

# INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY OF LOURDES ROMAN CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bury, Lancashire

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105337

Headteacher: Mrs M G Moran

Reporting inspector: Mr B Lord  
2791

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 July, 2000

Inspection number: 197252

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rudgwick Drive Bury Lancashire
Postcode:	BL8 1YA
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Paul Cannon
Date of previous inspection:	10 June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr B Lord	Registered inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught?
		Information technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Music	How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs J Beattie	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr J Curley	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils?
		Art	
		Geography	
		History	
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
Mrs J Platt	Team inspector	Under fives	
		English	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school. It is smaller than average and currently provides full time education for 59 boys and 54 girls between the ages of 4 and 11.

The school is situated in the Greater Manchester conurbation in the outskirts of Bury. Property adjacent to the school consists of a varied selection of privately owned houses, together with some small council estates. Only children of Roman Catholic parents are admitted to the school. Most pupils live fairly close to the school. Their family backgrounds encompass the full socio-economic spectrum, but most come from very supportive homes where there are fewer than average obvious social or economic problems.

Most of the children entering the reception class have attended a playgroup or nursery. Overall attainment levels on entry vary from year to year, but are generally average. There is, however, a wide range. There are 26 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, of whom four have a statement of special educational need. This is above average for a school of this size. A well below average proportion of pupils, about 4%, is entitled to a free school meal. There are no pupils with a first language other than English. Nearly all current pupils come from a white European ethnic background.

There has been no significant change in the nature of the intake since the last inspection, but the school roll has fallen from 137 to 113. In the last school year 6 pupils joined the school at non-standard times, and 3 pupils left the school at non-standard times.

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

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. Not only are nearly all 11 year olds attaining average or above average standards, and achieving to their potential, but their personal and social development is also very good. This is the result of consistently good teaching by a caring and committed staff, and a well planned curriculum. The leadership of the school, particularly that provided by the head and deputy, is outstandingly good. Over a two year period their work has produced dramatic improvements in all aspects of school management and organisation. The school provides good and improving value for money.

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

- The leadership of the school, especially that provided by the head and deputy, is outstandingly good. All aspects of management and organisation are of a high standard.
- 11 year old pupils attain above average standards and achieve to their potential in English, mathematics and science. Work in geography and history is also of a high standard.
- The quality of teaching throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is consistently good. It enables pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, to engage in effective learning and make good progress.
- The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Relationships are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work. They are well behaved, often show considerable initiative and are willing to accept responsibility.

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

- The curriculum and teaching provided for the under fives.
- Information technology resources, and the use of such resources to support learning in a range of subjects.
- The incorrect perceptions held by a significant minority of parents about the school's willingness to work in partnership with parents.

*Weaknesses are considerably outweighed by the school strengths. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in 1996 there have been three changes of both headteacher and deputy headteacher. Only one teacher who was in post at the time of the previous inspection is still teaching in the school. This considerable turnover of staff necessitated extensive use of temporary supply teachers and uncertainties about the school's educational direction. The quality of education was adversely effected and standards dropped. Since the appointment of the current head and deputy in September 1998, and a stabilisation in the composition of the teaching staff, the decline has been arrested. Dramatic improvements in all aspects of the school's work have taken place. Both the quality of teaching and the standards being attained by pupils are now as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection, and are showing improving trends. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully implemented. As recommended in the previous report the school has acquired a better range of literature for Key Stage 2 pupils, and emphasised mental arithmetic skills in the teaching of mathematics. The art curriculum has been refined and more effective use is now made of the available accommodation. Taking the very unusual factors into consideration improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## STANDARDS

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

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

The 1999 Key Stage 2 test results were easily the worst in the school's recent history. This can be attributed partly to the effects of staffing disruptions between 1996 and 1998. It should also be noted, however, that with a year group of less than 20 poor performances from just one or two pupils can have a very large effect on the aggregated results. A fairer reflection of standards is obtained by averaging the results over the four years 1996 to 1999. This indicates that overall performance was well above the national average, and particularly good in English. The A\* gradings for English in 1997 and 1998, and science in 1997, indicate that the school was in the highest 5% nationally. 11 year olds' standards of work seen during the inspection were judged to be well above average in English, mathematics and science. Provisional results of the 2000 Key Stage 2 national tests indicate very substantial improvements over the 1999 results. The school has agreed challenging targets for performance in the Key Stage 2 tests with the local authority. Inspectors consider these targets are likely to be met. Staffing disruption in the recent past resulted in some under-achievement by some pupils, but inspectors consider that all Key stage 2 pupils are now achieving to their potential.

Recent end of Key Stage 1 national assessments in English, mathematics and science indicate above average performances by seven year olds. Work seen during the inspection indicated these standards are being maintained, and that infant pupils are achieving to their potential.

The quality of work seen throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was above average in history and geography. Work in design technology, music, physical education and art was of a similar standard to that encountered in most primary schools. Standards in information technology, although broadly average, are not as high as they should be because the school has insufficient hardware and software to do justice to the subject.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are enthusiastic about learning and enjoy their work. They develop an admirable pride in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The school is characterised by a friendly and well ordered atmosphere, both in lessons and at other times during the school day.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are friendly and polite. They co-operate effectively both with each other and their teachers.
Attendance	Very good. The overall rate is well above the average for primary schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Overall the quality of teaching in the school is good and similar to that recorded in the previous inspection report. 97% of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better, 66% was good or better, and 17% was very good or outstanding. Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 lessons in English and mathematics were all well planned and delivered. The teaching of the under fives was generally satisfactory, but never good and occasionally unsatisfactory. Too many opportunities were lost to make learning as interesting and exciting as it should be for this age group. Teachers are well able to teach the basics of literacy and numeracy, and have a good understanding of National Curriculum requirements. A well conceived homework policy is starting to have a good effect on pupils' learning. Good planning ensures that the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well met. Learning benefits from tasks that are appropriately adjusted to pupils' attainment levels, and the use of classroom assistants and volunteer classroom helpers who give support to small groups and individuals. Combined with the good attitudes of the pupils, and the well planned curriculum, the good teaching results in an overall good quality of learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, but there are some deficiencies in the quality and range for learning experiences for the under fives. Throughout the school insufficient planned use is made of information technology to assist and support learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. They are well supported both by teachers and special needs assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision benefits from the strong Christian ethos which permeates the school, and the good role models provided by the staff.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Careful records are kept of pupils' academic and personal development, and appropriate action is taken when any concerns are identified. The school is a caring community where all pupils feel valued.

The school has a very good partnership with most parents. There is an active and successful parent-teacher association, and several parents make very useful contributions to the quality of pupils' education by giving voluntary help in classes. A significant minority of parents, however, feel that the school does not work closely enough with them in furthering their children's education. Inspectors do not consider such concern is justified, but the staff and governors need to take action to remove misconceptions.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstandingly good leadership has been shown by the head and deputy over the last two years. They have successfully restored the good quality of education which had been badly affected by chaotic staffing problems between 1996 and 1998.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. They have kept their nerve during a difficult period in the school's history and worked successfully to raise standards to high levels.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Careful analysis of performance data is used in setting priorities for improvement and appropriately challenging targets for the future.
The strategic use of resources	Good. School development planning is appropriately linked to financial predictions and the acquisition of suitable resources.

The school has an appropriate complement of teaching and non-teaching staff to meet the needs of the pupils. The accommodation is adequate and resources are generally sufficient to support the curriculum. There are currently, however, inadequate information technology resources and there is room for improvement in the availability of outdoor play equipment for the under fives.

