

INSPECTION REPORT

St MARY'S R C JUNIOR SCHOOL

Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104816

Headteacher: Mrs B A Livesey

Reporting inspector: Mr D S Roberts
1743

Dates of inspection: 5 – 8 March 2001

Inspection number: 197435

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Barn Way Newton-le-Willows Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Canon T G Naughton
Date of previous inspection:	September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1743	D S Roberts	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? School's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19669	F Kennedy	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
17913	B Frost	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17767	S Power	Team inspector	Science Geography History Special educational needs	
23453	C Cressey	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized junior school, which provides education for boys and girls from seven to eleven years of age. It currently provides full-time education for 244 pupils, comprising of 129 boys and 115 girls. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The intake represents the full range of ability, but attainment levels on entry to Year 3 are generally above those found nationally. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is below the national average. There are 39 pupils on the register. Currently 16 of them are at stages 3 to 5, including four who have statements of specific needs. The needs of those at stages 3 to 5 are for moderate and severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, speech and communication and visual impairment, and physical disadvantage. Nearly two per cent of pupils are from families belonging to racial minority groups. Less than one per cent of the school population speak English as an additional language, which is low compared to that found nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, which has been very successful in maintaining and building on the high standards of literacy and numeracy apparent at the time of the last inspection. It takes good care of its pupils, and is very successful in promoting their spiritual and moral development. The quality of teaching is predominantly good and often of high quality, particularly during lessons in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. This is a major factor in the very good progress made by pupils in extending key skills in these important areas. The school delivers a good, relevant curriculum, although there is some inconsistency in the progress made by high ability pupils in some aspects of scientific enquiry. The headteacher, governors and staff co-operate very successfully to create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere, and to promote the pupils' academic and wider development. The school receives a basic income which is about average, and it provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils, at all levels of ability, make very good progress and achieve particularly high standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).
- The quality of teaching is predominantly good and often very good, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT.
- Very good provision is made for the pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate very good attitudes towards their work and their behaviour is consistently of a high standard.
- The school is very well led and managed.
- The pupils enjoy school, and this is reflected in their very high attendance rate.

What could be improved

- The consistency of progress made by high ability pupils in some aspects of scientific enquiry.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has been very successful in maintaining and building on the high standards apparent at the time of the last inspection. Although national statistics for the last four years indicate that the rate of improvement is below that found nationally, there has been a significant upturn since 1999 and this was confirmed by the most recent national test results. Standards in English and mathematics have been improved by the highly effective implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and significant improvement has been achieved in raising the standards of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology. The quality of teaching has continued to improve. The proportion of lessons judged to be very good or better has increased from 35 per cent at the time of the last inspection to 42 per cent. Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues identified in the last inspection report. Subject co-ordinators are now engaged more purposefully in monitoring standards and provision in their subjects, and those responsible for national priority areas of literacy, numeracy and

ICT have contributed significantly towards the progress made in their subjects. In addition, policy statements and schemes of work have been produced for nearly all subjects.

More recently the school's involvement in educational initiatives relating to the award of "Beacon School" status has resulted in further improvements. The requirement for staff to reflect on practice before sharing ideas with other schools has supported their own professional development. The school is well placed to continue improving by building on its strengths and addressing the areas for improvement identified by the inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	C	A	A
mathematics	A	D	B	A
science	B	E	C	C

Key

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

The table shows that in 2000 the pupils' performance in English was well above the average for those in all schools. In mathematics, their performance was above the average for all schools and well above the average for similar schools. In science, they performed in line with pupils in all and similar schools. The pupils' overall performance was well above that of those in schools with similar characteristics.

Inspection findings are generally consistent with national test results. They indicate that by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are well above those found nationally in English and mathematics. In science, standards are at least in line with the national average and many pupils demonstrate an above average scientific knowledge and understanding, but high ability pupils in some classes are capable of making better progress in some aspects of experimental and investigative work. In information and communication technology, standards are above the national expectations. In all other subjects, pupils achieve standards which are at least appropriate for their age and a significant proportion exceed the national expectations in aspects of physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils, throughout the school, demonstrate very good attitudes towards their school work. They show interest and enthusiasm, respond well to challenging tasks and are keen to take part in all school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is of a high standard in classrooms and about the school. The standard of behaviour in school assemblies is excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils show confidence and a mature sense of responsibility. They demonstrate this when working independently and in groups. They show respect for other pupils' values and beliefs.
Attendance	Very good, well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	n/a	n/a	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.

During the inspection, all lessons were at least satisfactory. In 83 per cent of lessons, the teaching was good or better, 42 per cent was very good or better and 6 per cent of lessons were excellent.

Teaching is nearly always of high quality in English and mathematics. The very good progress made by pupils in extending their literacy and numeracy skills is a strong feature in their learning. Good and often high quality teaching in information and communication technology promotes good standards. Science teaching is generally good, enabling pupils to make particularly good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding, but is less consistent in developing some of the skills involved in scientific enquiry. In other subjects, teaching is generally of a good standard. Throughout the school, support staff make an important contribution towards the pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good, relevant curriculum, which places strong emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Information and communication technology skills are very well promoted through relevant curricular activities. However, there is some inconsistency in the emphasis placed on developing some of the skills involved in scientific enquiry.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision throughout the school. The setting arrangements for mathematics in Year 6 help teachers to set appropriately challenging work. Teachers and support staff co-operate very effectively to meet pupils' needs in all subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	High quality provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development, through imaginative whole-school assemblies and work across the curriculum. Social and cultural development successfully promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development and their academic progress. Good provision of educational guidance and support for pupils. Good procedures in place for monitoring welfare and safety and for child protection. Arrangements for promoting attendance and good behaviour are highly effective. Arrangements for assessment are generally effective and particularly effective in mathematics and English. Some scope for improving the use of information to inform planning in science, and for monitoring progress of individual pupils in subjects other than the core subjects.

A very good partnership has been developed with parents, the great majority of whom would feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Perceptive and purposeful leadership by the headteacher. Works very effectively with governors to provide clear vision and direction for the work of the school. Co-ordinators for key subjects provide very effective leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	New governing body is successful in ensuring that statutory requirements are met. Members show good awareness of school's strengths and priorities for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good use is made of local and national comparative information to evaluate and set targets for improvement in the core subjects. The headteacher provides governors with regular information about performance.
The strategic use of resources	Very effective school development planning enables money to be spent wisely on educational priorities. All resources are managed efficiently. Very good use made of grants for specific purposes.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children like school. • The children make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • The teaching is good. • Children get the right amount of homework. • They would feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant minority of parents feel that the school does not provide a sufficiently wide range of learning opportunities outside the classroom.

The inspectors agree with parents' positive views about the school. They find the provision of extra-curricular activities to be good, although most opportunities are for older pupils. The headteacher and governing body are anxious to continue strengthening provision and will take the views expressed by all parents into account when reviewing current arrangements.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 The school has been very successful in maintaining and building on the high standards apparent at the time of the last inspection. Pupils, at all levels of ability, make very good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills during their time in the school.
- 2 Comparative information, based on the Year 2000 National Curriculum test results, indicates that the performance of pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average in English and above average in mathematics. Their performance in science is in line with the national average. More significantly, in comparison with pupils in schools with similar characteristics, the pupils' performance is well above average in English and mathematics, and in line with the average in science.
- 3 National test results for the four years up to 2000, show the school's overall rate of improvement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science to be below the national trend. However, closer examination indicates a significant upturn in its performance since 1999. During the same period, there was no significant variation in the performance of pupils in terms of gender.
- 4 Inspection findings for English and mathematics are consistent with the national test results. They indicate that standards are well above those found nationally, and that pupils achieve very good standards in relation to their prior attainment. In science, overall standards are at least in line with those found nationally, and many pupils demonstrate scientific knowledge and understanding which is above average for their age. These findings are generally consistent with national test results. Pupils make generally good progress, although in some classes high attaining pupils are capable of making better progress in some aspects of scientific enquiry.
- 5 In English, standards are well above those found nationally in reading and writing. The successful implementation of the National Strategy for Literacy has a positive effect on standards. The development of literacy skills is given high priority, and considerable emphasis is placed on creating opportunities for pupils to use these skills in a wide range of contexts and for a variety of purposes. These are important factors in the very good progress made by pupils at all levels of attainment in extending their skills in reading and writing. Relatively less emphasis is placed on the development of speaking and listening skills, but the great majority of pupils achieve standards which are at least appropriate for their age by the end of the key stage.
- 6 In mathematics, pupils at all levels of attainment make very good progress in all aspects of the subject. The pupils' good grasp of tables and number bonds form the basis for the high standards in the subject. They demonstrate a high level of accuracy in computational work, and these skills are particularly apparent during the introductory activities to numeracy lessons. The great majority of pupils make good progress in problem solving work and, by Year 6, most demonstrate confidence in using a wide range of strategies to reach their answers.

