

INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's Catholic First School

Bromsgrove

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116872

Headteacher: Mrs D Rollason

Reporting inspector: Mr G Bassett
21500

Dates of inspection: 26th February – 1st March 2001

Inspection number: 197690

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | First |
| School category: | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of the pupils: | 4 – 9 years |
| Gender of the pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | St Peter's Catholic First School Rock Hill Bromsgrove WORCESTERSHIRE |
| Postcode: | B61 7LH |
| Telephone number: | 01527 831872 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr M Scanlan |
| Date of previous inspection: | September 1997 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 21500 | Mr G Bassett | Registered inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Equal opportunities | How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school managed? |
| 14083 | Mr A B Anderson | Lay inspector | | The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work with in partnership with the parents? |
| 27541 | Mr J Collins | Team inspector | Science History Geography Physical education Special educational needs | |
| 20350 | Mrs V Davies | Team inspector | English Art and design Design and technology Foundation stage | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Peter's First School is a Catholic voluntary aided school situated in the town of Bromsgrove. It serves the neighbouring community but also draws pupils from further regions of the town and county because it is the only Catholic First school in the area. It was originally opened in 1860 but is now in a new building adjacent to the church. The school has 267 on roll with 126 boys and 141 girls. The number of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average and there is no pupil with a statement. The children start school at the beginning of the year in which they are 5 years old. At the time of the inspection there were 48 children in the Foundation Stage. The school's assessment shows that this year the attainment of the children on entry was broadly average. However, over the past 4 years this initial assessment has shown that the pupils' attainment has reflected the full ability range but has been generally below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Peter's Catholic First School is a good school that gives good value for money. The quality of the leadership and management is very good. The headteacher and senior staff give a very clear and very good direction to the work of the school. The school has developed a cohesive and conscientious team of governors, staff and parents. The quality of teaching is good overall with many lessons being of a very good and often excellent quality. This has a significant impact upon the work produced and upon the progress made by all pupils including those with special educational needs.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good.
- The quality of the teaching is good overall, and often either very good or excellent.
- The provision made for extracurricular activities is very good.
- The pupils' behaviour and personal development including their spiritual, moral and social development are very good.
- The quality of the care and the attention to the children's welfare are very good.
- The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is good.

What could be improved

- The quality of the pupils' work in information communication technology in Years 3 and 4 is not as good as it should be.
- There are omissions in the governing body's annual report to parents.

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 made good and effective improvements since the last inspection in September 1997. The range of opportunities it provides to develop the pupils' skills in design and technology are now good and the standards reached by the pupils are above the expected levels. The provision for the pupils' cultural awareness has been improved and is now good. Physical education has a higher profile in the school with opportunities provided for the pupils to participate in competitive team sports and for the children who are under five to use large wheeled vehicles outdoors. The quality of teaching has improved significantly with many more lessons being of either very good or excellent quality. The teaching methods used have improved and the class organisation for literacy and mathematics is having a beneficial impact upon raising the standards of the pupils' work in Years 3 and 4. This is especially evident in the setting of more demanding tasks for the higher-attaining pupils. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for the pupils with special

educational needs has improved and is now good. The school has made the area around the school pond secure. The governors and staff have met almost all the issues raised by the last inspection, but there are still omissions in the annual report to parents. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection not only on the above issues, but also towards the targets set more recently for the development of the whole school and for the pupils' achievements. The school is well placed to continue the good rate of improvement in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | Key |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2000 | |
| reading | A | C | C | C | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| writing | B | D | C | C | |
| mathematics | B | C | E | E | |

The results of the national tests 2000 in reading and writing were close to the national average, with the proportion exceeding the expected level broadly in line with the average for all schools and for those of a similar type. The standards attained in mathematics are well below the national average because the proportion that reached the higher level 3 was small. Nevertheless, the proportion of the pupils that reached the expected level 2 or above in mathematics is in line with the national average and is a significant advance upon the results for 1999.

The results over the past three years show that there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The standards fluctuate from year to year because of the variation in ability of the cohorts of pupils. The overall standards over the past three years exceed the average national performance in reading and writing. They fall slightly below the national average in mathematics because of the small proportion that reached the higher level 3 in the most recent tests 2000. Nevertheless, it is evident from the pupils' work and the lessons observed during the inspection that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now close to the national average not only at the end of Key Stage 1 but also in Year 4.

The majority of the pupils presently in Years 1 to 4 began school with general attainment in literacy, numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world that was below expectations for their ages. It is evident from their work and the lesson observations that in reading, writing, mathematics and science their achievements are now in line with the expected standards. This is good progress. Their standards in design and technology and art and design are above the expected levels. All other subjects, with the exception of information and communication technology, which is below expectations in Year 4, are in line with expected standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time the pupils leave the school at the age of nine years.

THE PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | The pupils' enthusiasm and attitudes to school and their involvement in activities are good. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | The pupils' behaviour in and around the school is very good. |
| Personal development and relationships | The pupils' personal development is very good. |
| Attendance | The pupils' attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. |

The pupils are enthusiastic about their work and they enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour and personal development are very good. Although the level of attendance is broadly average, it is marred by one or two persistent latecomers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of the pupils | aged up to 5 years | aged 5-7 years | aged 7-11 years |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Very good | Good | Good |

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

During the inspection 50 lessons or parts of lessons were seen and the overall quality of the teaching throughout the school was good. There was no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of the teaching was satisfactory in 24 per cent of the lessons, good in 46 per cent, very good in 20 per cent and excellent in 10 per cent of the lessons observed by inspectors. This high proportion of good and better teaching has a beneficial influence upon the standards the pupils' achieve, the quality of their work and their attitudes to learning and to school. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good overall. This has marked influence upon the progress that pupils make.

The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage gives the children a very good start to their education. Throughout the school the quality of the teachers' planning is very good. They identify very clearly what they intend to teach and set tasks that match the ability range of the whole class. The additional support given to the pupils with special educational needs is good and contributes well to the good progress they make. The teachers carry out assessments effectively and, as a result, they know the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The school provides a good curriculum that is broad and well balanced. It has improved significantly since the last inspection, notably in design and technology. |
| Provision for the pupils with special educational needs | The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is also good. |
| Provision for the pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The provision made by the school for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. The pupils' cultural development is good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The contribution made by the assemblies to the pupils' spiritual development is very strong. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school is very caring and provides very effective support and guidance for its pupils. |

The school has good links with the parents, who express positive views about its provision. The parents work extremely hard for the school not only in fund raising, which is significant, but also in the support they give the children at home or in school. The curriculum is linked effectively to the national guidelines and the Curriculum 2000 and meets the statutory requirements. The curriculum for information and communication technology is steadily improving with the new facilities recently made available. The school provides a very caring, supportive and safe environment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good. The headteacher gives a very good clear direction to the work of the school. The subject co-ordinators provide good leadership in the development and monitoring of their subjects. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governing body is active in shaping the future developments of the school and is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school has very good procedures for tracking the teachers' performance and the progress made by individual pupils. However, the records do not allow the teachers to effectively and efficiently identify groups of pupils with similar learning patterns so that extension tasks or additional support can be planned. |
| The strategic use of resources | The available resources are used prudently. The learning support assistants are effectively deployed to support the teachers and the pupils. |

Very good leadership and management are strong features of the school. The headteacher has encouraged the development of the subject co-ordinators role and these teachers are now taking full

responsibility for the subjects. The staffing is adequate to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the resources are sufficient. The information and communication technology equipment has recently been improved and is already helping to raise standards. This is a good example of how the school applies its good principles of 'best' value when buying equipment. The accommodation is spacious but the necessity for pupils to go through one of the classrooms to reach the library, administration area and hall is not ideal and causes many disruptions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are making good progress • The standards of behaviour are good • The quality of teaching is good • The school is well led • The children are helped to become more mature and responsible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of out of school activities outside lessons • The amount of information they receive about how their children are getting on |

