

INSPECTION REPORT

ST FINBAR'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104640

Headteacher: Mrs R Bibby

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Brackstone
21872

Dates of inspection: 5th – 8th November 2001

Inspection number: 196987

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Fr J Southworth
Date of previous inspection:	17 th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21872	Lorna Brackstone	Registered inspector	English Art History English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? How high are standards? a) the school's results and pupils' achievements
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with the parents?
28320	Robert Willey	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Geography Physical education	
22740	Margaret Leah	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics Music Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Finbar's is an average sized primary school with 177 pupils on roll. The vast majority of the pupils are baptised in the Catholic Church. One hundred and seventy-one pupils are of white British heritage, three are of black British heritage and two are white European heritage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average at 72 per cent. No pupils use English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, is 43 per cent and this is high. One pupil has a statement for special educational needs. There are 97 boys and 74 girls. All pupils are fully included in all activities within school. The movement of pupils in and out of the school, other than at the appropriate times of the beginning and end of a school year, is high at 13 per cent. The school is situated in one of the poorest areas of Europe and is part of an Education Action Zone. Many parents are unemployed but a small number work as nurses or in untrained manual work. A high proportion of pupils live with one parent. Children start Nursery at the age of three with very poorly developed skills in all areas of learning. They spend up to two years in the Nursery before entering the Reception class. During the week of the inspection there were 41 children in these two classes, known as the Foundation Stage, which is prior to the children starting Year 1 of the National Curriculum; 18 of these were in Nursery and 23 in Reception. No pupils have been identified as gifted or talented. There is one class per year group. At the time of the inspection three newly qualified teachers had been in school for one half term and were employed on a temporary basis. The Year 3 teacher was absent and a temporary supply teacher was teaching this class. Only one lesson was observed in this class, which was taken by an advisory teacher from the Education Action Zone.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Finbar's is a good, effective school. The school is well led by the headteacher and staff work closely together to ensure that all pupils are fully included in the life of the school. The overall quality of teaching is good and all pupils, including boys and girls and those with special educational needs, make good progress. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in and around school.
- The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school knows its pupils very well and takes great care of them.
- Parents are very happy with the quality of education provided by the school.

What could be improved

- Standards at the end of the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning, which are currently well below average.
- Current standards in English, mathematics and science, which are well below average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6.
- Standards in information and communication technology, which are currently below national expectations throughout the school.
- Standards in art, history and physical education in Years 1 and 2. They are below national expectations in art and design technology and physical education and well below in history.

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

There are more strengths than weaknesses.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997 and has made satisfactory progress since then. Standards in English have made some progress over time but dipped again in the test results of Year 2001. Apart from an improvement in mathematics in 1999, standards in science and mathematics have remained well below average. This is mainly due to the high numbers of pupils with special educational needs and those who have either joined or left the school over time. However, the school is working very closely with the Education Action Zone and the local education authority to develop initiatives in assessment and target setting, which are specifically aimed to improve standards. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and this is having a positive impact on standards and the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. The high turnover of staff and the frequent, prolonged absences of the substantive deputy headteacher have made subject co-ordination and systematic monitoring and evaluation difficult. Effective use has been made of outside advisors and consultants. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has also been improved and pupils are now supported in line with the Code of Practice. The governors' involvement in school life has improved and many are regular visitors in school. However, information and communication technology has not been sufficiently implemented across the school and pupils do not receive the full statutory curriculum. Despite the frequent and prolonged absence of the deputy headteacher, the high staff turnover and the current number of temporary teachers, the school has a shared commitment to improve and an appropriate capacity to succeed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2000
English	C	C	E	C
Mathematics	D	E	E*	E
Science	E	E	E	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Children start school at the age of three with very poor standards in all areas of learning. Good progress is made in the Nursery and Reception classes but by the time that they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum standards are still well below those expected for their age. Good progress is made in Years 1 and 2 but attainment is still well below average in speaking and listening, reading and writing and history. This is because of the continuing poor levels of speaking and listening. Standards in mathematics, science, art and design and physical education are below national expectations but, in relation to their prior attainment, good progress is still being made in these subjects. Very good progress is made in design and technology, geography and music where standards are in line with national expectations in Year 2. Insufficient progress is made in information and communication technology in Years 1 and 2. Progress is uneven in Years 3 to 6 but is good overall. Satisfactory progress is made in Years 3 to 5 and good progress is made in Year 6. Standards in the current Year 6 are below the national averages in English, mathematics, and science. Standards are also below national expectations in information and communication technology and history. Standards are in line with national expectations in art, design and technology, geography and physical education. No judgement could be made on the standards of music in Year 6. The school has recently implemented specific targets through an Education Action Zone initiative and these are appropriate. However, it is too early to make a judgement on their effectiveness.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in and around school. In the vast majority of lessons pupils of all abilities co-operate and participate willingly in activities.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good and, when given the opportunity, pupils respond well to taking on responsibilities.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school works very hard to achieve the current level of attendance. The majority of pupils are punctual although there are a number of families who are regularly late.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. During the inspection, 44 lessons or part lessons were observed and all were at least satisfactory. Two lessons observed were of excellent quality, six were very good and 19 were of good quality. All teachers have good subject knowledge and clearly identify the learning objectives for each lesson. They have a good understanding of the literacy and numeracy strategies and these sessions are taught effectively. Planning throughout the school is good and skills are progressively taught. The management of pupils is effective and most teachers skilfully use praise to motivate and promote learning. Expectations of behaviour are good. Day-to-day assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage are good. Discussions between pupils and teachers in Years 1 to 6 are appropriate and the most effective teachers set individual targets to promote pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The quality and range of the Foundation Stage are good. The quality and range of the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 are satisfactory. Provision for information and communication technology does not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Individual education plans are appropriate for the needs of the pupils. Reviews are regular and teaching and non-teaching staff work closely together to support pupils on the special educational needs register.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The strong Catholic ethos provides for very good spiritual development. All pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The school encourages all pupils to become members of the school community. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares	The school cares very well for its pupils and takes great care to ensure

for its pupils	pupils are kept safe. Very good procedures are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction and is supported very well by the acting deputy headteacher. They work very closely together with all staff and strong teamwork is a strength of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body are very supportive of the school. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works closely with the headteacher.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Until recently insufficient monitoring of standardised tests had been undertaken. New initiatives that are supported by the Education Action Zone and the local education authority have been introduced to ensure that results are carefully analysed and information gathered is used to inform the teaching of specific groups of pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Funds from the Education Action Zone are used very well to support teaching and enrich the curriculum. However, insufficient use is made of the new information and communication technology suite. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

There is an adequate number of teaching and non-teaching staff to match the demands of the curriculum. The accommodation is spacious and well maintained but lacks a learning area for outdoor sporting and science facilities. Resources for all subjects are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • They feel that their children make good progress. • The school has high expectations of their children. • They feel that the quality of teaching is good. • They are comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. • Their children are encouraged to become mature and responsible. • Behaviour is good in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside of lessons. • The right amount of homework.

The team agrees with all the positive views of the parents. However, they consider that the amount of homework given and the range of extra-curricular activities provided are appropriate for this stage in their education.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Nursery at the age of three with very poor levels of attainment in all areas of learning. Their speaking and listening skills are particularly weak and very few have had any social experiences prior to starting school. A significant number of children still use bottles and plastic comforters. However, many of the children are able to benefit from up to two years in the Nursery environment where good progress is made in all areas of learning. This good progress is maintained in the Reception class but by the time that they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum they are still below nationally agreed levels for this age group in all areas of learning. This is because their attainment is so low on entry into school and most children receive no stimulus at home to enrich their learning.
2. In the most recent standardised tests of Year 2001 results at the end of Year 2 were in line with the national average in reading and mathematics but well below the national average in writing. In comparison with similar schools, results in reading and mathematics were well above average but below average in writing. Standards in the teacher assessed science tests were above the national average.
3. Inspection findings indicate that current standards in Year 2 for boys and girls are well below average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Standards are below average in mathematics and science. However, when compared to their very poor attainment on entry into the Foundation Stage, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. This is because this particular cohort has 33 per cent of pupils who experience learning and behaviour difficulties and have such limited educational experiences out of school. These difficulties also impact on standards in art, information and communication technology and physical education, which are below national expectations. Standards in history are well below national expectations because the vocabulary of the pupils is so poor and writing skills are weak. However, standards in design and technology, music and geography are in line with national expectations.
4. In the most recent standardised tests of Year 2001 for pupils at the end of Year 6 results in English were well below average. This represented a drop in standards from the previous year when standards were in line with the national average. The variation in results was reflected in those compared to similar schools; in Year 2000 English results compared very well to similar schools but this dropped in Year 2001 when results fell in line with the average. This fall in standards can be explained by the high number of pupils in this cohort who joined the school later than Year 1 and the high percentage of pupils who had special educational needs. Results in mathematics were well below the national average in Year 2000 and actually fell into the lowest five per cent in the most recent tests of Year 2001. Although they were below average compared to similar schools in Year 2001, they dropped to well below average in the Year 2001 tests. Results in science have remained well below average for the past five years and are below average when compared with those in similar schools.
5. Inspection findings indicate that current standards in Year 6 for both boys and girls in English, mathematics and science are below the national average. This represents an improvement since last year. There are 37 per cent of pupils with special educational needs in this particular cohort and, when compared to their prior attainment at the end of Year 2, they are making steady progress. Progress is particularly good in Year 6 where the quality of teaching is consistently very good. Standards in the foundation subjects of art, design and technology, geography and physical education are in line with national expectations. Standards in history and information and communication technology are below national expectations. No overall judgement could be made in music because the school is currently involved in an Education Action Zone project on 'Voices'.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Good levels of support in class and carefully organised withdrawal groups enable pupils to improve their skills at a good rate so that they meet the targets in their individual education plans. All pupils are fully included in every aspect of the school's work, having access to extra-curricular activities and to school visits.
7. Overall, standards have not sufficiently improved since the last inspection. The school is working very closely with Education Action Zone personnel to set realistic targets for further improvement. They are now carefully looking at each cohort and have started to make specific plans to raise attainment. However, it is too soon to evaluate their effectiveness.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The school has successfully maintained its record of good behaviour since the last inspection. Parents speak highly of the way most pupils behave in school and when they go out on trips. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a good attitude towards school. Most pupils are keen and interested to learn. They are also enthusiastic and eager to be involved in a range of activities. Through the good support they receive from staff, children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly into the routines of the Nursery and Reception classes. The good attitude demonstrated by the vast majority of pupils in Years 1 to 6 makes a strong contribution to the raising of standards and to the progress they make. During most lessons, and particularly where the quality of teaching is good, pupils concentrate well on their work and they persevere to finish the tasks set. When they are given the opportunity to do so most pupils are able to work well independently. Pupils know the school rules well and in all classes they have written their own classroom rules. Most pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations of behaviour and to the good role models provided by all adults in the school.
9. The school is an orderly and happy environment where the vast majority of pupils work and play well together. In lessons, pupils co-operate and participate willingly in activities. The majority of pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other. Although a significant number of pupils have low self-esteem and often lack confidence most pupils are keen to answer questions and to take an active part in the lesson. For example, during a Year 5 literacy lesson pupils enthusiastically shared their views and observations on the story of 'Ghost Dog', which they were reading with obvious enjoyment and pleasure.
10. Behaviour throughout the school is good and pupils know what is expected of them. Children in the Foundation Stage behave well and enjoy their learning activities. Incidences of bullying, racism or harassment are rare and pupils know that the school will not tolerate such behaviour. Pupils' good behaviour in classrooms, at lunchtimes and in the playground has a very positive impact on progress and the quality of life in the school. Pupils have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong. This is because there is a positive approach and good behaviour is rewarded and celebrated throughout the school. Most pupils demonstrate good self-discipline. They are polite and friendly towards visitors. For example, the pupils hold doors open and offer help willingly. They have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and the school develops this well through its provision for personal and social education. Pupils show respect for other people and for property. The school has a policy not to exclude any pupil.
11. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and all adults in the school are good. Pupils are very well integrated and they are encouraged to be involved in all activities. During lessons pupils work co-operatively in small groups with partners and share resources willingly. For instance, in a science lesson in a Year 4 class, the pupils worked well with partners to create a circuit and record their investigations. Most pupils support each other well in classrooms, at lunchtime and in the playground. They are familiar and confident with the daily routines of school life. The good relationships throughout the school contribute very effectively to pupils' academic and personal progress.