- 7 In science, pupils at all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. In some classes, they show good skills in experimental and investigative work. However, this is not a consistent feature. In some classes, insufficient emphasis is placed on important aspects of the work, such as interpreting information and explaining the results of investigations, and this particularly restricts the progress of potentially high achievers.
- 8 Since the last inspection, the school has made significant progress in improving standards in information and communication technology (ICT), which are now above the national expectations. Pupils make particularly good progress in communicating and handling information. The very good use made of the computer suite contributes greatly towards the good achievement, in relation to their prior attainment, by pupils at all levels of ability.
- 9 Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. In Year 6, they benefit significantly from arrangements to set pupils in classes according to their prior attainment for mathematics. In literacy and numeracy lessons, well-conceived individual education plans, which list precise and measurable targets, and good levels of support provided by teaching and support staff, are important factors in the very good progress made by pupils in this category in English and mathematics. Pupils of different racial groups and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress during their time in the school.
- 10 Standards are at least in line with the national expectations in all other subjects. A significant minority of pupils exceed the national expectation in some aspects of physical education, and the great majority are able to swim 25 metres or more unaided before leaving the school at the end of Year 6.
- 11 Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are of a high standard. The successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has a positive effect on pupils' progress. The pupils' skills are promoted very effectively during the daily literacy and numeracy lessons and in work in other subjects of the curriculum. The governors set appropriate targets for improvements in English and mathematics after careful analyses of the ability range in each year group. These targets are subject to regular review in the light of national test results and teacher assessments.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 12 The school has successfully maintained the high standards of behaviour which were apparent at the time of the last inspection. Behaviour is very good in lessons, in the dining room and in the playground. It has not been necessary to exclude any pupil in the past year.
- 13 The pupils' behaviour in assembly is exemplary. During the inspection, in an assembly with a Lenten theme, led by one of the Year 5 classes, the pupils listened with considerable reverence to those taking part in the drama and everyone joined in the singing with real enjoyment. A very moving sense of awe and wonder was created when the whole school used signing to accompany one of the hymns.

- 14 The pupils enjoy school. Their enthusiasm for all school activities is reflected in the creative effort they put into their work, their punctuality and their very good attendance. There has been good improvement in attendance since the last inspection. The attendance rate for the year 1999/2000 was very high in comparison with other schools and the rate of unauthorised absence for the same year was below that found nationally. The pupils arrive punctually in the mornings and lessons start promptly.
- 15 The pupils' very good attitudes to learning contribute significantly to the standards they achieve. During lessons the vast majority sustain high levels of concentration. The pupils draw successfully on knowledge gained in previous lessons to answer questions and enter into class discussion. Pupils often ask thoughtful and perceptive questions, demonstrating a real interest and sense of enquiry, for example in science and mathematics. The vast majority of the pupils pay attention to what others are saying, sensitive to other people's feelings and respecting viewpoints which are different from their own. Throughout the school and in all subjects the pupils take great care with the presentation of their written work. For example they draw and label graphs neatly in mathematics and they try hard with their handwriting in lessons across the curriculum and with homework.
- 16 Relationships at all levels are very good. The pupils are well mannered, friendly and helpful towards one another. A particularly strong feature of lessons is the way in which the pupils work co-operatively with a partner, for example in information and communication technology, taking it in turns to use the keyboard and mouse. In other lessons, for example English and history, they share books sensibly and are always ready to help and learn from their partner. Good teamwork is a strong element of lessons in physical education. In a written evaluation of an outdoor adventurous activities lesson the pupils showed a very good understanding of how working co-operatively as a team had contributed to their achievements.
- 17 The pupils move around the school quietly and calmly. They take care of their own and other people's property. The playground areas and the school playing field are entirely free from litter and inside the building there is a sense of order and purpose. Classrooms and cloakrooms are clean and tidy and the many colourful displays in open areas of the building are treated with respect. The pupils are helpful in giving directions to visitors and eager to point out interesting features of the work which is on display. A group of older pupils explained that the lovely display based on "The Wizard of Oz" represented a recent assembly linked to work on 'journeys' in the programme of study for religious education.
- 18 Throughout the school, the pupils show a willingness to help their teachers by collecting in books and other resources, getting out and putting away the apparatus in PE lessons, returning registers to the school office and tidying the classroom. The pupils enjoy helping in this way.
- 19 The Year 6 pupils set a good example to the rest of the school in their behaviour, their general appearance and the way in which they take responsibility for monitorial duties outside the classroom. They help at lunchtime in a variety of ways, both in the dining room and in assisting with the supervision of pupils in the cloakrooms and the library area. Their sense of duty is exemplified by the way in which they appoint someone else to take their place if they are needed elsewhere for football practice or other extra-curricular activities. Elected representatives from each class serve on the school council. This is well organised and provides a useful forum for pupils to express their ideas and contribute to school development. The council is currently

considering the introduction of a school tuck shop and, in the past, it has influenced the governors' decisions on a number of issues, for example school uniform. Girls are now allowed to wear tailored trousers for school.

- 20 Fund raising for charity is an important part of school life. The school works closely with all three parish churches to raise money for the Catholic Association for Overseas Development (CAFOD). The pupils and their families also give generously to the Kosovo shoe box appeal. These activities strongly uphold Christian principles of caring for people in need and they provide valuable opportunities for the pupils to develop their understanding of citizenship.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 21 The quality of teaching is predominately good and often very good or better. All of the lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory. The teaching was judged to be good or better in 83 per cent of the lessons, very good or better in 42 per cent, and six per cent of lessons were excellent.
- 22 The highly successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has a very positive impact on the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. Considerable improvements have been achieved in the teaching of information and communication technology since the last inspection.
- 23 The teaching of English is generally of very good quality. All of the lessons observed were of at least good quality and more than 50 per cent were judged to be very good. High quality teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning, enabling the great majority of pupils, at all levels of attainment, to make very good progress in extending their reading and writing skills. The consistent implementation of the National Strategy for Literacy enables teachers to provide appropriately challenging work for pupils at all levels of ability. The use of carefully selected texts for the introductory whole-class element of lessons helps to capture pupils interest, and very good questioning skills challenges their thinking. The development of spelling, punctuation and grammar is given high priority, and teachers successfully ensure that pupils use these skills correctly when engaged in extended writing. This enables pupils to make significant progress in extending their literacy skills. Teachers and support staff co-operate very effectively to meet the needs of all pupils, and this is an important factor in the very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
- 24 In mathematics, most of the teaching is of high quality. Over 80 per cent of lessons observed were very good or better and 25 per cent were excellent. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is consistently of high quality, and the arrangements to group pupils in Year 6 in four classes according to ability is proving very successful. It is enabling teachers to set work which is appropriately challenging and consequently promoting very good progress by pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs. Throughout the school, conscientious planning and preparation enables teachers to be secure in their subject knowledge. Mental work is conducted in a brisk and lively manner, so that pupils are enthused and well motivated. Clear objectives and good lesson organisation encourage the great majority of pupils to work productively during group activities.
- 25 The quality of teaching in science is generally good. In 80 per cent of lessons the teaching was at least good and 40 per cent were very good. Teachers are particularly successful in extending pupils' scientific knowledge, and this is reflected in the good progress which most pupils make in this aspect of the work. Most teachers achieve a

good balance between direct teaching and creating relevant practical activities, and this is effective in maintaining a high level of interest by pupils. However, in some classes teachers are less effective in developing pupils' skills in scientific enquiry. In such instances, insufficient opportunities are created for pupils to develop their skills through independent investigative work, which they plan and carry out for themselves.