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the parents. It does not support the views of a few parents that the out of lesson activities need to be improved nor that the amount of information they receive about how well the children are doing is inadequate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and the pupils' achievements

1. It is evident from the work seen and from the lessons observed that the standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This standard of work is maintained into Key Stage 2 and by the time the pupils reach Year 4 they achieve standards in English, mathematics and science that are in line with the expected levels for their age. In all classes there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
2. The results of the national tests 2000 at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the pupils' standards in reading and writing are close to the national average. In mathematics, the standards were close to the national average when comparisons are made with the proportion of the pupils reaching level 2 or above. However, the proportion that achieved the higher level 3 was well below the national average, and this had adverse effects on the school's overall performance reducing the overall performance to well below the national average.
3. The overall trend in the national test results since 1998 shows that the pupils have achieved standards in reading and writing that exceed the national average for this period. However, in mathematics, the small proportion of the pupils that reached the higher level 3 in the most recent tests 2000, causes the overall average to fall slightly below the national performance.
4. It is evident from the scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 2 that standards in art and design and in design and technology are above the levels expected for their age. This is a substantial development and improvement since the last inspection when standards in design and technology were judged to be below expectations. In science, history, geography, music, information and communication technology and physical education, the quality of the pupils' work is broadly as expected. By the end of Year 4, the pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, music and physical education is in line with the expected standards for their age. The quality of work in art and design and design and technology is above the expected levels but in information and communication technology it is below the expected standards at the end of Year 4. **(This is a key issue for action).**
5. It is clear that the pupils make good progress from the time they enter the school at the age of four years. The cohorts of pupils that are now in the Years 1 to 4, started school with knowledge and skills that were below (and sometimes well below) the expected range. The standards observed during the inspection show that these year groups now attain standards that are broadly as expected. This good progress is a direct result of good teaching. The pupils' progress is particularly good in the development of the skills and understanding in literacy and numeracy. Throughout the school, the pupils' listening skills are good and most can read fluently. The standards of writing are broadly average across the school. By the time the pupils are in Year 4 they write for different purposes effectively and include explanatory text. There is also a significant proportion of the pupils who exceed standards expected in mathematics. Most pupils have a sound understanding of all the elements of numeracy; they have a secure knowledge of number facts and are able to use measures accurately. Almost all pupils are keen to learn and endeavour to do their best in each subject.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The pupils' behaviour, personal development and the relationships within the school are very good. The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the pupils themselves have high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The majority of parents believe the school maintains high standards of behaviour and that the school is helping their children become mature and responsible.
7. The pupils' attitudes to the school and their interest and involvement in activities are good. Most pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are interested and fully involved in all activities, including the wide range of extracurricular activities that is offered. The pupils are confident, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and suggestions. The pupils quickly settle down diligently in class, are capable of maintaining sustained periods of concentration and staying on task.
8. The standards of behaviour of the vast majority of the pupils are very good. They behave very well and generally act in a mature and responsible manner. The behaviour in the classrooms, in registrations and in assemblies is consistently very good and there is no disruption to learning. The children work in an environment that is completely free from oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism and racism. The combination of high standards in the pupils' personal discipline and consistently good class management by the teachers has a positive impact on the standards of attainment achieved. The pupils move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner and their behaviour at breaks and lunchtime is very good. There were no exclusions in the academic year prior to the inspection or in the current year to date.
9. The relationships in the school are very good. The pupils relate well to their teachers, to other adults with whom they come into contact, and also to one another. Children of all ages work well together. They are very polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. The pupils consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies and class prayers, they show appropriate respect for the occasion, willingly join in the singing of hymns and bow their heads reverently during times of reflection. There is no deliberate damage to the school property and a remarkable absence of litter around the school site.
10. The pupils' personal development is very good. They are learning a good range of social skills that helps them to develop into well-rounded individuals. The pupils support local and national charities and are learning to be aware of others less fortunate than themselves. They take part in a good range of visits, including residential experiences for the older children. The pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for taking responsibility for their own work in the classrooms, and in many lessons, when not subject to direct teaching, they were observed working independently with good levels of concentration. Where opportunities for taking on formal responsibilities around the school are offered, for example taking registers to the office after registration, the pupils respond in a mature and sensible manner. However, there was little evidence of children acting on their own initiative.
11. The levels of attendance are broadly in line with the national average. There is almost no unauthorised absence. The pupils enjoy coming to school, but there is a relatively high level of recorded lateness. Much of this lateness is caused by a small but significant number of persistent offenders and some parents can display a lack of urgency when bringing their children to school.

HOW WELL ARE THE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching is good overall and the lessons seen during the inspection were never less than satisfactory. Of the 50 lessons observed, close to a quarter were of a satisfactory quality, 46 per cent were good, 20 per cent were very good and 10 per cent were excellent. This is an extremely high proportion of good or better teaching. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good and in the classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 it is good. This is a substantial improvement since the last inspection, when the quality of teaching was judged to be sound or better.
13. This high quality of teaching is having a very significant and beneficial effect upon the quality of the pupils' work, their progress and their attitudes to school. From the time the pupils enter the school the teaching raises standards from below, and in some cohorts well below average, to broadly in line with the expected standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave at the end of Year 4.
14. The quality of planning, the management of the pupils and high expectations were strong features of the teaching in 75 per cent of lessons seen. This was particularly so in English, mathematics and science where close to 90 per cent of lessons observed were either good, very good or excellent. In design and technology and in art and design, all the lessons seen were either good or better. Improvements in design and technology are particularly noteworthy since at the time of the last inspection provision was poor and standards low.
15. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection and is now very good overall. All the lessons seen were good or better with nearly 66 per cent being either very good or excellent. This is an extremely high proportion. The teachers and the learning support assistants work very closely together. They provide very stimulating and interesting tasks within a caring and secure environment. The planning and assessment routines are very good and have a beneficial effect upon the children's early progress. The children entered school this year with attainment close to the expected standards for their age. They settled quickly and are making good progress towards the successful completion of the early learning goals by the time they reach Year 1. This is a direct result of the highly effective teaching methods used by the teachers.
16. The quality of the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall. In 71 per cent of lessons seen the quality of the teaching was either good or better. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
17. The teachers throughout the school have good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum they teach. In the lessons where the teaching is either very good or excellent, the teachers demonstrate very clear understanding of the teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and investigative science. These very good teaching qualities were also observed, for example in design and technology lesson and music lessons.
18. Throughout the school, the teachers' planning is very good. It is detailed and effectively outlines an appropriate range of teaching methods. In most lessons, the tasks are appropriately chosen to ensure that all the pupils build upon their previous learning. This process is successful because the teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and in some cases clearly identify how it can be improved. The teachers have high expectations. With the reorganisation of the teaching groups in English and mathematics, the higher-attaining pupils are set specific and more demanding tasks. All these factors have a very beneficial impact on the quality of the pupils' learning; the pace of their work is

good and they sustain their concentration well. Occasionally, however, the pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet and as a result their concentration wanders. In Key Stage 2, there are instances where the pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to contribute as much as they should to the lessons.

19. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Good teaching and the support from the learning support assistants ensure that they all make good progress. The individual teaching they receive has a beneficial effect and also improves their concentration and skill levels very effectively.
20. The use of homework is satisfactory and the pupils respond well. In most instances the routines that share the development of the pupils' reading between the parents and the school are enhanced effectively by the work done at home.

