and order odd and even numbers. They are not yet confidently checking their own work. Pupils identify common two and three-dimensional shapes including triangles, rectangles and circles. They are starting to describe the properties, but are not yet confident in their understanding of reflective symmetry. Measuring skills are satisfactory with many pupils measuring accurately in centimetres. The higher attaining pupils show good skills when estimating length.
101. By the age of 11, pupils have further developed their understanding of number. Many have problems in applying their knowledge to written problems. They have difficulty in identifying the important facts in the problem. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding of

place value up to six figures, but a number of pupils find this difficult. Many pupils have difficulty in using mental strategies, for example, in multiplication exercises. Most pupils show satisfactory understanding of shape and space. They calculate the perimeter of a shape by adding the sides and the area of a rectangle by multiplying length times breadth. Pupils collect and analyse data, but the higher attaining pupils have few opportunities to develop this area by initiating their own ideas. Pupils' understanding of ratio and use of the ratio scale is limited.

102. The quality of teaching has improved recently. During the inspection period the quality of teaching was good overall with a range from satisfactory to excellent. Analysis of pupils' work shows that the quality has not always been as high throughout the year. In the excellent lesson the teacher used every moment of the lesson to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. In the mental mathematics session, addition and subtraction skills were developed very effectively because the teacher asked pupils to explain how they had worked out their answer. Pupils developed a very good understanding of mathematical vocabulary because the teacher used several different words to describe subtraction, for example take away, minus and difference between. Work set at different and appropriate levels ensured that pupils with special educational needs were fully included in the lesson and made very good progress. Most mental mathematics sessions are brisk, but occasionally teachers do not ensure a rapid response from pupils. Although work is usually set at the correct level for pupils, analysis of work shows there are times when the work does not fully stretch the highest attaining pupils. For example, a pupil completed several pages of simple addition and subtraction when she had clearly mastered the skill and could have moved on to something more challenging. There are also occasions when teachers set work at too high a level and pupils struggle or fail to complete the work. This results in time being lost because the teachers have to then re-teach the pupils at the correct level. Teachers do not use marking effectively to develop learning. Marking is positive, but does not make suggestions on how to move learning forward. All teachers have very good control of their classes. They relate very well to pupils and encourage them to learn. During the inspection period the teachers made good use of information and communications technology to support learning. They use computers to develop pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. For example in a Years 5 and 6 lesson, pupils developed their understanding of multiples of five by using an appropriate computer program. The school has identified a group of older pupils with special educational needs in mathematics and provided high quality individual educational plans with clearly measurable targets. Most of the work in the group sessions is closely related to these targets, but occasionally it is too difficult for pupils because they have not fully mastered the essential earlier skills.
103. Pupils respond very well in lessons. They persevere even when they find the work challenging, for example in the Years 5 and 6 special educational needs group, when working on written real life problems. When working together, pupils talk about their work and support each other. The very good attitudes have a very positive effect on learning, allowing the teacher to give support where it is needed.
104. Teachers have now firmly established the National Numeracy Strategy within the school. They have modified their planning to take account of mixed year groups; this has led to a little confusion about the appropriate level of work, particularly for lower attaining older pupils within groups. There is satisfactory development of mathematics throughout the rest of the subjects, but teachers do not yet systematically plan and link this to pupils' needs. Opportunities to develop number skills are particularly good in design and technology where pupils have opportunities to weigh and measure. They are not yet fully developed in science.
105. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator has recently returned to school after maternity leave and she has a very good understanding of

the strengths and areas for development and leads the subject well. There is regular assessment in the subject. Teachers use this to set targets and identify areas for development. Although they set group targets there are no short-term individual targets to ensure that they set work at the correct level to match the needs of all pupils. Teachers use resources effectively to develop learning.