12. Pupils' personal development is good. When given the opportunity, the vast majority of pupils are keen to help. They are enthusiastic about being classroom monitors and take on responsibility for tasks around the school. All pupils in Year 6 take turns to act as prefects and they have special jobs to do such as helping at playtime, lunchtime and with the Breakfast Club in the morning. Pupils benefit personally from the regular opportunities to visit places of educational and cultural interest including a residential visit for those in Year 6. The school's participation in parish and local community activities extends pupils' experience well and has a very positive effect on their personal and social development.
13. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy the extra attention they receive in class and in withdrawal groups. They respond very positively by concentrating and working hard. However, the achievement of a minority of pupils with special educational needs is hampered by their poor attendance.
14. Attendance is satisfactory, although at 93.5 per cent remains below the national average. Unauthorised absence at 0.7 per cent is above the national average. The majority of pupils are punctual although there are a number of families who are regularly late.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. During the inspection 44 lessons or part lessons were observed and all were at least satisfactory. Two lessons were of excellent quality, six were very good and 19 were of good quality. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when a significant proportion of lessons was unsatisfactory.
16. Except for information and communication technology, subject knowledge is good and this ensures that lessons are effectively taught. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils and these are frequently used to recap learning at the end of the sessions. This ensures that they have a good understanding of their learning. For example, in a very good science lesson in Year 2, the class teacher returned to the learning objective at the end of the session. This had been displayed throughout the lesson and the pupils were able to describe what they had been doing in relation to the objective set. The three newly qualified teachers are steadily developing an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the age groups they are teaching.
17. Teachers have a good knowledge of the literacy and numeracy strategies and all basic skills are taught well. All pupils make good progress in their learning but, because their prior attainment is so low, standards in most subjects are still below the national average. Teachers use very good techniques to encourage pupils learning. For example, in a very good literacy session the teacher used an extract from the popular 'Adrian Moles Diary' to illustrate the use of direct and indirect speech. The pupils could easily identify with the content of the conversation and were able to develop their knowledge and skills well. Mental mathematics sessions are used appropriately to increase the gains in the pupils' knowledge and understanding but the pace of these sessions is, at times, too slow. For example, within the Year 4 class the pace in the mental mathematics lesson was slow and the teacher did not challenge the pupils sufficiently.
18. Planning was weak at the past inspection but it is now of good quality throughout the school. Teachers have worked very well together to ensure that skills are taught progressively across the school and that all pupils gain equal access to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding in their learning. Planning documents are consistent and are used particularly well in the absence of some subject co-ordinators.
19. The management of pupils is consistently good and is particularly effective in the Foundation Stage where the children have such poorly developed social skills. All teachers have high expectations of behaviour and insist that agreed rules are followed. This ensures that pupils are not disturbed by poor behaviour and are able to learn at an appropriate pace. Overall teachers make good use of support staff to help manage difficulties. For example, in a Year 1 lesson in the information and communication technology suite the teacher made very good use of learning support assistants to help a small number of pupils with behaviour problems to focus on the

activities of the session. Very good use is also made of the learning mentor who is funded through a national initiative. She effectively supports those pupils who are experiencing difficulties within class.

20. Very good use is made of resources in the Foundation Stage to support the children's learning. The Nursery is very well equipped and spacious and is also used very well to provide good quality learning experiences for the Reception class. In Years 1 to 6 most resources are used well to encourage pupils to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding in their learning. However, the information and communication technology suite is insufficiently used to promote knowledge and skills throughout the curriculum.
21. Until very recently teachers' expectations have not been high enough and any targets set for the future have not been ambitious. Although pupils have made good progress throughout the school, in relation to their prior attainment, they have failed to make a real impact on the raising of standards. However, using recent initiatives from the Education Action Zone and support from the local education authority, there has been a distinct improvement in teachers' expectations.
22. All teachers plan suitable work for pupils with special educational needs in line with their individual education plans. In class, group tasks are appropriately modified to meet the particular needs of some pupils so that they have full access to the curriculum. Teaching assistants are well briefed and work skilfully with groups of pupils. Teaching in withdrawal groups by the part-time special educational needs teacher has clear objectives and is well focused to meet the targets in pupils' individual education plans. However, higher achieving pupils are sufficiently challenged in mathematics and science.
23. Day-to-day assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage are good and are used well to record the progress in the children's learning. Good use is made of oral individual feedbacks to pupils in Years 1 to 6 but marking of work is inconsistent. It is of particularly high quality in Year 6. The homework given throughout the school is appropriate for their stage of education.

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

24. The school has made some improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection, but not all deficiencies have been completely resolved. The curriculum in information and communication technology still does not meet statutory requirements. Aspects of modelling and control are not covered fully in all age groups and the curriculum for older pupils is not taught in sufficient depth. This hampers the development of information and communication technology skills and depresses attainment. The opening of the computer suite has improved resources considerably but teachers do not have the expertise and confidence to make full use of the new facilities. Computers in class are not used enough to support learning in other subjects. The school's response to the key issue concerning the unsatisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs has been good. The Code of Practice is now fully in place and the curriculum meets the needs of these pupils satisfactorily. Work in class and in withdrawal groups is planned appropriately to enable these pupils to make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The curriculum for potential higher achievers is less well developed and does not always meet their needs, especially in mathematics and science. This sometimes results in satisfactory rather than good progress. More attention is being given to the practical and investigational aspects of mathematics and science. The school is aware of the need to develop further the problem solving approach and has detailed plans to do so in the next academic year. Since the last inspection, the provision for personal and social development has been improved by the implementation of a relevant and sensitive policy for sex education.
25. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is rich and varied. It is a strength of the school and meets the needs of these young children well. The Nursery environment, shared with the Reception class, provides an attractive and effective setting for promoting all six areas of learning appropriate for this age group. A good range of interesting first-hand experiences is well

organised to enable the children to achieve well. Particular attention is rightly given to personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and to mathematical development.

26. With the exception of the provision for information and communication technology, the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. The school provides a broad range of worthwhile activities, which meet the interests and aptitudes of its pupils. Priority is appropriately given to English and mathematics. Strategies for teaching literacy skills are good. In Years 1 and 2, the systematic teaching of letters and their sounds supports pupils in learning to read and spell. The full implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is extending the pupils' appreciation of a wider range of genre, especially in Years 3 to 6. The school has been slower to reap the benefits of the National Numeracy Strategy because of staff changes and the absence through ill health of the curriculum co-ordinator, for several long periods in recent years. Nevertheless, the strategies for teaching numeracy skills are satisfactory in all age groups. All elements of the numeracy hour are taught each day but more rigour is needed to speed up the pupils' response in the short mental mathematics sessions.
27. The school provides a good range of extra curricular activities. After-school clubs often involve a particular activity for perhaps six or eight weeks. Over a year pupils have access to a good number of worthwhile pursuits. Sports from judo to netball, activities in drama, science and choir extend the pupils' interests and skills. Well-organised educational visits and an annual residential visit for older pupils enliven the curriculum considerably. Visitors such as musicians, artists in residence, or theatre groups provide new experiences for pupils. Before and after school clubs are valued facilities for families. The school's involvement in the Education Action Zone provides very good support in the range and quality of extra-curricular experiences offered, for instance, in holiday workshops.
28. The school in its aims and in its specific policy is fully committed to providing equal opportunities for all members of the school community. It is particularly concerned to value the achievements of all. Staff take care to ensure that all pupils irrespective of gender, race, age or attainment have access to the full curriculum. Opportunities in personal, social, health and emotional development lessons in religious education and in assembly promote respect for others. There are currently no pupils who learn English as an additional language.
29. The school promotes personal, social and health education well. Sex education and drugs awareness are taught sensitively. Weekly lessons in personal development are organised carefully to explore social and moral issues and to foster responsible attitudes to citizenship. The school has recently received a Healthy Schools Award for its work on promoting healthy lifestyles.
30. The local community makes a good contribution to the curriculum. There are close links with the church and parish, which promote spiritual and social development. Local agencies such as Community Police, Fire Brigade and rail companies visit the school frequently to increase pupils' awareness of issues of safety in the community. Premier league football clubs provide coaching sessions and use of information technology and physical education facilities. Pupils make educational visits in the locality, which widen their experience and expertise. For instance, studies on 'myself' benefit from the first-hand experience of visiting the hospital. Links with various agencies and through the Education Action Zone are proving very beneficial.
31. Links with partner institutions are satisfactory. Transfers to secondary schools are managed carefully. All Year 6 pupils visit their new secondary school before transfer and staff from two secondary schools visit St Finbar's to smooth the transition. Work experience students from high schools are regularly welcomed in classes. The school is beginning to develop curricular links with its sister primary school.
32. The overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