- 26 In information and communication technology, teaching is generally good and often of very good quality. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The establishment of a computer suite is a major factor in improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. It is now possible for teachers to teach the whole class together, when appropriate, and this contributes towards a rapid pace in learning. Class teachers and specialist ICT support staff work together very effectively to provide a good level of support for the pupils. A good balance is achieved between clear explanation and demonstration, to introduce new skills and tasks, and opportunities for pupils to work on the computer. The very good use of ICT to support work in English and mathematics is a particularly good feature in the work.
- 27 Throughout the curriculum, teachers make generally good provision for pupils at all levels of attainment and respond positively to the varying needs of boys and girls and pupils from racial minority groups. The teaching of pupils with special needs is good throughout the curriculum and very good in English, mathematics and ICT. The effective co-operation between teachers and support staff is a strong feature which helps to promote very good progress by pupils in English and mathematics. Their work is supported by good quality individual education plans, which enable pupils to work systematically towards the realistic targets set for them. There is scope, however, for strengthening current arrangements by incorporating provision for pupils with special educational needs into the short-term lesson planning of class teachers.
- 28 In other subjects, the quality of teaching is more variable, although generally good. Good teaching in physical education enables some pupils to exceed the national expectations in games and gymnastics. In some non-core subjects (subjects other than English, mathematics, science and ICT), the school is still in the early stages of implementing new curricular requirements introduced at the beginning of the current academic year. There is some inconsistency in the way new schemes of work are being taught in geography, history, art and design and design and technology. All of the teaching observed in these lessons was at least satisfactory, but the quality was not as good as the teaching in the core subjects. Despite this there were some strong features. Class management was consistently strong, promoting good behaviour by pupils and contributing towards very good relationships throughout the school.
- 29 The school has been successful in building on the good standard of teaching apparent at the time of the last inspection. This is reflected in the proportion of lessons judged to be very good or better, which has increased from 35 per cent in the last inspection to 42 per cent. This has been achieved despite staffing problems, including a delay in appointing a substantive deputy headteacher. Significant progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching in ICT, which is reflected in the improving standards achieved by pupils.

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

- 30 The school provides a good quality curriculum, which has many strong features and is appropriately broad, balanced and relevant. It meets successfully the requirements of the National Curriculum. Despite recent staff changes and a vacancy at deputy headteacher level, all staff have worked tirelessly and very successfully to implement the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. High quality displays in classrooms and around the school generally reflect the depth of the curriculum. They also emphasise the school's strong desire, set out in the mission statement, to provide a Catholic education which helps the pupils to maximise their potential.
- 31 Since the last inspection, the school has installed a new computer suite. This is of high quality and provides the pupils with rich, purposeful and hugely interesting experiences and skills which help to equip them for the future. The provision is enhanced by the decision to appoint a technician who provides staff and pupils with very effective support in ICT and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' learning.
- 32 All of the National Curriculum subjects are taught. Most of them include a wide range of learning opportunities, but there is scope for placing greater emphasis on developing the skills of scientific enquiry in some classes.
- 33 Through a detailed programme of staff training and the use of carefully chosen resources, effective strategies are in place to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. In addition, teachers and classroom assistants are deployed to advantage. This makes optimum use of staff expertise and provides the pupils with a favourable adult to pupil ratio, which gives those at different levels of attainment much carefully targeted support for their learning, especially in literacy and numeracy lessons.
- 34 Good provision is made for extra-curricular activities, mainly of a sporting nature, and teachers give much of their own time helping the pupils to enhance their skills. The activities are open to boys and girls and are well attended. A French club is proving very popular with the pupils.
- 35 The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils' spiritual development is promoted very successfully throughout the school. This provision is supported by the strong Catholic ethos which pervades the school and by the school's clear commitment to Christian principles and values. All staff value the pupils' ideas, beliefs and cultural traditions. They provide numerous relevant experiences which contribute greatly to the pupils' spiritual development and positively enhance their learning. These occur through a variety of well planned experiences throughout the curriculum. For example, in a Year 5 music lesson focusing on duration, the pupils listened to and reflected on part of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. A sense of awe and spirituality pervaded as the pupils described the feelings which the music evoked.
- 36 In complying with the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship, class and school assemblies are reverent occasions which do much to cultivate the spiritual and moral dimensions of the pupils' learning. For example, in a class assembly, Year 5 pupils took part in a short drama production which explored through seed growth, the awe and wonder of new life. In school assemblies, the pupils' good quality singing, enhanced by quite inspirational piano playing accompaniment, reaches out and reflects the life and work of the school.

- 37 The school's clear moral code and the very good relationships which exist at all levels throughout the school provide a strong framework for the pupils' moral and social development. All of the adults working in the school provide good role models. The pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. They are helped to consider how their actions and behaviour might affect others in the community. Issues such as kindness, friendship and caring are explored effectively through story and drama. The school places much emphasis on the pupils' successes in their academic and personal achievements. These are always recognised and valued.
- 38 The school provides many opportunities for the pupils' social development. The pupils have numerous opportunities to develop responsibility, self-confidence and independence. For example, this occurs through the School Council which has persuaded staff and governors, as part of equality of opportunity, that girls should be allowed to wear trousers. The very good relationships throughout the school enable the pupils to feel comfortable when discussing sensitive issues which concern them. In lessons, paired and small group work make a significant contribution to the pupils' social development. The pupils are helped to consider the thoughts and feelings of others and to co-operate productively when working together. The importance the school places on the development of mutual respect and the establishment of good relationships is a major factor which contributes to the pupils' social development. Such provision is evident in extra-curricular activities at lunch times and when visitors come to the school. The pupils are helped towards a sense of citizenship through fund raising activities. For example, much money has been raised recently for the Catholic Association For Overseas Development.
- 39 Since the last inspection, the school has improved its provision for the pupils' cultural development. Very good quality displays, books, visitors invited to the school and planned work in many subjects make a valuable contribution to this dimension.
- 40 Subjects such as history and geography provide pupils with an insight into the significance of ancient cultures and their effect on present day life. Through studying coal mining and train building industries that were once instrumental in developing their own town, the pupils are helped to appreciate the richness of the past and its impact on the present day. In art and music, the pupils are introduced to the work of famous people from our own and other cultures. In religious education lessons, the pupils are helped to broaden their knowledge and understanding of other religions and important festivals, including Divali, Eid and the Chinese New Year.
- 41 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and the school complies fully with the Code of Practice. There are very good procedures for identifying the pupils who need extra support and the co-ordinator liaises closely with the infant school in order to ensure continuity of provision. The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs have been improved since the time of the last inspection. They now make very clear the targets that have been set to meet the needs of the pupils and the means by which they will be achieved. The targets set are specific and measurable and the progress made by the pupils towards them is reviewed at regular intervals. The parents are kept informed at all stages and a strong feature of the individual education plans is the information given to parents about how they can help their children to achieve their targets. The pupils with special educational needs are given good quality classroom support, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. There is a sufficient level of support staff for the numbers of pupils and their deployment is effective in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are able to take a full part in the lessons.

- 42 Good provision is made for pupils for whom English is an additional language. They are fully involved in and appropriately extended by all aspects of the curriculum. The school is able to draw on extensive support provided by the local education authority when necessary.
- 43 The governors' policy for equality of opportunity is implemented effectively throughout the school. All pupils, irrespective of gender, race or religion, have equal access to the curriculum. The range of good quality learning resources reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Through their use and careful planning, pupils are helped to develop positive attitudes towards other cultures and religions. This occurs often, through the use of well chosen literacy texts and also through other subjects, including art, music, history and geography. During lessons, teacher take care to involve all pupils, through well targeted questions and a high level of interaction during group tasks. Support for pupils of different levels of ability is a strong feature of the work in English and mathematics. The work is very well planned and appropriately challenging.
- 44 Staffing difficulties have contributed towards a delay in implementing fully all of the curricular changes introduced at the start of the current academic year. In addition, timetabling arrangements for some subjects, such as art and design, and design and technology present difficulties in achieving the same degree of quality as is apparent, for instance, in the core subjects.
- 45 In each class, the pupils' personal and social development is promoted successfully. Throughout the school, an effective health education programme is taught and includes appropriate attention to drug misuse and sex education. The pupils are taught essential facts and provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to make informed choices, now and in the future.
- 46 The school is successful in supporting the pupils' learning through the good links it has established with the local community. For example, Year 4 pupils gained much from the expertise of a visitor who brought in a range of Greek artefacts as part of their history work. In addition, the school organises a relevant programme of visits in the locality and further afield. For example, Year 3 visited the Roman exhibition in Chester and Year 6 enjoyed a trip to Eden Camp in Yorkshire as part of their World War II studies.
- 47 Strong links are well established with St Mary's Infant School and with the local secondary school to which most pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. Well conceived induction procedures enable Year 2 pupils to transfer confidently to this school. Similar procedures are in place prior to Year 6 pupils transferring to secondary education. For example, the 11 year olds, visit the secondary school to sample a variety of lessons prior to their move. In addition, many take part in a summer school which is organised in the holidays. A smooth system is well established for the transfer of appropriate records and attainment data.

