

INSPECTION REPORT

ST TERESA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

St Helens

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104807

Headteacher: Mr John Coleman

Reporting inspector: Mrs Lesley P A Clark
25431

Dates of inspection: 12-16 June 2000

Inspection number: 198051

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Devon Street
St Helen's
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Postcode: WA10 4HX

Telephone number: 01744 25763

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Miss Eileen Wilson

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Lesley Clark Registered inspector | English Art Music | What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. |
| Roger Watts Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| Lynn Alvy Team inspector | Design and technology Information technology Under fives Equal opportunities | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| Debbie Kerr Team inspector | Mathematics Geography History Special educational needs | How well are pupils taught? |
| Roger Fry Team inspector | Science Physical education | How well is the school led and managed? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average size Catholic primary school for boys and girls aged 4 – 11 years that serves the immediate parish of St Teresa and the neighbouring parish of Sacred Heart. Several teachers and many parents and governors have themselves attended the school as pupils. Much of the housing is terraced with small back yards. Male unemployment is approximately 19 per cent and is high by both local and national standards. At present, there are 228 pupils who attend full time and no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Forty-two pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is broadly average. At the time of the inspection, three pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school is over-subscribed and has recently reduced its admission number to maintain average sized classes throughout the school. Seven per cent of pupils have received nursery education and the majority has had experience of pre-school playgroup. Children's attainment when they enter the school is broadly average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals varies considerably from year to year. At present, eleven per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is about average nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Because of good leadership and management, initiatives put in place following the last inspection have been very successful in raising standards throughout the school. Pupils now achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science and well above average standards in art and music by the time they leave. Pupils are well taught and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average for eleven-year-olds. Pupils attain above the expected level for their age in design and technology and physical education and well above average standards in art and music.
- Pupils' personal development and their relationships with other people are very good and fostered well in additional activities such as music, sport and the homework club, which uses computers extensively.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and very good teaching takes place in every class. The teaching of skills in literacy is particularly effective.
- Good leadership and management by the headteacher and a committed governing body are supported by very effective co-ordinators in key subjects.
- The school takes very effective action to meet its challenging targets.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and helps them to make good progress.

What could be improved

- The breadth and balance of the curriculum is rather narrow for older juniors and does not provide for systematic development of knowledge and skills in history and geography.
- Higher attaining pupils in mathematics and science are not always set work which challenges them sufficiently.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1997. It has made good improvement overall since then and no longer has serious weaknesses. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 has improved considerably and is now good. The quality of teaching throughout the school has improved

considerably and unsatisfactory teaching is rarely seen. Seven-year-olds now achieve nationally expected standards in English, mathematics, science and art. Standards in science are now above those achieved nationally by eleven-year-olds. Standards in information technology are rising rapidly as a result of the new computer suite, specialist teaching and a shared commitment to using computers in other subjects. All National Curriculum requirements in this subject are met. The library is now well equipped and with its computerised cataloguing system and well-chosen furnishings provides a very good learning resource for both younger and older pupils. The school development plan gives effective guidance. History and geography do not have satisfactory schemes of work to guide what is taught so that pupils learn systematically, building on what they know and understand.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | Compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | All schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| English | E | D | D | B |
| mathematics | D | C | C | B |
| science | E | C | C | A |

| Key | |
|--------------------|---|
| Well above average | A |
| Above average | B |
| Average | C |
| Below average | D |
| Well below average | E |

These results indicate that in 1999 pupils' performance was below the national average in English and close to the national average in mathematics and science. Compared to similar schools, however, pupils attained more highly. Inspection judgements are that attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average for eleven-year-olds. Standards have risen because of the good quality of teaching throughout the school. Literacy is very well taught and the national strategy for numeracy is used very effectively. Standards have improved in science because pupils learn well from practical activities. The use of information technology in the homework club and in the library has helped to make learning fun. Standards broadly meet those expected nationally in information technology and show rapid improvement and pupils' attainment is above average in some aspects. Standards are above the expected level in design and technology and physical education. They are well above the expected level in art and music. The very good quality of pupils' art is seen in the wide range of pupils' work, which is individual and distinctive. Standards in history and geography, however, are not high enough. Religious education is inspected separately in a different inspection. The school has set itself challenging targets, which it is likely to meet.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Good; pupils come to school with enthusiasm and are interested in their work. They willingly contribute to discussions and persevere with tasks. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good; pupils generally behave well and are polite and obedient. They play well together in the playground though boys and girls tend to play separately. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils work and play together harmoniously and the school meets the needs of all pupils well. Many improvements have been made to promote the equality between boys and girls. |
| Attendance | Good; above the national average. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Eighty-six per cent of teaching is good or better. Thirty-eight per cent is very good and three per cent is excellent. Twelve per cent is satisfactory and two per cent is unsatisfactory. Teaching is consistently good overall throughout the school and very good lessons were seen in every class. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are particularly well taught. Some very good teaching of information technology, art, music and science was also seen. The teaching is particularly good in Year 6 where it is never less than very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers manage pupils well and insist on good behaviour. They plan interesting activities which pupils enjoy. This ensures that pupils work hard and learn at a good rate. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory overall. Effective strategies are in place for literacy and numeracy. Information technology supports learning in literacy particularly well. The curriculum is rather narrow for the oldest pupils who do not learn very much history and geography. Children under five have relatively few opportunities to play outside or to use the hall for physical education. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They receive good support from the specialist teacher. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good provision. The school promotes a positive ethos in which all these aspects are well developed. Staff provide positive role models. Pupils are taught a moral code of behaviour based firmly on biblical guidance. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Good. The school provides a safe and caring environment. The school monitors and records pupils' progress well and makes sound use of this information to support further progress. |

Partnership with parents is good. The school encourages parents to be partners in their children's learning and to become involved in school activities. Several parents give valuable assistance in classrooms. Parents receive helpful newsletters and some information about what their children are being taught though not in much detail. Reports to parents are satisfactory though sometimes the comments are too general.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and key subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning very effectively. The school's aims and values are consistently reflected in the life and work of the school. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Satisfactory. The governing body supports the school well and makes a satisfactory contribution to the future plans of the school. |

| | |
|--|---|
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Very good. This is the main strength of leadership and management. Scrupulous self-review has led to very effective measures to improve the school's performance. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good levels of staffing, including support staff. Satisfactory accommodation and resources overall with particular strengths in resources for the library, information technology and the range of musical instruments. |

The headteacher, staff and governors conscientiously appraise their work. Strengths and weaknesses in the school results are evaluated and effective plans put into place to improve standards. The school is very strongly committed to improving further and the school development plan provides a good framework for future development. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. The principles of best value are effectively applied.