The head and governors are diligent in comparing all aspects of the school's performance with both local and national figures. They adopt a suitably competitive approach and set appropriately challenging targets for improvement in the light of consultation with the local authority and parents.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Their children are well taught and make good progress.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• Their children are helped to become mature and responsible</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work their children are given to do at home</li> <li>• The information about how their children are getting on</li> <li>• Arrangements for approaching the school with questions or a problem</li> <li>• The way in which the school works with parents</li> <li>• The range of activities provided outside lessons</li> <li>• A lack of musical expertise among the staff.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views about the school. The inspection team felt that the school has a good homework policy, but that occasionally greater care needs to be taken to ensure that it is used consistently. Inspectors consider that information supplied to parents about their children's progress or other matters is at least satisfactory, and has some good features. Inspectors felt that it is easy to get further information. The head welcomes enquiries of any sort from parents. Inspectors agree that extra-curricular activities are a little limited, but by no means unsatisfactory in the light of the school's size. There is some lack of musical expertise among the staff but inspectors do not feel this is a serious problem, since the school implements a good music scheme with all classes.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Since Our Lady of Lourdes is a small school with less than 20 pupils in each year group the statistics resulting from national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 should be treated with some caution. Small variations in the number of pupils with learning difficulties, for example, make big differences to percentage figures. Overall indications, however, from national test results are good.
2. The results of tests for seven year olds in reading, writing and mathematics between 1996 and 1999 have been consistently above the national average. In 1999, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, all pupils reached at least level 2, the national expectation, in all three tests. This statistic places the school in the top 5% nationally, and compares well with the results for schools with a similar intake. The proportions of pupils gaining above level 2 in the 1999 tests compare less favourably with the average proportions for schools with a similar intake. In both reading and writing the proportion of pupils gaining level 3 was well below the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining level 3 in mathematics was close to the average for similar schools. Observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection indicated that seven year olds are continuing to attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and that a higher proportion of pupils are attaining at levels above the national expectation
3. The results of tests for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science between 1996 and 1999 indicate an overall performance that is well above the national average, with performance in English being particularly good. The 1999 results were, however, by the school's standards, poor. Performances in English and science were close to the national average, and performance in mathematics was below the national average. In all three subjects performances were well below the average for schools with a similar intake. These results are partly a consequence of the composition of the year group, and partly a result of disruption to pupils' education caused by extensive changes of staff between 1996 and 1999. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection indicated that current standards in year 6 are significantly higher than they were in 1999. Inspectors judge that the work of nearly all pupils is at least of level 4 standard, the national expectation, in all three of the core subjects. About half the current year 6 pupils are working at level 5 in English, mathematics and science.
4. The school and local authority have agreed official targets, all in excess of 90%, for the proportions of pupils who should reach level 4 and above in English and mathematics in the future. Inspectors consider the school is well placed to meet these targets, which are challenging but realisable. In addition to these formal targets the school has a very good system for setting individual targets for all its pupils. These are based on careful analysis of the progress individuals are making, comparisons between attainment levels in different subjects, and teachers' judgements about capabilities. This approach helps to ensure that all pupils are achieving to their potential. It detects any under achievement at an early stage and allows appropriate action to be taken.
5. No consistent differences between the attainment levels of boys and girls were detected during the inspection. Test results between 1996 and 1999 show that boys did a little better than girls at age seven, but that there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' performances at age 11.
6. No significant differences between the performances of the small number of pupils from ethnic minorities and other pupils were detected.
7. The overall attainment level of pupils entering the school varies from year to year, but is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the reception class and as they start Key Stage 1

the overall attainment level is again average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above average, and further above average in relation to pupils' ages at the end of Key Stage 2. This represents good progress throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and indicates that most pupils are achieving well. Progress in the reception year is not as good as in the rest of the school because curriculum planning and teaching for the under fives while broadly satisfactory, is a little lacklustre. Too many opportunities are lost to make learning experiences interesting and exciting, and pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. Good progress and achievement in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is the result of good teaching based on a well planned and resourced curriculum. Teachers use good systems for following the progress pupils of all abilities are making, and ensure that the work they are given is both interesting and challenging.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are carefully assessed and appropriately addressed through individual education plans. It is to the school's credit that some pupils who have learning difficulties early in their school careers attain average or above average standards by the age of 11.
9. Inspectors did not identify any highly talented or gifted pupils in the school. A good proportion of pupils, however, have above average capabilities. Teachers take care to ensure that such pupils are given appropriately challenging work, and encourage them to develop skills of independent study and research.
10. Throughout the school there is an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and science. There are no significant weakness in any areas of these subjects in either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.
11. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills, and become able to take part in mature discussion and debate. They learn to read efficiently, and put reading skills to good use by reading both for pleasure and to support learning. Pupils become progressively more adept at writing as they move through the school, and by the time they leave nearly all are able to write competently in a variety of styles suitable for a range of purposes. Handwriting is generally neat and legible, spelling is good, and pupils become conversant with the rules of grammar. The successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has further improved English standards. Pupils' good literacy skills are of considerable benefit to progress in other subjects. Teachers make appropriate arrangements, especially in history and geography lessons, for pupils to practise and refine their English skills.
12. Pupils' mathematical skills develop well. By the time they leave school most have considerable agility in mental arithmetic, show proficiency in routine written calculations, possess an appropriate mathematical vocabulary, and are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of the subject to the solution of problems. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a beneficial effect on mathematics standards. Pupils' mathematical competency is useful in other subjects, for instance when they are learning about co-ordinates in geography or producing graphs from sets of results in science.
13. Pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of both the physical and biological science topics specified by the National Curriculum. They also learn to plan and carry out experiments and investigations effectively. They become able to examine sets of experimental results with considerable perspicuity, detecting patterns and suggesting explanations.
14. Standards attained in information technology by the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are about average. Progress is hindered by a shortage of equipment, and some lack of experience among the staff. Nevertheless all pupils become able to use computers for word processing, and with the aid of appropriate programmes, data processing. They are confident with control devices, and can access information from data bases. Insufficient use is made of information technology in other subjects. The school has not yet joined the National Grid for Learning, but expects to do so in the near future. A substantial proportion of pupils have access to information technology devices at home, and some have acquired considerable skills. Some year 5 pupils, for example, discussed with inspectors how the Internet had proved a useful source of information for homework projects.

15. Standards in history and geography are above average in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Standards in art, music, physical education and design technology are about average.
16. Nearly all parents are satisfied with the academic standards their children are attaining. Inspectors' findings indicate that this parental confidence is fully justified.

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

17. Pupils show great enthusiasm for school and good attitudes to the range of activities provided throughout the day. Attendance continues to be very good, lateness is not a problem. From the earliest years pupils respond very well to the pace of a busy community. In the large majority of classes all pupils enjoy their work, listen carefully and concentrate well. They show confidence and interest in sharing and explaining to their classmates the projects that they have completed at home. However occasionally, if a lesson lacks pace, a few pupils are inattentive. As they progress through the key stages all pupils develop a strong sense of pride and ownership in their school and are eager to take on new projects such as, for example, the school council planned for next September. Pupils are keen to take part in assemblies and Christmas productions and enjoy sporting activities. They are eager to talk to visitors. Older pupils showed a real interest in literature after discussing creative writing with a local author and were keen to use her expertise in their work.
18. Pupils behave well and no one has been excluded, temporarily or permanently, during the current academic year. Two boys were temporarily excluded during the previous academic year. Behaviour in assembly is exemplary and throughout the school pupils are pleasant, friendly and polite. Lunch-time is a valuable social occasion. Pupils have good table manners in the dining room and play happily, and with natural spontaneity in the playground without harm or harassment. However the youngest children do not have suitable play equipment. Pupils know that any incidents of physical or verbal bullying must be reported and will be treated seriously. They have clear ideas about what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Pupils are aware that they are ambassadors for their school when they are on visits and trips and, even when excited, behave very well.
19. The school has included pupils' ideas when producing the mission statement and the home school agreement and staff take every opportunity to promote individual personal growth and promote good relationships. All pupils take responsibility for duties in the classroom and older children help the younger ones at lunch time. In response to the Christian ethos pupils have written prayers and shown support for others in the wider community. They have learned about the needs and experiences of others, for example by listening to an elderly visitor's experiences during the during World War II.
20. Older pupils have been well prepared for citizenship. Following a survey of the local precinct they have sent written comments to the local authority about the adverse effect of traffic on people's lives. The residential trip for older pupils provides a wealth of new and interesting visits and helps them to learn responsibility and independence. The trip to Northumberland together with pupils from a sister primary school inspired very good art and design work depicting seals and puffins as well as the Angel of the North. In addition pupils were able to make comparisons between their own and other communities. The school prepares pupils very well for the next stage in their education and for future citizenship.

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

21. The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. It is consistently so in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 where there are many examples of very good practice. Teaching of the under fives is generally satisfactory, but somewhat lacklustre. Many opportunities to make the teaching interesting and exciting are lost, and there are occasional unsatisfactory lessons. 97% of the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better, 66% was good or better, and 17 % was very good or outstanding.