- 48 Since the last inspection, the school has developed the curriculum to take account of the latest requirements. The range of the pupils' learning experiences has broadened and the pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 49 The school provides a good level of care for its pupils and is successful in ensuring their welfare, health and safety. Child protection procedures are good, adhering to guidelines provided by the local education authority. Regular attendance and punctuality are strongly encouraged. Since the last inspection the school has made improvements to the arrangements for monitoring attendance and these are now good. The school works closely with the pastoral care assistant from the nearby Catholic Technology College who continues to give strong support in helping to follow up concerns about irregular attendance by visiting pupils in their homes. The school prospectus and the home-school agreement emphasise the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and parents are contacted at an early stage if an individual pupil's record of attendance is giving cause for concern. The school's efforts in encouraging good attendance are reflected in a rate of attendance which is very high in comparison with other schools and a rate of unauthorised absence which is below the national average.
- 50 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are generally good and particularly good in English and mathematics. A carefully planned programme of statutory and non-statutory tests are set throughout the school. The results are carefully analysed and used effectively to set challenging targets for improvements. The arrangements to track pupils' progress in English and mathematics as they move through the year groups are a good feature. They help the school to extend fully pupils at all levels of ability. The arrangements also contribute towards the assessment information used to inform future planning and teaching, and ensures that pupils are set appropriate work in the subjects. In science, although appropriate assessment procedures are in place, the use of information to inform future planning is not so effective, and this means that some pupils are not always extended fully.
- 51 The monitoring and supporting of pupils' academic progress are carried out very effectively in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but are less consistent in other subjects where new curricular requirements were introduced at the beginning of the current academic year. The school recognises this as a priority to be addressed.
- 52 Procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development are good. The Christian ethos of the school is central to all of its work and the pupils are taught to care for one another inside school and to reach out to the wider community through fund raising for charity, in co-operation with the three parish churches. Throughout the school, consistent attention is given to pupils' personal and social development. This helps pupils to appreciate different patterns of friendship and learn how to deal with difficulties which sometimes arise between friends.
- 53 The school has a very positive approach to behaviour management. Hard work, good manners and caring, helpful attitudes are rewarded consistently with a wide range of rewards such as stars, smiley face badges, applause and certificates. A 'best class' award encourages good teamwork. The pupils respond positively to this approach and behaviour in lessons and around the school is of a very high standard. Each class has a set of 'Do s and Don'ts' drawn up by the pupils themselves. These are displayed prominently, and often very imaginatively, in classrooms, useful reminders

of what constitutes good behaviour.

- 54 Relationships throughout the school are very good. The programme of study for religious education places great emphasis on the importance of friendship and what it means to be gentle, kind and forgiving. The small minority of pupils who have difficulty in following the code of conduct are sensitively supported by their teachers and the support staff. Where necessary, individual education plans are drawn up for them in accordance with the school's special educational needs policy. Since the last inspection the school has implemented a formal anti-bullying policy, documented as part of the policy for pupil care and discipline. The school continues to investigate alleged incidents carefully.
- 55 Links with the Infants' school and the Catholic Technology College to which most of the pupils transfer at 11+ are very good. This helps to facilitate a smooth transition for the pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. The school nurse provides very good support for the work of the school. She interviews each of the Year 6 pupils individually, with their parents if they so wish, giving them the chance to share any worries or concerns they may have and so helping them prepare for the next stage of their education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 56 The school has developed a very good partnership with parents. Parents and carers have a very high regard for the work of the school and appreciate the attitudes and values which the school promotes. They consider this aspect of the school to be one of its major strengths. The consultation exercise, prior to the inspection, revealed that parents and carers are of the view that the school is well led and managed. They are in total agreement that teaching is good and they feel the school expects their children to work hard and achieve of their best. They feel their children like school and they consider behaviour to be good. They are almost totally in agreement that their children are making good progress. Almost all the parents and carers would feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems or questions concerning their children. The inspection findings support all these positive views.
- 57 A significant minority of parents are of the view that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside the classroom. The inspectors found extra-curricular provision to be good, although most opportunities are for older pupils. The headteacher and governors are anxious to continue strengthening provision and will take the views expressed by all parents into consideration when next reviewing provision.
- 58 While the great majority of parents and carers are happy with the arrangements for informing them of their children's progress, a relatively small minority indicated some dissatisfaction. The inspectors found the arrangements for reporting on pupils' progress to be very good. Formal parents' evenings are arranged at suitable intervals in the school year, providing parents with appropriate opportunities to discuss their children's attainment and progress with class teachers. Pupils' annual written reports are highly informative. They give very detailed information in relation to progress in all areas of the curriculum as well as an overview of the individual's personal development and achievements. In addition, the reports set targets for development in English, mathematics, science, religious education and information and communication technology.
- 59 The overall quality of the information provided for parents and carers, by the school, is

very good. Through the prospectus, the governing body's annual report and regular correspondence parents are kept fully informed with regard to the aims of the school and school procedures and events. Parents and carers receive useful curricular information about topics to be covered during the term. A home-school agreement has been introduced since the last inspection and this explains, in detail, the school's responsibilities towards its pupils, the responsibilities of parents and the school's expectations of its pupils. The school's mission statement is at the forefront of the agreement and the Christian principles of the school are made very clear.

- 60 The parents and carers make a good contribution to their children's education through their strong support for the home-school reading scheme and for homework generally. Parents of pupils on the register of special educational needs are closely involved in drawing up and implementing their children's individual education plans and this contributes to the good progress the pupils are making. Parents and carers support the religious life of the school by joining in school Masses and assemblies. A large number of parents attended the Year 5 class assembly during the inspection week. The pupils themselves wrote the invitations and were very pleased and proud to have their parents with them on such an enjoyable occasion.
- 61 The Parents', Teachers' and Friends' Association is extremely supportive of the school. The association, which is affiliated to the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, raises considerable additional funds for the benefit of the pupils. Fund-raising events include a Turkey Bingo at Christmas, a children's Bingo twice a year and an annual fashion show. A successful '100 Club' raises sufficient money to pay the levy for the Archdiocese. The association also organises numerous social events for the pupils, including Christmas parties and school discos. The annual Sports and Gala Day in the summer term is a major event in the school calendar. Pupils, staff, parents and friends of the school join together for school sports, strawberry teas and a variety of fund raising activities. The school is grateful to the local shopkeepers, who generously provide the raffle prizes on these occasions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 62 The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher has been in post for nearly two terms, during which she has successfully overcome significant staffing difficulties as well as negotiating an inspection. She provides perceptive and purposeful leadership and works together very effectively with the governing body to provide clear vision and direction for the work of the school. They are well supported by a dedicated and committed staff. The school is well placed to continue to improve by building on existing strengths and implementing the areas for improvement identified by this inspection.
- 63 The governing body has only been in existence since the beginning of the academic year, although many of its members previously served on the joint governing body for the infant and junior schools. Governors show a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which could be improved. Appropriate governing body committees have been established, and they work effectively and successfully to ensure that statutory requirements are met.
- 64 Very good leadership provided by the co-ordinators for English and mathematics is an important factor in the highly successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The very effective co-ordination of information and communication technology has helped the school to make significant progress since the last inspection. In science, the knowledgeable and hard working

co-ordinator is beginning to help teachers to overcome a lack of confidence in teaching some aspects of the subject. In other subjects, co-ordinators work hard to provide effective leadership, but some have been restricted in recent years by the understandably strong emphasis placed on developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