33. The school continues to make very good provision for spiritual development. In all areas of school life the school nurtures Catholic Christian values and reflects the commitment shown in its prominently displayed mission statement. School sessions begin and end with prayers and with moments of quiet reflection. A religious focus is set up in each classroom, which provides a constant reminder of the school's Christian purpose. Lighted candles and appropriate music set a reflective atmosphere for assemblies. Close links with the church and parish promote spiritual development well. Teachers and church work closely together to prepare pupils in Years 3 and 4 for the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. Pupils are encouraged to take part in class mass and to be responsible in church, for example, in reading aloud or saying a prayer. Opportunities across the curriculum are sensitively created to increase the pupils' sense of wonder at the world around them. For instance, their response to the wartime medals earned by a Granddad shows particular empathy and awe at suffering caused by war. On the residential visit, experience of a night walk to an old chapel in the darkness, filled pupils with wonder. In dance, pupils are uplifted in responding imaginatively to a drumbeat.
34. The provision for moral development continues to be very good. By example, all adults provide good role models of care and consideration. They communicate high expectations of the pupils' conduct and are consistent in rewarding and encouraging good behaviour and effort. The pupils are very well aware of what is acceptable and what is not. School rules are made clear and pupils themselves contribute to drawing up sensible class rules. The school merit system is understood by all and promotes good behaviour and effort very well. Well-prepared discussions in personal, social and emotional development lessons and in religious education enable pupils to consider different points of view on moral and ethical issues. Drama workshops explore subjects such as bullying to increase the pupils' sense of fair play in dealing with such situations. Pupils are encouraged to consider people less fortunate than themselves and to help in any way they can, for instance, in collecting for the Catholic Aid Fund for Overseas Development or for local charities.
35. The provision for social development has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The school is greatly committed to raising the pupils' self-esteem and providing a safe haven where pupils can confidently relate to one another and to adults. The school celebrates the achievement of its pupils in special weekly assemblies and in class. Even the youngest children in the Foundation Stage are invited to contribute a 'brick' to a 'Wall of Celebration' by nominating one thing they can do well. Positive values and supportive relationships are promoted through topics, for instance, on friendship. Pupils in Year 6 are given particular respect as responsible members of the school community. As prefects, they are expected to provide examples of good behaviour as they supervise other pupils in the corridors, dining room and playground. They respond sensibly to the school's expectations to carry out minor administrative duties around school. Older pupils gain in confidence from opportunities to represent the school in competitive sport and musical activities and through the annual residential visit. Pupils are chosen as class monitors in all age groups and learn to care for the school environment and for equipment. However, except in Year 6, opportunities for pupils to become self-reliant and to use initiative around school and in organising their own work, continue to be less well developed. Education Action Zone initiatives are very supportive of the pupils' social development. The role of the Learning Mentor in particular is very effective in providing support and counselling for troubled pupils.
36. The school's provision for the cultural development of its pupils continues to be satisfactory. There are considerable strengths in the opportunities provided for pupils to appreciate their own heritage but less attention is given to learning about the rich diversity of other cultures. For most pupils, stimulating, focused visits to the theatre and to museums, as well as visits from theatre groups, support cultural development well. Studies in literature, for instance, of Shakespeare, extend their knowledge of famous writers. Work in history, for example, on the Victorians, brings the past to life and increases the pupils' awareness of their own history. Studies in religious education teach pupils to respect the nature of religious belief and raise their awareness of the traditions of several faiths. Younger pupils learn about other cultures through celebrations as when the children in the Foundation Stage make Diva lamps and paint Mendhi patterns associated with Divali. Through Education Action Zone involvement, the choir is learning a good

repertoire of songs from various cultures but in general opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge of worldwide cultures are not well developed in music and art. However, pupils involved in the Toxteth Schools Choir Festival and in Education Action Zone drama productions have opportunities to work with children from different backgrounds and experience at first hand the diversity of British society today.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Provision for the pastoral care and welfare of pupils is very good and has been well maintained since the last inspection. The school is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for pupils, many of whom are exposed to anti-social behaviour and poor role models in the surrounding area. The successful Breakfast Club provides a secure and happy start to the day for a significant number of pupils. All pupils have access to outside support agencies with whom the school constantly keeps in touch both formally and informally. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and specialist staff are sensitive to their individual needs. Regular consultative meetings are held between class teachers and the special needs support teacher. The learning mentor provides good and effective additional support to those pupils experiencing behavioural and learning difficulties. The school pays good attention to the inclusion of all pupils and this enables them to take full advantage of all educational opportunities. Staff know pupils very well and they are fully aware of their individual, physical and emotional needs. This has a strong impact on pupils' progress and on their achievements. The good provision for personal, social and health education, which includes an effective programme of sex and drugs education, promotes pupils' awareness of the need to care for themselves and for others.
38. Staff and governors follow very good and well-established health and safety procedures. A formal risk assessment is completed annually and staff are vigilant in ensuring that any potential safety hazards are reported, recorded and dealt with promptly. During lessons and in the playground pupils are alerted to safe practices. Satisfactory provision is made for first aid with trained staff on site. Regular fire drills are held when the building is evacuated. Electrical equipment is checked regularly.
39. Child protection procedures are very good and concerns are very well monitored and recorded. The headteacher is the designated person for child protection and the acting deputy headteacher takes responsibility in her absence. The school follows the Liverpool Education Authority guidelines closely. The regular meetings held with all staff, including lunchtime supervisors, ensure that all are fully conversant with the school's procedures. Good personal records are kept up-to-date and are used well to support pupils' individual needs and contact with parents.
40. Very good procedures are followed for monitoring and promoting attendance. The school works very hard with the help of the Education Welfare Officer and the Education Action Zone group to improve the level of attendance. Registration is computerised and this makes good provision for close monitoring of individual pupils. Parents are reminded regularly of the need for their children to attend school every day and the importance of being punctual. Pupils are praised and rewarded with certificates each half-term for excellent attendance and punctuality. Registers are completed accurately and consistently. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and these are consistently followed throughout the school. A good system of reward is in place and pupils receive stars, merits and certificates to celebrate their successes both academically and socially. Procedures to deal with any bullying or harassment are good and any rare incident is very quickly dealt with and records kept. Pupils' personal development is closely monitored and supported through good procedures and their achievements are well recorded.
41. Throughout the school, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teachers regularly record what pupils have learned. These assessments have enabled the teachers to plan suitable work and allow them to measure progress over time. Most teachers set regular learning targets for lessons and remind pupils of these at the end of lessons. This also supports pupils' own understanding of their learning. However, until very recently, these targets have not been used sufficiently to support individuals, improve attainment and raise overall standards. The

school is now working closely with advisers from the Education Action Zone and the local education authority to implement systems, which will provide a successful tool to assess levels and discuss targets.

42. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is carefully monitored. Regular reviews involve the class teacher, specialist teacher or teaching assistant. For pupils at stages three to five, the parents, special educational needs co-ordinator and outside agencies are involved. Reviews are up-to-date and the provision outlined in the educational statements is in place.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The school has a good partnership with parents. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to work very hard to encourage parents to be involved in the life of the school and to take an active part in their children's learning. Parents view the school as providing a very good education and most are very satisfied with their children's progress. A number of parents are ex-pupils themselves and have a long-standing connection with the school. Through an open-door policy parents are made welcome and the headteacher and staff are readily available to meet with them to discuss any problems. Parents find the school approachable and feel that their concerns and suggestions are listened to. The school increasingly responds to requests for support and advice in parenting skills.
44. The teacher in charge of the Nursery has special responsibility for the school's links with parents. From the time when children are inducted into the Nursery and through both key stages the school is committed to the promotion of parental support and interest. Although some are reluctant to be involved, most parents support the work of the school well and provide good additional help at home with reading, homework and special topics. Very few of the parents help regularly in classrooms but they are keen to assist when pupils go out on trips. A small group of parents organise regular fundraising and social activities that are always very well supported by parents. During the week of the inspection, one parent organised and distributed the numeracy sacks to a small number of parents. The contribution made by parents, although limited, makes a positive contribution to the work of the school and pupils' progress.
45. The quality of information for parents is good and the majority of them feel well informed. The headteacher sends out regular monthly newsletters, which are friendly and attractively presented. These contain helpful information about events and organisation and encourage parental involvement. Each half term the parents receive a curriculum information letter providing them with details of the topics pupils will be learning. Helpful information notes are readily available to assist parents; for example, when pupils move into Years 3 to 6 and prior to their transfer to secondary schools. All pupils have home/school reading records, but only limited use is made of these as a means of communication. The home/school agreement sets out responsibilities clearly and has been signed by the majority of parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed by the special needs co-ordinator and they are invited to attend all reviews and assessments. Regular consultation open evenings are held and these are very well attended. The school pays good attention to organising curriculum information meetings and workshops for parents, but the response is limited.
46. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet the statutory requirements and provide a good amount of information about organisation and the curriculum. The pupils' annual reports to parents are satisfactory. Parents are given the written reports at the July parents' evening, although some parents would prefer to receive these in advance. The school has declined parents' request to change the present system as they see this as providing an incentive for parents to attend. Although reports provide sufficient information about what pupils have learnt and their progress, insufficient information is provided about progress against national expectations. Helpful information is provided for parents by pupils being placed in an attainment band and by targets set for work in school and at home during the holidays.
47. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are properly consulted and involved in identifying their needs. They are invited to attend review meetings but do not always attend.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The headteacher provides very focused leadership and has successfully maintained a clear educational direction despite the high turnover of staff and the frequent, prolonged absence of the substantive deputy headteacher. She is very well supported by the acting deputy and both work very closely with teaching and non-teaching staff. Despite the lack of permanent, fully experienced staff there is a very strong sense of teamwork and everyone works cohesively together to ensure that the aims of the school are well met.
49. Curriculum co-ordination is satisfactory overall. Subjects such as English, physical education and music are co-ordinated well and use input from the Education Action Zone funding very well. However, there are a number of key areas where the co-ordinator has frequent and prolonged absences and this has a negative impact on the subject leadership. Other subjects cannot be co-ordinated by individuals because there are insufficient numbers of permanent teachers. This has resulted in limited development and lack of effective leadership in some particular areas. However, staff work both within their specific age range and across the school to provide support to one another and ensure that skills are progressing appropriately.
50. There is a nominated governor for special educational needs. She works as a teaching assistant at the school and is knowledgeable about the specific needs of the pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator is currently on maternity leave. She has very little non-contact time to liaise with staff, outside authorities or monitor standards and provision. A part-time (9.5 hours) teacher is employed to work with groups of children whom the school has identified. Teaching assistants are deployed to work with specific groups in class. The headteacher organises the deployment of support staff and the annual budget for special educational needs is spent appropriately on a support teacher and an Additional Literacy Strategy teaching assistant.
51. The headteacher makes good use of independent advisors to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching. Performance management procedures are successfully in place and link closely to staff development. There is a very detailed policy in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers and all receive their full entitlement to time released from the classroom and to opportunities to attend courses. The three newly qualified staff feel very well supported by the school and work closely within the cohesive team. Despite the absence of the deputy headteacher, the high staff turnover and the current number of temporary teachers, the school has a shared commitment to improvement and an appropriate capacity to succeed.
52. Governors fulfil their statutory requirements satisfactorily and an appropriate committee structure is in place. They are very supportive of the school and have an appropriate understanding of pupils' performance in standardised tests. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works effectively with the headteacher.
53. Current financial planning is very tight because of a deficit budget during the past academic year. This was due to an insurance policy failing to cover frequent and prolonged absences. Reserve funds are being used well to supplement the shortfall and efficient management strategies are in place. For example, three less expensive teachers have been employed on a temporary basis. Very good use is made of all available specific grants to match the school's educational priorities. The school is active in generating additional funds from charities and local businesses. There has been a very recent audit, which endorsed financial procedures. Any recommendations have now been implemented. On a day-to-day basis the school secretary deals with administrative matters very effectively. She ensures that all money matters are dealt with regularly and provides very good support for the headteacher. Principles of best value have been carefully discussed and a policy has been devised to ensure success. However, insufficient use is made of new technology both in administration and throughout the school.
54. The school is staffed adequately to meet the demands of the curriculum and teaching and non-teaching staff are used well to support the learning needs of the pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory and good use is made of all teaching areas except the information and

communication technology suite. There are two spacious indoor halls but outdoor sporting and science activities are limited because there is no grassed area. The school is satisfactorily resourced and all resources, except information and communication technology are used well to promote teaching and learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. In order to improve standards of attainment, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- a) Raise standards in all subjects which do not meet national expectations by:
 - improving speaking and listening skills throughout the school and devising opportunities for pupils to extend their vocabulary; (paragraphs 1, 69-70)
 - extending the use of the new assessment procedures to set cohort targets; (paragraph 41)
 - analysing data and using the results to pinpoint weaknesses in pupils' attainment; (paragraph 41)
 - ensuring that higher achieving pupils in mathematics and science are provided with suitably challenging activities. (paragraphs 80, 86)
- b) Meet statutory requirements and improve standards in information and communication technology by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 by:
 - using the new suite of resources to develop information and communication technology; (paragraph 112)
 - improving teachers' knowledge and confidence in the subject through intensive training; (paragraph 116)
 - ensuring that the skills are taught progressively throughout the school. (paragraph 111,118)

In addition to the key issues above, the following should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve the provision made for mental calculation and ensure that pupils are provided with opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in practical situations (paragraph 80);
- ensure that the annual reports to parents provide sufficient information on the pupil progress compared to national expectations (paragraph 46).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	6	19	17	0	0	0
Percentage	5	14	43	39	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	165
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		112

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	46

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	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

National comparative data	5.2
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National comparative data	0.5
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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	7	14	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	4	7
	Girls	14	12	14
	Total	19	16	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (85)	76 (89)	100 (85)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	4	7
	Girls	14	12	14
	Total	19	16	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (81)	95 (85)	96 (85)
	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	12	14	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	4	9
	Girls	11	6	11
	Total	17	10	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (80)	38 (57)	77 (80)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	3	6	6
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	13	16	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	50 (67)	62 (73)	62 (69)
	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	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	144
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.6
Average class size	23.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Total number of education support staff	1.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33
Number of pupils per FTE adult	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.4

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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	484,156
Total expenditure	509,826
Expenditure per pupil	2,708
Balance brought forward from previous year	29,121
Balance carried forward to next year	3,481

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	195
Number of questionnaires returned	52

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	35	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	52	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	37	4	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	46	17	0	2
The teaching is good.	60	37	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	40	10	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	21	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	40	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	69	21	10	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	33	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	31	17	2	6

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

56. The children start Nursery soon after their third birthday. They spend up to six terms there before transferring to the Reception class at the beginning of the school year in which they will be five. Currently there are 18 full-time and three part-time children in the Nursery and 23 full-time children in the Reception class.
57. There are good induction procedures, which enable children to settle quickly into class routines. All parents are invited to attend an introductory meeting with the headteacher before admission and parents and children are welcome to visit the nursery informally in the term before they start. This establishes good relationships from the outset.
58. The Nursery and Reception classes comprise the Foundation Stage of education. The school follows closely the Early Learning Goals, the nationally recommended Foundation Stage curriculum. This consists of six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy development; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development. Each area of learning is made up of four stages or *Stepping-Stones*, from which progress and standards can be measured.
59. Whilst there is a wide range of attainment, a high percentage of children enter the Nursery with very poorly developed skills in all areas but especially in communication, language and literacy, personal and social development and mathematical development. This is confirmed by the assessments made soon after they start school. Children make good progress in all areas as a result of the rich curriculum provided and the overall good quality of teaching and learning. Children with special educational needs are identified early and receive a good level of support so that they make good progress alongside their peers.
60. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Half of all lessons seen were good or better. Teaching in the nursery is consistently good and occasionally very good. Teaching in the Reception class is satisfactory and occasionally good. This reflects the inexperience of the reception teacher who is only recently in post and is just developing an understanding of these young children. The unsatisfactory teaching noted in the last report has been eliminated. All children in the Reception and Nursery classes benefit from the spacious and stimulating environment, which is prepared skilfully to promote learning. The children's work is respected and displayed attractively to increase the children's self-esteem and sense of ownership. Throughout the Foundation Stage, teachers and support staff work very closely together as a team to plan work and monitor progress. Best use is made of each individual's skills to help children learn. Teaching is well focused and activities planned with clear objectives. The wide variety of group tasks is very well organised to meet the children's needs.
61. Since the last inspection, the Foundation Stage has been established in line with national guidance and Reception and Nursery classes work more closely together. In particular, the Reception class, as well as having their own class base, shares the rich Nursery environment with both inside and outside play areas. This arrangement provides well for their needs.
62. Despite the satisfactory progress made, their attainment in communication, language and literacy is still very low when they start in Year 1. Children achieve well in all other areas of learning but they do not reach the Early Learning Goals and their attainment is well below national guidelines when they start in Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

63. Almost all children in the nursery leave their carers willingly and very gradually settling into school routines. However, many are not independent enough to answer their name as the register is called. Most are confident to select an activity but several children prefer to stand and watch. Few concentrate for long without adult intervention. They play alongside each other, for instance, in the home corner but frequently do not relate to other members of the group. They do not appreciate the needs of others and respond only slowly to daily procedures. They are approaching the first *Stepping-Stone*. In the Reception class, children are beginning to appreciate established routines, although they still find it difficult to wait their turn in class discussion. They are enthusiastic to join in-group activities and, when supported by an adult, are beginning to extend their concentration span. They are still unable to sit for long in the whole class group and quickly become restless and lose interest. They are mainly working at the first *Stepping-Stone* level. Teaching is very good in this area. Activities are very well organised to promote independence and encourage children to make choices. Routines are consistently emphasised so that children gradually become aware of the school's expectations. Incidental opportunities to promote personal and social development are taken throughout the day. Adults provide good model attitudes of care and respect for children, each other and the environment. All the staff encourage good supportive relationships with children and constantly give positive feedback to increase the children's confidence. Ongoing assessment is carried out carefully by observation so that staff are quickly alerted to the particular needs of individual pupils.