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 enjoy coming to school. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • Parents feel happy to come to school to discuss any worries or problems concerning their children. • Teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve. • Teaching is good and enables their children to make good progress. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents would like to see a wider range of extra-curricular activities. • Homework. • Information to parents. |

The inspection team supports the parents' positive views and finds that aspects which parents would like to see improved are at least satisfactory. Extra-curricular activities are good with a wide-range of musical and sporting activities. The homework club provides additional use of computers. The use of homework is satisfactory, as is information to parents. The school feels it could do more to involve parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The attainment of the children on entry to the school is broadly representative of that expected of four-year-olds. The good rate of learning in the reception class results in most children achieving the expected standards for this age in personal and social education, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development by the time they are five. A few children attain more highly and read above the level expected for this age.

2 Inspection judgement is that standards are above the level expected nationally of eleven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science. The results of the 1999 national standardised tests indicate that attainment in English was below the national average and in mathematics and science it was close to the average expected nationally of eleven-year-olds. Compared to similar schools, pupils attained above average standards in English and mathematics and well above average standards in science. The results of the 1999 tests for seven-year-olds show that pupils' attainment was below average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics though better than this when compared to similar schools. The trend in the school's results is rising faster than the national trend as attainment improves rapidly each year. Inspection evidence confirms this rapid improvement.

3 There are several reasons for the improved attainment in English, mathematics and science. Younger pupils, until this year, have had an unsettled pattern of teaching and consequently missed out on learning some basic skills. Two years ago, the quality of teaching at this key stage was a serious weakness and adversely affected pupils' attainment in mathematics and writing. The quality of teaching has improved considerably and is now good overall and very good in literacy. The implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, combined with regular and good teaching, has given consistency to pupils' learning. Much time has been spent in Year 2 on helping pupils to acquire basic skills. This systematic teaching has resulted in all pupils, apart from those few with special educational needs, reaching the standard expected of their age. Although few pupils this year attain above the nationally expected standard, pupils in Year 1 are already achieving highly for their age as a result of these measures.

4 The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are instrumental in raising standards for eleven-year-olds. The quality of teaching is now good throughout the school and very good lessons were observed in both subjects and in science at this key stage. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have had an immediate impact by ensuring consistency in teaching and by improving the pace of lessons throughout the school. Teachers develop pupils' mental calculation skills well and pupils' pace of learning has increased as a result. Literacy is used very effectively in other subjects, particularly information technology, and numeracy is used well in subjects such as science. Standards in science have improved because of the increased emphasis the school now places on investigative and practical activities. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to learn from experience and as a result they learn quickly. The co-ordinators for these subjects observe lessons regularly and from these observations note areas for development. From these, similar strategies are adopted throughout the school such as incorporating scientific research and learning how to skim read at the same time as learning library skills. Writing has improved considerably through the consistent use of helpful and imaginative story frameworks for pupils of all ages. So younger pupils, for example, find it easy to imagine the feelings of a cat faced with his new cat flap, as one noted, 'I did not like my cat flap because horrible Harry can come into our house'. Older pupils have an additional extended writing time each week. The wide range of non-fiction, poetry and play-scripts used in the literacy hour broadens the range of appeal particularly for boys. The school monitors very closely minor variations in the attainment of boys and that of girls and has taken some positive steps to encourage boys to read and write extensively. The homework club was attended initially

only by Year 6 girls until the school incorporated information technology. As a result, all Year 6 pupils attend regularly and benefit from additional practice.

5 Overall standards have improved since the last inspection in information technology; standards are in line for seven-year-olds and broadly average for eleven-year-olds. Pupils achieve very well and they are rapidly acquiring new skills. These skills, however, have largely been acquired within the last year since the opening of the computer suite. The school has already identified areas of the curriculum where pupils have had insufficient experience to attain the expected standard. The pattern of learning and achievement is therefore similar in different year groups. The rate of learning indicates that pupils will attain more highly next year, following a similar trend to the results in English, mathematics and science. Information technology is used very well and is instrumental in helping pupils to learn. Religious education is considered separately in a different inspection report.

6 Since the last inspection, standards in most other subjects have improved. Pupils attain above the expected level for their age in design and technology and in physical education. They achieve well. Standards are well above average in art and music where the quality of their work is of a very high standard. Displays throughout the school testify to pupils' skills and appreciation of art and many talk quite knowledgeably about artists they have studied. Standards are below the expected level in history and geography because older pupils spend very little time studying them. Whilst much work in these subjects supports literacy and develops pupils' skills in writing in particular, pupils' geographical and historical knowledge is below that expected of eleven-year-olds. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make good progress towards the targets identified in their individual education plans. Targets are clear and are reviewed regularly to ensure they are appropriate.

7 Overall, pupils achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics and science and in the aspects of information technology they have studied. Achievement is better in English than in mathematics and science where the structure of lessons does not always allow higher attaining pupils to achieve as highly as they might. Pupils achieve very well in the creative arts and many pupils spend their lunchtimes and times after school playing instruments or singing together. Extra-curricular sport and regular swimming lessons raise the standard in physical education but achievement could be higher if pupils followed a consistent programme of work in lessons. Generally, achievement is highest where the quality of teaching is particularly good and pupils are enabled to learn independently. The school has set appropriately high targets which it is likely to meet and possibly to exceed.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8 Routines are well established in the reception class as a result of the effective teamwork between the class teacher and the support assistant. They have a good rapport with the children based on good humour, positive behaviour management and effective organisation, which means the children are happy and successful in their learning. Children try hard to succeed, persevere with the tasks set and work together harmoniously.

9 Pupils have good attitudes towards school. Virtually all parents answering the questionnaire agreed that their child enjoyed coming to school. In the morning pupils find their way to the classrooms without fuss and are ready to start the day promptly. Most are keen to participate fully in lessons but a significant minority show signs of lethargy. In the best lessons they are quickly shaken out of this, showing their good potential as willing learners. When stimulated by good or better teaching, pupils are keen to participate and enjoy challenges. In lessons they are generally attentive and start work when asked. Sometimes, however, where the work is insufficiently challenging, a few pupils are inattentive. Pupils take pride in their work, particularly in art and design and technology, and with the results of their work with computers. Pupils participate enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities and in the educational visits provided by the school.

10 The behaviour of pupils is good. Some parents expressed reservations about this in the questionnaire but nothing untoward was seen during the inspection. In lessons pupils are obedient and work conscientiously. Most are disciplined in putting up their hand to answer questions and refrain from interrupting others. On the few occasions when teachers need to admonish them, they respond well. Pupils generally move around the school carefully although sometimes they rush down the stairs. They behave well in assemblies and at dinner times. Pupils play well together in the playground, although there is an almost complete separation between boys and girls. No examples of bullying were seen and, in discussion, pupils said that this was not generally a problem. Very few pupils come from an ethnic minority and these are well integrated. No pupils were excluded last year.