- 65 The mission statement and main aims are communicated effectively to parents through the prospectus. The school sets out to provide a Catholic education, which starts with Christ and recognises the importance of the sacraments and the gospels. It is committed to enabling each child to reach his or her potential. These aims are consistently reflected in all of the school's work and contribute greatly towards the very positive ethos for learning which exists in the school.
- 66 The governing body is successful in ensuring that all of the requirements of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs are addressed appropriately. The requirements for providing equality of opportunity for all pupils are also addressed successfully. School policies are implemented consistently by class teachers, who meet the needs of all pupils, ensuring that they are appropriately included and involved in the formal and informal curriculum.
- 67 Arrangements for monitoring teaching and the curriculum have focused in particular on the teaching of literacy and numeracy in recent years, and are very effective. The headteacher visits classrooms regularly to evaluate teaching and the quality of curricular provision. The feedback from lesson evaluations is considered during annual personal interviews with teachers, and areas for improvement are considered and agreed. The standard and quality of work produced by pupils are monitored at regular intervals by the headteacher and co-ordinators.
- 68 Staff responsibility for co-ordinating subjects and aspects of the curriculum are appropriately shared and defined. Medium and short-term planning is scrutinised by relevant co-ordinators in order to check curricular balance and provision in their subjects. These arrangements ensure that appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and are generally successful in maintaining a broad and relevant curriculum. However, there has been a delay in establishing fully effective monitoring procedures in some subjects, particularly art and design, design and technology, history and geography.
- 69 Requirements for staff appraisal are met through the arrangements to conduct annual personal interviews with teachers. There are good procedures for supporting the induction of newly qualified teachers and staff who are new to the school. Strong emphasis is placed on staff development. Teaching and support staff are given opportunities to attend relevant in-service training. In addition, the school is currently providing ICT courses for parents, in order to help their understanding of the work which their children are doing in the subject.
- 70 School development planning is well conceived. The process of devising the plan involves staff, governors, parents and officers of the local education authority working together to identify priorities for development. Targets for improvements are listed in order of priority, and financial and staff development implications are listed. In addition the curriculum co-ordinators' action plans include detailed information about action to be taken to support the implementation of curricular priorities. This includes deadlines for meeting targets, persons responsible, and criteria for evaluating the success of initiatives. The effective use of the plan to inform spending ensures that money is spent appropriately on relevant educational priorities. The first cycle of performance

management begins this term.

- 71 Very good use is made of all funding available to the school. Grants for specific purposes are used appropriately, and good use is made of the element within the school's budget for making provision for pupils with special educational needs. The large grant provided to support initiatives related to the Beacon initiative is used appropriately. The relatively large amount of money carried forward from the last financial year was to finance the resourcing of the computer suite and avoid the effect on the school's budget of some fluctuation in the number of pupils on roll.
- 72 The headteacher, governors' finance committee and very efficient school administration co-operate effectively to monitor spending and ensure efficient financial control. Administrative staff are appropriately trained and make good use of information technology to support financial management. The school is also able to draw on financial advice provided by the local education authority on a regular basis. The most recent audit of finance by the local authority found that the school maintained a high standard of financial control. The relatively minor weaknesses have been addressed.
- 73 The increasing attention given to monitoring school performance is a good feature in the work of the governing body. The headteacher provides regular information to enable the governors to compare the school's performance with similar schools as well as the national picture. Governors demonstrate a good awareness of the school's performance and priorities for improvement. The governing body also seeks to secure best quality and value when purchasing resources and arranging for work to be completed. The development of the new computer suite provides a good illustration of the application of best value principles. The location of the new suite makes very good use of the limited space available in the school. The initiative has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of curricular provision and secured very good value for the money spent in developing the suite.
- 74 The strategic management of all resources is very good. The school has sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum for pupils at all stages of their education; they are deployed very effectively. Very good use is made of the range of facilities provided by the accommodation, school grounds and playing fields. Standards of cleaning and caretaking are high, and the grounds are well maintained. The quality of the internal environment is considerably enhanced by displays of pupils' work which are of good quality.
- 75 The good standard of leadership and management apparent at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and developed further. Appropriate schemes of work have now been introduced for most areas of the curriculum, although there is some inconsistency in their implementation in some of the non-core subjects. Co-ordinators, particularly those responsible for the key areas of English, mathematics, science and ICT, now play a more purposeful role in monitoring standards and curriculum provision in their subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 76 In order to raise standards and quality of work further, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:
- 1) Achieve greater consistency in the progress made by high ability pupils in

science by:

- * creating appropriate opportunities for pupils in all classes to engage in independent investigative work, and placing greater emphasis on developing their skills in interpreting information and explaining the results of their investigations.
- * improving the expertise of some teachers in this aspect of the work; and
- * increasing the use of assessment information to inform curricular planning. (paragraph reference: 7, 25, 98, 99 and 102)

In addition to the key issues above, the following recommendation arising from areas of more relative weakness should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

Achieve greater consistency in the coverage of work in +non-core subjects by:

- * reviewing timetable arrangements;
 - * implementing new curricular requirements more consistently;
 - * further strengthening the arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress in non-core subjects. (paragraph reference: 28, 44, 104, 108 and 113)
- + none-core subjects are those outside the core areas of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	36	41	17	0	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	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	-	244
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	-	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	-	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.5
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	26	28	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	20	24
	Girls	26	24	24
	Total	50	44	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (65)	81 (59)	89 (73)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	21	24
	Girls	27	24	26
	Total	51	45	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (69)	83 (65)	93 (82)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	241
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.2
Average class size	27.1

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	104

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	-
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	-

Total number of education support staff	-
Total aggregate hours worked per week	-

Number of pupils per FTE adult	-
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	399,307
Total expenditure	388,305
Expenditure per pupil	1,660
Balance brought forward from previous year	26,022
Balance carried forward to next year	37,024

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	244
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	38	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	47	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	46	1	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	49	8	1	0
The teaching is good.	58	42	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	56	14	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	40	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	26	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	57	13	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	54	44	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	50	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	38	18	8	1

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

ENGLISH

- 77 Standards achieved by eleven year olds are well above the national average. This is similar to the 2000 national test results which showed the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 to be well above the national average and well above the performance of those in similar schools. Throughout the school, pupils consistently achieve high standards in relation to their age.
- 78 Literacy is given a very high priority throughout the curriculum and most pupils, at all levels of attainment, make very good progress throughout the key stage. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress and achieve standards in line with those expected nationally. The school rigorously implements a range of national and local initiatives, including the National Literacy Strategy, additional literacy and booster classes, in order to help pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing pupils' literacy skills in a variety of contexts and for a wide range of purposes. Pupils at all levels of attainment use their reading and writing skills well in other areas of the curriculum; for example, when recording their investigations in science lessons or writing poems in religious education. Well developed literary skills enable pupils to make rapid progress in information and communication technology.
- 79 Standards in reading are above those expected nationally. As well as reading for enjoyment pupils are encouraged to read for information, such as how to operate the computers and access the Internet and CD ROMs. By the age of eleven, pupils are confident readers of a range of texts. Staff ensure that individual pupils who are particularly skilled in reading have a challenging range of books to read and are not limited to the reading schemes. Books are well matched to pupils' attainment and interest levels and carefully chosen to reflect different cultures and to interest boys and girls. A range of non-fiction books is used appropriately within the classroom to support topic work in other subjects. Pupils show a good understanding of different writers' styles and have preference for particular authors such as J K Rowling and Roald Dahl. High attaining pupils understand plot, setting and characterisation and are able to make subtle deductions and inferences from their reading. They talk confidently about why they prefer particular types of books, such as 'horror or history' stories and express their ideas well, recalling important aspects of the reading. Lower attaining pupils use a variety of strategies to help them recognise unfamiliar words, such as letter patterns and sounds, context and pictures. Pupils are developing very good independent research skills as they use dictionaries, glossaries, thesauri, encyclopaedias, CD ROMs and the Internet, to extend their learning. Guided reading groups are used effectively to provide good support for pupils to develop their reading skills. Reading books are taken home regularly and parents and carers hear their children read and record their progress. This has a positive impact on the pupils' progress.
- 80 Standards in writing are well above the national average across the school. Handwriting is given a very high priority. Writing is almost always neat and well formed and, by the age of eleven, most pupils have developed a fluent and legible style of handwriting. Pupils progressively develop their ability to write for a range of purposes using a range of styles. Those at all levels of attainment use their writing skills well in other areas of the curriculum, such as religious education, history and science. For example, after reading the classical poem 'The Lady of Shallot', Year 5

pupils wrote of her death in the style of a newspaper article, imaginatively reporting that the grief stricken Sir Lancelot was prepared to offer a reward for information on the unfortunate lady's death. Writing is well organised, and by the age of eleven most pupils show a very good awareness of complex spelling, grammar and punctuation. Average and higher attaining pupils invariably use correct punctuation, complex grammatical structures, paragraphs and interesting vocabulary to add interest to their work. Pupils are also aware of how to make notes and the importance of recording their sources of information by writing bibliographies.