SCIENCE

106. Standards in science are below those expected of the majority of pupils at the ages of both 7 and 11 years. Test results for 2001 show standards to be well below average. When compared with similar schools, standards are average. By the end of the Infant phase the majority of pupils are attaining the basic level expected of 7 year olds. Very few of them are attaining the higher Level 3. In the junior phase a satisfactory proportion of pupils attain the higher Level 5. However, too many pupils are currently below the required standard to attain Level 4. Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school, particularly in some junior classes.
107. The curriculum provided for all pupils gives thorough coverage of all elements. The last inspection found that some topics were covered in insufficient depth. This is not now the case. Satisfactory improvement has taken place. Pupils revisit topics in different classes with the level of enquiry raised. At times there is, however, insufficient awareness of the levels of understanding previously attained. Some work repeats that done earlier and pupils are not moved on as quickly as they might be.
108. Pupils of all abilities, including those pupils with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory gains in learning in all areas of science as they move through the infant classes. Pupils have a basic knowledge of life processes and living things and physical processes, and their skills in investigative and experimental science are developing well. For example, in Year 2 work about electricity, pupils test which circuits will work and higher attainers explain why. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of materials and their properties. Pupils can name man made and natural materials, but are sometimes a little confused about the origin of certain materials. For instance, a piece of shaped wood is described as man made, but originally was a natural material. In physical education lessons, pupils recognise that the heart beats faster after exercise. Pupils make good progress through the junior classes in all areas of learning, but the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level by the age of 11 is smaller than normally expected. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 investigate which materials are conductors and insulators of electricity and, while most record what happens, it is mainly the higher attainers who explain 'why' it happens. By Year 6, pupils have continued to make good progress in the way they organise their work and in their investigative and experimental skills. For example, pupils in Year 5 show care measuring liquids with a syringe and think deeply about ensuring a test is fair. In Year 6, pupils consolidate further their satisfactory understanding of electricity by considering if the brightness of a bulb is affected by the components in a circuit.
109. Teachers have suitable learning objectives for lessons and usually share them with the pupils. In the best lessons they are put into simpler language for all pupils to understand. Many lessons are based on the pupils investigating and trying to find answers to the problems. They usually follow scientific procedures by predicting what they think will occur and afterwards considering their findings. However, the recording of investigations is not developed progressively. Good practice is seen when some pupils include good diagrams to illustrate and clarify what they are doing. The use of graphs is less evident. There is a lack of consistency in recording. On occasions, pupils do not predict outcomes, nor do they write down any conclusions arrived at from their investigations.

110. Teaching is satisfactory overall. A strength in all areas of the school is the good management of and relationships with pupils. This fosters good sharing in learning. Teachers know their pupils well and try to provide for them accordingly. All are fully included. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support so that they learn equally as well as their peers. Teachers could give more attention to higher attaining pupils, particularly in the Infant phase, where they do not receive sufficient challenge. The same tasks are often provided for all pupils. Expectations of both behaviour and application are high. The large majority of pupils record their work neatly. When they work together in groups they are sensible and helpful to each other. In a good Year 6 lesson the pupils shared in a fruitful discussion about the likely factors affecting the brightness of bulbs in electrical circuits. The teacher effectively drew into the discussion some of the less assured. She provided some challenging tasks at different levels in which all were very interested. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported and worked exceptionally well. Two of them were noted testing and eliminating different possibilities very logically. Later, pupils were able to say what they had found. The higher attaining pupils also explained why things had happened.
111. Teachers do not always highlight science vocabulary sufficiently. There is some inconsistency in expectation of pupils' ability to read, write and explain the important science words relating to each topic. It is important that the teachers pass on clearly to pupils their own knowledge and understanding of, for example, what is a man-made or natural material. They mark pupils' written work regularly, which encourages them to record neatly and carefully, but some teachers pose insufficient questions in their marking to reinforce and progress pupils' understanding.
112. The new subject co-ordinator has opportunities to monitor both the planning and teaching of the subject and to see pupils' work. This is good, although too early to have had any significant impact but she is building well on the good progress made from the previous inspection. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is being assessed at the end of each topic. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The information now needs to be used more effectively. Some good support is given to literacy. For example, when Year 3 pupils commence their electricity topic they are given a vocabulary list. Mathematical skills are used and reinforced in various ways. Pupils in Year 4 show accuracy in measuring liquids when learning to conduct a fair test.