11 Personal development and relationships within the school are good. Rapport between teachers and pupils in most classes is very good, which has a very positive effect in getting the most out of the pupils. In a few lessons the relationship is less open and pupils do not achieve what they could. Relationships between pupils are generally very good but there is sometimes an undercurrent of minor friction between boys and girls. This is most noticeable amongst infants where there is occasional niggling in the playground and some inappropriate comment in class; some junior girls feel excluded from playground football by boys. Pupils discuss their own feelings through their religious education lessons which, whilst based on the Roman Catholic faith, cover the beliefs of other religions and wider social and personal issues. Pupils show clearly that they know the difference between right and wrong in their approach to others. Pupils take advantage of the opportunities given them in lessons such as science or design technology to show initiative. They work well together in pairs, for example when sharing a computer, and older pupils collaborate well to achieve a common task.

12 Pupils' attendance is good. Overall attendance is above the national average and there is little unauthorised absence. Very few pupils are late and this allows a prompt start to the day. Good attendance and punctuality has a positive effect on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and there are many very good features. In 22 of the 57 lessons seen, the teaching was judged to be very good or excellent. In 27 lessons the teaching was good and in six it was satisfactory. Two lessons were judged to have some unsatisfactory elements. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the infants where previously there was a high level of unsatisfactory teaching observed.

14 Teachers now have a secure understanding of the subjects they teach. This is evident in the way they explain tasks to pupils, ask probing questions to challenge their thinking and keep the lessons going at a brisk pace. This results in pupils making steady steps in progress through the lesson so that by the end almost all have achieved the learning objectives set for them at the beginning. The improvements in teachers' knowledge are particularly notable in science and information and communication technology, where weaknesses were noted in the last inspection. Teaching in these subjects, and in the basic skills of reading, writing and number, is now very effective. In information and communication technology particularly, pupils learn at a fast rate. Their lessons are very well planned to build on skills already mastered so they learn quickly and their confidence is high as a result of the success they achieve.

15 Teaching in the basic skills of reading, writing and number is very successful because teachers plan and teach according to the national frameworks for these subjects and most provide work to the different levels of achievement within the class. This means that pupils build systematically on what they learnt the previous lesson and make good progress from week to week. In other subjects, namely science, aspects of maths, geography and history, some teachers are better than others at matching the task to the needs of the pupils. They mark pupils' work conscientiously but not all teachers take account of the information gained to plan different work for

different groups of pupils. Where this is done well, higher attaining pupils find their work challenging and try hard. In other lessons higher attaining pupils are set work that is too easy for them and their efforts and interest wane. In lessons where there were some unsatisfactory features, the tasks were not well matched to what pupils had learnt previously, so there was little real progress in the lesson.

16 Pupils with special educational needs are well taught by the specialist teacher in small withdrawal groups. Detailed records of their individual progress are kept and this ensures that the work covered in these lessons is well matched to pupils' individual education plans. Class teachers know their pupils with special needs well and include them fully in all activities, but not all teachers plan their lessons to take account of these pupils' individual targets or recognise that their work needs to be adapted for them to achieve success. As a result, these pupils do not always finish the work set for them, because it is too hard.

17 A feature of the very successful teaching in the reception and infant classes is the imaginative way in which lessons are presented to make learning fun. Teachers plan practical activities which stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm for their work. For example, in a very effective mathematics lessons on two-dimensional shapes in Year 1, the teacher acted in role as an 'alien' for most of the lesson, encouraging pupils to explain to her what their shape looked like, so they could develop the mathematical language needed to describe their shape's properties. In the juniors, the very good teaching is marked by lively, well planned lessons conducted at a brisk pace. All teachers manage their pupils well and have high expectations of behaviour. This results in a good working atmosphere in the classrooms in which pupils feel confident to ask questions, offer answers and explain their work to one another when asked. Teaching is of a particularly high standard in Year 6 where lessons are exciting and offer a high level of challenge. An example was noted in an excellent music lesson in which the teaching was lively and inventive, enabling the pupils to produce their very best work. In this class pupils develop their knowledge and skills at a fast pace and leave school very well prepared for the next stage of learning.

18 The quality of teaching for children under five is good. This has been maintained since the last inspection. Some very good teaching was seen in the literacy session where the teachers' lively and expressive story telling resulted in interesting observations from the children about the story. Lessons are thoroughly planned for groups as well as individual children resulting in work well matched to their needs. The teacher and the assistant organise and manage the pupils consistently well so that they feel secure and interested in their tasks. Careful assessments of their learning are used to plan what to teach next.

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

19 Overall the school provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum that meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and covers the recommended areas of learning for children under five. Particular emphasis is placed on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and personal and social development resulting in purposeful learning as the pupils begin their school life. Statutory requirements were not met in information and communications technology at the last inspection. The school has been successful in meeting this key issue through the effective planning using national guidance, and through staff training to increase expertise and development of resources including the new computer suite.

20 The curriculum for the infant pupils is good and is satisfactory overall for the pupils in the juniors. Schemes of work provide support for planning the curriculum, thus meeting the key issue identified at the last inspection. The schemes of work vary in quality for example; medium term planning is intended to provide the scheme of work for the subjects of geography and history in the juniors. However some inconsistencies between different year groups means the overall system does not provide sufficiently for building on the knowledge, skills and understanding that has gone before. In contrast the school has well-developed strategies for the teaching of literacy and

numeracy and has been effective in meeting the demands of these national initiatives in order to raise standards considerably in English and mathematics by the age of eleven. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support literacy both in school sessions and after school. Recent monitoring by the headteacher identified a difference between the reading standards of boys and girls and information and communication technology has been used successfully to encourage boys' interest in reading through a homework club and the use of computerised library systems. All pupils have access to the curriculum and the school provides good opportunities for pupils in physical education, music and personal, social and health education.

21 The curriculum is organised well to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are catered for appropriately in literacy. In other subjects where pupils are not withdrawn for additional reading, the provision is more variable, depending on the quality of individual understanding of pupils' needs.

22 The curriculum for children under five is satisfactory overall. It is generally broad and balanced and planning covers all the recommended areas of learning. However there are limited facilities to provide a range of relevant and imaginative outdoor activities. The children are well prepared to meet the more formal demands of the National Curriculum, particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics and in their personal and social education.

23 The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. From entry into school pupils are sensitively encouraged to develop a respect for their own beliefs as well as the needs and feelings of others. Planned opportunities support the children in the development of good relationships, confidence, independence and enjoyment in their achievements. During a singing lesson with older children for example, they co-operate well and show pleasure and perseverance in their work. The school has a strong Christian environment and the staff are committed to the ethics and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. Staff provide strong positive role models for spiritual and moral behaviour. Formal teaching is done through for religious education and this teaches pupils to develop, not just spiritually, but also morally and socially, based on Christian ethics. Spirituality is developed in weekly whole-school assemblies, of which there is one a week, in daily prayers and in masses at the church. Spirituality is also evident in pupils' approach to music and art. Across the rest of the curriculum there is no specific planning to provide opportunities to marvel at the surprises that study can throw up or wonder in their developing awareness of our world, and few were seen. Pupils are taught and discuss the rationale of right behaviour and conduct, which is based firmly on biblical guidance. Aspects like bullying and relationships are also discussed and this is supplemented by appropriate separate lessons on the dangers of drugs in the broadest sense.