- 81 Pupils at all levels of attainment make satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills, although this aspect of English is not approached as systematically as reading and writing. Pupils listen very attentively and value the contributions of other pupils during discussions, such as those about issues arising from their studies of texts in literacy lessons. The great majority of them express opinions clearly and make good use of new vocabulary acquired during their studies of various topics. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic to talk, and communicate their ideas effectively. This was evident, for example, during many of the lessons in the ICT suite, when pupils were able to follow verbal instructions, including some new technological language and concepts, to complete their tasks. They were able to explain clearly any difficulties arising, and also to help each other with clearly expressed advice. The increasing ability of older pupils to vary expression in order to engage the listener, and to pay close attention to what others say, are strong features in their learning.
- 82 Teaching is generally of very good quality. All the lessons observed were at least of good quality and over 50 per cent were very good. Lessons are well planned and the National Literacy Strategy is implemented very successfully. Teaching is carefully structured and well planned to meet the needs of pupils at all attainment levels. Expectations throughout the school are very high and the teachers' explanations and knowledge have a very positive effect on attainment and progress. Teachers share learning objectives with the pupils and ensure that pupils are very clear about what it is they are expected to learn. Very good use of plenary sessions and careful on-going assessment of pupils' progress checks that pupils have understood the lesson, are ready to move on to the next stage of learning or need further help to reinforce their learning. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are given a particularly high priority and teachers ensure that pupils use these skills in their extended writing. Teachers use humour, praise, comments and questions effectively to check understanding and extend thinking. Pupils are constantly reminded of the strategies they need to improve their work such as good handwriting, correct spelling and punctuation.
- 83 Relationships are very good and teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour, resulting in very good discipline. Teachers are very skilled in helping pupils to recall what they learned in previous lessons before building on that knowledge and this contributes towards good levels of continuity in pupils' learning.
- 84 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and tasks are always well matched to pupils' individual needs. Support staff are used very effectively to give additional help to designated individuals and groups of pupils. Their contribution greatly enhances the learning opportunities for the pupils.
- 85 Pupils enjoy English lessons and show very favourable attitudes to learning. They relate positively to staff and to each other. They are very eager to learn, stay on task and show good levels of independence and concentration and this has a positive effect on the standards of work they produce. Good use is made of opportunities to

work collaboratively, share ideas and to develop personal skills.

- 86 Assessment and record keeping arrangements are very good. National Curriculum Tests and a wide range of other school tests and assessments are used very effectively to identify areas for school development, identify individual pupils' standards and to track their progress. Teachers mark work regularly and there are some very good examples of how teachers' comments help pupils to improve their work.
- 87 Curriculum co-ordination is highly effective. Regular monitoring of lessons and planning by the co-ordinator and the head has a very positive impact on the quality of the teaching and learning. Although learning resources are generally adequate, there is scope for increasing the range and variety of books available in class reading areas and the school library.

MATHEMATICS

- 88 The standards reached by the 11 year olds are well above those found nationally, in all aspects of the subject. This shows an improvement since the last inspection. National test results indicate a similar picture and reveal that standards are above average compared with all schools and well above average when compared with similar schools. The improvement in standards in mathematics is better than the national trend. There is no significant variation in the performance of the pupils in terms of gender. Throughout the school, pupils at all levels of ability, make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets set for them.
- 89 From Year 3, the teaching builds very effectively upon the pupils' numeracy skills so that by Year 6 the pupils have a secure grasp of place value and demonstrate a high level of accuracy in computation work, using the four rules of number. In each year group mental work is well taught and given appropriate emphasis. As a result the pupils' ability to recall quickly essential tables and number facts is of a high order. The pupils are given time to explain the strategies they use so that, by Year 6, this aspect of their work is well advanced and they reach high standards. For example, in a class of higher attaining 11 year olds, they had little difficulty answering a variety of questions with speed and accuracy. These related to the conversion between a range of metric measurements. They used their knowledge of multiplying and dividing whole numbers and decimals by 10, 100 and 1,000 to good effect.
- 90 By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have a very good understanding of the extension of the number system. This is reflected in their understanding of negative numbers and in their knowledge of the relationship of fractions, decimals and percentages. The pupils, from Year 3 onwards, make good progress in recognising and describing number patterns and relationships including multiples, factors and squares. The higher attaining oldest pupils demonstrate increasing progress using and applying their knowledge of co-ordinates. For example, the higher attaining oldest pupils used these skills to transform shapes from the first to the fourth quadrant. They were able to explain their thinking clearly and spoke knowledgeably about the x and y axis and why they used negative or positive numbers in their calculations.
- 91 The well planned teaching introduces the pupils to a variety of relevant experiences related to shape, space and measures. The pupils have a good understanding of the properties of three and two dimensional shapes, making increasingly more precise use of geometrical language, especially that related to triangles, quadrilaterals, prisms

and pyramids of various kinds. By Year 6, the pupils are adept at drawing and measuring angles to the nearest degree and can use associated language, such as reflex, acute and obtuse with precision. Most of the pupils understand the angle sum of a triangle and can calculate the third angle when only two are known. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of perimeter and area is well developed. For example, in a group of lower attaining 11 year olds, skilful teaching, using a range of arbitrary measures, enabled the pupils to recognise quite quickly the need for using standard measures. After some trial and error they realised that in using such measures they did not need to count all the centimetre cubes covering the surface of a small booklet. They soon arrived at the notion of length multiplied by breadth would give them the correct answer much more economically. By the end of the lesson they had made very good progress and could calculate correctly the answers to a number of related problems, recording carefully in squared centimetres.

- 92 Throughout Key Stage 2, the pupils are introduced to handling data. They make very good progress collecting information, recording their results and interpreting their findings. The very good quality of the teaching, overall, helps the pupils to understand and use an appropriate range of graphs, charts, diagrams and frequency tables. The oldest pupils have a very good understanding of measures of average. For example, in one class, studying temperature, the teaching made good use of this relevant topic to introduce the pupils to an increasing use of mathematical terms. By the end of the series of lessons the pupils were able to use appropriately terms such as mode, median, mean and range in relevant problem solving contexts.
- 93 In each year group the pupils make very good progress using and applying their mathematical skills in a range of relevant situations. They organise their work effectively and present their findings in a clear and organised way. The standard of their presentation is extremely high.
- 94 Much of the teaching is of a high standard and provides the pupils with interesting and challenging experiences, which build progressively on their prior learning. The high quality planning is based appropriately on the lesson format recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy. Mental work is brisk and lively and enjoyed by the pupils. They are very well supported in their learning by the knowledge and understanding of the subject which their teachers demonstrate. This is reflected in the pace and content of lessons, the high quality of questioning which probes pupils' thinking and extends their learning, and in the variety of relevant experiences provided. Lesson objectives are shared with the class at the beginning of each lesson and evaluated at the end of sessions. The results are used effectively to plan further learning and to help the pupils build progressively upon their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject.

- 95 The work in mathematics is very well planned to take account of the pupils' different levels of ability. The arrangement for teaching the three Year 6 classes in four ability groups is an important factor in promoting their learning and progress. In addition, the valuable support provided by classroom assistants makes a significant contribution to the learning of pupils who have special educational needs. These members of staff are well briefed and they know the pupils well.
- 96 The pupils have many opportunities to consolidate and use their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in Year 3, in geography, the pupils collected information on types of houses in the area. They made a tally chart prior to constructing a graph which they used effectively to interpret their findings. In a Year 5 class, the pupils studied rainfall comparisons between Bombay and the polar regions. They used a graph to interpret their findings with a high level of accuracy. In other classes the pupils use their measuring skills in many ways including measuring liquids in millilitres. They understand how to read a range of calibrations in a variety of contexts.
- 97 The school is particularly successful in the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Since the last inspection the proportion of the pupils reaching level 5 has increased. The co-ordination of the subject is very effective. Careful attention is given to analysing test results in order to raise standards even further, and the planning of work and the quality of the teaching are monitored carefully. The subject makes an important contribution to the school's aims. The subject is well resourced and an appropriate amount of time is allocated to mathematics. The pupils clearly enjoy the challenges they are set and they respond with a sense of eagerness and interest during numeracy lessons. The content of the work meets fully the requirements of the National Curriculum.