ART AND DESIGN

113. Attainment in art is below that expected when pupils leave school. This is a decline since the last inspection. However, the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 are similar to those of pupils of the same age. Art has not been a priority of the school since the last inspection. The school has consequently made little progress in the development of an art curriculum. The school is very aware of this and is taking appropriate action. It has recently adopted a scheme that, when fully implemented, will allow for the progressive development of skills. Currently, pupils have a lack of basic skills in all areas of art, and do not build on or improve skills as they move up the school. Although written work is sometimes illustrated with drawings that are then coloured in, these are on the whole immature for pupils of this age.
114. No overall judgement on teaching in Key Stage 1 is made. However, work on display shows good use of information and communication technology in terms of creating faces, pictures of fireworks and patterns based on the work of Mondrian.
115. In Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory, although some teachers lack subject knowledge and are, therefore, unable to develop skills progressively. As a result, tasks can be undemanding or lacking in focus and pupils do not make sufficient progress. For example, in Year 5 pupils were asked to create a picture with visual and tactile qualities using a

choice of 14 techniques including information and communication technology. Apart from using the computer program that had been set up to produce images, most pupils relied on the simple techniques of paint and collage. The number of techniques available were overwhelming and as many could not recall the meanings of 'visual' and 'tactile' they could not discuss the most appropriate materials and methods to use. In a Year 3 lesson, where the aim of the lesson was to investigate pattern, pupils were fully instructed on what to do and how to do it. There was little opportunity for them to contribute ideas before they started work. Discussions on how to use the patterns did not take place until after pupils had done their printing; therefore, they were not encouraged to design for a purpose or to use their imagination. The result was a set of very similar repeating patterns none of which showed flair.

116. In some areas, work showed good development from design through to evaluation. For example, masks for a performance made in Year 6 were designed and then made in modroc (a plaster of Paris material). The finish showed imagination with a range of materials and techniques used. Finally, valuations were made. Year 6 pupils also had the opportunity to take part in a paper sculpture workshop led by a local artist. This gave them valuable experience of a new technique of three-dimensional work and they were proud to have their work displayed in the local library.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

117. Standards in the design element are broadly in line with those expected at the ages of 7 and 11 years. No firm judgement can be made on making, but masks in Year 6 and photographic evidence indicate that pupils produce good quality products. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the school. All pupils are fully included in the subject.
118. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were well below the expected level. This was partly because the subject did not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school has addressed all the issues and the subject now meets requirements.
119. By the age of 7, pupils gather information and talk about different facial expressions in work on drawing a face for a puppet. Higher attaining pupils match faces to one of their characters from literature. Other pupils match to mood: happy, sad, funny. Pupils have also designed and made a vehicle to carry a teddy bear. They produced labelled plans, listing the materials used: shoe boxes, elastic bands, plastic drinking straws and plastic wheels. Photographic evidence shows the vehicles being tested. Pupils comment on the success or otherwise of the vehicles and as a class say how they could improve the vehicle.
120. By the age of 11, pupils have developed their design and making skills by designing and making monsters with a pneumatic movement. They use linkages and levers, for example, when designing moving parts for an infant storybook. Pupils develop food technology when they design and make biscuits. In Year 6, pupils design and make headgear. They gather information and investigate movement using pulleys in work on designing and making a fairground ride. Pupils record what they have done in a design book. Pupils write their instructions and comment on suitability for purpose.
121. The quality of teaching in the inspection period was very good overall and never less than good. The very high quality of teaching has a positive effect on developing learning. Pupils are kept interested in the subject because of the methods the teachers use. In a Years 1 and 2 lesson a video was used very effectively to help pupils design a clown's face. The use of a tray of materials including cotton reels, elastic bands, wires and electrical cells enabled pupils in Year 6 to investigate mechanisms before they designed

fairground rides. Lessons are very well planned with extra support being given to pupils with special educational needs to ensure they are fully included in all activities. There are very high expectations both in terms of work and in terms of behaviour. Pupils respond very well to these expectations and this has a very positive effect on learning. In the Year 6 lesson there were excellent attitudes with the room a hive of activity throughout the whole lesson. Pupils develop their literacy skills satisfactorily in design and technology because they read instructions and write for a purpose when they record what they have done. Mathematical skills are particularly well developed as pupils learn the need to weigh and measure accurately. There are links with science, for example in work on movement, but teachers do not always make the link clear to pupils. The use of information and communication technology is at an early stage, but when used it has a very positive effect on learning. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils used a construction kit and computer to build and operate a moving lift. This developed both design and technology and control technology skills very effectively.