24 A school council is in process of being set up and pupils showed in their first use of email that they had quite decided views to communicate to the headteacher. Whilst all pupils have equal access to the curriculum, the school does not do enough to promote a better ethos of gender equality. Pupils get good opportunities to paint in the style of great European painters and also experience Australian aboriginal and Islamic art. Love of music is well fostered and pupils gain experience of local cultures of the past in visits to Styal Mill. More modern local culture is represented by the links to the local Rugby League club. There is generally, however, insufficient introduction to pupils of the other cultures that they will find outside their school in the rest of Britain today and there are too few non-European fiction books in the library.

25 The school has good procedures for ensuring that pupils are well looked after. Appropriately trained staff look after pupils who are ill or who have accidents at school and staff are aware of which pupils have specific medical conditions. The school has adopted local child protection procedures and the designated teacher is appropriately trained. Staff are aware of the actions to take should the need arise. External agencies such as social services give very good support. Equipment is regularly checked, as are fire procedures. The caretaker and governors carry out risk assessments of the buildings regularly.

26 The local community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Links with the church and the local Catholic community are very strong. Pupils attend mass regularly at the church and boys sing there in the choir. There are strong links with local sporting clubs who provide coaching. This not only improves skills but also interest, as pupils see ex-pupils who are very successful at their sport. Local police officers teach aspects of safety.

27 There are good links with both the pre-school playgroup and the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. During the inspection children who will be coming to St Teresa's next year visited the school to experience school dinners. The reception teacher liaises closely with the playgroup leader on the curriculum. Local primary schools meet regularly with the secondary school to encourage continuity, particularly in English and mathematics.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28 Effective entry procedures to the reception class help both the children and their parents to experience a calm and positive start to school life. Formal assessment is undertaken as the children enter the school. It is well used to measure progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development and to set targets for national assessments at the age of seven.

29 The school has good procedures for monitoring academic and personal development and makes satisfactory use of the data to promote pupils' further development. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Children are assessed when they start in the reception class and again at the end of the year. This allows good evaluation of learning in that year. It also provides confirmation of the need for additional support for pupils identified using regular assessments by the special needs co-ordinator. In the rest of the school there are formal tests at the end of each year in English and mathematics, and some additional testing in the Autumn term. The results are collated and the data used to place pupils into groups. This data is also used to predict statutory targets and to identify those pupils who are borderline. Support given to these pupils has allowed the school to improve the overall attainment of groups of pupils against initial expectations. Test data is analysed in detail to identify areas of weakness and the curriculum or teaching strategies modified accordingly. Whilst assessment and termly evaluation is used to set targets for classes, individual pupils are not yet set more specific targets based upon tracking of their progress. Data are not yet in a form sufficiently accessible to the class teacher for this purpose, although it is planned to develop this facility using the computerised assessment database. Science is assessed annually but in other subjects there is little formal assessment. Pupils who are below the attainment expected for their age are placed on the special educational needs register and assessment used well to set their individual learning plans.

30 The school recognised that boys performed less well than girls to an extent greater than the national picture. It has made effective changes to the curriculum, for example, inclusion of more non-fiction reading material in the literacy hour, which has greatly improved this imbalance. Day-to-day assessment by observation or marking of written work is sound. The use of this assessment is sometimes constrained by the rigidity of the lesson planning, particularly in mathematics, which does not allow for changes based upon how well pupils have learnt in the previous lesson. Staff keep some informal records of pupils' personal development but mainly use their good knowledge and relationships with pupils to complete the reports. Pupils' personal records contain past reports but otherwise do not provide a sufficiently detailed view of academic and personal development. Obtaining an overview of the support required for individuals is more difficult because of dispersed data. Staff encourage good behaviour and this is successful in the vast majority of lessons and around the school. The anti-bullying policy is effective, and rests upon the caring ethos promoted by the school's religious education programme. Registers are completed correctly each day and attendance is well monitored and promoted.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

31 Parents are fully involved in the well-organised procedures for the pupils' entry to the reception class. A planned programme of visits ensures that the children have a positive start to school life. Parents are encouraged to share in their children's learning by discussing any concerns, celebrating achievements and helping children to read and write. This encourages a positive attitude to work from an early age.

32 Generally parents are well satisfied with the school although there are some minor concerns. They think that standards and teaching are good and they would be comfortable in raising any concerns; the school has high expectations. Their children like coming to school and are helped to become mature. However a significant minority was concerned over the lack of extra-curricular activities and a few about homework, information for parents and the extent to which they as parents are involved.

33 The inspection team supports the parent's positive views and find that those aspects which the parents had concerns over are at least satisfactory. Extra-curricular activities are good with a wide range of sporting and musical activities, which pupils enthusiastically participate in. The use of homework and pupils' reports are satisfactory, as are links with parents, although the school itself states it might do more to involve them in future decision making.

34 The school has good links with parents and they respond in turn by giving their children good support. Parents of children starting in the reception class receive very good information about the school and how to help their child's learning from home, for example with reading or initial writing. The school has held meetings for parents to learn about the literacy and numeracy strategies and their role in them. Parents receive helpful newsletters about the routines of school life and some information about what is currently being taught. However, this is not in a very helpful format as it gives insufficient detail to tell parents how they can support children's work at home to complement what they learn in school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are consulted regularly about their child's progress. They are encouraged to approach the school with any concerns as soon as they arise and are fully informed of any changes to the support their child receives. Statutory documents such as the prospectus meet requirements. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through two formal meetings with teachers a year and through pupils' annual reports. These meet requirements to report progress in all subjects. Comments are most detailed for English and mathematics, which reflects the high level of assessment in those subjects. As well as strengths, the reports state the pupil's areas for development. Whilst generally satisfactory, the comments are sometimes too bland and the targets too general or not couched in terms helpful to parents. The home-school agreement has been issued and returned by most parents. Parents expressed some misgivings and the document has had no discernible additional effect. The school is aware that it should involve parents more in longer-term decision making. It has made a start with consultation on a new sex education policy, although the response of parents to this, and other events like the Annual Parents' Meeting, are not encouraging.