22. Teachers generally have a good knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum subjects, but insufficient attention has been paid to recent recommendations about the teaching of the under fives. All the teachers are proficient at implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, and are successful at teaching basic skills. They have kept up to date with information technology developments, but a shortage of equipment has prevented them doing full justice to this subject. As is almost inevitable with a small staff there are some areas of the curriculum where in depth expertise is lacking, for example in music. This is not a serious disadvantage because the school implements a well resourced commercial music scheme which meets National Curriculum requirements and includes a wide selection of recorded music.
23. Planning is good. Effective long term planning is firmly based on National curriculum requirements. Shorter term planning takes into account pupils' previous attainments, and lesson planning includes provision for a variety of tasks to challenge pupils of all abilities. Teachers keep good records of children's progress and use them effectively as an aid to planning.
24. Teachers generally have high expectations of both work and behaviour. There are some exceptions in the reception class, where a lack of structure sometimes results in the unproductive use of time by pupils. The school has responded well to a below average percentage of pupils gaining level 3 in some of the Key Stage 1 national tests. Greater care is now taken to ensure that the brighter children are given work that allows them to achieve to their full potential, and inspectors consider an above average proportion of seven year olds are now working at level 3. High expectations have also paid off in year 6, where an above average proportion of pupils are now working at level 5 (2 years in advance of their ages) in English, mathematics and science.
25. Teaching methods are good except in the reception class where there are some weaknesses. All the teachers in Key stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are effective when engaging in whole class teaching. They give clear instructions and explanations, ask appropriate questions to check pupils' understanding, and make sure that all pupils are involved and following their expositions. When lessons involve pupils working individually or in groups work is appropriately adjusted to the individuals or groups concerned.
26. Teachers control pupils well. This is because of the good relationships they enjoy with their classes. They manage to maintain a happy atmosphere while being fully in control and ensuring that pupils are working as hard as possible. At no time during the inspection were there any significant discipline problems.
27. Good lesson planning, efficiently organised resources, and pupils' co-operative attitudes all combine to ensure that little time is wasted in lessons. Classroom assistants, special need support assistants and parent volunteer helpers all help to make lessons proceed effectively. The availability of these extra helpers is particularly valuable when pupils are working in groups, and the class teacher can only give help and support to one group at a time.
28. Teachers keep good records of the progress pupils are making, and use these records to adjust lesson planning and organisation. All written work is regularly and conscientious marked. Sometimes, however, comments about how to improve could be a little more specific, and teachers should occasionally take greater care that mistakes are corrected and all written work completed.
29. A significant proportion of parents expressed some concern about homework. The school has a good homework policy which is in line with department for education guidelines. Because it is fairly new not all teachers are implementing it with full consistency. As the policy beds down it is expected that this minor weakness will be remedied and parental concern allayed. A noteworthy feature of the homework strategy is the school's policy of giving long term projects for pupils to complete at home. It is intended that parents should be involved in some of these projects. An example is described in the section on design and technology in this report.
30. The impact of good teaching in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is that pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding in an effective way. They are encouraged to work hard and given generous praise not only when they succeed, but also when they try hard. This approach is successful in getting pupils to make as much effort as possible to produce their best work. They

try hard to carry out intellectual tasks in academic subjects, give of their best physically in PE and games lessons, and do not stint their creative efforts in art and music. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, and pupils' productivity is good.

31. Inspectors were particularly impressed by the enthusiasm shown by pupils about their work. They enjoy the great majority of their lessons and look forward to being able to continue their work in subsequent lessons. The questions and suggestions they readily make in class illustrate the interest they have in what they are studying. Pupils in Key Stage 2, especially in years 5 and 6, are acquiring good habits of independent work. Although the school is not in the forefront on information technology developments, many pupils have taken advantage of access to the Internet at home to further their work in science, geography and history.
32. Pupils are aware that they making good educational progress, and appreciate the work of their teachers. As they get older they become clearer about what they need to do to improve, and take effective steps to bring this about. Pupils in years 5 and 6 have high long term aspirations, and some have clear ideas about what they need to do in the future to become, for example, doctors or teachers.
33. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported both by special needs support teachers and classroom teachers.

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

34. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities for its pupils and statutory requirements relating to the curriculum are met. There have been improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection, notably the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy hours. There are, however, some weaknesses in the curriculum provided for the under fives. Provision for the physical and creative development of these pupils is too limited. More work is needed to consider and take appropriate action in the light of the latest national recommendations about education in the foundation stage. Although the school's curriculum provision for information technology just meets the requirements of the National Curriculum insufficient use is made of information technology across the curriculum. Little use, for example, is made of information technology techniques for data processing or data capture in science.
35. With the exceptions mentioned above the curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It is relevant to the needs of the pupils and allows them to learn effectively, building progressively on previously acquired knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. Instrumental music lessons are available for pupils whose parents wish to take advantage of the local authority's peripatetic music service
36. There is full access to the curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Well designed individual education plans are drawn up for pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. These plans are appropriately linked to the main school curriculum, as well as to the special needs of individual pupils. Parents are fully consulted in the drawing up of these plans, which contain clear targets at which pupils can aim. It is to the school's credit that some pupils with special educational needs are enabled to reach levels of attainment which remove them from the register of special educational needs, and some reach or exceed national expectations by the age of 11.
37. The school has taken appropriate steps to implement fully the National Numeracy and Literacy strategies. Staff have attended suitable in-service training sessions. All pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 spend at least an hour a day on the development of literacy skills, and a further hour on the development of numeracy skills. In both these hours pupils learn well because of an appropriately planned and implemented balance of activities. These include, for example, a good approach to the teaching of spelling through phonetics, and a robust approach to pupils' acquisition of mental arithmetic skills.
38. A significant minority of parents expressed concern about the scanty availability of extra-curricular activities. Some parents were particularly disappointed at the lack of musical activities.

Inspectors felt that the availability of football, netball, cricket, rounders sewing and knitting activities was not unreasonable given the size of the school, and the pressure under which it has been working for the last two years. Nevertheless the situation should be kept under review, and in consultation with parents, attempts made to introduce a wider range of extra-curricular activities. The school organises a good range of visits and excursions, including opportunities for all pupils to take part in a residential visit to Northumberland. Pupils expressed considerable enthusiasm for these outings in discussion with inspectors.

39. The school has a well designed policy for the personal, social and health education of pupils. This includes appropriate provision for sex education and education about substance misuse. The effective implementation of this policy, together with the good role models provided by staff, enables the great majority of pupils to leave the school as well adjusted young people well prepared to face the challenges of their teenage years.
40. The school has very good links with the local community, particularly with the church. These links effectively enhance the quality of education and help to promote pupils' personal development. Inspectors were particularly impressed with pupils' involvement in a local old people's home, and the letters they had written to the council suggesting improvements to the local environment.
41. There are good links with the Roman Catholic High School to which nearly all pupils transfer at 11. Pupils have opportunities to visit the school and meet their new teachers, and appropriate secondary school staff visit the primary school to discuss the intake and become acquainted with academic and personal backgrounds. The special educational needs teacher from the high school pays particular attention to preparing for the transfer of pupils with special needs. The high school co-operates with its primary partner by organising visits of junior age range pupils to its computer suite, and inviting them to take part in musical activities.
42. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, and is at least as good as at the time of the previous inspection. In this part of its work the school is successful in promoting the attitudes and values stated in its admirable mission statement. Parents are rightly very pleased with this aspect of the school.
43. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The daily act of collective worship, which fully meets statutory requirements, invites pupils to reflect on issues such as co-operation, consideration, friendships, respect and hard work. Pupils pray with sincerity, sometimes having written their own prayers. Inspectors were particularly impressed with prayers written by pupils for the funeral of an elderly resident from the old people's home with which the school has links. They sing hymns in a spirit of joyful celebration. The chair of governors, who is also the parish priest, plays an important part in the life of the school and makes an effective contribution to its caring ethos and pupil's spiritual development. Pupils are successfully taught to show respect for the beliefs and values of others.
44. Provision for moral development is very good. A well conceived code of behaviour and sensible school rules are discussed with pupils at regular intervals. Pupils acquire a sense of right and wrong and learn how to show consideration for others. Assemblies help to reinforce this moral code and the examples set by adults in the school are good. Parents praise the school because their children's property is safe, and pupils treat each other with politeness and consideration.
45. Provision for social development is good. Pupils in all years are given responsibilities for classroom duties, and the oldest pupils cheerfully and effectively carry out daily duties and tasks around the school. Pupils show considerable initiative in raising money for charities.
46. Good levels of participation in extra-curricular sporting activities make a substantial contribution to social development. The annual residential visit for older pupils successfully helps them to acquire qualities of consideration and tact when living with others.
47. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. British culture and traditions are explored effectively through history, geography, art and music. Visits to museums, stately homes and the local community are particularly successful in making pupils aware of their own heritage. This

cultural awareness is enhanced through the study of literature. Pupils in years 5 and 6 were able to discuss texts ranging from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to the latest Harry Potter adventures. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to appreciate the richness of other cultures through lessons in religious education, geography and history.