122. The subject is very effectively co-ordinated by the headteacher who has ensured that the subject now meets requirements. The school has introduced a new scheme of work and is reviewing this to meet its needs more closely. Resources have been improved to ensure all aspects of the curriculum are covered. The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

123. History and geography are taught as alternate topics through out the school so that at the time of the inspection little geography was being taught at either key stage. Since the last inspection the school has adopted a new scheme of work and has combined this with staff training, which has resulted in an improvement in standards throughout the school. Pupils' attainment at the age of 7 and when they leave the school is now in line with expectations for pupils of similar age.
124. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and work on the local environment shows satisfactory development between Years 1 and 2. In Year 1, pupils progress from looking at a plan of the school grounds to a walk in the local area around the school. They identify familiar buildings, which are recorded in the form of photographs and displayed in the class both as a record and to stimulate discussion. The work in Year 2 shows good progression, so that the buildings and places found in Year 1 are now combined with a simple map of roads. The route taken is marked and the features put into their correct location. Pupils, therefore, learn early mapping skills in an environment that is familiar to them.
125. Current work in Year 1 effectively uses a series of stories about a child who lives on a small Scottish island. In an observed lesson the teacher effectively used the photographs on a display together with the elements of the story so that pupils quickly focused with enthusiasm on the 'Island of Struay'. The characters in the story were then the centre of discussions as to what forms of transport would be used on the island. Although pupils used both the picture in the book and their own prior knowledge in identifying different vehicles, there was little challenge in deciding 'who', 'when' and 'why' would use the vehicles. Individual work set met the needs of pupils with different levels of prior attainment. The characters such as Morag and Grannie Island enabled the pupils to make 'real life' comparisons between the life styles in the two different locations so adding meaning to their learning. They were, therefore, able to make brief comparisons with transport used on the island and that they use to come to school.
126. No overall judgement is made on teaching in Key Stage 2. However, in the one lesson observed, in Year 6, pupils demonstrated that they had well developed research skills. Almost all pupils had come to the lesson with information on mountains that they had accessed for homework. During the lesson a group of pupils worked independently on

computers in another class's room, without any disturbance to the lesson that was taking place. They successfully searched the Internet and downloaded information on the Himalayas. Two more pupils worked in the library extracting information on the Austrian Alps from encyclopaedias. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported by the teacher in extracting information from prepared work sheets.

127. Although pupils showed that, through good teaching, they had acquired the skills to access information from various sources, their skills in selecting from information collected was more limited. Many pupils simply copied chunks without deciding what parts were relevant to their inquiry.

HISTORY

128. Pupils enjoy their history lessons and make good use of the local museum. Progress is satisfactory through the school and pupils reach the standards that are expected at the age of 7 and by the time they leave the school. A combination of a new scheme of work and staff training has resulted in a teaching style which is based on inquiry. As a result, the development of skills has improved since the last inspection and this is now judged as satisfactory along with subject knowledge.
129. The teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. From Year 1 pupils are encouraged and supported to formulate questions that will give them information they need. For example, in a good lesson in Year 1, pupils collected new toys to put on to their time line. The teacher then produced a box, which contained a toy that she had been given when she was a year old. With skilful support they were able to ask questions, that together with feeling the toy, enabled them to conclude that it was a teddy. While pupils were drawing pictures, the teacher engaged them in discussions comparing the teddy with the new toys, so that they understood the changes that had taken place over time and were able to give reasons for the dirty, shabby appearance of the old toy.
130. Photographic evidence illustrated the value of a Victorian day at a local museum for pupils in the infant classes. Timed just before Christmas, pupils experienced Christmas traditions, games and toys as well as participating in role-play, such as being the butler. Such visits provide good support to work in school and increase pupils' understanding of life in the past.
131. Teaching in the junior classes is on the whole satisfactory, but variable. At its best, as illustrated by a lesson about Ancient Egypt in Year 3, pupils' observational and investigative skills are well challenged. The teacher asked pupils what information they could find from the looking at the mask and challenged them to give reasons for their answers. For example, 'Why do you think this person was young or old?' Follow up work was different for various groups of pupils so that all made good progress. Higher attaining pupils used writing skills to write descriptions while pupils with lower attainment were well supported in labelling diagrams. In a less successful lesson with a mixed class of Years 3 and 4 pupils the teacher used mainly closed questions that did not excite or stimulate pupils interest in the Romans and Celts. Consequently, pupils worked with minimum of interest and at a level that was below that expected for pupils of this age.
132. Pieces of extended writing in Year 6 illustrate the differences that have occurred in the lives of children since Victorian times. Pupils used their literacy skills well in descriptions of Victorians at work such as 'Life as - a Shoe Shine Boy, a Match Girl and a Chimney Sweep'.
133. The co-ordinator for history is enthusiastic for the subject and values the support staff have received in the form of training which has increased confidence and developed a more investigative style of teaching. Units are planned on a two-year cycle and the school has