35 Most parents hear their children read at home, particularly parents of reception and infant children and many comment in the reading diary. This is also used for homework, but the completion of this both by the child at school and parents is not widespread. However, many pupils have a very evident love and appreciation of reading which is well supported from home. When asked, parents give good support to activities organised by the school and several help around the school with practical activities like cookery and needlework, as well as hearing pupils read. This assistance is much valued by the school as additional support for learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

36 The school is well led and managed by the headteacher who with the deputy headteacher, staff and governing body show absolute commitment to improving the education the school offers

its pupils. The leadership and management have many good ideas to improve the school further. The headteacher in particular provides much of the impetus to raise standards further and promotes the school's distinctive and supportive ethos, based on good relationships. The staff and governors share this vision for the school. The headteacher and key subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning very effectively. Delegation of responsibilities is good and co-ordinators carry out their duties effectively. They read teachers' plans, which helps to ensure that pupils receive an education that builds successfully on what they already know. The school has adopted and used, for example, the schemes for literacy, numeracy and games well. There are realistically high targets for standards in English, mathematics and science which the school is likely to meet. The school's aims, based on firm Christian ideals and aspirations for pupils to reach their full potential, are well reflected in its work. Its impact is most clearly seen in the raised standards of teaching and learning throughout the school.

37 Standards of work have improved at both key stages. By the time pupils leave the school, they have achieved above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The quality of teaching has improved greatly for pupils of infant age and is reflected in pupils' attainments. Standards are improving rapidly in information and communication technology and whilst broadly average overall are above average in some aspects. There has been a satisfactory improvement in the range of schemes of work though there remains insufficient guidance for teachers in geography and history and some elements of physical education. Literacy is very well taught and the national strategy for numeracy is used very effectively. The school has responded well to the advice and support received since the last inspection. The school development plan now provides clearer educational direction for the school because it is more detailed and ways of making progress are better defined. The library has been reorganised successfully and now provides a very useful teaching resource as well as an information centre which pupils use regularly to research information for topics.

38 The school's evaluation of its own performance is very good. Scrupulous self-review has led to very effective measures to improve the school's performance. The quality of teaching has improved largely through the quality of monitoring by the headteacher and key curriculum co-ordinators. Teaching is regularly evaluated and teachers receive information about their strengths and weaknesses, so that they can improve. The school successfully uses an agreed framework of questions for this task. This professional dialogue has had a strong impact on the quality of teaching. The standards demanded and expectations of teachers in most subjects are now high enough. The school has been subject to considerable external scrutiny and support. The headteacher and staff have used these reports to help them to appraise their work. The school's work is now very well monitored by the headteacher. Strengths and weaknesses in the school's results are evaluated and effective plans are put in place to further improve standards. Pupils' performance in national tests is monitored stringently and comprehensive data prepared to examine trends in performance over time. These are used as a guide to setting targets to improve overall standards. The extensive knowledge this provides is used well to monitor, for example, the slightly lower performance of boys in comparison with girls. This has been investigated and action taken which has decreased the gap. The school worked out that boys are more likely to lack motivation and so set about finding ways to interest boys more in their work. As a result, the school computerised the library system and integrated some teaching of skills in information technology with library skills.

39 The governing body carries out its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. The chair of governors provides good support and direction for the school and knows it well though the governing body as a whole is not sufficiently aware of the school's relative weaknesses. Governors are active and committees support the headteacher's work effectively. In particular, the monitoring committee is very effective in helping to evaluate the work of the school. The governing body reviews aspects of the school's work and supports the school's financial policies as recorded in the school development plan. The special needs co-ordinator manages the provision very effectively and pupils make good progress. The additional funding for special needs is spent appropriately and resources are satisfactory though the role of the governor responsible for pupils with special educational needs is under-developed.

40 There is a satisfactory link between the school's educational priorities and financial planning and there is an appropriate focus on raising standards further. The school is fully aware of its likely future costs and any implications that might require action. The money for school improvement is used well. The school follows the principles of 'best value' appropriately. The headteacher, for example, checks the value for money that contracts provide. The school office is efficiently run and good use is made of new technology to save time. The secretary is professional, efficient and caring and gives a good first impression of the school to visitors and parents. The school makes satisfactory strategic use of its financial resources. In the recent past spending decisions have been clearly related to the action plan from the previous inspection, national initiatives such as literacy and numeracy strategies and the need for a computer suite. These have generally been well planned. Current thinking tends to be dominated by the planned reduction in the number of pupils and to retaining teachers as long as possible until that point is reached. The school uses longer-term income and expenditure predictions well to do this. Budget setting is carefully done, with full consultation of governors but tends to rely too heavily on historic expenditure patterns. Financial control is good. Governors monitor the progress of expenditure against the budget to ensure financial propriety. The recommendations of the most recent audit report have been implemented. The funds allocated for specific purposes have been properly spent for those purposes. The school is satisfactorily aware of the need to provide the best value it can in allocation of resources. It has focussed well on previous shortcomings in attainment in comparison with similar schools and has made very good use of the support provided by the local education authority. It has the view that this has provided very good value but has not yet started to explore other sources of support or ways in which to allocate resources.

41 The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall with notable strengths in the resources for the library, information technology and musical instruments. The library is well stocked and accessible. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. There are sufficient well qualified and well inducted teachers to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The school conducts its business with a good level of effectiveness. The inspection team's judgement now is that, overall, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection. When the school was last inspected in 1997, St Teresa's provided unsatisfactory value for money. Since then it has improved in many areas of its work, in particular, the standards pupils achieve and the quality of teaching. Most of the points for action from the last inspection have been tackled effectively and the school has successfully addressed the serious weaknesses. The interim inspection report carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in 1998 indicated that the school was making satisfactory progress towards the required improvements. The school no longer has serious weaknesses. Taking into account the cost to educate each pupil and the school's context, it now provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

42 In order to further improve standards the school should:

- a] Improve the curriculum and quality of pupils' learning in history and geography for juniors by providing schemes of work so that pupils' knowledge and skills develop systematically as they move through the school. [6, 96]
- b] In mathematics and science particularly, make better use of information gained from teachers' marking and day-to-day assessment to fully challenge the higher attainers. [7, 66, 76]

In addition, the following minor issue should also be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- Improve the physical development of children under the age of five by providing more opportunities for outside play and physical education. [22]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 58 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 37 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3% | 38% | 45% | 12% | 2% | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 0 | 228 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 0 | 26 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 | 3 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 0 | 42 |

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

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.0 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.2 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 17 | 22 | 39 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 12 | 14 | 13 |
| | Girls | 17 | 17 | 19 |
| | Total | 29 | 31 | 32 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 74 | 79 | 82 |
| | National | 82 | 83 | 87 |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 15 | 13 | 13 |
| | Girls | 16 | 17 | 17 |
| | Total | 31 | 30 | 30 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 79 | 77 | 77 |
| | National | 82 | 86 | 87 |

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 22 | 24 | 46 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| | Girls | 17 | 18 | 20 |
| | Total | 31 | 34 | 38 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 67 | 74 | 83 |
| | National | 70 | 69 | 78 |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| | Girls | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| | Total | 31 | 34 | 37 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 67 | 74 | 80 |
| | National | 68 | 69 | 75 |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | % of pupils |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | |
| Black – African heritage | 1.0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 99.0 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 9.6 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 23.8 |
| Average class size | 28.5 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 3 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 92 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of education support staff | 0 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 0 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 0 |
|--------------------------------|---|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|---------|
| Financial year | 1998/99 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 398,525 |
| Total expenditure | 403,903 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1,591 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 20,851 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 15,473 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 225 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 101 |