Communication, language and literacy

64. In the Nursery, many children speak indistinctly in short phrases or single words, which are difficult to understand. They frequently show by their response that they have not understood even a very simple, clearly stated instruction. They do not listen to each other. The children's knowledge of rhymes and jingles is very poor. They are beginning to enjoy stories but they have very limited concentration. Although they are interested in the teacher and her pictures, they are restless, continually wriggle and are unable to keep on task. Individuals frequently interrupt with unrelated comments, for instance, about their new pyjamas, which indicate they have not been listening to the story. They do not know the difference between a picture and a book. Children are often enthusiastic to join in role-play, as when acting out parts of a story, but do not persevere even with adult help. They are beginning to make uncontrolled marks on paper when painting or drawing. Overall, standards are well below the first *Stepping-Stone*. In the Reception class, children are learning an increasing number of nursery rhymes although not all children join in and their recall from day-to-day is poor. Few children initiate conversations and, if they respond to adults' questions, they do not speak in sentences. Their vocabulary is limited. The children's listening skills and understanding of spoken language are poor. They frequently mistake meanings, for instance, snake and snail. Higher achievers are beginning to realise that print carries meaning and are just starting to recognise one or two words in the first readers. However, most are confused between words and letters and do not retain information from day to day. Higher achievers are beginning to hear and repeat sounds, for example, 'd' and with help relate them to objects like dog and duck but not to the written letter 'd'. Most 'write' messages informally using unrecognisable marks on paper. Higher achievers increasingly use letter shapes at random and 'read back' their work. Teaching varies from very good to satisfactory and is satisfactory overall. Teachers foster positive attitudes to books and reading through lively storytelling, which seizes the children's interest. Resources are very well prepared to engage children fully in learning. For instance, the use of a feely bag full of objects beginning with 'd', motivates children very well and focuses their attention. In the Nursery, incidental opportunities are taken consistently throughout the day to improve speaking and listening skills. Well-planned informal activities reinforce and consolidate skills. In the Reception class, opportunities are sometimes missed, for instance, the teacher accepts the reply 'dolls' house' to the question, 'What would you like to do?' instead of modelling a fuller response. Inappropriate expectations lead to the setting of tasks which are not always closely matched to the children's needs, for instance, when children who are only just beginning to know that words carry meaning are expected to follow word by word from readers with much new vocabulary.

Mathematical development

65. Nursery children are encouraged to sort, match and count in many varied activities, as when counting the three candles on the birthday cake or the children present at registration. Whilst higher achievers are beginning to recite numbers they are frequently inaccurate in sequence and cannot match one-to-one. They know few number rhymes. Their use of mathematical language, for instance, to compare *big* and *little* is limited. In the reception class, children count to five with some help, although children frequently wait for the teacher to tell them, for example, how many skittles they have knocked down. They count forwards and backwards as a programmable toy moves along a number line. They do not anticipate correctly where the toy will stop if it moves on three places. Higher achievers are beginning to recognise some numbers. Teaching is good. Teachers plan an interesting range of practical activities, which involve children purposefully and directly in their learning. Games, such as skittles and use of a programmable toy interest the children and motivate them to learn. Resources are of good quality and are well prepared and accessible to the children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Many children start Nursery with very little experience of the world beyond their own home. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned to provide a wealth of first-hand experiences from which children learn about the world around them. They enjoy experimenting with materials like sand and water. They are encouraged to use their senses but have limited vocabulary to describe what they see or touch. They are beginning to investigate construction materials but have little idea of the use of tools. Through stories and celebrations, they are taught about other cultures and beliefs. Whilst they enjoy the activities they do not yet have an awareness of the concept of their own or other cultures. They are approaching the first *Stepping-Stone*. In the Reception class, pupils continue to enjoy the wide range of practical activities in the Nursery room. They are also extending their knowledge and understanding through structured topic work. They listen and look carefully to identify different sources of light from a torch, a light bulb, lighted candles and the sun. They are interested and curious. However, most are unable to say why it is still light when the classroom light is switched off. Pupils in Nursery and Reception enjoy using the computer. With help, they use the arrow keys or the mouse to move objects on the screen. In a lesson with Reception children the teacher introduced a programmable toy in the guise of a spider. Groups of children directed this toy along a number line. The children quickly learned how to reset and direct the equipment. However, the activity was hampered by the children's inability to add and subtract the numbers on the controls and accurately move the device backwards and forwards along the line. Overall, standards are close to the second *Stepping-Stone*. Teaching is good. Teachers use questions skilfully to assess what children know and to extend their ideas. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are used effectively to consolidate the active learning that has taken place.

Physical development

67. All children in the Foundation Stage use the outdoor area and the indoor climbing frame with increasing awareness of space and of each other. They control the large wheeled toys with growing skill. Whilst the Nursery children climb and slide confidently they are largely unaware of others. Few Nursery children are able to put on their own coats. Their fine motor control in handling paintbrushes and pencils and tools such as scissors is weak. They are working towards the first *Stepping-Stone*. Reception children work hard in a dance lesson in the hall. They jog and stop with control and co-ordination. They spin and jump in response to music to 'become' sparklers, rockets and Catherine wheels. Whilst they respond imaginatively, their use of space is poor. They are not aware of others and cannot use the large hall space without crowding and bumping. They are at the first *Stepping-Stone*. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers give clear instructions and demonstrations so that children know what is expected. Whilst a good range of activities is well organised for outdoor play there is insufficient emphasis on building skills over time. Children are managed effectively with appropriate encouragement and with awareness of safety aspects.

Creative development

68. Children throughout the Foundation Stage enjoy exploring a wide range of media. They squeeze and pummel clay enjoying the tactile experience when making Diva lamps. They explore colour and pattern with paint to make Menhdi patterns. Nursery and Reception children tend to wait for instructions rather than responding with imagination. Most children are keen to dress up but are unable to develop their own ideas imaginatively in play without considerable help from adults. They become gradually more confident in taking part in singing sessions and extend their repertoire over time. Reception children respond to the tempo of the music by tapping their knees quickly or slowly as the teacher sings. They move from below the first *Stepping-Stone* in Nursery to reach the second *Stepping-Stone* in the Reception class. Teaching is good. The lively, enthusiastic approach of the teaching teams promotes the children's interest and effort. Resources are varied, attractive and well prepared. Teaching assistants make a particularly good contribution to learning in this area by the sensitive intervention and careful support they give to children in-group work. All staff respect the children's efforts and give positive feedback so that children become increasingly confident. Involvement in the Education Action Zone enhances provision for creative development particularly in dance when outside staff work regularly with Reception children.

ENGLISH

69. Current standards at the end of Year 6 are below the national average and this is similar to the last inspection. Current standards in Year 2 are well below the national average and this represents a decline since the last inspection. However, comparisons with the last inspection need to be made with caution because of the varying numbers of special educational needs in each cohort. All current pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in their learning in relation to their prior attainment.
70. In the current Year 2 standards in speaking and listening are well below national averages. Although the higher achieving pupils are able to sustain simple sentences, average and lower achieving pupils are unable to express themselves coherently. Higher achieving pupils listen carefully for short periods of time. However, average and lower achievers experience great difficulty listening for any length of time and this has a negative impact on their learning. In the current Year 4 class speaking and listening is satisfactory overall because this cohort has more higher achieving pupils in it. This can be confirmed by their performance in the Year 2 standardised tests when they achieved nationally expected levels. In Year 6 higher achieving pupils speak with confidence to both their classmates and adults. They listen carefully to different views and opinions and then successfully express their own conclusions. For example, one high achieving boy articulately explained the reasons why he found learning so interesting and was able to maturely explain his particular strengths at school. However, the average and lower achievers lack the appropriate vocabulary to express views and opinions. They frequently punctuate their sentences with familiar words, which enables them to gain confidence as they speak. Average and lower achievers also have difficulty listening to each other and, because of nervousness, tend to mumble when speaking in front of the class.
71. In Year 2 standards in reading are currently well below the national average. The higher achieving pupils know what an author and illustrator are but are unable to discuss books that they have enjoyed reading. They sound out unfamiliar words and 'read on' to gain some meaning. The average and lower achieving pupils use the initial letter sound to help them work out words and also look at picture clues. By Year 4 they are able to discuss favourite books but are unable to state who wrote them. Pupils do not readily visit the local library to borrow books to read for pleasure or for the purpose of information seeking. However, good progress is being maintained although, by Year 6, standards in reading are just below national averages. Higher achieving pupils articulately discuss a wide variety of authors and identify favourite characters in the books that they have read. Average pupils read with an appropriate degree of fluency but lack expression and have minimal views on characters and plots. Lower achieving pupils still require

the use of a variety of techniques to aid word recognition and have a limited knowledge of contemporary authors.

72. Current writing standards in Year 2 are well below the national average. Although the pupils have made good progress in Year 1 of the National Curriculum and higher achieving pupils are able to use capital letters consistently to start sentences, the content of their writing is very limited. Average achievers recognise rhyming words and are able to identify spelling patterns such as 'ea', 'ee' and 'ow'. Both higher and average achievers sequence stories into the 'beginning, middle and end' but the overall presentation of the work is weak. Lower achieving pupils recognise the first letter of commonly occurring words and match these to objects, which begin with these sounds. However, they are unable to write independently. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils continue to make good progress in their writing and start to gain confidence in their use of adjectives. They have an appropriate understanding of alphabetical order and are able to distinguish between spellings such as 'piece' and 'peace'. However, their use of capital letters is inconsistent. In Year 5 pupils start to use conversation to tell a story and know that production notes help to enhance storylines. Higher achieving pupils make good use of words such as 'bang, crash, and wack'. However, although good progress is made, current writing standards in Year 6 are below those expected nationally because there is a high number of pupils with special educational needs. The higher achieving pupils in Year 6 are able to use a wide vocabulary to create chronological and descriptive reports. They write in the style of classic stories and successfully create mysterious atmospheres in the manner of Shakespeare. For example, they write spells such as 'A dragon's lung and lizards tongue, an owl's big eyes and cloudy skies'. Average and lower achieving pupils use capital letters, full stops and paragraphs but are developing their ability to write in detail and at length.
73. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. All teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the literacy hour and plan sessions well. Learning objectives are clearly shared with the pupils and used to evaluate learning at the end of the session. There is generally a good pace set and teachers have high expectations of behaviour and outcomes of work. In high quality lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject influences the attitudes of the pupils. They react positively to stimulating activities and show good levels of concentration. For example, in a very good Year 6 lesson the teacher stimulated the pupils' interest through very good use of resources and high quality expression and fluency as she read sections of direct and indirect speech. She carefully maintained their concentration by introducing a varied number of activities, which included very good individual questioning and answering skills, work in pairs and whole class tasks. The teacher also systematically ensured that all pupils were fully involved in the session and had appropriate access to the learning situation.
74. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and is clearly committed to improving the performance of the pupils in English. She has been actively involved in the implementation of the literacy strategy and has a clear focus for improving the quality of spelling throughout the school. The co-ordinator has been aware of particular weaknesses in the past in the attainment of boys and has introduced various strategies to improve this. For example, a writing programme has been introduced that focuses on non-fiction themes and has also ensured that the books in the home library project captivate the interest of the boys. The co-ordinator has recognised that assessment procedures in the past provided much information but were not always successfully used to improve results. However, in-service training and support has been provided by the Education Action Zone to adopt systems that will target pupils early enough to lead to improvements in the national tests. Resources have been improved since the last inspection and the co-ordinator ensures that good use is made of local resources, which enrich the experiences of the pupils. For example, a good selection of theatre visits is organised to watch both modern day and traditional plays. Drama groups are also encouraged to work with the pupils in school. However, literacy skills are insufficiently developed across the curriculum and inadequate use is made of information and communication technology to promote this subject.