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

21. The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum covering all the subjects of the National Curriculum. The strategies for the teaching of both literacy and numeracy are used appropriately within the school. A combination of the school's own schemes of work, national guidelines and local education authority material is used to plan other subjects, ensuring that the complete National Curriculum is covered. The teachers link aspects and subjects of the curriculum where possible. There are appropriate policies for personal and social education including sex education and awareness of drugs. A suite with up to date computers has only recently been installed, but is already raising the skills of both the teachers and the pupils. The full potential for information and communication technology to enrich the whole curriculum is not yet realised but in-service training is scheduled for the teachers in the summer term.
22. The provision for design and technology has improved greatly since the last inspection. The school has appropriate plans that are used by the teachers to ensure that all the pupils cover the appropriate parts of the National Curriculum for this subject. The school has very good long-term planning for the new Foundation Stage and the implementation of the curriculum for children in the reception years is very good. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school's policy in this area has clear and appropriate aims and objectives. The pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and their individual education plans are matched carefully to their needs. All the pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The pupils are regrouped according to their prior learning in English and mathematics, and this enables the teachers to cater more effectively for pupils of differing levels of attainment. In many lessons, the work is adapted appropriately to meet the needs of the pupils of all abilities.
23. The school promotes the use of English appropriately throughout the curriculum. In art, for example, the pupils wrote detailed accounts of their reaction to a painting following their visit to the National Gallery. The curriculum planning includes the teaching of technical language to support each subject. Numeracy is also used appropriately within other subjects. For instance, the pupils record their research in diagrams and graphs, use measures to support science and geography and are made familiar with the passage of time.
24. The provision of extracurricular activities is very good. The wide range of activities includes sports, dance and music. Many visits are linked to the work the pupils do in school and each class makes visits to support the topics studied. Extra activities for the pupils in Year 2 include visits to the

Black Country Museum and the seaside. During the inspection, the pupils in Year 4 made a three-day visit to the Frank Chapman Centre where they pursued a full timetable, including swimming, map games and a walk to the 'Magic Tree' in the dark. The pupils also have very good opportunities, for their age, to visit art galleries both national and local. They take part in music and folk dancing festivals. The pupils enjoy opportunities for taking part in sporting competitions with other schools. They are actively encouraged to give of themselves by collecting for local and national charities.

25. The links with other schools are good. A group of schools work together and hold workshops, including one for design and technology for higher-attaining pupils. The headteacher visits local pre-school groups and there are good links with the local middle school to support arrangements for the transfer of the pupils. The school has obtained some useful financial support from joint arrangements with the parish but currently contacts with local businesses and other local community organisations are not extensive. The school is a member of an effective consortium of all schools in the area. It welcomes students and older pupils from other schools, who make a useful contribution to the pupils' development. The school has very good links with the local community through its parish. Recently, the pupils took part in an exciting mathematics project organised by a local supermarket.
26. The pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school also enjoys very good links with the church, and assemblies are used well to create a spiritual atmosphere of prayer and reflection. Consideration is given to this aspect in various lessons across the curriculum. For example in an art lesson the pupils reflected on the sea passing over a piece of driftwood. All of these experiences make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual development.
27. The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal development by providing an environment where all are valued. Discussions and assemblies affirm the importance of respect for others' values and beliefs and provide opportunities for the pupils to share their thoughts and feelings. The result is that the pupils treat each other with sensitivity and respect. The provision for the pupils' moral development is very good. It is effectively promoted through the mutual respect prevalent throughout the school. The school rules reflect its ethos and effectively encourage the pupils to understand the consequences of their actions on others. All members of the staff understand the importance of raising the pupils' self-esteem through praise and reward rather than through sanctions. They apply the code of behaviour consistently. As a result of the school's provision, the pupils' sense of morality increases and by the time they reach Year 4 it is clear that they are firmly aware of the difference between right and wrong and are willing to take responsibility for their actions.
28. The school makes very good provision for the pupils' social development. Adults around the school present good role models in terms of care, consideration, trust, reliability and good manners. There are many opportunities for the pupils to work together co-operatively and to use their initiative. For example, the pupils in Year 4 in an English lesson produced a set of instructions for using a play station. They allocated tasks and decided on the contents. The staff involve the pupils in charity work and encourage them to think of others who may be less fortunate than they are. The quality of relationships, both between adults and the pupils and among the pupils is very good, and a strength of the school. This has a direct bearing on the pupils' good behaviour and enthusiastic approach. The provision of a wide variety of extracurricular activities and the opportunities for residential trips is particularly effective in developing the pupils' social skills, building confidence in relationships and instilling a sense of citizenship.

29. The arrangements for the pupils' cultural development are good with displays around the school relating to the different cultures and customs of other people around the world. Moreover, there is an emphasis on comparisons between the lifestyles of various cultures and similarities and differences are discussed. The school also participates in both local and regional festivals of dance and music that also support many aspects of their cultural development. During the Millennium year, a local needlewoman helped the pupils to produce a very high quality wall hanging for the hall. The pupils acquire a good understanding of other faiths through studying festivals including Hanukkah and Diwali and creation stories. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school effectively supports its pupils and the staff strives hard to promote their welfare. The headteacher places a high priority on pastoral care and provides very good leadership in this aspect. The teachers are very approachable and totally supportive of the pupils. The non-teaching staff are dedicated, committed and provide very good support for both teachers and the pupils. All members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have a very good understanding of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures, and implement them conscientiously and consistently. Appropriate provision is made for medical and first aid requirements, and the arrangements for dealing with routine matters, such as minor accidents, are very good. Conscientious teachers, who are alert and vigilant, supervise the pupils well at breaks. Experienced and efficient midday supervisors undertake lunchtime supervision, and their standard of care is high.
31. The school makes good use of appropriate external support agencies and very good use of its learning support staff. The classroom assistants and parent helpers are deployed very effectively. For example, they maintain feedback sheets that help the teachers in identifying and supporting children who are finding difficulty in achieving the targets that have been set for them. The support for the pupils with special educational needs is good and has a positive effect on their attainment and progress. The child protection procedures are securely in place and there is a very good awareness of the relevant issues throughout the school. There are also very good procedures for health and safety. These are well known and understood by all staff, who consistently demonstrate safe working practice in lessons. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities seriously and all the required safety inspections and checks, including risk assessment, are regularly carried out and properly recorded.
32. The school has very effective procedures in place to promote and monitor discipline and good behaviour. All staff members have high expectations of behaviour, and discipline is administered consistently and well. This has a positive effect on the high standards of behaviour maintained in the school. Attendance is monitored rigorously. Absence is correctly recorded, followed up and appropriate action taken when necessary.
33. The headteacher, class teachers and the support staff know the pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. The class teachers maintain detailed pupil records and class profiles, and they monitor their pupils' personal development very well. There are comprehensive procedures in place for assessing and monitoring each pupil's academic attainment and progress. Assessment takes place regularly, but the record keeping system needs streamlining so that the teachers can quickly identify how the pupils are progressing through the planned programme. In particular, the records should show which aspects have been grasped and which need more attention so able pupils can move on more quickly and the consolidation needed by other pupils can be more precisely identified. **(This is an area for improvement that the governors should consider in their action plan.)**