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 53 | 44 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 48 | 45 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| 39 | 50 | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| 29 | 52 | 16 | 1 | 2 |
| 45 | 48 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| 31 | 47 | 15 | 5 | 1 |
| 60 | 35 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| 52 | 42 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 35 | 42 | 15 | 2 | 6 |
| 44 | 40 | 8 | 1 | 6 |
| 44 | 52 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| 29 | 41 | 15 | 5 | 10 |

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

43 Children under the age of five are admitted to the Reception class in the year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection there were eight children under five in the class. They receive good additional support from a well-qualified non-teaching assistant. The children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. This is reflected in the early assessment undertaken by the school. The children achieve well and most attain the standards expected for their age in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. A number of children exceed this as a result of the good teaching they receive.

Personal and social development.

44 The children settle quickly into the reception class, as there are effective systems in place to support a calm and secure start to school life. Good relationships between the children, their families and the staff have a positive impact on the children's development and learning. Teaching and learning in this area is good, for example thoughtful and effective planning provides a welcoming start to the day through a choice of interesting activities. This gives staff and parents an opportunity to share confidences, discuss reading records, individual needs or simply to return books. Children develop independent skills quickly as a result and take turns, share equipment and behave well. They become totally absorbed in their imaginary games. When playing in the toy house, for instance, they told the teacher to 'come in through the door properly.' Well-planned sessions using relevant stories about friendship, for example, are used sensitively to develop self-awareness and responsibility.

Language and literacy

45 The majority of children enter the reception class with broadly average language and communication skills. Planning for the literacy hour is thorough and reading and writing are taught well. The children achieve well in this area of learning and enjoy shared reading sessions enormously due to the enthusiasm of the teacher and the skilful questions she uses to develop lively discussions. For example during the shared reading of the book entitled 'The Play' a higher attaining child made an interesting observation, 'I think they are going to get dressed up in costumes', whilst a lower attaining child offered a simple remark about the picture 'There is the dragon's tail'. Teaching and learning is effective with thorough planning well matched to the children's levels of attainment as a result of consistent assessment. Most children read simple sentences independently, name letters and learn sounds so that they tackle new words confidently and begin to write independently about their personal experiences. A good balance between self-chosen and more formal activities means that children also learn through taking turns in conversations or through re-creating roles or experiences. A group of children playing in the 'café' shared out the role of waitress, customer and cook and greeted customers confidently by asking them to make choices from the menu displayed on the café door. Three children listened carefully to a taped story, another group listened to the teacher as they matched words and pictures or to each other as they talk about what they have learned at the end of the literacy session. A very good variety of activities taught at a lively pace to engage and retain the children's interest are linked imaginatively to the development of basic skill so that the children are successful and most attain the required standards by the time they are five.

Mathematics

46 The teacher plans carefully for mathematical development using a combination of formal and practical tasks to achieve successful learning and children attain the expected standards by the time they are five as a result. In a number rhyme game used as an introduction to a lesson,

good team work and use of interesting resources such as money to buy current buns from the baker's shop led to well motivated and interested children. They counted out the correct money to five pence and made good attempts at taking away and adding on during the game. The teacher and her assistant plan interesting tasks that challenge the children. These are taught effectively, learning is exciting and the children strive to succeed as a result. Children are encouraged to work in pairs and support each other to write numerals correctly on small chalkboards as the teacher calls them out. Most write and count correctly to ten and higher attaining children count well beyond ten. Younger children enjoy working with the support assistant using water and brushes to paint over the numerals on the 'hop scotch' outside in the playground. Careful assessments linked to well planned learning objectives contribute to good teaching and learning with work effectively matched to the children's levels of attainment.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

47 Children talk confidently about their experiences and the world around them. The teacher provides for both spontaneous and planned learning opportunities that capture children's natural curiosity. For example, the children talk about their local area and discuss with the support assistant how the crossing patrol person helps them cross the road safely. They control the audio cassette in order to select a favourite story or the mouse pointer in order to sort muddled pictures in a maths adventure program. A group of children working with the teacher discuss the properties of grated soap. They think the soap will dissolve in water and use words like 'slimy' and 'sticky' to describe its texture. They are excited by the activity and make lots of observations as they strive to describe what the water feels like. Teaching and learning are good as planning provides the opportunities for children to select their own resources that encourage exploration and observation with informed adults on hand to support communication and discussion. Most children attain the expected level by the time they are five.

Physical development.

48 Children move in a controlled manner around the classroom and the school. This group of children is particularly mature in this area of development and attains the standards expected. They play with increasing control and awareness of space for others, use tools and equipment carefully and cut, stick and paint with developing accuracy. They learn to hold pencils correctly, use the mouse pointer with facility or pour water carefully in the water tray. The children enjoy playing outside and happily play 'follow my leader' making good use of space as they run around, weaving in and out of other children. They are keen to learn to skip like older pupils and some achieve a running skip while others attempt to skip together, clearly having fun as they exercise. The teacher plans effectively for this area of development although support for learning using large equipment in outdoor as well as indoor space is limited.

Creative development

49 In creative development, children's learning is good and most attain the standards expected by the time they are five. Teaching is good and provides children with the opportunities to make choices for example, about the colours they use to paint pictures or the materials they need to make models. They enjoy using a range of materials and well-planned and effective activities support their learning. Most of the children's pictures begin to show developing detail, appropriate use of colour care and effort. The teacher's planning makes effective links between the Desirable Learning Outcomes and the National Curriculum. The children make their own music using percussion and join in confidently with songs and rhymes. Most sing accurately from memory and develop their thoughts and feelings through imaginative play.

50 The quality of the provision for the under fives has been maintained since the last inspection and during the recent change of staffing. The quality of teaching and learning is good due to the carefully planned activities linked to clear learning objectives. This provides a firm foundation for the development of positive attitudes to learning, in particular, reading, writing and mathematics. Some limitations are imposed upon the richness and challenges provided by the

curriculum overall due to the absence of a separate outdoor area with appropriate space, appropriate facilities and equipment.

ENGLISH

51 Standards in English are above the average expected of eleven-year-olds and broadly average for seven-year-olds. Results of the 1999 national standardised tests show that the performance of pupils was below average at both key stages but that the trend in the school's results was above the national trend. Compared to similar schools, standards are close to the level expected of seven-year-olds and above the average for eleven-year-olds. Few pupils in 1999 attained higher than expected levels. Whilst this is still largely true of pupils in Key Stage 1, most pupils in Year 2 achieve standards expected of their age in reading and writing. In the present Year 6, however, a significant proportion of pupils attains levels above the average expected nationally and a few attain well above average standards. There are now no discernible differences between the attainment of boys and that of girls. The school monitors any variations closely and has taken some positive steps to promote boys' interest in reading and writing.