MATHEMATICS

75. Inspection evidence indicates that current standards in Year 2 are below those found in most schools and are not as high as those reached by last year's Year 2 in national tests. This continues the trend over the last five years of standards being at or below the national average. Results are affected from year to year by the variation in the percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the class. There is a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the present Year 2 class. This is confirmed by the overall very low standards the class attained in tests when they started school. Given the low starting points, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 1 and 2.
76. Standards in Year 6 are below those of most schools. However, they are better than those attained by last year's Year 6 in national tests. This indicates that after several years of very low standards, attainment is beginning to rise albeit not sufficiently yet to reach the national average level. Low standards have been due in part to a lack of clarity in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. A new scheme of work has recently been introduced to provide more support for teachers in planning the small steps of learning necessary for pupils to make progress. This is just beginning to improve standards. The school is still feeling the effects of some ineffective teaching in the past, but this is now resolved. Standards have also been adversely affected by some lack of leadership in the subject. The absence of the curriculum co-ordinator for several long periods in recent years has had an impact on school action plans especially for the development of the curriculum and the evaluation of teaching. Achievement over time in Years 3 to 6 has been depressed by the above factors. Recent initiatives from the local education authority and from the Education Action Zone are supporting the school well in its determination to raise standards. The current position is much more positive and achievement is satisfactory. In all lessons seen, the rate of learning was at least satisfactory. In Year 6, very good teaching is leading to very good achievement.
77. In Years 1 and 2 pupils learn well through handling equipment practically and through talking about what they have done. The teachers plan work that builds carefully on what pupils already know so that they are confident in their learning. Activities are planned which interest the children and motivate them to learn. In Year 2, for instance, pupils explore ways of handling data and communicating their findings. All sort by colour and organise rows of sweets to compare amounts and to show which colour is most common. Almost all can match and count the sweets accurately but many are unsure when counting on; for example, when asked, 'How many more to make eight?' few are able to count back to discuss how many less in one column than in another. As the teacher demonstrates, higher achievers come to appreciate how to record their findings in pictogram form. About half the class do this successfully and are able to discuss their findings with reference to number and colour. Most pupils are familiar with the value of coins and can exchange for equivalent value up to 20 pence. When shopping most pupils can give change correctly when purchasing articles up to 10 pence. Lower achievers are not confident with amounts beyond five pence. All pupils are working on recognising pairs of numbers, which add up to 10, but many pupils are not yet competent in this. Higher achievers can add and subtract to 20 with practical equipment. They have not yet begun to consider place value. All pupils use non-standard units such as straws to measure length with varying degrees of accuracy. They do not make accurate guesses of estimated length. A significant number of pupils including pupils with special educational needs are working appropriately at a lower level. They receive good support from teaching assistants in class and are making good progress. Appropriate challenge is provided for higher achievers in open-ended tasks as in data handling.
78. As pupils move through Years 3 to 6, lessons closely follow the age-related curriculum in the National Numeracy Strategy. Work is usually well planned at a lower level to meet the need of the lower achievers. However, there is not always sufficient expectation of the potential higher achievers and work does not always fully meet their needs. For instance, higher achieving pupils in Year 4 spend almost the whole lesson consolidating their knowledge of odd and even numbers at a Year 2 level before moving on to more suitable work in investigating the outcomes of adding or subtracting odd and even numbers at the very end of the lesson. Mental mathematics sessions often lack sufficient rigour and pace to ensure that pupils respond quickly as well as accurately. For instance, pupils in Year 5 work at a leisurely pace to add two-digit numbers.

Whilst the teacher employs effective strategies to gain the pupils' attention, not enough emphasis is given to promoting a speedy response.

79. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils have a secure understanding of place values up to 1000 and are becoming proficient in mentally rounding four-digit numbers up or down to the nearest 1000. However, they do not use this understanding to multiply and divide whole numbers by 10 or 100. Lower achievers concentrate on rounding up and down with three-digit numbers. Although most pupils know that multiplication and division are inverse operations, they have limited recall of multiplication facts to 10 times 10 and the associated division facts. Pupils achieve well in one aspect of the shape, space and measures attainment target. Two-thirds of the class use protractors accurately to measure acute and obtuse angles. All pupils explore the angle sum of a triangle and under the teacher's direction prove that the sum of the angles is 180° . Most pupils communicate collected data, for instance, about their favourite pastimes, in a pie chart. Higher achievers can retrieve information and compare findings. Concepts of mode, median and range, when displaying data have not yet been developed.
80. The overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was satisfactory but some good and very good lessons were observed. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good overall. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall, with some very good teaching in Year 6. Since the last inspection, more provision is made for mental calculation and for the application of knowledge in practical situations. However, there is still room for further refinement of these areas of the curriculum to enable pupils to make good progress. In all classes, teachers manage pupils effectively with praise and encouragement so that they develop positive attitudes to learning and are confident to take part in class discussion and demonstrate to others. All lessons are appropriately planned with clear objectives. Where lessons are good or better, these objectives are carefully shared with pupils so that they understand what they must do to succeed. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the pupils' learning. They are appropriately deployed, usually to work with pupils with special educational needs or lower achievers. They provide good quality support to enable all pupils to have full access to the curriculum. Resources are well prepared, attractive and accessible and help pupils to understand concepts and solve problems. Where lessons are less than good, assessment is not used effectively and teachers' expectations are not high enough to provide appropriately challenging tasks for the potential higher achievers. When work in groups is not organised efficiently pupils do not persevere with their independent tasks, they interrupt the teacher and deflect attention from the target group so slowing down the pace of learning in the lesson.
81. Mathematics makes a good contribution to pupils' competence in literacy, not least in the good attention given to extending the pupils' vocabulary with subject specific language. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is not well developed. Whilst graph work is used occasionally in geography or science, there is no systematic approach to promoting numeracy in other subjects. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics is not sufficiently developed. Mathematics makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' social development through providing opportunities for pupils to co-operate in paired or group work. There are few opportunities for pupils to use initiative and independence in planning their own work.
82. The school has appropriate systems of assessment to measure individual and group achievement over time. The headteacher and senior staff are beginning to analyse test results in order to develop the curriculum. There is currently insufficient use of collected data to set the challenging targets that are needed to improve standards.

SCIENCE

83. Pupils' attainment is currently below the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. At the last inspection standards were in line with national averages at the end of Year 2 but below at the end of Year 6. Pupils have a very low scientific knowledge when they enter school and achieve well in the subject each year through to Year 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

84. By the end of Year 2 pupils have developed their scientific knowledge and vocabulary appropriately. In Year 1 they demonstrate their understanding through investigating how far cars can travel using ramps with bumpy, smooth and rough surfaces. The pupils also understand that force can be used to push and turn objects. In Year 2 they learn about electricity and are aware of it 'going through wires'. They also understand that electricity and water 'do not go together' and are very conscious of both the benefits and dangers of electricity. However, progress is often inhibited by poor literacy skills and pupils are frequently limited to drawing and labelling pictures. The presentation of work is generally unsatisfactory.
85. By the end of Year 6, standards are below average. Higher achieving pupils begin to understand that microorganisms are living things, which are often too minute to be seen but can be either beneficial or harmful. These pupils also understand the different functions of plant growth and confidently label parts of a flower. They investigate different types of soil and use simple data base programs to classify their findings. However, the average and lower achieving pupils lack the vocabulary and speaking skills to investigate independently. Instead they tend to rely on work sheets and use text copied from the board. In Year 5, they begin to understand the importance of a healthy diet. They describe differences between 'carbohydrates', 'protein' and 'fats' and are able to give examples of foods that provide these. Pupils in Year 4 investigate reversible and irreversible change by melting chocolate and making bread. Year 3 pupils have experimented with sieving materials and know that this is only one way of separating mixtures.
86. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection and this represents an improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching for pupils aged 7 to 11 was unsatisfactory. In all science teaching great emphasis is placed upon the use of correct vocabulary. All lessons are well planned and resourced. However, the same task is often set for all pupils and higher achieving pupils are insufficiently challenged. This was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection and has not yet been resolved. Teachers try to focus much of the science curriculum through scientific investigation as this makes the subject exciting for pupils. They know their pupils well and work is designed to maximise the scientific learning by minimising the dependency upon literacy skills. The activities enable pupils to experience the science without the frustration of having to write things down. Teachers have maintained a balance between worksheets and written workbooks. In Year 2, pupils sort pictures rather than words; in Year 6 pupils take notes rather than writing at length. These are good features that maximise learning opportunities. Lessons are often delivered at a brisk pace and this maintains pupils' interest successfully. Teachers are confident in the subject and have good subject knowledge. Pupils' activities are relevant and linked to the learning objectives of the lesson indicated in the planning. Pupils respond well to investigation and mostly co-operate well. They value each other's opinion and work with confidence. Teachers often have high expectations and this encourages pupils who are less motivated to co-operate and join in lessons. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good and teachers often hold high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. They make predictions, discuss conclusions and their confidence is increased. The teaching also enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and their learning is enhanced by the work of the classroom assistants.
87. The science policy has been updated and national guidance has been implemented within the scheme of work. Planning for the development of knowledge, skills and understanding is good. The school has addressed the area of investigational science identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection. For example, a Year 4 class worked in groups with wires, bulbs and batteries to make a circuit. Work in pupils' books in Year 6 described experiments in observing plant growth and conducting a fair test. In Year 5, pupils conducted tests in evaporation related to surface area. Teachers assess pupils' learning at the end of topics or units of work. However, not enough emphasis is placed on assessing skills, knowledge and understanding in order to change or amend future planning.