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

48. The previous inspection stated that the school provided very good pastoral care and this standard of care has been maintained.
49. Pupils receive good personal support at school. There is a good system to ensure that new pupils settle into school with appropriate parental involvement. Relationships between pupils are good and they have every confidence in the staff because they know they are cared about. In this small school, staff know the pupils and families well and treat them with individual care. This is particularly the case with vulnerable pupils in school.
50. There are effective child protection procedures in the school and the head teacher has had appropriate training. All the staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed if an incident occurs. The pupils' welfare is well taken care of in school. The playgrounds are closely supervised to ensure that no child is isolated and that the pupils develop good social relationships. There are sufficient staff trained in first aid.
51. Health and Safety routines and procedures are effective. Each term the well qualified Health and Safety Governor checks the building and environment of the school. PE equipment and all electrical equipment are examined by the appropriate experts each year.
52. Most parents agree that behaviour in school is good. School rewards and sanctions are effective. House points are given for good behaviour and also merit certificates are presented at assemblies. There are effective sanctions to combat unpleasant behaviour but these are rarely used. Older pupils are given some responsibility for example helping to look after younger pupils at lunch times. Younger pupils act as monitors in their classroom. Generally teachers have high expectations and in return receive good standards of behaviour.
53. Bullying is not an issue in the school. Pupils are of the opinion that bullying rarely happens but at the same time they know what to do if an unpleasant incident occurs. Notwithstanding the head and staff are vigilant and take effective action if they feel that unpleasant behaviour may occur.
54. The recording of attendance complies with statutory requirement. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good.
55. Procedures for monitoring academic performance are very good. Good records are kept of pupils' attainment through standardised tests and tracking sheets are kept so that pupils' progress can be monitored. Assessment procedures are very good and clear, thorough records are available. The results of the assessments are carefully analysed in order to make planning of new work more effective. The assessment is also used to discover strengths and weaknesses so that targets can be set for individuals and groups of pupils in order to remedy these difficulties and thereby raise standards. The school has a marking policy but the consistency with which it is used needs to be improved.

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

56. A large majority of parents agree that their children like school, are making good progress and are helped to become mature and responsible. They consider that teaching is good, that the school sets their children high standards of commitment to work, and that behaviour is good.
57. A minority of parents do not think that the school works closely with parents, they feel that are not kept well informed about how their child is getting on and that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home. A similar minority consider that the school does not provide a

sufficiently interesting range of outside activities. A smaller minority say that they are not comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.

58. The school has good procedures to promote partnership with parents. Parents are invited to termly parents' evenings which include an opportunity to discuss the end of year report. The reports generally, but not always, give sufficient information on what pupils are doing, how well they are doing it, whether it is good enough and what they need to do to improve. Teachers act quickly to contact parents to arrange a discussion about any concerns which may arise. The school is always concerned that any parents' worries should be discussed as soon as possible at a mutually convenient time. At parents' evenings teachers inform parents of the results of annual tests giving the level of their children's attainments, a score which can be compared with standard levels.
59. Parents receive weekly newsletters and have regular notice of topics to be studied in school and of project and homework requirements. Parents are invited to a school coffee morning every Wednesday and are included in special assemblies and masses. They are invited to special meetings before their child starts school and before transfer to secondary education.
60. Parents' involvement in school, and in their children's learning at home, plays a valuable part in their children's education. Pupils are proud of the projects they do at home and the regular reading and homework has contributed to the good standards of literacy and numeracy in both key stages. Several parents and a grandparent help regularly in school and parents help with extra-curricular sport. The active members of the Parent Teachers' Association work very hard to raise substantial extra funding and provide social events. The school is always keen to involve parents in their children's education. It should continue to find ways of removing the misconceptions of the minority of parents that their concerns and views are not welcome and of those who do not think that they work closely with them or give them enough information about their children's progress.

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

61. The leadership provided by the head and deputy over the last two academic years has been outstandingly good. They both arrived at the school in September 1998 to inherit a situation where the quality of education had been severely disrupted by a period of considerable staffing instability and changes of leadership. Pupils' continuity of education had been interrupted by extensive use of temporary teachers. The school roll had fallen, necessitating the loss of a teacher and a reduction in the number of classes from five to four, and putting curriculum and planning procedures into disarray. All these defects have now been remedied. A clear educational direction for the school, which had been temporarily lost, has been restored. The revised mission statement is treated seriously and ensures that the school's aims and values are reflected in its work. The curriculum has been revised to ensure that pupils in the mixed aged classes experience a coherent sequence of learning experiences, and do not engage in unnecessarily repetitive work. All school policies have been revised and are now being implemented effectively. Newly introduced procedures for assessing and keeping track of the progress made by individual pupils have been introduced. The National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies have been successfully implemented. Parents are right to think that most concerns they have had about the school in the recent past have been dealt with. The end of Key Stage 2 results in 1999, as reported elsewhere in this document, were a matter of concern to governors and parents alike. Inspectors feel they represent the nadir of the school's fortunes. There is good evidence that the quality of education, and the standards pupils are attaining by the end of year 6 are back to at least the levels reported in the previous inspection.
62. Responsibilities for subject co-ordination and leadership are appropriately distributed among the small number of staff. Inevitably some, including the head and deputy have to bear a heavy load. Nevertheless all schemes of work are well documented, efficiently organised, appropriately resourced and up to date. Good procedures are implemented to review and if necessary improve planning in all subjects, and advice is always available.
63. The head and governors have agreed appropriately challenging targets with the local authority. These targets are incorporated, together with more detailed ones formulated by the school, into

the well designed school development plan. Inspectors consider the school is on track to meet these targets.

64. The head has worked diligently with the local authority to introduce effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and evaluating the efficiency of the curriculum. There is a systematic programme of lesson observations. Pupils' work books are checked and staff meetings used to discuss improvements to teaching and share good practice. A programme of visits to other schools has been organised, so that staff can compare and contrast different approaches to primary education.
65. The governors have been very effective in supporting the school through a difficult period. They fulfil all their statutory duties conscientiously, are well informed about all aspects of the school and play a very full part in its life. They are particularly proud of the school's Catholic ethos, and are rightly confident that they made a good choice of head to remedy weaknesses and reinforce the school's strengths. Working with the senior staff of the school they manage the budget carefully, and have ensured that resources for learning have been improved since the previous inspection. All educational developments have been carefully supported by good financial planning. All specific grants have been used effectively for their designated purposes. The additional funds received by the school for pupils with special educational needs are used wisely and to the benefit of the pupils concerned. Resources are now at least adequate for most subjects, but information technology equipment is still not up to the levels seen in many primary schools. There are good plans for the future involving government funding and the school's entry in the national grid for learning.
66. Since Our Lady of Lourdes is a small school there is only a small number of teachers. Although all are appropriately qualified to teach in a primary school, with such a small team it is inevitable that some gaps in their expertise. Some parents are concerned, for example, that there is a lack of musical expertise. The school has taken good steps to ameliorate difficulties by investing in a good commercial music scheme which fully covers the National Curriculum, and is well supplied with an appropriate selection of recorded music, both to listen to and to sing to. Other minor gaps in staff expertise, for instance in information technology, are being addressed by an appropriate programme of in-service training.
67. The school has very good procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers.

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

68. To improve further the quality of education in this already successful school the head staff and governors should:-
  1. Improve curriculum provision and the quality of teaching for the under fives, paying particular attention to the latest national guidance,
  2. Acquire more information technology hardware and software, check that all staff are fully aware of its potential, and formulate and implement plans to use it not only to improve pupils' standards of attainment in information technology, but also to support teaching and learning in all curriculum areas
  3. Take steps to remove the misconceptions held by some parents about the willingness of the school to give them information and work in partnership .
69. Inspectors acknowledge that some of the above issues have already been included in the school's developmental planning. Other minor issues which should be considered by the school include:-
  - Acquiring better play equipment for the under fives (paragraph 76 ).
  - Improving some of the marking of pupils' written work, so that there are better checks on the completeness of tasks, and more emphasis on accurate corrections (paragraph 28).
  - Reviewing the availability and range of extra-curricular activities (paragraph 38 ).
  - Checking that comments on written reports give clear information about the standards pupils are attaining, the progress they are making, what they need to do to improve, and the targets at which they should be aiming (paragraph 58).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	36
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	14	49	31	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	113
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	26

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	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	2.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	12	5	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	17	17	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (90)	100 (100)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	17	17	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (90)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	6	13	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	4	5
	Girls	10	7	12
	Total	14	11	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (100)	58 (85)	89 (81)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	6
	Girls	11	12	12
	Total	16	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (85)	95 (95)	95 (95)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	98
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.3
Average class size	28.3

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

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	226066
Total expenditure	219805
Expenditure per pupil	1946
Balance brought forward from previous year	12034
Balance carried forward to next year	18295

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	113
Number of questionnaires returned	84

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	45	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	39	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	53	4	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	39	14	11	3
The teaching is good.	42	46	5	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	43	14	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	23	11	4	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	37	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	33	42	17	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	39	4	4	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	44	6	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	42	19	5	7

### **Other issues raised by parents**

A number of parents expressed concern about the lack of musical expertise among the school staff.

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

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

70. Education for children under five is provided in the reception class. At the time of the inspection, only three children had not reached the age of five. However, there was sufficient evidence available to identify that the overall attainment of children by the time they reach five under five is similar to that seen in the majority of schools. Although children start school with a wide range of attainment their overall ability is average. Progress is satisfactory in the areas of language and literacy, mathematics, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development.