52 There are clear reasons for the rise in standards. The quality of teaching is now good throughout the school and some very good teaching was observed. This is a considerable improvement, particularly at Key Stage 1 where the teaching was a serious weakness. The National Literacy Strategy has had an immediate impact by ensuring consistency in teaching and by improving the pace of lessons throughout the school. Literacy is used very well in other subjects. The recently appointed co-ordinator observes lessons in literacy regularly and from these observations notes common areas of concern. From these, staff agree to adopt similar approaches such as giving pupils a framework for writing stories with a beginning, middle and end. Older pupils have an additional extended writing time each week. The wide range of non-fiction, poetry and play-scripts used in the literacy hour broadens the range of appeal and in particular is raising the standard of boys' reading. The homework club was attended initially only by Year 6 girls until the school incorporated information technology. As a result, all Year 6 pupils attend regularly. The staff discuss various ways to teach different skills. Interestingly shaped booklets tempt pupils throughout the school to write. Year 2 pupils made a concertina shaped book and cut different shapes at the top of each page to tell the story of, for example, 'The adventure of the castle mouse.' In Year 5, some pupils' shortened versions of Greek myths, complete with captions and pop-up pictures, imitate real books when they warn, 'This booklet contains parts that parents may not want their children to see.' In these ways, pupils raise their standards of reading and writing through constant but unobtrusive practice.

53 Standards in reading and writing for seven-year-olds are broadly average and well within the nationally expected level for this age. Whilst few pupils in the present Year 2 attain higher than nationally expected standards, many pupils in Year 1 are already attaining highly for their age. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Since September, however, most pupils have achieved well with the settled pattern of teaching they now receive. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Because of pupils' previous unsettled learning, much teaching in Year 2 this year has concentrated on formal aspects of English in order to teach pupils the basic skills of reading and writing. This has enabled all pupils to achieve expected standards and pupils learn well. Junior pupils achieve well and discussions about books or the quality of their imaginative writing particularly illustrate this. The quality of their learning is good and pupils strive to succeed as they apply themselves well to their tasks.

54 Standards in speaking and listening are about average for seven-year-olds and above average for eleven-year-olds. Pupils speak readily and confidently. They are curious and ask questions. In one lesson, infant pupils volunteered to recite tongue twisters at an ever faster pace, such as 'swan swam over the sea, swim, swan, swim', giggling delightedly as they muddled the words. They listen attentively to stories and point out different types of punctuation. Junior pupils speak fluently and with lively interest. In conversations about books, for example, Year 4 pupils were vivacious, keen, articulate and fun. Older pupils recommended books with enthusiasm and

were keen to discuss characters and plots. Discussions were animated and pupils of all attainment levels were similarly well informed. They clearly enjoy the work and teachers take every opportunity to promote such discussions. Pupils discuss books in relation to films and recognise that characterisation will be different in each. In response to their teachers' questions, pupils offer their own suggestions and ideas. Some of their contributions show a good understanding of the power of words. When Year 6 pupils were discussing how to write an effective moment in a story, within seconds they offered words and phrases such as 'cautiously', 'stumpy' or 'as pungent as damp wood'. They behave very well and listen carefully to each other.

55 Standards in reading are broadly in line with those expected of seven-year-olds and above the average expected nationally of eleven-year-olds. It is clear from listening to pupils read throughout the school that standards are likely to be higher than this in due course for many pupils read fluently and accurately for their age. One reason is the additional support the school gives to reading through weekly lessons to develop skills in using the library. Not only does this promote interest in books, but it also teaches pupils how to skim read for information, use an index and contents page and to use the computer to search for specific titles. The classroom assistant works very well with pupils and follows the clear guidelines provided by the class teacher. Younger pupils show great interest in their books as they share with each other their favourite parts of stories. They gain confidence in selecting books and logging them in and out of the computerised system. A minor drawback to this is that the 'loan option' discourages pupils from using the junior books. Older pupils develop a sophisticated understanding of library classification. For example, using the computer they sort fiction and non-fiction, suitable for younger readers, using the first three letters alphabetically to sort authors' names.

56 Teachers encourage pupils to read a wide range of fiction. By the age of seven, most pupils, apart from those with special educational needs, read with fluency, good expression and reasonable understanding. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to deduce information from the text. They read well together in literacy lessons and teachers demonstrate well how to read expressively. Pupils have appropriate strategies for reading unfamiliar words. Teachers and pupils obviously enjoy reading books together and there is an appreciative sharing of funny or frightening moments. Throughout the school, teachers have a very good understanding of how to promote interest in books, bringing in a pop-up picture book, for example, to illustrate one Year 6 groups' shared reading of 'The Hobbit'. By the age of eleven, higher attaining pupils read expressively and with a very good command of dramatic pauses or different tones of voices for different characters. Lower attaining pupils read more hesitantly but with good understanding, predicting, without prompting, what they think is going to happen next. The school encourages pupils to dip into and read several books at once. Although only the school book is commented on in the reading record book, pupils write book reviews of others. Teachers read, recommend books and write book reviews themselves, which stimulate pupils to read the books so they can discuss them with their teachers. Some Year 5 pupils used their initiative to order a set of books from the local library as they so enjoyed one in the same series that their teacher had read.

57 The school was very concerned that writing was not as good as it should be and has taken positive steps to raise attainment. At Key Stage 1, teachers concentrate on teaching basic skills, particularly in Year 2 this year, to give all pupils a sound basis for writing and to ensure that pupils do not suffer from previous inconsistencies in teaching at this key stage. This has raised the standard of pupils' attainment to the level expected nationally. Their spelling is about average but teachers have quite imaginative ideas to help pupils to improve, such as an upright roll of paper on each table containing the spellings to be learnt by the end of the week. Pupils consult these words as they write. Some of their writing is quite evocative and pupils are clearly helped to write at length by the very precise guidance teachers give them. For instance, lower attaining Year 1 pupils, after discussing how the tiger might feel, sitting in his cage, wrote underneath the picture, 'This is a sad tiger', and average attaining pupils used more complex tenses, 'He would feel happy in the jungle'. Higher attaining pupils wrote more fluently as in, 'He is very worried what will happen next. He wants to be free in the jungle.'

58 Standards are above average in writing for eleven-year-olds. Again, teachers use very precise guidelines to help pupils to write at length and to concentrate on the important elements. When writing poetry, for example, pupils use some striking metaphors and similes of their own as in 'The tree is a tall green-haired giant' or 'blossom blows off like spaceships'. Teachers take pains to develop pupils' vocabulary. Year 6 pupils write quite lengthy biographies and much of their writing has a sensitive tone as in, 'watching the reflections of clouds'. Pupils clearly enjoy using words. Year 4's epitaphs in rhyming couplets show delightfully humorous rhymes such as 'Cath' who 'drowned in a bubbly bath'.