34. Nevertheless, the day-to-day assessment of individual pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, is good and helps teachers to differentiate work within the class. This has a particularly positive impact on the progress made by the pupils with special educational needs.
35. Overall, St. Peter's Catholic First School is a very caring school that provides very effective support and guidance for its pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. The relationships between the school and parents are very good. The school enjoys the active support of most parents. The majority of parents consistently expressed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. There are a number of committed parents who regularly help in the classrooms, accompany children on out of school trips, and are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. For example, during the inspection 47 parents and grandparents attended a mass with their children in the school hall. The parents support home reading and consistently enter appropriate comments in the home/school reading books. The parent governors are also fully involved in the governing body and with the school. There is a very active parents' association, The St. Peter's Parents' Association, which organises social events and raises considerable funds for the school. The vast majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems or complaints, but not all parents agree that the school works closely with them. The inspection evidence does not support the views of this minority of parents. The headteacher is very approachable and is available on the playground at the start and end of each school day. Surprisingly, a relatively high number of parents did not agree that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team judged the provision for extracurricular activities to be very good.
37. The communication between the school and home is very good. The school sends out regular newsletters and communications to parents about specific events and activities. It provides a comprehensive and informative prospectus and the governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish an annual report. However, there are a few minor omissions, such as rates of authorised and unauthorised absence, in the latest governors' report. **(This is a key issue for action)**. The parents are given a personalised and informative annual progress report and offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. The reports clearly indicate what the pupils can and cannot do, what they understand and the progress they are making. The parents are given the opportunity to be involved in setting targets for improvement for their children. A small minority of parents did not agree that they were kept well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspection evidence did not support these comments. The parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed and fully involved in their children's education.
38. Overall, the partnership with parents enriches the school's work and has a positive effect on the pupils' learning and personal development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

39. The leadership and management of the school are very good and are strong features of the school. The headteacher provides a very clear direction to the educational and social development of the pupils and to the school as a whole. She has developed the curriculum effectively since her appointment with all teachers being encouraged to take responsibility for the development and monitoring of their subjects. Through the efforts of the deputy headteacher and the co-ordinators, the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. In most cases the co-ordinators have based

their subject development upon the national guidelines. However, the coverage of art and design and physical education is based upon comprehensive schemes of work that are preferred by the school. They still fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum. The numeracy and literacy strategies have been promoted effectively and are now securely established. The headteacher and deputy headteacher compile very thorough and detailed tracking records for each pupil.

40. The staff, governors, and parents form a cohesive team and work hard and conscientiously for the benefit of the school.
41. High expectations are evident in all that the school does. These expectations are reflected well in the day-to-day running of the school and in the very positive attitudes that every one has towards the school. The school's aims are apparent in all aspects of its work.
42. Since the last inspection in 1997 and especially since the appointment of the new headteacher, the staff and governors have worked hard and conscientiously to address all the issues in the last report. The action plan is comprehensive and sets out a clear vision for development of the priorities identified by the school. The targets set are monitored well and effectively reached.
43. The governing body is actively involved in the monitoring and management of the school's development. They resolved effectively the staffing problems that affected the overall performance of the pupils and especially those in Year 2 during the national tests in 2000. Through their various committees the governing body is aware of the strengths and weaknesses and is able to help to shape the future direction of the school. The governors are fully aware of the major issues faced by the school, for example the need to improve the teachers' information and communication technology skills so they can make full use of the new computer suite to support their teaching in all subjects. The governors have approved all policy statements and regularly monitor the budget to ensure prudent use of the resources made available to the school.
44. The staffing and resources are good. All learning support assistants are well deployed and give their whole-hearted support to the teachers and the pupils. This is particularly strong in their support of the pupils with special educational needs. The school has established good routines and systems to ensure that the principles of 'best value for money' apply when purchasing equipment. The administrative staff works conscientiously to ensure that their good procedures support the school and maintain good relationships with the parents and the community.
45. Overall, the accommodation is good. There are sufficient classrooms, which are adequate in size, well lit and suited to teaching all areas of the curriculum. There are additional areas for shared practical work and for the withdrawal of groups of the pupils. The hall is large enough for assemblies, physical education lessons and dining. There is a small library, which is easily accessed but not yet fully developed as a learning facility. There is a small but useful computer suite. The school is kept very clean, is well decorated, and the learning environment is enhanced by attractive display of the pupils' work.
46. Access throughout the school does present some problems. The Key Stage 2 pupils have to pass through a classroom to get to the hall, library and administrative area. This is not an ideal situation as it causes considerable disruption, but the teacher copes very well with this problem. The very good behaviour of the pupils and good class management of the other classes minimises the disruption caused by this movement. The reception classes and one Year 1 class, have to pass through the hall to get to other areas of the school. Access into and throughout the school for the pupils with physical difficulties is limited. There is no disabled toilet provision.

47. There is a good hard surface playground and a large grassed sports field. The school has developed a safe and attractive environmental area. There is a separate play area for children under the age of five but is only partially fenced.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) raise the quality of the pupils' work in information and communication technology by ensuring that:
 - (i) all pupils throughout the school, make regular and full use of the computer suite and other information and communication technology resources to support their learning;
 - (ii) the teachers and learning support assistants develop their skills and understanding in the uses of computers to support learning across the curriculum;
 - (iii) the information and communication technology skills are identified and taught for each age group.(Paragraphs 4, 96)
- (2) ensure that all the required information is included in the annual report of the governing body.
(Paragraph 37)

The governors, headteacher and staff should also consider the following areas for improvement within their action plan.

- (3) Simplify the assessment and recording system so that the teachers can more easily identify where groups of pupils either need further practice or need to be moved on rapidly.
(Paragraph 33)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 50 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and the pupils | 18 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 10 | 20 | 46 | 24 | 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

The pupils on the school's roll

| | YR – Y4 |
|---|---------|
| Number of the pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 267 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 28 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

| | YR – Y4 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 35 |

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

| | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| The pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 8 |
| The pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 15 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.0 |
| National comparative data | 5.2 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.1 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | 2000 | 29 | 30 | 59 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| | Girls | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| | Total | 50 | 51 | 52 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 85 (78) | 86 (87) | 88 (78) |
| | National | 84 (82) | 85 (83) | 90 (87) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 25 | 24 | 25 |
| | Girls | 26 | 25 | 25 |
| | Total | 51 | 49 | 50 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 86 (75) | 83 (78) | 85 (80) |
| | National | 84 (82) | 88 (86) | 88 (87) |

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 | 5 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 213 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 1 |

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 refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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

*Teachers and classes***Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 11.2 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 24 |
| Average class size | 26 |

Education support staff: YR – Y4

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 6 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 84 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999-2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | |
|--|---------|
| | £ |
| Total income | 406 814 |
| Total expenditure | 419 639 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1 539 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 14 987 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 2 161 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 268 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 93 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 65 | 31 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 57 | 37 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 55 | 35 | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 40 | 46 | 10 | 2 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 57 | 39 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 37 | 46 | 11 | 5 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 69 | 24 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 65 | 25 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 46 | 34 | 12 | 6 | 1 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 51 | 37 | 3 | 8 | 2 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 57 | 39 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 23 | 38 | 23 | 3 | 14 |

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

48. The children enter the reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. This year on entry the majority of children demonstrated standards of attainment that are average for their age. Most have attended either a nursery or local playgroup. This is an improvement when initial assessment results are compared with the children who have entered the school in the previous four years. In these previous year groups, the attainment overall was below the expected levels for children of their age.
49. The classroom setting is very warm and has a positive ethos. The teaching observed during the inspection was always good, and mostly either very good or excellent. The children relate very positively to their teachers. The curriculum is rich, well balanced and very well planned. The activities are well matched to the children's needs. The teachers direct most activities and opportunities for children to choose for themselves are more limited. However, the activities are of very high quality and generally great fun. The teachers make detailed assessments and with the very effective support of the other staff members ensure that all children are very well challenged in their learning. As a result, they receive a very positive introduction to school, and by the time they reach the end of their reception year, all have made good progress. Most of them achieve the levels of attainment appropriate to this age group. This is similar to the last inspection. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Personal, social and emotional development

50. The children's personal and social development is good. The very good teaching ensures that the children's attainment in personal and social development improves well during their time in the reception class. The children are well behaved and enthusiastic, and are able to sustain concentration. They are kind and caring towards each other, and in lessons they demonstrate that they know that pets also need care. They learn to take turns and to listen to each other. They have opportunities for role-play both in the 'Home Corner' and in many lessons, including English. The teachers create a stimulating environment and atmosphere where each child is made to feel special. Expectations in regard to their work and behaviour are high, and the children are cheerful and want to please.