#### *71. Personal and social development*

Most children reach average levels of personal and social development by the age of five. Many have attended some pre-school provision and are confident in establishing friendships. They are also happy with looking after themselves. For example, they get changed for physical education and require only limited adult help. Many fold their clothes carefully so that it is easy when getting dressed. Overall teaching is satisfactory and the children are aware of classroom rules and routines. On occasions children are left without sufficient activities to keep them occupied and this leads to behaviour deteriorating. Most pupils take turns and share when playing small games. They help each other, as for example using the headphones to listen to stories. After activities the vast majority are keen to help tidy away and often select a book while they are waiting for other children.

#### *72. Language and literacy*

In language and literacy children make satisfactory progress and attain the standard expected by the time they are five. Teaching is satisfactory and follows the guidelines in the National Literacy Strategy. Letter sounds are taught well through activities and stories. As a result children under five who read to the inspector have a secure knowledge of letters. They handle books carefully and are starting to read a few words and make good use of pictures to help them. Most lessons include discussions and children are beginning to understand the need to take turns although a few still call out. Listening skills are satisfactory but children do not always listen carefully to instructions and then are unclear about what it is they have to do. Writing is the weakest aspect. Children understand that writing has a purpose and many have made satisfactory progress from making 'marks' to using recognisable letters. Postcards have been 'written' as part of the topic about the seaside and a few examples include recognisable words. Children under five are confident writing their first names.

#### *73. Mathematics*

Children make satisfactory progress and reach average levels of attainment by the time they are five. Overall teaching is satisfactory and activities are planned to match pupils' prior attainment. Number rhymes are used and pupils count to ten. They understand 'more' and 'less' and accurately use a number line to count on. Writing numerals is less secure and books show many examples of numbers being reversed or not formed properly throughout the year. These errors have not been corrected and this hampers progress as pupils are not made aware of their mistakes. Children know the names of shapes and match them correctly to make a picture of a house. The lack of adult support means that these skills in number are not always transferred to practical activities. For example, the water tray had no focus to encourage children to consider capacity and the lack of support in the 'café' meant the idea of counting and giving change was not developed.

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

Children make satisfactory progress and reach average levels of attainment by the time they are five. Overall teaching is satisfactory. Most of the learning is linked to the National Curriculum

and is taught in small focus groups. Although this enables several topics to be covered the children not included in the teacher's group often have activities that do not extend their learning. During the inspection the teaching of geography failed to develop the overall purpose of the lesson as teaching was disrupted by the behaviour of the other children. Displays of work show children have discussed how things and people change over time. Children have identified what people did on holiday in Blackpool in 1894 and compared this with the present day. They understand few people swam in the sea and that more formal clothes were worn in the past. Information technology is a weakness and the computers were not seen in use during the inspection. Pupils acquire some keyboard skills. They are able, for example, to delete errors. Children have carried out some investigations and are growing in confidence in predicting outcomes.

#### *75. Creative development*

Standards of work are in line with the expected level for children's age. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, but the quality of learning is sometimes impaired by tasks that are over directed and restrict creativity. Children have made patterns on bags using different items to print. The large class picture about the sea side has been decorated in suitable patterns. There is limited evidence of the use of a wide range of materials. The vehicles and bags on display show confidence in cutting and gluing and the vehicles show attention to detail. Children are proud of their models. Children enjoy singing and playing different percussion instruments. They sing various nursery rhymes tunefully and play instruments successfully maintaining the rhythm. Imaginative play is hampered by the lack of adult support to stimulate conversations. Similarly other creative play areas lack stimulation or clear focus to encourage imagination. Some opportunities to extend creative development through the use of sand and water play are missed.

#### *76. Physical development*

This area of learning suffers from limited space and resources. During the inspection children only had one physical education lesson in the school hall. There is no outdoor provision or large scale equipment for outdoor play. In the lesson seen children run and jump confidently and make good use of space. They show an understanding of different body parts and balance and make a range of shapes. Manipulative skills are developed effectively through the use of scissors, paint brushes and making models with a variety of building bricks. Children's physical development is average for their age in the curriculum offered but the development of co-ordination to pedal and climb are restricted by the lack of provision.

77. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory, but lacks sparkle. Too many opportunities to add interest and excitement to activities are neglected. Lessons follow a clear structure and are usually organised to include discussion and a sharing of experiences at the end of lessons. This leads to pupils having a clear understanding of the rules of the classroom and most have settled well to school routines. Relationships are good and most children behave well and are eager to please the teacher. When unsupervised this deteriorates and management is insufficiently firm to keep all children purposefully occupied. A common weakness in most lessons is a lack of pace and children start to lose interest as the activities fail to capture their interest. Teaching of numeracy and literacy are better as lessons follow the guidelines in the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. These lessons include more variety. For example, using a puppet in English that captured children's interest and they quickly learned new sounds. Lesson plans often only list the tasks to be included in the lesson and insufficient attention is given to what children are to learn. Consequently assessment concentrates on activities encountered rather than what children have achieved. This leads to tasks being set that do not challenge children and this hampers their progress.

78. The school has introduced an assessment as children start school and this is used to track children's progress. The curriculum is planned to the National Curriculum and not to the learning experiences recommended nationally. This leads to some areas of learning, notably, personal and social development, creative and physical not receiving sufficient attention for the needs of the younger children. This hampers progress in these important aspects of the curriculum.

## ENGLISH

79. Results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1997 and 1998 were very high being among the top five per cent in the country. These results dipped in 1999 to being average compared with the national standards but well below when compared with similar schools. Figures do not always present an accurate picture of standards when only a small number of pupils are being assessed. This particular cohort included more pupils identified as having special educational needs. Although overall figures were low 26 per cent of pupils exceeded the national average and this was above the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection show an improvement and are above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
80. A similar picture of standards is reflected in the national test results at the end of Key Stage 1. Reading and writing had been above average until 1999 when writing remained good but reading dipped to average. Compared to similar schools attainment in reading was well below average and writing was average. The school identifies this group of pupils including a larger proportion of boys who nationally do not perform as well as girls at this age. There has been an improvement in standards and by the end of the key stage inspection evidence indicates overall standards in all aspects of English are above average.
81. Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced several staffing changes and standards have fluctuated. The school has introduced several initiatives that have stabilised and improved standards and overall the high standards identified at the time of the previous inspection have been regained. The National Literacy Strategy has led to an improvement in the range of books used by teachers. This has led to an enthusiasm for reading and this has resolved an identified weakness. This has been particularly beneficial for pupils in Key Stage 2 who now have an appreciation of good literature. Assessment is now used more thoroughly to monitor pupils' progress. Information is used to provide extra help if required. Pupils have improved their literacy skills by following the Additional Literacy Programme. Other pupils have also benefited from additional work to be completed at home with parental support. An analysis of results showed a weakness in pupils' ability to write in a range of styles and teachers acted promptly to provide a wider writing curriculum. This again has reaped benefits notably in skills in instructional and information writing. The school has agreed suitable challenging targets with the local authority for performances in end of Key Stage 2 national tests. Inspectors consider the school is on track to meet these targets.
82. In speaking and listening standards achieved are good throughout the school. Pupils express themselves clearly in class discussions and are confident asking questions both to clarify and increase their knowledge. The vast majority listen carefully and their answers to questions show they understand what they have heard. Teachers in Key Stage 2 include regular opportunities for pupils to discuss with a partner. This was successful in a lesson to years 5 and 6 when pupils shared their ideas about the contents of travel brochures. Conversation skills are good and pupils respect the opinions of other pupils. Vocabulary is interesting. When providing examples of prefixes and suffixes pupils in Year 4 produce a long list of interesting words. By the end of the key stage, pupils use well-expressed language to discuss their reading preferences. When talking about other subjects their vocabulary is enlivened by technical terms, notably in science and geography.
83. Standards in reading at the end of both key stages are high. Since the previous inspection the range of books available has been extended. Pupils are eager to read to adults and enjoy discussing their favourite authors and types of stories. At the end of Key Stage 1, they retell what they have read in their own words and have good recall of the names of characters and their part in the story. Referencing skills are taught well and pupils are confident locating information in non-fiction books. Higher attaining pupils read silently and discuss their reading at a level that clearly exceeds the national average for this age group. Good progress is made as pupils move up through the school and high standards are evident as pupils leave school. In a Year 6 lesson the vast majority of pupils read travel brochures very competently when researching for fact and

opinion. They scanned the pages efficiently for key words. They identified quickly words and phrases that persuade customers to go on a holiday and also spotted facts about travel and prices. In addition to reading work by popular children's authors pupils have also sampled classical texts in the Literacy Hour. Some pupils, for example, were able to discuss "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Romeo and Juliet". Teachers plan activities for pupils to extend their reading in other subjects and this effectively extends their skills. Research topics are set for homework and in history and geography lessons and pupils' confidence in reading makes a significant impact upon achievement in other lessons.