adopted a scheme of work that builds on the development of skills. Time has been allocated later in the year for monitoring of the subject by the co-ordinator and adequate assessment procedures are in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

134. Standards are below what is expected of pupils at the age of 11 years. There was insufficient evidence during the inspection to judge the attainment of pupils by the age of 7 years. However, pupils are achieving well.
135. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in both provision and standards. It now provides between two and five computers in each classroom, most being networked. There is a clear and progressive curriculum for the development of pupils' basic skills. Each week all have time to reinforce and learn new skills. Teachers plan well to make use of the computers in many lessons in all areas of the curriculum. They are constantly in use in many classrooms. Pupils' skills are developing well and they are very aware of the uses and benefits of computer technology. They make good use of the Internet for independent research. Year 6 pupils seek information about the Himalayas and other mountain ranges.
136. Pupils used computers in various lessons, but only one lesson was seen involving direct teaching of skills to the whole class. This was very good. The teacher showed supreme confidence and knowledge. Pupils respected this and listened intently. Effective questioning ensured that all pupils were included fully. Tasks set were well matched to challenge pupils and they worked well in pairs. While one group used the computers, others had simulated spreadsheets. Pupils understood how to use them and how the computer can speed the process, using formulae to calculate costs, for example. The pupils showed good application to their tasks, sensible shared discussion and very good behaviour. The teacher worked closely with pupils with special educational needs. Consequently, there was a very good pace to the learning of all pupils.
137. There has been recent training of teachers in the subject. In lessons where some pupils used the computers, teaching was good. They ensured that pupils understood and were able to carry out their tasks successfully. In a Year 2 literacy lesson some pupils used a dictionary program, supported by the classroom assistant. In design and technology, Year 1 pupils designed faces for their puppets by dragging and placing facial features accurately. Year 6 pupils explored how devices can be controlled. They assembled a construction model and linked it to the computer. Two boys explained how to insert their own program to control the garage door. Whenever pupils used the computers they appeared confident. Older pupils have had limited experience due to earlier lack of resources. They are, however, making rapid progress in understanding.
138. The subject benefits from very active and effective leadership. The co-ordinator has a clear action plan to take the subject forward. There is an excellent policy for the use of the Internet, with high awareness of the need to protect pupils. Assessment procedures are in place so that teachers can track pupils' progress in acquiring basic skills. Further planning takes account of this. Software resources are provided for most areas of the curriculum, including provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for gifted pupils. The Dewey system in the library provides another opportunity for pupils to use their skills. Mathematics is supported in various ways, such as the production of pie charts in Year 4. Year 6 pupils produce multi-media presentations which involve use of literacy skills.