Communication, language and literacy

51. The children's attainment in this aspect of their work is in line with the expected standards for this age range. They are confident, articulate and respond well to their teacher's questions. In all sessions, they are encouraged to develop their vocabulary, to listen carefully and to show respect for each other's views. They recognise many simple words and phonic sounds at the beginning and end of words. They understand the stories and can predict what might happen next, for example when reading 'What a Bad Dog'. Some read simple text fluently and accurately. The children enjoy books and like to talk about them; they know what an author and a title page are. They are beginning to understand sentences. They can write their names and most copy the teacher's writing with few mistakes. The potentially higher-attaining children begin to write on their own and make good attempts at spelling 'new' words. The quality of the teaching is very good. The teachers use books very well and simple resources are used effectively to turn a lesson on sentences into a game. The teaching of sounds is very imaginative and the teacher uses a puppet

well as a teaching aid. The puppet makes mistakes and this delights the children who are able to correct using the right sound. The teachers and other staff are enthusiastic and because of this the children have very positive attitudes to their learning. A lively and rich range of activities is provided to encourage listening, reading and writing. The planning is very clearly focused; it takes into account what the children already know and extends it.

Mathematical development

52. The children's attainment is satisfactory. They learn to count confidently to twenty and beyond. They count forwards and back and can recognise simple number patterns and geometric shapes. In one lesson, the children showed enjoyment and skill in addition and subtraction. They ordered numbered mats and used a set of knitted dogs for subtraction. Some can use arbitrary measures, estimate and find missing numbers. They are also acquiring and using mathematical vocabulary in an appropriate way. This is all the result of very good teaching and a wide range of relevant learning experiences. The tasks provided for the children match their needs, and enhance their interest in learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. The children's attainment in this aspect is as expected for their age and their knowledge and understanding increase rapidly. They know how to care for pets. They know that pets need food, water and exercise. They are able to carry out investigations. Recent work included experimenting with a snowman and finding out whether or not an overcoat would effect melting. They use computers with confidence. The teachers have high expectations, and through their very good use of discussion they encourage the children to reflect and explain their experiences. This was particularly strong in the group-work during the lesson on pet care. Very good resources are provided including a complete pet care kit for both a cat and a dog.

Physical development

54. The children's attainment in this area of learning is good. They can make good use of space and are aware of each other. They travel using feet by hopping, skipping and running. They are learning to use hands and feet to bunny-jump, camel walk and crab walk. In the playground, the children move confidently, utilise space well, and show a good awareness of others. They balance rings on their heads and use hoops, ropes and canes. They are able to ride bikes safely with due concern for others. The different wheeled vehicles provide the pupils with a very good variety of experiences. Their manipulative skills are developed well; they use scissors carefully and hold pencils and brushes appropriately. In the physical education lesson seen, the teaching was excellent. The planned activities were imaginative and challenging. The teacher was inspirational and the pupils tried very hard. Very good resources were provided to help the pupils with difficult elements of their task. Coloured hand and foot cut-outs were used to help children sort out their movements when using hands and feet in different combinations. The planning for these activities is excellent. There is good access from the classroom to the outside area.

Creative development

55. In this aspect of the work the expectations are very high, and the children's attainment is above the expected standards. In music lessons, the children are able to compose using claps, stamps and clicks. They add variety by making the sounds either louder or quieter. Very good use is made of a prepared tape to develop the children's listening skills. The children have opportunities for engaging in good range of art activities such as drawing, painting, modelling and printing. They paint

confidently, often making bold use of colour. They use a range of techniques; for example marbling was used to very good effect to create beautiful pictures of Jack Frost. They also respond imaginatively to opportunities for using drama, in the form of role-play, in many aspects of their work. The planning for this area also takes careful account of the children's language development. The children enjoy acting, singing nursery rhymes and there is provision for using musical instruments. Good teaching and good support from the learning support assistant encourages the children's creativity. Careful planning skilfully relieves the intensity of some of the language and number activities by offering more creative follow-on task. This ensures that the concentration skills of these young children are not over-taxed.

ENGLISH

56. The inspection evidence shows that at the end of Key Stage 1, the standards that the pupils achieve in English (reading and writing) are in line with the National average. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests 85 per cent of the pupils achieved the nationally expected level for reading and writing. This result is broadly consistent with results achieved over the last three years. The results match those achieved by similar schools. Boys and girls achieve similar results. Trends over time follow the national picture but since the time of the last inspection when reported figures for 1997 were below average, the results in English have improved in Key Stage 1 in the tests for 2000 to be close to the national average. In the present Year 4 the pupils' standards in English are in line with national expectations. This is a good improvement and these pupils have made good progress since beginning school.
57. The pupils' standards in speaking and listening are average by the end of Key Stage 1. Most pupils are eager to answer questions about stories they share during the literacy hour. In Year 2 for example, the pupils are able to discuss a story and use examples from the text to back-up their opinion. Some pupils are able to argue against the general view, again with reference to the text. Many pupils in Key Stage 2 talk enthusiastically about their work describing, for example some of the difficulties encountered when writing explanatory texts. Throughout the school, the pupils' listening skills are good. The pupils listen well to each other and offer helpful advice when work is read aloud. In one class, the teacher made very good use of paired discussion to prepare the pupils for a class question. School procedures also help to develop speaking skills, as the pupils read in the Mass and are required to deliver messages.
58. The standards in reading are in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in line with the expected levels at the end of Year 4. The pupils read fluently at their level. Most are quickly aware when they have misread a word or phrase. Generally, they re-examine the word and use phonic knowledge to correct their mistakes. Most pupils use correct grammar so they will stop and repeat when their reading of the text does not sound right. The very youngest pupils are acquiring a good knowledge of essential sight words. The pupils are eager to read along with the teacher, and there are always many pupils with raised hands, who are ready to predict what might happen next. The pupils use the text well to support their opinions. The pupils with special educational needs benefit from the consistency with which they are taught how to link sounds with letters and from regular opportunities for reading. Consequently, they make good progress throughout the school.
59. By the age of seven, the standard of the pupils' written work is in line with national average. They apply their knowledge of capital letters and the use of full stops in their own writing. There is a steady improvement in the way they sequence their ideas and apply their developing phonic knowledge to spell key words. Many children make good progress in spacing their written words and in the formation of their letters. Most pupils hold pencils properly and their handwriting is good.

These standards are maintained in Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 4 the pupils are achieving the expected standards for their age. Their writing is more fluent and they are beginning to write for different purposes, for example explanatory texts. In Year 4, the pupils understand the structure of a piece of explanatory text and use this model to create their own text for using a play station or portable compact disc player.