SCIENCE

- 98 Pupils in Year 6 attain standards which are at least in line with those expected for their age, and many show scientific knowledge and understanding which is above average. This is a similar picture to the previous inspection and consistent with the most recent national test results. Most pupils, at all levels of ability, make generally good progress during their time in the school, but high attainers in some classes are capable of better progress in some aspects of scientific enquiry.
- 99 By the age of eleven the pupils have gained good levels of scientific knowledge. They know, for example, that air is needed for a candle to burn and that some materials such as water can exist as a solid, a liquid or a gas. They use the correct scientific vocabulary for processes such as evaporation and condensation and are developing successfully their ideas about reversible and irreversible change. Through their practical investigations, they discover that substances can be classified as acids or alkalis and are able to apply their ideas about the nature of these substances in their every day lives. They are very good at articulating their ideas about scientific phenomena and at associating their learning in science with other areas of the curriculum, such as making a link between rainfall and condensation. The pupils take part in high levels of practical investigative work and have a good theoretical knowledge of the principles of scientific enquiry. They are able to make informed predictions about what might happen in an investigation, make careful observations and measurements and record the resulting data in charts and tables. However, they are not so good at converting this information into graphs and they have difficulty in interpreting and explaining their results without help. This imposes some restriction on progress, particularly of high ability pupils.

- 100 The teaching in science is never less than satisfactory and in most of the lessons seen it was good or very good, with one example of excellent teaching. Most of the teachers provide a good balance between direct teaching and relevant practical activity and this is very effective in maintaining the high levels of interest shown by their pupils in the subject. The teachers are very skilled at using questioning to establish what their pupils know and to extend their thinking. Throughout the school, the teachers are very successful in creating a secure climate for learning, in which it is safe to contribute ideas and take part in discussion without fear of failure. This plays a significant part in promoting the confidence shown by the pupils in science lessons.
- 101 The best lessons hold the pupils' attention through imaginative presentation, provide high levels of challenge for all levels of ability and move the learning on at a brisk pace. In these lessons, the charismatic teaching promotes a sense of awe and wonder in the pupils that is a significant factor in the high quality learning and the very good progress made, such as when observing what happens when a candle burns or when using universal indicator to test for acidity.
- 102 Most teachers have sufficient subject knowledge to enable their pupils to reach the expected levels for their ages and abilities. However, the teaching of scientific enquiry skills is sometimes not specific enough to meet the requirements of this area of the subject and there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to construct and interpret graphs from the data they collect. Investigative activities are used mostly to support the acquisition of factual scientific knowledge and there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their scientific enquiry skills through independent investigative work they plan and carry out themselves.
- 103 The subject is very well managed. The comprehensive scheme of work meets curriculum requirements and provides a secure basis for teaching the subject. The assessment arrangements for the subject are thorough and effective in providing evidence of pupils' progress but are less effective in their impact on planning for the learning needs of all abilities, particularly the more able pupils. The co-ordinator is very well qualified to make a significant contribution towards developing the expertise of her colleagues but to date she has been given insufficient opportunity to make an impact because of the time constraints imposed by other initiatives.

ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 104 Standards in both subjects are broadly in line with national expectations. Although pupils at all levels make generally satisfactory progress there is little evidence of high quality work in either subject. Due to the relaxation in National Curriculum requirements in recent years there has been a loss of momentum in these subjects, so that standards are not as good as they are in most other subjects. The school recognises this and has included proposals for improvements as priorities in the school development plan.
- 105 In art and design, pupils study a wide range of work produced by famous artists, and in the best lessons make good use of these ideas to enhance their own work. For example, as part of their work on the Victorians, pupils in Year 5 extended their appreciation of patterns and colour by drawing on the work of William Morris, when designing their own Victorian samplers. Pupils in Year 6 produced their own interpretations of industrial landscape in the style of L.S.Lowry, using graphite to create the same effect as the celebrated artist.

- 106 In design and technology, pupils make steady progress in extending their skills in designing, making and evaluating through various projects linked to their studies in history. For example, younger pupils designed and made Roman costumes, swords, shields and sandals. In Year 5, pupils designed and made ancient games as part of their work on ancient Egypt. In general however, the range of work in design and technology is narrow. For example, there are few opportunities for pupils to plan and make objects which use different techniques for creating movement.
- 107 In all of the lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory and there were some good lessons. This was evident during a design and technology lesson in Year 5, for example, when imaginative teaching successfully challenged pupils to achieve good standards in the work linked to their studies of ancient Egypt. Throughout the school and in both subjects, class management is a consistently good feature. This promotes very good behaviour by pupils and good relationships.
- 108 Scrutiny of work produced by pupils during the academic year confirms that the school is still at an early stage in implementing new curricular requirements. Schemes of work are not yet implemented consistently, and this contributes towards the relatively narrow range of opportunities provided for pupils, particularly in design and technology. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress are not sufficiently systematic in either subject. In addition, current timetable arrangements do not allow sufficient time for pupils to develop their ideas and achieve the results and quality of which some of them are capable.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

- 109 The majority of pupils achieve standards that are broadly in line with those expected for their ages in both subjects. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make appropriate progress in relation to their prior levels of learning.
- 110 In history, by the age of eleven, the pupils have developed satisfactory research skills to find out about both recent and past events and cultures. They use books and the Internet with confidence to find information and they are building a good range of factual knowledge about ancient civilisations such as the Egyptians and the Romans as well as more recent historical periods such as Victorian England and the Second World War. Through the different history topics they study, the pupils are developing a strong sense of chronology and are able to order artefacts and events into appropriate time frames relating to the distant or more recent past. A visit to Chester and the subsequent 'Roman Afternoon' helped pupils in Year 3 to develop high levels of awareness about the daily lives, beliefs and customs of the Romans. They were able to empathise with the Roman people and gained a strong sense of what it was like to live in those times. A visit to Eden Camp, by pupils in Year 6, was very effective in supporting their learning about the influence of the Second World War on the daily lives of ordinary people and they showed great sensitivity in writing about the feelings of evacuee children.
- 111 In geography, by the age of eleven, the pupils have become familiar with a range of contrasting localities both at home and overseas. They are able to make informed comparisons between the physical and human features of their own locality and the areas they study overseas such as Kenya and Tibet. They are able to carry out geographical surveys, for example to find out about weather patterns, local housing types and traffic flow, by collecting and analysing data in tally charts and graphs. The

information they collect is successful in helping them to develop a satisfactory understanding of the world in which they live. They are aware of important issues relating to the impact of human activity on the environment, such as pollution and acid rain, and know some of the ways in which they can help, for example through recycling and the disposal of litter. In specific studies of geographical topics such as rivers and settlements they demonstrate a sound basic geographical vocabulary. A visit to the Leigh Environmental Centre gave pupils in Year 5 a valuable opportunity to take weather measurements, using the appropriate instruments, in order to produce weather reports and study the water cycle. The pupils have a basic understanding of how the features of a locality can be represented in maps and plans but their map reading skills are not generally well developed.

- 112 The teaching of both history and geography is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Most teachers make very good use of questioning to establish what their pupils already know and to extend their understanding. They manage their pupils well and encourage high levels of pupil participation. In the best lessons the teachers use imaginative strategies to make the learning relevant to their pupils, such as when pupils in Year 5 took part in a debate about the best climate in which to live. This stimulated high levels of interest and the pupils demonstrated very good insight into the impact of climate on people's daily lives. In most lessons, the activities and tasks given to the pupils are relevant to the specific requirements of the curriculum but there were occasional instances in the lessons seen, in both history and geography, when the tasks were not sufficiently closely related to new requirements in the subjects, and this imposed some restriction on the range and continuity of learning.
- 113 A great deal of subject development has taken place since the time of the last inspection and both subjects now have carefully constructed guidelines, which have been checked to ensure they cover the curriculum requirements. However, the school is at an early stage in implementing these guidelines and some inconsistency remains in their interpretation in lesson planning. In geography, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to take part in fieldwork activities. Assessment arrangements have been put in place but these are not yet specific enough to give accurate information about the progress of individuals in the development of history and geography study skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 114 By the age of eleven, standards are above the national expectations. The great majority of pupils, at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress during their time in the school. The planned use of ICT to support work in other subjects, particularly English and mathematics, is a strong feature in the pupils' learning. The programme of work meets fully the requirements of the National Curriculum and makes very good provision for all pupils.