88. The school has been without a science co-ordinator for some time and subject monitoring has not taken place effectively. Teachers work very hard to compensate for this by planning together for the year, ensuring that resources are in place and that the subject curriculum is fully met. This is a very effective maintenance arrangement but does not provide the leadership necessary to move the subject forward. The current scheme of work is based upon the latest national guidance and provides a very good structure that supports teaching. Science is taught within a topic framework for Years 1 and 2 and as a discrete subject for older pupils. There are some links with other subjects, particularly mathematics and English. Links are being developed with design and technology but computers are used minimally in science. Curriculum provision has been well supported through a science club, which is an Educational Action Zone activity begun last term. Resources are adequate and located in a well-organised central store.

ART AND DESIGN

89. Standards in the current Year 2 class are below national expectations but are in line with national expectations in Year 6. Standards at the last report were judged to be average in both Years 2 and 6 and pupils were reported to make satisfactory progress. Currently all pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 make very good progress.
90. In the Year 2 class pupils show minimal response to ideas and have very limited skills in painting and drawing. They are able to paint very simple pictures such as trees in differing seasons and make basic patterns using crayons and clay. The pupils have started to recognise shapes within their school environment but lack the vocabulary to discuss them with confidence. They are gaining confidence in using simple computer programs to create colourful pictures. The pupils are able to achieve this both on individual computers and on a large teaching screen in the information and communication technology suite.
91. In Year 6, pupils use a wide range of materials to create pictures and paintings. They understand that a slim paintbrush is needed for fine details and they are able to mix confidently a wide range of paints to create different effects. The pupils successfully use a variety of pencil techniques in their sketching and are able to draw 'People in Action' using blending, tones and lines. They have studied a number of artists such as Monet and Van Gogh and discovered how these individuals achieved certain effects. For example, the pupils have studied the work of Degas with ballet dancers and are developing an understanding of his 'movement' techniques.
92. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when some teaching observed was unsatisfactory. Planning over time is consistent and skills are progressively taught. When teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject, it has a positive impact on the pupils. For instance, during the inspection one higher achieving pupil in Year 6 explained to an inspector that 'a good teacher inspired you'. He then gave a detailed description of a previous teacher who had particular expertise in art and had really motivated his pupils in this subject. One excellent lesson in Year 6 had an excellent impact on the pupils' learning. This lesson was introduced through the discussion of the two learning objectives, which ensured that the session started with a strong focus. The teacher then modelled a number of sketching techniques, providing pupils with a clear understanding of what was required of them. The response of the pupils was of excellent quality and their levels of concentration were exemplary.
93. There is no current subject co-ordinator but teachers work well together to ensure that all pupils receive a fair deal in this subject. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Resources are satisfactory and are enriched by visits to local museums and galleries, such as the Tate Art Gallery in London. A local artist has also visited the school and shared her expertise with the pupils. Work is well supported by the use of information and communication technology when the pupils gain access to the new computer suite.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

94. Pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. At the previous inspection pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was average and no judgement was made on the attainment of older pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment in Years 1 and 2. Good progress is made by all pupils in Years 3 to 6.
95. Only two lessons were observed, one with Year 2 pupils and one with Year 6. Judgements about standards of attainment are therefore, drawn largely from discussion with pupils, scrutiny of their work and examination of long and medium term planning. National Curriculum requirements for design and technology are being fully met.
96. In Year 2 pupils learn how to create simple sewing techniques, such as simple running stitches, in preparation for making a multi-coloured coat for Joseph. They are aware of safety aspects when using tools such as scissors. These skills are utilised later in the year to make pop-up cards and finger puppets. They know about hinges and levers through work on card teddy bears with moving arms and legs. Pupils make decisions about the materials and tools they use. By the end of Year 2 pupils are beginning to develop the ability to use simple tools to cut and shape materials such as fabric, paper and card. Evaluation of work by pupils in Years 1 and 2 is done in discussion with their teachers. Pupils recall making suggestions to improve their models of moving vehicles but they are not able to write evaluations.
97. The skills developed in Years 1 and 2 are consolidated and developed systematically as pupils move through the school. For example, pupils in Year 4 have made individual money containers. They have produced a design brief, explored different types of fasteners and recorded an evaluation of their work. By the end of Year 6 pupils are beginning to design for a particular purpose. During the inspection pupils examined a range of shelters for different creatures. The teacher had provided a question sheet that promoted good discussion and challenged pupils' thinking. They worked well in groups. Designs were well-drawn, labelled and included elevations; materials and tools were carefully chosen and pupils regularly evaluated work. There is consistency in skill development and approaches to recording work throughout the school and these are very good features.
98. Pupils throughout the school respond enthusiastically to tasks set. They discuss their work with interest and talk about the processes involved in designing and modelling. The pupils enjoy the corporate experiences afforded by the subject. They understand the need to use tools safely and the importance of hygiene when working with food.
99. Teaching in the two lessons observed was good. Lesson plans were detailed and learning objectives well defined. The quality of work seen, pupils' enthusiasm and planning indicate that subject teaching is generally good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching ranged from very good to unsatisfactory.
100. There has been no subject co-ordinator for over a year. This means that planning and teaching are not monitored regularly. In spite of this, curriculum delivery continues to be good. This is due to teachers' good subject knowledge. The scheme of work has been replaced since the last inspection by a scheme based on the National Curriculum programmes of study supported by materials from recent national guidelines. Assessment procedures are also linked to national guidance and teachers record pupils' coverage of National Curriculum requirements. Future planning in the subject is not yet effectively informed by this assessment and this is a weakness. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology within design and technology. Resources are satisfactory and are securely and safely stored.

GEOGRAPHY

101. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with national expectations and, overall, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Very good progress is made in Years 1 and 2. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when progress was judged to be satisfactory overall. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection. Judgement on pupils' attainment has been made through scrutiny of pupils' work, examination of teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and their teachers.
102. Pupils in Year 1 are able to observe their surroundings during a walk in the locality. They are able to make a simple map to record local features. In Year 2, pupils build on this experience. They produce more detailed maps showing geographical features, such as the bus stop, the telephone box and the traffic lights. They carry out a local traffic survey and record results on pictograms. Pupils are given first-hand experiences because much of the geographical work in Years 1 and 2 is carried out in the locality of the school. Pupils are also made aware of the world beyond Liverpool through trips to a local travel agent. In addition, places are found on maps of the British Isles and the World, where individual children and the travelling 'Barnaby Bear' have been. By the end of Year 2, most pupils can describe similarities and differences in the contrasting environment of the Mexican Horta family in Tocuaro.
103. By the end of Year 6, pupils have sufficient skills to carry out individual research using books, globes and atlases. From the study of several rivers around the world, they make generalisations about changes from source to mouth. Pupils understand terms such as 'source', 'mouth' and 'estuary'. They are aware of the effect of rivers on the landscape and on the settlement of communities. Pupils have a secure understanding of the water cycle. They are aware that people can damage as well as improve the environment and relate this to local issues such as a proposed zone for pedestrians only in the High Street. They show good awareness of conservation and express concerns about pollution caused by traffic, factories and litter. They are keen to learn and enjoy looking at maps and taking part in field studies. However, pupils' knowledge of contrasting locations has not been sufficiently developed.
104. No secure judgement about teaching can be made as only one geography lesson seen. This was a good lesson, which was well planned, resourced with a focus on appropriate vocabulary and taught briskly. The lesson promoted good group discussion and the task challenged pupils' thinking effectively. Throughout the school, planning follows national guidance to ensure appropriate coverage of the programmes of study and progressive acquisition of skills. Homework for older pupils is used effectively to encourage independent research to extend topic work. Marking of work in books is generally encouraging but rarely tells pupils how they can improve.
105. The curriculum co-ordinator is enthusiastic to develop the subject further. She monitors teachers' plans and examines pupils' work. Her role in monitoring teaching and learning in this subject has not yet been sufficiently developed to influence progress significantly. She observes teaching in her role as co-ordinator for Years 1 and 2. The geography curriculum is well supported by a number of local visits and a residential visit. Resources are adequate but insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to promote the pupils' learning.

HISTORY

106. Standards in the current Year 2 class are well below expected levels but are just below expected levels in Year 6. This is less good than at the last inspection but can be explained by differences in cohorts and changes in the nationally expected levels. All pupils, including both boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
107. The very poor levels of speaking and listening and lack of social experiences have a negative impact on the standards achieved in history. In Year 2, pupils know that at various times during the year different celebrations take place. For example, they know that Christmas is celebrated each year but have difficulty explaining the difference between the past and present. During the inspection Year 1 pupils were comparing old and new toys. However, they were unable to explain

the difference between the two types and considered that all old toys would be broken. They were also totally unaware of why bonfire parties took place.