60. In about three-quarters of the classes in Key Stage 1 the lessons seen were either good or very good. The teachers are very secure with the national literacy strategy. They think carefully about their lessons and prepare well. Their lessons are interesting and the activities, resources and teaching methods are carefully selected to advance the pupils' learning efficiently.
61. The planning of work for English is good. Very specific learning objectives are set, the content and organisation of lessons are well thought out and the teachers make good provision for reviewing the learning in the light of the identified lesson objectives. The teachers use text well to motivate the pupils so they approach tasks with eager anticipation. Occasionally, the pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet and their concentration loses its sharpness. In Key Stage 2, there are also instances where over zealous classroom management inhibits the pupils' interaction so they do not contribute as much as they should. The teachers make good use of opportunities to develop English across the curriculum. This was notable during a geography lesson in Key Stage 1 and a design and technology lesson in Key Stage 2. In both lessons, the teachers asked pertinent questions, gave the pupils time to think and offered appropriate language models to help the pupils express their thoughts more effectively.
62. The pupils are positive about the subject, and across the age and ability range feel that they are doing well. Most pupils can work independently and even the youngest pupils are able to use either dictionaries or word banks to support their spelling. The pupils settle very quickly to tasks and concentrate well. The work in their books is neat, careful and well presented reflecting their pride in doing their best at all times.
63. Although the library contains a satisfactory range of books to support learning across the curriculum, it is not an inviting area in which to work and is generally under-used. However, the literacy libraries are very well stocked with essential and very well ordered resources. The school has a very good collection of books to support the teaching of reading. The pupils use information and communication technology occasionally to support the development of their literacy skills. The school library and class collections of books are used satisfactorily to extend the pupils' reading and to support work in a range of subjects.
64. All work is regularly marked. There are examples of marking comments that help the pupils to improve their work.
65. The co-ordinator for English is experienced, knowledgeable and is providing very good leadership in this subject. Her commitment and effort, and that of the headteacher and other staff, has ensured that the pupils gain a very firm foundation in their knowledge and skills in the use of language. After analysing the pupils' work, the school decided to provide at least two periods each week for extended writing and also to ensure that the youngest pupils had very regular sentence practice. This is a very positive outcome of the thorough monitoring of the teaching and the pupils' work undertaken by the co-ordinator. The impact of the literacy training is apparent in the good teaching seen in this subject.

MATHEMATICS

66. The inspection evidence indicates that the standards are in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. By the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 the standards are broadly in line with the expected levels for their age.
67. The proportion of the pupils that reached the expected level 2 in the National tests 2000 was close to the national average. However the proportion that achieved the higher level 3 was small and this caused the school's overall performance to be well below the average for all schools, and also for similar types of schools. The school has responded quickly to these results and now regroups the pupils in Years 3 and 4 for all mathematics lessons. Consequently, standards show a significant improvement since last year.
68. The overall trend in the national test results since 1998 shows that, the performance falls slightly below the national performance because of the small proportion of the pupils that reached the higher level 3 in mathematics in these successive years.
69. By the time the pupils are seven years old, most have a secure understanding of the sequences of odd and even numbers up to 100 and can competently recall addition and subtraction facts up to 20. They understand the place values of digits in tens and units and can calculate addition and subtraction with numbers up to 100. They can describe the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes and have a good understanding of simple fractions such as a half, a quarter and an eighth. They are developing a good understanding that interesting patterns of odd and even can be made with calculations using number pairs. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress by the end of Key Stage 1 compared to their attainment on entry to the school.
70. The pupils in Key Stage 2 also make good progress. The setting of the pupils into similar ability groups for mathematics lessons is having a positive impact on standards of their work in Years 3 and 4. From the work seen and the lessons observed, it is clear that the work of the majority of the pupils is in line with the expected standards for their age. Most have a firm understanding of place values to 1000 and can add and subtract these larger numbers accurately. The higher-attaining pupils were observed counting accurately in 25's and 50's and were challenged appropriately to use consecutive numbers to make as many numbers as possible between 1 and 30. Nearly all completed the tasks successfully and were aware of the patterns that evolved from calculations of this type. A significant proportion of the pupils in Year 4 is making very good progress and exceeding the expected levels for their age. These pupils know multiplication tables up to 10 times. They have a secure understanding of division by 10 and can work out the area of simple shapes. They can also measure accurately in millilitres and centimetres. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
71. Over the past few years the cohorts of pupils in the present Years 1 to 4 entered school with below average attainment in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. Good teaching throughout the school has enabled all pupils to make good progress.
72. Of the lessons observed, 13 per cent were excellent, 25 per cent were very good and 50 per cent were good, with the remainder being satisfactory. This is a high proportion of good and better teaching. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was judged to be satisfactory. This good teaching has raised standards and improved the rate of progress that all pupils have made since they began school. All the teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the mathematics they teach. This was very obvious in many lessons where the quality of the teaching of mathematical investigations was very good and sometimes excellent. The teachers plan their lessons very effectively with detailed coverage of the national numeracy strategy. Different tasks are designed for the wide range of the pupils' abilities and the Years 3

and 4 are set into four groups of similar abilities for their mathematics lessons. This has a beneficial influence and is particularly evident in the mental calculation sessions where all the pupils are challenged with tasks according to their prior learning and understanding. The teachers' questioning is good and used well to establish whether or not the pupils have understood what they have been taught. This good teaching has a significant impact upon the pupils' progress and their attitudes to their work. In several lessons observed in Key Stage 1, the pupils were very enthusiastic and eager to discover new patterns in number pairs up to 20. In the Key Stage 2 lessons, the pupils worked with sustained concentration and completed sufficient work during each session. In both key stages, all the pupils are keen to succeed and try their best to achieve good results. They work neatly and this is praised well by the teachers in the marking of the work. The learning support assistants are deployed very well to enhance the learning of all the pupils and particularly those with special educational needs. They are made aware of their role during lessons and sensitively support the pupils identified having need of extra help. They record what the pupils have done and indicate whether or not they might require further support during the next lesson.

73. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and fulfils her role effectively. She occasionally monitors the teachers' plans but does not yet link sufficiently well what has been planned to the work that the pupils have completed in their books. The co-ordinator and the headteacher have observed mathematics lessons and the teachers have received verbal and written feedback about their teaching styles and their classroom management of the pupils. This has been influential in raising the quality of the teaching, the quality of the pupils' work and the secure establishment of the national numeracy strategy.
74. The resources for mathematics are satisfactory although the computer suite and the class computers are not yet used sufficiently to support the teaching of mathematics in all classes. At present, the school is selecting appropriate programs and the all teachers will join a training course about information and communication technology during the summer term.

SCIENCE

75. The results of the teacher assessments of seven-year olds in 2000 showed that the pupils' attainment was below the national average for the expected level, and well below average for the higher levels. The current inspection evidence shows that this has been reversed and attainment by the age of seven is now securely in line with the national average. The attainment of the pupils at the age of nine, when they leave school is similarly securely in line with the national average. Scrutiny of the previous work and the current observations show that the proportion of the pupils currently working at the higher levels at both ages is higher than in the previous year and similar to the findings of the last inspection. The baseline assessment of the current pupils aged seven and nine showed that their attainment on entry to the school was below average, and their current attainment shows they have made good progress. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls at both ages.
76. By the age of seven, the majority of the pupils are becoming familiar with many of the basic principles of science. For example, the pupils in Year 1 have studied forces and can identify pushes and pulls and the effects they have on the movement of toys. In one lesson they were seen using this knowledge to find out how far down a ramp a toy car would run. Their knowledge and understanding was developed well by sharply focused teaching, which led them to look at the differences between plastic and metal cars and their size and weight. By the end of the lesson, a number of more able pupils were talking about the effect of weight on the distance travelled. This clearly focused investigative work was typical of the many good lessons seen. For instance in Year 3, the pupils investigated how quickly water passed through various materials such as sand, gravel

and clay, and Year 2 pupils were seen testing the waterproof qualities of different materials to make 'Teddy' a rainproof hat. By the time the pupils reach Year 4 they are making careful and detailed temperature recordings to test the insulation properties of materials. These activities typify the teaching and learning in the subject across the school and underpin the improvement made since the last inspection.