84. Standards of writing in the pupils' work are above average at the end of both key stages. A strength in the writing is pupils' understanding of how writing changes for different purposes. This reflects the many opportunities teachers provide for pupils to extend their writing skills. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have written imaginative poems particularly enjoying nonsense poems that show a good understanding of rhyme. Good progress is evident. In year 2 diagrams and labelling are used correctly to describe how penguins lay and care for their eggs. Stories already include a clear structure and higher attaining pupils use dialogue to develop their characters. Most pupils are confident using capital letters and full stops accurately by the end of the key stage. Spelling is generally good and all pupils have a secure knowledge of letter sounds and spell commonly used words correctly. More difficult words show effective use of letter sounds, as for example, 'papel' for 'people.' This reflects pupils' confidence when writing unaided. Good progress is also made in Key Stage 2 and pupils' confidence develops as teachers provide many imaginative writing tasks. Teachers put an emphasis on final presentation and many classes include large, decorated books containing collections of meticulously presented pupils' work. Again this supports the judgement that pupils have a good appreciation of writing in a range of styles. In years 3 and 4 pupils have written poems in very sensitive language. This is further developed in years 5 and 6 when pupils have written prayers of sympathy for a local refugee who had died without any known relatives. These good writing skills contribute well to learning in other subjects. For example, in history pupils write about the experiences of evacuees during the war. Pupils in year 6 become more adventurous with their vocabulary with the higher attaining pupils writing imaginative stories. Adjectives are used well to set the scene, such as 'empty night' and 'enchanted ride.' Handwriting is taught regularly throughout the school and most pupils write neatly and legibly. However, as pupils move into Key Stage 2 and are taught how to join up their writing they do not always use this style in their daily writing. This leads to some pupils not developing a confident, joined-up style of handwriting by the time they leave school. The school has recognised this problem and has plans to adapt the teaching of handwriting.
85. The overall quality of teaching is good. In lessons seen teaching was good in 86 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the rest. This leads to pupils of all abilities learning well in lessons and making good progress as skills are built on year on year. Teachers are confident delivering the National Literacy Strategy and lessons follow a suitable structure. Letter sounds are taught effectively through a range of activities and pupils have a secure knowledge of letter sounds and use this well in their early reading. All lessons are rounded off with an effective conclusion that celebrates achievements and this raises pupils' confidence to read aloud in front of an audience. Lesson plans clearly identify what tasks are to be taught and this leads to effective organisation and pupils learn well in a busy and orderly atmosphere. Lessons have clear purposes which are understood by pupils. Management of pupils is very effective and based on very good relationships. Behaviour is good and pupils generally work well and are enthusiastic to answer questions and be involved in discussions. Assessment is recorded at the end of lessons and used to plan future lessons. Most lessons include tasks that match pupils' prior learning. This includes pupils with special educational needs and they generally are supported well and make good progress. The school has very effective systems to monitor and track pupils' progress as they move up through the school. This has led to lessons including more challenging activities for higher attaining pupils and an increase in the proportion of pupils exceeding the national average at the end of both key stages.
86. Overall resources have improved since the previous inspection and this has led to more enthusiasm for reading. Currently information technology is underused to develop editing skills although pupils do use word processing to copy work. The library is situated in a room used for many lessons and this restricts its use. Some books in the library are old and need replacing. Parents expressed a concern about homework. Spelling and reading are given regularly in Key

Stage 1 and this continues with the addition of more research in Key Stage 2. This provision is generally in line with national guidelines and effectively extends pupils' learning. A few pupils are given extra work to improve an identified weakness.

## **MATHEMATICS**

87. Pupils' results in the 1999 national tests for seven-year-olds were well above average compared to all schools and well above compared to similar schools. Since 1996 the results have always been above average but there was a further improvement in 1999. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher level was in line with the national average. In the 1999 national tests for eleven-year-olds results were below average when compared to all schools and well below average when compared to similar schools. However this cohort of pupils had inconsistent teaching over the two previous years because of staff changes and contained more pupils on the special needs register than usual. The number of pupils attaining the higher level was below the national average. By the time the pupils leave the school there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In 1999 the results for mathematics were not as good as those in English and science.
88. Observation of lessons, examination of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that by the end of Key Stage 1 attainment is above average for seven-year-olds. The emphasis given to the quick recall of number facts, the use of different strategies for calculating numbers and the daily practice of brisk mental mathematics has developed in the pupils a high standard of numeracy. In one class, for example, pupils were adding and subtracting numbers up to 10 and some of the more able pupils were also able to add three and four numbers up to a value of 30. Pupils were also able to count in 10's, 5's and 2's and to follow the pattern of numbers. Most pupils can comfortably add and subtract numbers up to 20. Pupils are able to operate with money and have no difficulty in finding the change from 50p when working with real life money problems. They are familiar with time using half and quarter hours. Shapes like triangles, rectangles, pentagons and cuboids are instantly recognised. In one lesson pupils were using a fruit dice to collect information to build a pictogram. Other pupils made a bar graph showing the favourite drinks of the children in the class. All the pupils know about simple fraction like halves and quarters. They can work with capacity using litres and millilitres and are able to measure length using centimetre and metres. A suitable emphasis is placed on using the correct mathematical vocabulary. Pupils make good progress throughout the key stage.
89. Observation of lessons, examination of pupils' work, and discussions with the pupils and the teachers confirm that by the end of key Stage 2 attainment is above average. This big improvement compared with last year has been influenced by an emphasis on strategies to improve the pupils' ability to manipulate numbers, by taking steps to see that pupils have instant recall of tables and are able to apply the four rules of number. The Numeracy Hour has improved the pupils' ability to operate with numbers in their heads and has also added a progressive structure to the lessons. Teachers also assess the pupils thoroughly and regularly and use this information to track pupils' progress and target areas where pupils need to improve. In one class of younger pupils, for example, the pupils were able to double and halve selected numbers up to 1000 in their heads. The more able pupils were solving real life money problems which required them to add two and three digit numbers whilst the less able were adding together straightforward two digit numbers. In another class pupils knew about factors when working with multiples of 2, 5, and 10. The older pupils are able to add and subtract three and four digit numbers and are familiar with division and long multiplication. Pupils can use fractions and know the decimal and percentage equivalents. One group of pupils made a bar graph showing types of bulbs given to the school and another group interpreted information about favourite fruit on a pie chart. Pupils are familiar with scalene and isosceles triangles and know that the sum of the angles is 180 degrees. They know how to draw a variety of angles using a protractor. In discussion pupils are able to talk about probability. Some pupils were able to solve problems in their heads involving petrol consumption and the cost of a journey. The previous report indicated that the pupils' ability to manipulate numbers mentally was unsatisfactory but this is not the case now. During the inspection week some of the older pupils were involved in an investigative mathematical workshop concerned with organising a holiday abroad. This was an effective, worthwhile and interesting topic which required the pupils to use a wide range of mathematical skills which they had been taught and made a valuable contribution to their mathematical development. As a

result of all this valuable work carried out in mathematics pupils make good steady progress throughout the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at an appropriate level at both key stages. There is full access for all the pupils to the curriculum.

90. The quality of teaching in all the lessons observed was always good. The Numeracy Hour is working well and improving standards. For example in one good lesson the teacher began with a lively mental session which motivated the pupils for the rest of the lesson. Teachers have undergone extra numeracy training and their knowledge and teaching skills have increased. Most teachers have good relationships with the pupils and are able to create a good educational ethos in the classroom so that the pupils are motivated, well behaved and give of their best. Teachers assess the pupils effectively and use the findings to guide their planning in order to raise standards.
91. Mathematical skills are used across the curriculum to support other subjects. In geography, for example, pupils collect data and draw graphs to assist in their study of domestic water supply.
92. On occasions pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively, and this makes a worthwhile contribution to their social development.