- 115 Regular lessons in the ICT suite enable pupils to acquire confidence in using the computer keyboard and mouse to complete a variety of tasks relating to their studies. They benefit from learning activities which are meaningful and purposeful and from opportunities to enjoy regular access to a computer.
- 116 Pupils make particularly good progress in extending their skills in communicating information. They make rapid progress in learning how to use a wide range of facilities to produce, amend and enhance text. From an early stage, they become familiar with tools such as those for correcting their spelling and for adjusting the style and size of print. As they progress, they show high levels of competence in using ICT to organise and present their work in the best way for a particular purpose, often incorporating graphic images to complement the text. This was evident, for example, when pupils in Year 4, added carefully selected illustrations to the text, when writing under the title of "The Great Storm". Older pupils are able to reorganise aspects of their work, for example by shifting text about, using cut and paste techniques. They show a good awareness of audience, and are able to structure, refine and present their work in ways which are suitable for specific purposes. In Year 5, for example, pupils produced high quality, eye-catching, colourful leaflets to attract holiday makers to Kenya, in work related to their studies in geography. In Year 6, pupils made good use of their skills when presenting information about their investigation of "minibeasts" in an effective way, during work in science.
- 117 Pupils also make very good progress in developing their skills in handling information. Younger pupils are able to use ICT effectively to present the results of class surveys, using block graphs and pie charts. As they progress, they extend these skills and use them very effectively to support work in mathematics. In Year 5, for example, pupils entered data onto a spreadsheet, in order to produce a line graph to show temperature changes during a particular day. They were able to complete this task quickly and accurately, benefiting from very good teaching which provided clear explanation and an appropriate level of intervention. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to select the information they need for different purposes. They retrieve it from relevant sources, using the Internet and CD-Rom facilities, before checking its accuracy and presenting it in a suitable way.
- 118 Pupils make good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of control technology. For example, pupils in Year 6 produced a programme on paper, and then entered their set of precise instructions to draw quite complex shapes on screen. ICT is also used to investigate options by using simulations. A very good example of this was provided in Year 6, when pupils produced room designs. In addition, at certain times during the year ICT is used to monitor the weather as part of pupils' work in geography.
- 119 Throughout the school, work in ICT has a very positive impact on pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The regular timetabling of some English and mathematics lessons in the ICT suite means that this becomes a consistent feature in pupils' learning.
- 120 Teaching is predominantly good and often very good. Ninety per cent of the lessons observed were at least good and over 40 per cent were very good. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, and work is pitched at a challenging level. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and work productively. Class teachers and ICT specialist support staff co-operate very effectively and provide a perceptive level of intervention in pupils' learning. This allows scope for pupils to learn through trial and error, but ensures that help is provided before the momentum of learning is lost. Very good use is made of the computer suite. Teachers achieve a good balance between whole

class explanation and creating time for pupils to work on their tasks. The arrangements for pupils to save their work on their personal disk is a positive feature, which contributes towards good levels of continuity in their learning. Class management is consistently of a high standard, promoting very good relationships and high standards of behaviour. Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, which is reflected in their progress. Appropriate care is taken to involve and extend boys and girls, and to meet the needs of pupils of different racial backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language.

- 121 Very good progress has been made since the last inspection, when relatively little direct teaching of ICT was observed. Standards, which at that stage were described as satisfactory, now exceed the national expectations. Considerable improvements in resources, the development of the computer suite, the implementation of a clear and comprehensive scheme of work and very effective subject co-ordination are important factors in the progress achieved.

MUSIC

- 122 By the age of 11, the pupils attain the standards expected for their age. They enjoy music lessons and are highly co-operative and keen to participate. As a result, the great majority of the pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their time in the school.
- 123 The pupils' progress is underpinned by the generally good quality of the teaching which introduces them to a variety of appropriate music from our own and other cultures. For example, in a Year 6 class, the pupils listened to a Scottish ballad, 'An Eriskay Love Lilt'. They wrote their own graphic score and compared this to the actual staff notation. They were able to detect a clearly structured rhythmic pattern and to describe the mood and feelings of calm spirituality which the music evoked.
- 124 Lessons are planned carefully and the pupils' learning is supported effectively by the use of appropriate resources. For example, in a Year 5 class, a good quality recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was used skilfully to introduce the pupils to musical duration. By the end of the lesson they demonstrated much progress in their understanding of duration and in discussion they used accurately a growing musical vocabulary, including terms such as pulse, dynamics and tempo.
- 125 Throughout the school, the pupils sing confidently a growing repertoire of songs and hymns. They sing tunefully and make increasing progress singing with clear diction and control of pitch and dynamics. They particularly enjoy singing hymns, stimulated by the outstanding and inspirational piano playing provided by one of their teachers.
- 126 Although instruments were not used during lessons, a fact also reported during the last inspection, some of the pupils demonstrated their increasing skills playing effectively untuned percussion instruments during a class led assembly. In addition, a number of pupils receive instrumental tuition and play a range of instruments including the guitar, keyboard, cello, violin, flute and saxophone. Some of these pupils, in discussion, revealed their increasing knowledge and understanding of staff notation.

- 127 The quality of teaching is usually of a good standard. Clear objectives are shared with the pupils and evaluated at the end of lessons. Although the teachers try to integrate elements such as performing, composing and appraising into their lessons, the short length of some of these lessons provides the pupils with too little time to create and develop musical ideas.
- 128 Music makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly through the use of singing during school assemblies. The content of the work is generally well balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The subject is well co-ordinated and enables all pupils to take a full part in the work apart from the lessons which are too short for the development of composition. Since the last full inspection, the school has maintained satisfactory standards in music and the overall quality of teaching has improved slightly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 129 The standards achieved by pupils aged 11 are at least line with and often above the national expectations. The great majority of pupils, at all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, make good progress during their time in the school. The programme of work meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- 130 In gymnastics, pupils plan and perform different ways of balancing and travelling in sequences of movements. They transfer their work successfully from floor to apparatus. In Year 3, for example, pupils demonstrated good skills in balancing and moving along an upturned bench. Most were able to maintain a good standard when travelling forward and backward and when turning and dismounting. They were able to add other actions in order to perform a sequence of movements which finished with a good quality forward roll.
- 131 In outdoor games lessons, pupils in most classes develop good skills during practice and are able to apply their skills in small sided competitive games. This was evident when classes of older pupils engaged in work to develop hockey skills. In the best of these lesson, the work moved at pace and pupils were appropriately challenged. Many showed good ball control and an ability to work effectively within a team. In some lessons however, insufficient time was allowed for pupils to practise their skills and this restricted their progress. The skills of many pupils are considerably enhanced through extra-curricular activities in football, netball and rounders. In addition, visiting coaches from Wigan Athletic Football Club, and visits for coaching to the Wigan Rugby League team's ground, help to extend the pupils, skills and strengthen their interest in sport. The school organises a judo club for older pupils during the spring term. This is taken by trained coaches from the Newton Judo Club.
- 132 In swimming, the great majority of pupils are able to swim 25 metres or more unaided before leaving the school at the end of Year 6. Athletics is taught mainly during the summer term and many pupils compete in the Mini-Olympics which is organised during that term.
- 133 In outdoor adventurous activities, pupils show a good ability to work effectively with others to meet challenges. This was evident when pupils in Year 4 responded to the challenge of working as a team to move from one side of the playground to the other without touching the yard surface. They were able to co-operate very successfully to move a bench when standing on a mat, before standing on the bench in order to move the mat forward. They completed the exercise in a very good time.

- 134 The quality of physical education teaching is good and often very good. Lessons are well organised and present an appropriate level of challenge to the pupils. However there is scope in some games lessons for certain activities to be organised in a way which achieves a higher rate of participation by the pupils. Class management is very good, demonstrating very good class control and promoting very good behaviour. Teachers successfully ensure that all pupils have access to all aspects of the subject. For example, boys and girls are able to take part in all of the extra-curricular clubs. The teaching promotes a very positive response by pupils, who thoroughly enjoy physical education lessons. They demonstrate very good attitudes towards their work, showing a good ability to work as individuals and within a team.
- 135 The subject is co-ordinated very efficiently, and this is an important factor in the school's success in maintaining the good standards apparent at the time of the last inspection.