77. The pupils develop a good body of scientific knowledge as they progress through the school. The youngest children in the reception classes have looked at animals in cold places such as the Arctic and older pupils in Key Stage 1 have explored the school grounds looking at creatures in their different habitats. Work on magnetism begun in Year 2 has been effectively developed in Year 4 through the study of magnetic and non-magnetic metals. The current work in Year 3 classes is focused on the study of rocks and minerals, and their work is well supported by interesting and informative classroom displays. The pupils take great pride in their work and are eager to talk about what they have done. This interest and enthusiasm for science is a feature of many of the lessons seen and is directly related to the various stimulating activities that the teachers plan.
78. Overall, and across the school, the teaching of science is good. Of the lessons seen, nearly three-quarters were either good or better and one excellent lesson was seen in Year 2. This is an improvement from the last inspection. The teachers have secure subject knowledge, direct their questions skilfully and give clear explanations. The lessons are well planned, well resourced and stimulate the pupils' interests and enthusiasm. The teaching of investigations is strong. There is a clear focus to what is to be learned and this helps to maintain a good pace to the work. The teachers have high expectations, and as a result the pupils respond with great interest and enthusiasm. They are eager to take part in practical activities, but wait patiently while their teachers explain the tasks they have set. The teachers give clear explanations and use well-directed questions that enable all the pupils to take an effective part in the discussions and in the well-planned, practical activities they organise. The less able pupils and those with special educational needs are always well supported in classes by the teachers and support assistants so that they are always included in all aspects of the lesson. The resources are always ready and this enables all groups of pupils to settle quickly to their work.
79. Occasionally, when the teaching is merely satisfactory, it is characterised by over direction and control by teachers, which does not allow the pupils to be fully involved in the lesson. The tasks do not sufficiently challenge the pupils' powers of thinking and deduction and the pace of the work is slower.
80. At present, the headteacher is acting as co-ordinator, while a newly qualified member of staff is trained to take on the role. She is being well supported by the headteacher and the former co-ordinator and training is already planned. The school, for example, was quick to respond to the disappointing results last year and has already put in place training and new assessment systems to strengthen the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1. The resources are good and are being used well to support teaching and learning across the school.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

81. Throughout the school, the pupils' work in art and design and in design and technology is above the expected standards. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection when standards in design and technology were unsatisfactory. The high standard found in art at the last inspection has been maintained. The pupils make good progress throughout both key stages. Those with special educational needs are fully involved in all of the activities and make sound progress.

82. In design and technology in Year 1, the pupils can plan and make a fruit salad, build cars using construction materials and devise hinged snakes and shadow puppets. They plan their work with pictures and words, use tools and assemble their products. In Year 2, they successfully produce a range of vehicles with axles and wheels that move. They understand and use the correct terms when discussing mechanisms. They talk knowledgeably about how an axle works, identifying the link between wheels and axles. As part of their preparations for making puppets, they examined and analysed some examples and investigated ways of joining materials by stapling, stitching and gluing. They completed a labelled plan of a character from the Christmas play, which they then made. When their work was complete they evaluated their design, reflected on the appropriateness of the materials and methods and then recorded their conclusions. In Years 3, the pupils examine photo frames to discover what makes a strong and sturdy structure. Dismantling and reassembling the frames provides good experience for planning their own order of work. Each frame was investigated carefully and a discussion about the type of person who might use such a frame caused laughter and enjoyment. In Year 4, the pupils examine a set of purses and wallets and identify differences of function. They can make drawings from various perspectives indicating fabrics, fastenings and construction techniques. Previous work, which was undertaken with a local secondary school, included designing and making a CD cover.
83. Only one art and design lesson was seen during the inspection. However, the pupils' work is displayed throughout the school and is of a high standard. The pupils learn from an early age to appreciate the work of well-known artists such as Mondrian. In Year 1, the pupils are able to take ideas from illustrations when using modelling materials to experiment with line, texture and pattern. Previous work included paintings in the style of Mondrian that demonstrated good control of paints as well a good eye for placing colour. The Year 3 pupils observed the patterns in natural and living objects including shell patterns. They drew these patterns well and then by cutting their drawings into strips, stuck and stretched the image to create a surprisingly good effect. In Year 4, the pupils studied still-life drawings by Cezanne before producing similar pictures of their own. They also produced very powerful images to illustrate their poems about winter trees. All the pupils in the school were involved in contributing to a millennium wall hanging, which is a striking feature in the school hall.
84. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In art and design and design and technology lessons they apply themselves diligently to their tasks for long periods of time. The pupils listen carefully to adults and show satisfactory levels of independence and a real enthusiasm for the subject. They support each other with positive and encouraging comments.
85. The teaching in art and design and design and technology ranges from good to very good. The teachers' planning is detailed and they provide a very good variety of resources to help the pupils analyse products and to give insight into the way that established artists have tackled a subject. The teachers are well organised, they anticipate and prepare materials for lessons so that they run smoothly and the pupils are very well behaved. The teachers make good use of on-going assessment to help them decide on the emphasis in the next lesson. The pace of lessons is appropriate with sufficient time given for reflection when needed.
86. The two co-ordinators for design and technology and for art and design are doing a good job. Design and technology was a key issue for action during the last inspection. The co-ordinator for this subject now monitors the teachers' planning and has improved the quality and quantity of the available resources. The school has implemented the national guidelines for design and technology and now has good guidelines in place. This is an improvement since the last inspection. It is having a positive effect upon practice and is ensuring that the pupils make progress in their learning. The school has decided to retain its own very good scheme of work for art. The pupils' artwork is

displayed around the school, often linked to other areas of the curriculum. In particular some good sketches of winter trees added an extra dimension to some sensitive poems. There are three-dimensional willow sculptures in the grounds that are much valued in the summer months and form an arresting feature at this time of year. The school visits the National Gallery annually and the pupils' written work testifies to the impact that the art appreciation lectures have on their ability to really look and talk about paintings.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

87. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' attainment in both subjects is in line with national standards. By the time that they leave school at the end of Year 4 the majority of the pupils are achieving the expected levels for their ages. This contrasts with above average attainment at the time of the last inspection, but nevertheless, illustrates the good progress made by current pupils who had a below average knowledge and understanding of the world around them when they entered school.
88. Scrutiny of previous work, lesson observations and current displays show that the pupils have access to all the required programmes of study of the National Curriculum. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have studied their local environment and have a sound knowledge of many features of their immediate surroundings. There have been visits by the local Fire Service and during the inspection a lesson was observed that effectively followed up work in school by the Road Safety Officer. The pupils are able to locate Bromsgrove on a map of the United Kingdom and have started to draw simple maps and plans of the local area. These mapping skills are further developed in Years 3 and 4 where the pupils have made large-scale maps of the local area and used computers to draw maps of Bewdley in preparation for their residential visit. Previous visits have included places such as Underhill and Weston where the pupils were able to compare a seaside locality with their own. Older pupils have studied a village in India called Pallipadu. All these studies and visits help the pupils to build up a picture of the wider world. As they progress through the school, the pupils develop a satisfactory vocabulary and body of knowledge in geography that prepares them well for the next stage of their learning.
89. There is similar good progress in history. The pupils in Key Stage 1 classes have studied toys in the past and made comparisons of the toys of their parents and grandparents. They have looked at famous people and events such as Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot. A topic on Victorian life was considerably enhanced by a visit to the Black Country Museum. Older pupils in Year 3 were seen using a range of Roman artefacts. This was a well-planned and well resourced lesson that effectively developed the pupils' sense of chronology. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 have visited a Roman Lunt fort in Warwickshire and Bath during their work on the Romans. They have also been to see 'Eric the Viking' in Bishop's Wood. This use of outdoor visits and trips to museums is a notable feature of the provision for both history and geography and enhances the school's provision in both subjects.
90. The pupils are given appropriate opportunities to develop their skills in using and interpreting historical evidence. This could be seen in their inquiries into the origin of the name of 'Charford'. Good co-operation between the local schools ensures that there is no duplication of topics so that by the time they leave school, the pupils have been well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
91. From the few lessons seen, a scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with staff it is clear that the teachers have a secure knowledge of both subject areas. This is used well in their questioning of groups of the pupils of different abilities so that all are able to take a full part in lessons. The lessons are well planned and resources used to interest the pupils in their activities. However, not

enough use is made of computers and the Internet to develop the pupils' independent research in both subjects. The pupils have positive attitudes to their work.