## **SCIENCE**

93. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for Key Stage 2 show that pupils' overall attainment was close to the national average. An above average proportion of pupils reached level 4, the national target, but the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 was well below the national average. When compared to schools with a similar intake the overall performance of 11 year olds in science was well below average.
94. The 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 indicated that the percentage of pupils gaining level 2, the national target for seven year olds, was very high compared to both the national average and the average for schools with a similar intake. The percentage of pupils exceeding the target and reaching level 3 was below both the national average and the average for schools with a similar intake.
95. Too much should not be read into the above statistical interpretations because of the small size of the year groups in the school. Unexpected performances from just one or two pupils can make very big differences to percentage figures. There is no doubt, however, that the 1999 Key Stage 2 results were, by the school's standards, poor. This was at least partly due to discontinuities and disruptions brought about in this year group's education by staffing difficulties over a two year period. Happily these difficulties have now been resolved, and standards in science being attained by both 11 year olds and 7 year olds during the inspection were high. These findings are reinforced by the provisional results of the 2000 national assessments received by the school during the course of the inspection. Although national comparisons are not yet available the indications are that they will be well above average at the end of both key stages.
96. Observation of pupils working in lessons, scrutiny of written work completed over the course of the academic year, and discussions with pupils indicated they had gained a good knowledge and understanding of the both the physical and biological science topics listed in the National Curriculum. Year 2 pupils, for example, are conversant with the difference between primary and secondary light sources and know that sound is produced by vibrations. They demonstrate a firm grasp of experimental method when they investigate the most suitable material for wrapping parcels by carrying out "fair tests" on samples of paper and card to find out their breaking strains.
97. By the end of Key stage 2 pupils have a firm grasp of the science involved in all the topics specified by the National Curriculum. They understand the difference between balanced and unbalanced forces, and know that the scientific unit of measurement for force is the Newton. Pupils can discuss the differences between solids, liquids and gases, and some can give simple kinetic theory explanations of changes of state. Biological understanding encompasses topics such micro-organisms, food chains, human reproduction, and reproduction in plants. Pupils are familiar with a good range of materials and their uses, and can discuss the suitable of materials

for particular tasks in terms of their properties. They understand the difference between chemical and physical changes, and can give examples of each. They are able to plan and carry out scientific investigations. Written accounts of such practical work indicate that pupils are able to build up a table of accurate experimental measurements, convert the results into a graph, look for patterns in the graph and suggest explanations for such patterns. Pupils in years 5 and 6, for example, had (unknowingly) repeated the experiments of Robert Hooke and arrived at appropriate conclusions regarding the laws of elasticity.

98. There is no significant variation in attainment between pupils of different gender. Pupils on the special needs register generally achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment. This is because work is adjusted to suit their needs and they receive good support. Pupils of above average capability achieve to their potential because they are given suitably challenging work and good opportunities to engage in research and private study.
99. Overall teaching is good, and some is very good in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. No unsatisfactory science teaching was observed during the inspection. Good teaching observed in Key Stage 1 and Key stage 2 was characterised by good planning, secure subject knowledge, clarity of thought about what was to be achieved and very good class control. When pupils work in groups, either on practical or written tasks, teachers made good arrangements for pupils at different levels of attainment in the mixed age classes be challenged in line with their ability. They also make it clear that they had high expectations of what all pupils, including those with special educational needs, should achieve. Whole class teaching, both to introduce lessons and to sum up at the end, was good. Teachers were able to give clear instructions and explanations, asked pertinent questions to check pupils' understanding, and ensured that all pupils were paying attention and involved.
100. The combination of good teaching, and the good attitudes of pupils described elsewhere in this report, makes for effective learning in classes throughout the school. Standards are at least as high as at the time of the previous inspection.

## **ART**

101. The previous report stated that progress was satisfactory at both key stages and this is the case at the present time. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress at an appropriate level. In Key stage 1 pupils are introduced to a range of skills and a variety of materials. For example pupils draw portraits using soft pencils and learn how to mix paints and produce shades of the same colour. Some pupils as a result painted pictures using only shades of blue. Pupils are introduced to the use of collage and a group of pupils made attractive collages of a people dressed in a variety of clothes. Pupils also have experience of printing and used cardboard printing sticks in the shape stars to make interesting patterns. Pupils' experiment with mosaics coloured squares to make pictures and patterns which gave the pupils scope to be creative.
102. The previous report said that there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop observational drawing skills. Sketchbooks have been introduced, and are having a beneficial effect on pupils' drawing skills, but their use is not yet fully developed. There are some good examples of three dimensional art work. For example some younger pupils made some animal masks out of paper mache. In another class older pupils were making pots out of clay and each included an animal motif. Pupils took great care with these pots and applied a suitable coloured finish. Art is used to support other subjects of the curriculum. For example one class made coloured drawings of Greek vases in connection with their history project. Other pupils drew pictures and posters to illustrate their work on the Second World War. Some older pupils researched information to produce topic books about famous artists such as Van Gogh, Lowry and Leonardo de Vinci. However there are few example in school of pupils painting in the style of famous artists. Art makes a useful contribution to display which enhances the educational atmosphere in the school
103. Teaching of art overall is satisfactory. In one class where the pupils had just completed some clay pots for example a worthwhile evaluation session took place in which the teacher encouraged the pupils to evaluate their pots and explain why they had made them in a certain

way and how they thought they might be improved. However the teachers do not yet provide sufficient opportunities for the pupils to use their sketchbooks to practice and improve their skills in observational drawing. The teachers do not encourage the pupils to use information and communication technology to support the subject.

104. Art makes a satisfactory contribution to the cultural development of the pupils by introducing them to a range of artistic masterpieces, including some from other cultures.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

105. It was only possible to observe a very small amount of design and technology teaching during the inspection. Most evidence was obtained from a scrutiny of work previously completed, examination of teachers' planning, discussions with teachers and discussions with pupils. The quality of pupils' work at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is similar to that encountered in most primary schools, and standards are similar to those reported by the previous inspection.

106. In Key Stage 1 pupils experience design and making techniques with a suitable range of materials. They have recently discussed how to plan a picnic menu, and then proceeded to design, make and evaluate the quality of a range of sandwiches. Work with fabrics was linked with religious education when pupils designed and made "Joseph's Coat of Many Colours". A noteworthy initiative has recently been a homework project where infant pupils were asked, with parental assistance, to make a working model illustrating the rhyme about "Incy Wincy Spider". Some of the constructions showed considerable ingenuity in the use of recycled household containers, and were finished to a high standard. Infant pupils talked about technology activities with enthusiasm and clearly enjoy the subject. All, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress and experience a sound quality of learning.

107. Sound learning continues in Key Stage 2, where pupils attempt progressively more challenging projects with a wider range of materials. They learn techniques for making structures strong, rigid and stable, exploring various jointing techniques and gaining real satisfaction when their constructions are evaluated and found to meet design criteria. They design and make a variety of toys with moving parts, making good use of their knowledge of magnetism from science lessons and also learning how cams can convert rotary into linear motion. Food technology is not neglected. Pupils have learnt how to bake bread, and have designed, made and evaluated Easter eggs. Experiences in Key Stage 2 design and technology make a good contribution to the development of pupils' mathematical skills. They gain an appreciation of the importance of accurate measure as they transfer designs from paper to the materials with which they work.

108. Pupils' learning in both key stages is considerably assisted by their good attitudes. They cooperate effectively when working in groups, and can be trusted to take care when using tools and equipment.

109. Much indirect evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. It benefits from a well planned scheme of work which ensures an appropriate balance of activities. Good contributions to teaching are made by parent volunteers and classroom assistants.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

110. The last inspection report indicated that progress throughout the school was good, and this remains the case. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress at an appropriate level. Much of the geography in Key stage 1 is studied through the local area and pupils are familiar with maps, symbols and plans. For example, some pupils drew a plan of the classroom with co-ordinates so that items in the room such as the teacher's desk could be pinpointed. They also produced a plan of the whole school which showed how the land on which the school is built was used. Pupils recognise a map of the world and can point out the countries that make up Great Britain on a map of the United Kingdom. The older pupils compare their own locality, Brandesholme, with the area around Southport which they are going to visit for some

fieldwork. Pupils were observed using their acquired skills to study maps, plans and pictures of Southport in preparation for their visit. In order to encourage pupils to develop an interest in places around the world and to analyse differences the school is arranging for a toy bear called Barnaby to be taken on holiday or visits with pupils or people connected to the school. Barnaby then sends postcards describing the places he visits, for example the Grampians, to the school.