108. In Year 6, the higher achieving pupils talk with great enthusiasm and interest about the Victorian times. They are able to identify buildings in Liverpool built during this time and describe notable features such as 'arched doors, sash windows and pointed roofs'. Average and lower achieving pupils are able to discuss differences between a Victorian and a modern day classroom and most understand that cars had not been invented at this time in history. They are able to represent facts from the past in picture form and answer simple questions. However, they do not have sufficient skills to write about historical events in detail and lack the development in their imagination to describe how these events have influenced life today.
109. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. This is an impressive improvement since the last inspection when some poor quality teaching was observed. Over time, teachers carefully plan their units of work well and learning objectives are clearly identified for individual lessons. Good use is made of resources that stimulate the interest of the pupils. For example, old toys are displayed to help the pupils in Year 1 gain an interest of history through observation and direct experience of artefacts. During the inspection in a very good lesson in Year 6 the teacher took on the role of a Victorian schoolteacher. Pupils rapidly became completely absorbed in the lesson and awaited the teacher's next word with real eagerness and enthusiasm. Very good use was made of humour in this lesson and the appearance of a bowl of gruel for lunch was greeted with varying degrees of delight. However, although the pupils' concentration was exceptional during this session, their ability to recall detail was limited as were their recording skills.
110. There is currently no subject co-ordinator but staff work well together to ensure that all pupils throughout the school develop their historical knowledge and skills. Resources appropriately meet the needs of the pupils and are very well supplemented by visits into the local community. Use of information and communication technology to promote learning is insufficient but the school make good use of their digital camera. For example, this has been used well to photograph Victorian houses nearby the school. Numeracy skills are also appropriately developed through the use of timelines, crucial dates and family trees.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

111. Attainment in information and communication technology is below national expectations for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is a very similar picture to that of the previous inspection when the subject did not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Apart from using a programmable toy, pupils have no experience of control technology. In Year 6 pupils do not learn of multimedia presentations or use e-mail facilities. Such limitations are due to lack of control technology equipment and teachers' expertise. As a result, pupils make insufficient progress in this subject and this is unsatisfactory.
112. Generally resources have been much improved but there has been little change in pupils' attainment since the last inspection. The school has a computer suite complete with a large computerised teaching screen. Internet access and e-mail facilities are also in place. The suite has been operational for just over one year. However, it is timetabled for less than 40 per cent of the week and was empty throughout each morning of the inspection. In addition to the suite, each class has a stand-alone computer.
113. By the end of Year 2 pupils are competent in using the mouse and are beginning to develop typing skills. They can identify letters, capitals and use the space bar and delete button. Pupils can log on, access programs, use a variety of fonts and use the computer to generate repeat patterns. However, Year 2 pupils do not know of 'save' and 'load' procedures or how to print their work. Year 1 pupils are developing their confidence using a word bank and are starting to learn how to drag sentence endings into text.

114. By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to access programs confidently, save their work and organise and refine information in different forms. They use terms such as 'drag', 'clipart', 'icon' and 'file' with confidence and understanding. However, pupils are often frustrated by the lack of keyboard skills and most of the pupils type with index figure only. A minority of pupils have improved keyboard skills because they have a computer at home.
115. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are good and equipment is treated with respect. They greatly value the time they have in the computer suite and work very hard either independently or in pairs. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions and act upon them enthusiastically. All pupils are very well behaved whilst on task, show great interest in their work and sustain concentration well. Pupils help each other well and those with special educational needs benefit from the support of their peers as well as from the teacher.
116. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 and those new to the school have good subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. When the quality of teaching is good lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, are well planned and good subject knowledge is demonstrated. Good use is made of the large computerised teaching screen. For example, in a Year 5 lesson pupils constructed spreadsheets and interpreted data. However, although there was a very good focus on vocabulary and pupils were able to explain 'access', 'spreadsheet' and 'cell', many pupils were unable to read the instructions and questions. As a result, progress within the lesson was unsatisfactory. The level of subject knowledge and expertise of some teachers is weak and support from the Educational Action Zone project has been used well by some teachers. For example, in a Year 4 lesson an advisory teacher from the Local Education Authority provided effective teaching support. A more comprehensive training programme under 'New Opportunities Funding' is planned for 2002-3.
117. The school has a policy document and a scheme of work that has adopted much from a nationally recommended scheme. End of unit assessments are beginning to be used throughout the school. These serve as an on-going record of pupils' achievement in the absence of formal assessment procedures. Some teachers keep their own assessments and record pupils' achievements. Planning is variable but where teachers have confidence in their subject knowledge, understanding and expertise it is often good.
118. The subject co-ordinator was absent during the inspection and has previously been absent for prolonged periods. As a result, subject monitoring has not been effectively carried out and there has been a lack of leadership to ensure good use of the range of equipment and facilities available. The new computer suite is a very valuable asset but the subject has a low profile. The school does not make effective use of this provision and this is a weakness. Links with other subjects are tenuous but developing. There is little computer generated display work around the school and in pupils' books. There is no equipment for control and modelling technology and good quality software to support other subjects. Consequently, computers are not sufficiently used to support work in other subjects and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to experience the full subject curriculum.

MUSIC

119. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been maintained since the last inspection and continue to be similar to those found in most schools. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards at the end of Year 6.
120. The school is fully committed to 'The Voices Project' introduced through an Education Action Zone initiative. In-service training has increased staff confidence, expertise and consistency of approach. Skills are taught progressively through the implementation of a carefully organised scheme of work. Consequently the pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. There is particular emphasis on the enjoyment of musical experiences through singing, which involves all pupils actively in their learning. As a result, the pupils enjoy music

lessons, are well-motivated and put considerable energy and enthusiasm into increasing their wide repertoire of songs.

121. In Year 2, the pupils are developing a good awareness of pulse, rhythm and tempo. They step the beat or tap the rhythm as they sing. Pupils co-operate with others to sing tunefully together. They improvise alone to fit their own sentence to the rhythm. Almost all listen carefully and copy a rhythm accurately, for instance, on a drum.
122. The quality of teaching and learning was good in all lessons seen. Pupils respond very well to the lively and exciting lessons where learning is fun. Teachers are confident and use their voices skilfully to demonstrate so that pupils know what is expected. Pupils are carefully managed with praise. As a consequence, they concentrate and give of their best. Teaching assistants give good support in drawing all pupils including those with special educational needs into the activities. All pupils have full access to the curriculum. Good opportunities are organised for pupils to enjoy making music with pupils from other schools and to sing, for instance, in the Cathedral or in the Philharmonic Hall. Whole school performances such as *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* promote performing skills and confidence. The high quality leadership of the school choir enhances the curriculum greatly for some pupils and their exciting repertoire extends the pupils' awareness of cultural diversity through music.
123. Assessment of individual attainment is not in place. The Education Action Zone project team monitors the school's work and reviews the curriculum. Detailed evaluation of lessons has been given so that teachers have learnt how to improve their work.
124. The curriculum contributes substantially to the development of skills in literacy and especially provides excellent opportunities for developing listening skills. Apart from the choir, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' cultural development by listening to music from a range of cultures. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to recall, identify and make improvements to sounds using recording equipment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. By the end of Year 2 standards are below national expectations and this represents a decline since the time of the last inspection. However, a significant number of pupils in the current Year 2 have special educational needs and experience problems co-ordinating their hands and feet. Despite this good progress is being made by these pupils in relation to their prior attainment. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection in Year 6 and are in line with national expectations. The good progress made in Years 1 and 2 is maintained throughout Years 3 to 6. During the inspection, it was only possible to see games and dance, but evidence shows that all aspects of the National Curriculum are comprehensively covered.
126. Although a significant number of pupils in the current Year 2 experience problems with the co-ordination of their hands and feet, they are able to work on appropriate warm-ups and cool-down sessions and they are starting to understand the effect of exercise on their bodies. Higher achievers are working on improving the quality of their movements. However, less attentive pupils have to be frequently reminded of the task and this inhibits progress within lessons. In Year 1, pupils appropriately develop their ball skills and the brisk pace of games lessons motivates them all. They also respond well to opportunities to improve their skills by observing and evaluating each other's demonstrations.
127. By the end of Year 6 pupils use a combination of skills with confidence and accuracy. In a Year 5 games lesson good coaching enhanced good catching and throwing skills. As a result of employing the technique of stepping into a throw, pupils achieved greater distance without loss of accuracy. Pupils develop an awareness of mood in dance. This was observed in a Year 6 lesson where the pupils interpreted an African song. They demonstrated a range of controlled, expressive movements from bold and slow to vigorous and energetic. Good use of atmospheric, taped music engendered a positive response.
128. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Planning is of good quality and resources are used effectively. All teachers have good subject knowledge and know what they want their pupils to achieve. Teachers include appropriate warm-up and cool-down sessions and help pupils understand the effect of exercise on their bodies. They make good use of praise and pupils enjoy these lessons. All members of each class take part and work co-operatively and maturely. They show sensitivity in evaluating each other's work. The behaviour of the pupils during lessons is good.
129. A new policy and scheme of work was introduced last year providing teachers with high quality support material. Weaknesses in athletics have been identified. This is to be addressed with coaching through a three year rolling programme under the 'New Opportunities Fund' that will also provide appropriate equipment. This fund will also support programmes for health, fitness and dance. A swimming programme using the local public baths for Years 3 and 4 was well established. However, the arrangements are temporarily suspended due to lack of funds.
130. The inclusive nature of the school's physical education curriculum is a strength. Pupils who arrive late are quickly included in the lesson and spare kit is available as required. After school sports clubs make a very good contribution and are very well attended. These provide opportunities for football, netball and dance. The curriculum is enhanced well by an annual residential visit during which pupils take part in such adventurous activities as archery and caving.
131. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and capable co-ordinator. Recently she traded full sized bats, pads and stumps with the local secondary school in return for some more appropriate cricket equipment. The supply of small equipment is currently good but there is only a small budget for repair and replacement. There is a lack of larger gymnastics equipment in the upper hall and this is a weakness. There are good hard play surfaces but no grassed areas suitable for sporting activities. The local secondary school frequently makes its grounds available and this is welcomed. Occasionally playground games are made difficult by interference from teenagers beyond the perimeter fence. No formal assessment of pupils' attainment is made. A

range of good quality small resources and good quality indoor accommodation provide very effective support for teaching and learning in the subject.