92. The curriculum for both subjects is broad and balanced and enables all groups of the pupils to learn effectively across the range of themes of the National Curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

93. The school is presently updating its computer equipment and this is beginning to have a significant impact upon the teaching and the uses of information and communication technology. Consequently, the quality of the pupils' work is improving. Recently the equipment was removed from most classrooms and added to new computers funded through the National Grid for Learning to establish a computer suite. This suite is small and as yet cannot be easily used for a whole class lesson. Even so, some teachers, but not all, are beginning to make regular visits with their classes. As a result, their skills and understanding of information and communication technology are improving quickly.
94. During the inspection few pupils were to be seen using computers, but a variety of work is displayed in each classroom. The judgements about the quality of work and progress being made are based upon this evidence and upon discussion with some of the pupils.
95. At the end of Key Stage 1 the pupils reach standards that are broadly in line with the expected for their age. They are able to produce and amend their written work effectively. In Year 1 they use word processing to make labels for their work and their cloakroom pegs. They use different fonts and colours well. Good use is made of a graphics program that includes symbols like trees, flowers and other every day images. The pupils select and then 'stamp out' symbols to create pictures that represent number pairs such as '3 flowers and 4 trees to show 7 objects in total'. Some of the younger pupils were observed programming a floor robot. All have developed a sound understanding of the commands needed to move it and change its direction. The computers are being used to enhance the pupils' reading and writing skills and this is especially good in the reception classes and in Year 1. Some pupils have searched for information on a CD-ROM and also created booklets such as the one about 'Owls'.
96. Overall standards are below those expected by the end of Year 4. **(This is a key issue for action)**. In some aspects of information and communication technology the pupils are beginning to make progress but their skills in the use of word processing are still only slightly better than those observed at the end of Key Stage 1. They do not have opportunities to include tables, sound and graphics in their word documents and presentations. This is partly because until recently the school lacked reliable computers. Some pupils are beginning to use spreadsheets to record the results of their science investigations. They have printed out graphs, but their use of equations and formula is under-developed and uncertain. They are developing research skills by using screens of information downloaded for them from the Internet prior to their residential visit to Bewdley. However, they do not yet use the Internet independently because the computer suite is not connected to an Internet service. Consequently, the pupils' standards in all elements of the curriculum are below the expected levels for their age.
97. The teachers now have access to the computer suite and to computers in their classrooms. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and alongside the headteacher and a colleague is gradually extending the use of the computer suite. The programs available are adequate to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum, but the network is not fully operational and this causes the staff problems in, for example, setting up and saving the pupils' work. Many of the teachers do not have a sufficiently

broad range of skills to make effective use of the computers available. They are, nevertheless, gradually gaining confidence. They are to embark upon a school based training to improve their own skills and knowledge and also to extend their understanding of how information and communication technology can be used to enhance and support their teaching. At present the computers are not used on a regular basis and classes are not receiving adequate access to develop their skills and knowledge. The teachers need to plan to use the computers more often to support their teaching through the effective use of the computer suite.

MUSIC

98. The quality of the pupils' work in Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with the expected levels for pupils of this age. The quality of the pupils' work is similar to that seen at the time of the last inspection. It is not possible to judge the quality of the pupils work in Key Stage 2 nor is it possible to make any comments about the quality of the teaching in this age range because no lessons were timetabled during the inspection.
99. In Key Stage 1 the lessons are planned very well and include all elements of the music curriculum as set out in the national guidelines and Curriculum 2000. The teachers use a wide variety of stimuli and often use literary texts to provide a structure for musical composition. This links very effectively to the literacy lessons. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 were observed selecting appropriate percussion instruments to create sounds that accompany the story line to 'Red Riding Hood' and the Year 2 pupils were stimulated by a poem entitled ' Out and about'. They explored sensitively the sounds that different instruments can make and then began to compose rhythms and sounds to represent certain characters in the story or poem. They practice these sounds and sequences and then perform their compositions confidently and competently to the rest of the class.
100. The whole accompaniment to the story and poem is pleasing and appreciated by the pupils who listen intently to the variation in sounds. The quality of the teaching was generally good and inspired the pupils an all three lessons seen to respond well. The teachers give the pupils time to reflect and encourage them to evaluate what they create. Targets are set for their compositions.
101. The classroom management is good in all lessons and this fosters good attitudes and behaviour that is very good. The pupils share the instruments very well and listen carefully to each one's efforts. They make good progress in the development of their musical knowledge and skills.
102. During the Mass held in school, the quality of the pupils' singing was very good as the older pupils led the parents, staff and clergy in worship on Ash Wednesday.
103. The resources are of a good quality and quantity, but as yet there are no facilities to use computers for musical composition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

104. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4, levels of attainment are in line with those expected of pupils of similar ages. This repeats the findings of the last report. The school has fully addressed the issue of the pupils taking part in competitive sports identified as weakness in the last report. Since then, the school has been successful in competing against other local Catholic schools and won awards in netball, athletics and football.
105. The teachers' planning shows that the school provides a balanced programme of physical education that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The pupils are making satisfactory

progress in developing their skills of throwing, catching and balancing as they move through the school. This was well-demonstrated in lessons where the teaching focused on the development of balance points, using both floor mats and apparatus. The lessons were successful in helping the majority of the pupils to improve their performance because the pupils acted as demonstrators showing what they could do, and their friends offered advice as to how they could improve. In addition, the teachers were careful to give due emphasis to the basic rules of health and safety, and appropriate behaviour. This was a valuable focus on personal and social development for the pupils as well as a physical education lesson. The other lesson seen were based on movement to music and a number of the pupils showed imagination in the ways they interpreted the moods of the music. All lessons showed teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, which they use well to extend the physical development of the pupils. For example, all lessons start and end with an appropriate warm-up and cool-down period. The great majority of the pupils respond well to the encouragement of their teachers, and they take great pride in their performance. They are pleased to show what they can do and offer sensible advice on how things can be improved. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making good progress in swimming and by the time they leave school, the majority can already swim the distance required for pupils aged 11 years.

106. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator, who gives good support and advice to her colleagues. The subject is supported by a nationally approved scheme of work and one provided by a local education authority. The co-ordinator has made good use of sponsored schemes, such as 'Top Sports', to extend the range of opportunities for the pupils. A local football club comes and gives training. In addition, the school supports its provision through a wide range of clubs and after-school activities, which is better than that offered by most schools of a similar size. The present resources are good in quality and quantity and make a positive impact on the teaching and learning in physical education. The hall is spacious and well used. The outside facilities, both playground and grass areas, are of a good size and make a positive contribution to the development of physical educational skills.