MUSIC

139. Standards at the age of 7 are in line with the expected level. Year 6 pupils were not observed during the inspection period. However, discussion with the co-ordinator and analysis of planning indicate that standards are not yet at the expected level by the time pupils reach the age of 11 years. This is because the strategies put in place to improve standards have not had time to work their way through the school. Standards observed in the Year 4 lesson were at the expected level. In the very small number of lessons observed, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were fully included in all activities and achieved well.
140. The school has worked hard to raise standards. There is a new scheme of work in place. To help raise standards the school uses the expertise of the co-ordinator effectively to teach in both Year 2 and Years 3 and 4. The standard of singing was identified as an issue in the previous inspection. The school has addressed this by employing a part-time singing specialist to raise standards throughout school. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
141. Only two lessons were observed in the inspection period and both were taught by the music co-ordinator. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching throughout the school. In the lessons seen the quality of teaching was very good and good. Pupils in Year 2 recognise pitch in music because the teacher asks them to raise their hands when the notes go higher and lower them when notes go lower. They sing tunefully showing good attention to pitch, time and dynamics. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop a good sense of rhythm because of activities such as the 'Switch game'. Pupils discuss how they can improve their performance, for example, by using percussion instruments. They listen carefully to music because the teacher chooses tunes which catch their interest and imagination. Musical vocabulary is well developed with pupils using terms such as 'ostinato'. They talk about simple notation because the teacher illustrates crochets and quavers on the board. Both lessons observed were well planned. The teacher makes good use of resources to develop learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed satisfactorily in music. Pupils develop reading skills when they learn words to songs. They develop writing skills when they record what they have done during the lesson. Counting and development of musical patterns help to develop mathematical skills. The use of information and communication technology other than in playing pre-recorded music is unsatisfactory. There are no opportunities for pupils to compose or play their own music using computers. Attitudes to music are good. Pupils handle instruments well. They enjoy music and listen carefully both to the teacher and to each other.
142. The co-ordinator is working hard to raise the profile of music in the school. The subject makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are opportunities to listen to and reflect about music. Pupils sing and play instruments together. The curriculum includes music from all parts of the world. Visits by groups such as 'The Noisy Planet Band', a brass ensemble and a percussionist, develop both musical and cultural knowledge. There are opportunities to develop musical skills in the school concerts and productions such as 'Oliver'. A number of pupils benefit from instrumental tuition in brass, woodwind and strings. There are no opportunities for large numbers of pupils to take part in regular extra-curricular musical activities. A number of pupils sing with the local authority school choir.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. Standards in the subject, overall, are similar to those expected of all pupils at the ages of 7 and 11 years. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school.
144. Standards in swimming are above those seen in the majority of schools. By the time pupils leave the school almost all of them can swim a minimum of 25 metres. A good proportion of them swim considerably further and are competent in a range of strokes. Provision for swimming is good with all pupils in the junior phase having at least one full term each year. A brief observation of Year 5 pupils showed the teacher to have good subject knowledge. Good relationships with the pupils meant that they were encouraged to behave well and work hard, making good progress. This applied to all pupils including those with special educational needs.
145. Teaching of games and gymnastics is satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations. They set a very good example in their dress and attitude. Pupils follow this lead. In gymnastics, pupils in Year 1 are taught to carry and use apparatus safely. Pupils warm up before commencing the main tasks and usually cool down afterwards. A balance needs to be struck between rigorous application of safe practice and loss of time and pace. In some lessons, pupils are kept inactive, 'waiting their turn'. When necessary, teachers give good demonstrations and opportunities for pupils to do so also. However, there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to comment. They work hard and with evident enjoyment so that they improve their skills in jumping and balancing. Pupils show satisfactory control, and co-ordination develops satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 4 plan and perform successfully a series of linked balances.
146. In the only games lesson seen, Year 3 pupils were very competent in the use of the chest pass and overhead pass, and catching skills were good. The teacher used demonstrations, such as for a one-handed pass. No key skill points were identified, however, so that not all pupils grasped the new activity well, lacking control. While most of them co-operate well, a few of them tend to compete instead. When pupils are seen playing games of football, both independently and in the after-school club, they show a satisfactory level of skill and good use of space. In the playground they play very fairly and sensibly without close supervision. In another after-school club for high fives, pupils show suitable skills in passing and receiving, although shooting requires further practice. The two teachers leading this have good knowledge and pupils spent their time very purposefully.
147. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy a full curriculum, which includes dances of different cultures. The accommodation is good and used effectively. The active co-ordinator receives good support from many of her colleagues and a parent volunteer in the provision of a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make a residential visit when they experience a variety of outdoor adventurous activities. This range of experiences and the standards set and expected by the teachers provide very strong support for the pupils' personal and social development. Assessment is made only in swimming currently. This is an area for development.