111. In Key stage 2 the pupils make a wider study of the local area and compare this with an similar area in another part of the country. For example the older pupils went on a residential visit to Northumberland to carry out field studies and then compared the locality with Brandesholme. They found, for example that Northumberland is a much more rural area with lots of small farms with very different land use and fewer cars. Another observation was that Northumberland is influenced by being near the sea whereas Brandesholme is a long way from the coast. During the study of their own locality pupils were concerned about the care of the environment and made a study of parked and flowing traffic. Because the pupils thought the traffic was damaging the amenities of the environment they wrote a letter of concern to the local council. Some of the younger pupils were studying the weather and in one class they were looking at how the weather influences peoples lives. To emphasis this point the pupils were pretending to go on holiday abroad to find the sun but wrote postcards to say how the atrocious weather had ruined their holiday. By the end of the key stage the pupils have a wide knowledge of geography. For example, they can discuss the importance of the European Union and indicate on a map the main countries that make up that organisation. They have developed good geographical skills and are familiar with maps and understand co-ordinates, compass points and scales. Topic work completed at home makes a valuable contribution to the good standard of geography in school, e.g. How French People Live.
112. Teaching overall is good at both key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge of geography and their own interest motivates the pupils. As a result pupils concentrate well on their work and time is not wasted. In one class good quality teaching encouraged pupils to use their acquired literacy skills to write about the domestic water supply. Numeracy skills are also used to support the subject, for example, in the preparation of data to construct a graph showing the various uses of water. The majority of the teachers have a good relationship with the pupils and as a result are able to create an effective educational atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils behave well, concentrate on their work and give of their best. This together with effective planning and suitable methods leads to worthwhile and interesting lessons for the pupils.
113. Resources for geography are satisfactory although a wider range of ordnance survey maps is required. Insufficient use is made of information technology to support the subject. Geography makes a worthwhile contribution to the social and cultural development of the pupils through the study of localities at home and abroad.

## **HISTORY**

114. Because it was not possible to see any history lessons during the inspection judgements are based on the scrutiny of pupils' work, display and discussions with pupils and staff. The last report stated that pupils progress was satisfactory throughout the school. Progress is now good in both key stages. Pupils study a well balanced range of topics in order to understand how and why people lived differently in the past and also learn about people and events to give them some knowledge of their heritage. In Key Stage 1 pupils have a clear understanding of events happening in the past rather than in the present. They compare what life was like when their grandparents were children compared with life today. For example, they discovered that their grandmothers only listened to the radio when they were children because television was not available. Food too was different because whereas pupils today eat yoghurt, crisps and sliced bread, when grandma was a child she had homemade bread and tapioca pudding. Pupils also found out that supermarkets have replaced the corner shop. Pupils also compared school life now with the strict, boring schools that their grannies attended. The lives of famous people and events are also studied. For example, the pupils learn about Guy Fawkes and relate this to their enjoyment of Bonfire Night.
115. In Key Sage 2 the pupils study a wide range of topics and in doing so acquire good investigative skills and interesting historical knowledge. For example the younger pupils study the

Ancient Egyptian civilisation and compare how their way of life differed from life today. They look at the food they eat, the clothes they wear and their different way of writing. The older pupils are taught about Henry the Eighth and the Tudors and also about the Second World War. They learn how Hitler came to power and used air raids in an attempt to defeat Great Britain. The pupils handled and wrote about ration books and identity cards. Some pupils made a list of items they would take into the air raid shelter. Other pupils pretended to be refugees and wrote letters letting their parents know how they were settling into their new homes. To make the history more alive and interesting a local resident was invited into the school to recall what it was like when he was a child during the war. The older pupils worked on a Millennium Tapestry using the theme of sport and leisure. This was incorporated in a much larger tapestry and displayed in the Millennium Dome. Pupils also take part in living history and on one recent occasion turned their classroom into a strict Victorian classroom for the day. To make history more realistic they make visits to historical sites, for example Hadrian's Wall. Presentation of work, including diagrams and drawings, is good and is an indication of the pupils' interest in the subject.

116. Resources are adequate although the school intends to obtain a wider range of artefacts to cover all the topics taught. Information and communication technology is not used frequently enough to support the subject. However the school is aware of this and hopes to improve the range of software once the proposed computer suite is installed. Literary skills are improved by the varied extended writing used in the subject. Numeracy skills are enhanced throughout the subject, for example, by work involving dates and timelines. The subject enables pupils to develop an appreciation of their own cultural heritage, and to understand how moral and social matters have affected society.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

117. It was not possible to observe any lessons in information technology during the inspection, neither were pupils seen using computers to any significant extent during lessons.. Evidence was obtained by talking to pupils, examining previously completed work, discussing the subject with teachers and scrutinising teacher's plans and records.
118. The broadly average levels of attainment described in the previous report have been maintained, but the school has not made the improvements observed in many primary schools over the last four years. This is because there have been other priorities and it has not been possible to acquire sufficient hardware and software to do justice to the subject. Nevertheless, by the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key stage 2 most pupils are reaching the targets specified by the National Curriculum. The good achievements of some pupils, however, are more to do with their experiences of information technology at home than at school. Pupils' skills in word processing, data processing and using information technology to obtain information are satisfactory, but they get too few opportunities to use them either in specific information technology exercises or in lessons in other subjects. Insufficient work in English is drafted and redrafted on the computer screen. In mathematics, science and geography computer programmes are rarely used to produce graphs. The potential to use CD-ROMs as convenient sources of information is not fully exploited in other subjects, and the school is not yet connected to the Internet.
119. Teaching strategies are reasonable effective, but are insufficiently used. All the teachers are, however, taking pains to become conversant with the potential of information as a useful learning aid. The school expects to join the National Grid for learning in the near future, and receive grants which will enable considerably better resources to be purchased, and the overall quality of education to be improved.

## **MUSIC**

120. A significant minority of parents expressed concern about the provision for music in the school. Inspectors agree it is no longer "a particular strength of the school" as described in the previous inspection report. This is because very considerable staffing changes in a small complement of teachers have resulted in some musical expertise and enthusiasm being lost. In addition, the emergence of national initiatives, such as the Literacy Hour and the Numeracy Hour

has meant music has quite correctly not been a high priority in the school's recent developmental planning. Nevertheless the subject does not represent a serious weakness in the school's provision, and the quality of pupils' work is similar to that in most primary schools.

121. None of the current staff have qualifications in music, although most are interested in the subject and some can play an instrument. The school makes good arrangements for a visiting pianist to accompany hymn practices. Instrumental tuition is also available for those pupils whose parents choose to take advantage of the local authority's peripatetic music service.
122. The school has wisely adopted a commercially produced scheme which is followed in all classes. This scheme meets National Curriculum requirements, and contains an abundance of recorded music to accompany children's singing. It also provides a comprehensive selection of classical and modern music, including some from other cultures, for pupils to listen to and appraise. It incorporates opportunities for pupils to compose music, and introduces them to the elements of musical notation.
123. The teachers have worked conscientiously to become familiar with the scheme and use it for weekly music lessons with their classes. The quality of teaching resulting from this system is usually at least satisfactory, and often good, in both Key Stages. Lessons are lively and incorporate a good variety of activities. Pupils respond well and effective learning takes place.
124. Key Stage 1 pupils make sound progress and by the end of the key stage most sing tunefully and with a good sense of rhythm. They have benefited from opportunities to listen and respond to a wide range of music. They are starting to compose accompaniments, using a variety of percussion instruments, to simple tunes.
125. Sound progress in Key Stage 2 results in year 6 pupils becoming competent at two-part singing. Throughout the key stage pupils become capable of increasingly complex compositions, and are able to record such compositions, using non-standard, and in some cases standard, musical notation. When compositions are performed in class attentive listening and spontaneous applause exemplify the good attitudes of pupils towards the subject. Six Key Stage 2 pupils are currently taking advantage of opportunities to learn to play violins or flutes, and some of these are reaching high standards of performance

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

126. Due to the school timetable it was only possible to see one dance lesson during the inspection. Teachers' planning shows that all aspects of the curriculum are covered including swimming. Achievement in dance is similar to that of pupils in most schools. There is insufficient evidence to support the good standards identified in the last inspection. Swimming records identify all pupils in year 6 can swim 25 metres. This is a good achievement by the pupils.
127. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils express themselves through dance. Their movements portray plants growing. Pupils' response to music is satisfactory. It was better to slow music when movements were controlled and reflected the quality of the music. Pupils were less successful reacting to faster music when pupils' speed became more important than their movements and pupils did not listen as carefully to the music.
128. Only a very small amount of games was seen in Key Stage 2 and pupils in Year 3 showed satisfactory skills when running, hopping and aiming a quoit into a hoop.
129. Teaching seen was generally satisfactory. A variety of activities are included including opportunities to work with a partner, a small group and a team. This leads to pupils learning the necessary skills of collaboration and working with others. Demonstrations are used effectively to show good practice. However, pupils are not allowed to practise following these demonstrations and this means they do not have the chance to reflect and improve their performances. Time is not always used well. For example, an over reliance on the taped music in dance led to activities being rushed and insufficient attention given to improvement before moving on to the next activity. Similarly, in the small amount of games seen pupils had to wait too long for a turn and had insufficient time to practise and improve their skills.

130. A wide range of extra-curricular activities extends the curriculum. The school enters several competitive competitions including rounders, short tennis, netball, and cricket. The football team had a successful season and reached the semi-final in the Bury Catholic School's competition. This was a commendable achievement for a small school. Pupils in Year 6 have an opportunity to go on a residential visit and take part in a range of exciting adventurous activities. These activities make a very positive contribution to pupils' social skills as well as extending their physical skills.