59 The quality of teaching at both key stages is very good overall and is clearly the main reason why standards are rising so rapidly and why pupils are achieving well. Most lessons are good or very good. Within the literacy hour, teachers question carefully for understanding, inviting pupils to offer suggestions for meaning. In one lesson, pupils discussed how 'beautiful death' and 'playful hunter' appeared to be contradictory. Teachers value pupils' contributions and skilfully build discussions based on their ideas. Many of the lessons are fun as well as informative. What pupils are to learn is made clear at the start of each lesson and teachers check for understanding very well. In very good lessons, teachers take every opportunity to help pupils to learn. For example, pupils' suggestions for a group start to a story was greatly improved by changing the tense and adding an adverb, thus demonstrating how to write more effectively as well as learn the precise function of parts of speech.

60 Where teaching is less strong, teachers can over-emphasise points so that pupils 'switch off' momentarily, the pace of lessons slows and pupils do not start on their tasks quite soon enough. Higher attaining pupils are often given additional work after completing a common exercise. Whilst this works very well in some lessons, in others higher attaining pupils could work more productively, rather than at greater speed repeating what they already know.

61 Literacy is promoted very well in other subjects, notably information technology, which is regularly taught in conjunction with literacy. Pupils are given many different occasions to read and write. Older pupils use the library and Internet to research information for topics. Most consult a wide range of sources, summarising what they have discovered. Pupils are very responsive to this interrelating of subjects. In a factual presentation, for instance, pupils include delicately crayoned drawings with descriptions such as 'its black stripes look like shadows' alongside word-processed accounts.

MATHEMATICS

62 Standards in mathematics are in line with the average expected nationally of seven and above average eleven-year-olds, with high standards in numeracy. This is an improvement since the last inspection, particularly for seven-year-olds. The results of the 1999 national tests were well below average for seven-year-olds and broadly average for eleven-year-olds, where they were better than those obtained by pupils from similar schools.

63 There has been an upward trend when compared with national results over the past four years. The school has successfully improved this trend this year as a result of the hard work that has gone into implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. The quality of teaching throughout the school has improved and younger pupils now receive systematic teaching of basic skills. By the age of seven, most pupils can add numbers to 20 with confidence and round larger numbers up or down to the nearest ten. They can work with coins to £1 and do simple multiplication and division activities. Lower attaining pupils can add numbers to ten and are working with numbers to twenty. By the age of eleven, most pupils can calculate numbers to two decimal places. They understand the relationships between percentages, decimals and fractions and can convert one to another with the aid of calculators. Lower attaining pupils understand the relationship between equivalent fractions and can convert simple fractions to their equivalent decimals. In both infants and juniors, pupils have a good understanding of space and shape. Standards in data handling and using and applying mathematics are broadly average.

64 The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and some very good teaching was observed. Only one lesson had unsatisfactory elements. In all classes, teachers' planning is based securely on the National Numeracy Strategy guidelines. As a result, lessons are very well organised and in most cases work builds systematically on what pupils have already learnt. In the lesson with unsatisfactory elements, the activity the pupils were asked to do did not match the planned learning objective and dealt with a mathematical concept pupils were not yet ready for.

65 A significant strength of the teaching of numeracy lies in the skilful way in which teachers manage the mental and oral sessions at the start of each lesson. These sessions are lively and brisk, stimulating pupils' interest and challenging their thinking. Quick-fire questions keep pupils on their toes and they often have to explain how they have arrived at their answers. Pupils clearly enjoy these sessions as they are challenged to think quickly. Younger pupils treat such challenges as a game and there is a delightful sense of shared adventure. They delight in explaining their different strategies and listen quite intently when someone explains a method they had not thought of. Teachers make very good use of teaching aids such as white boards and often ensure that all pupils participate by attempting every calculation and showing the answer simultaneously. In an effective Year 2 lesson, the teacher used magnetic number cards to play games that tested children's recall of odd and even numbers. Pupils were enthused by the activity and keen to have a go themselves. Similarly, teachers of older pupils make very effective use of flip charts and white boards to demonstrate and illustrate mathematical processes. Their clear explanations ensure that pupils fully understand the task and give them confidence to persevere at it. In all classes, the quality of relationships between the teacher and pupils is strong, so pupils respect their teacher, are confident to ask questions or say when they need help. Pupils have good attitudes to work and behave well, listening attentively.

66 All teachers mark pupils' books regularly and comment on how well that they have done. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in the way information gained from marking and assessment is used. Teachers do not always set work that is hard enough for the higher attaining pupils in the class, which limits what these children achieve. Also, the structure imposed by the national numeracy strategy is applied so rigidly that teachers do not make time in the week to follow up problems that individual pupils may have had with their work. This means that some pupils find the work too difficult because it has not been fully explained to them and they have not been given the time they need to practise. In very few classes are pupils given enough time to correct and improve unsatisfactory work.

67 A notable strength of the teaching in the infant classes lies in the range and quality of the practical activities offered. Teachers are imaginative and pupils enjoy working at the tasks they plan. In both infant classes, pupils learning about the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes developed their understanding of the specialist terms such as 'face', 'corner', 'cuboid' through practical activity and discussion. The Year 1 pupils acted out role play with their teacher as the 'alien' and the Year 2 pupils did lots of cutting and sticking as they made their three dimensional shapes. There are fewer opportunities for practical mathematics and problem-solving activities further up the school.

68 The subject owes much of its improvement since the last inspection to the expertise and enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator and to the priority that has been given to the subject this year. The programme of classroom monitoring and observation has helped to raise standards in teaching and increase teacher confidence. The school is now well placed to raise standards and improve the subject even further.

SCIENCE

69 Pupils' standards of work at seven years old are similar to national expectations, and at eleven years old they are above national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Infant and junior age pupils make better progress than that reported during the last

inspection. Most pupils are sufficiently well challenged and look at topics in depth. Pupils' attainment is now much higher than it was four years' ago.

70 The school has made good progress with the provision of science. The subject is now well co-ordinated. The teaching has improved, particularly in the infant classes and pupils are now better challenged by the work they are set. Standards in science have improved because of the increased emphasis the school now places on investigative and practical activities. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to learn from experience and as a result they learn quickly. Similar strategies are adopted throughout the school such as incorporating scientific research with learning information technology and library skills. Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and they leave the school well equipped for the secondary school curriculum. They respond well to the demands made on them.

71 The results of teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 2 in 1999 showed that standards were well below the national average. Early indications from the national assessments for seven-year-olds point towards significant improvement substantiated by the inspection judgement that places attainment at average by the age of seven. For the past four years, pupils' performance at the end of Year 6 was close to the national average with an increasingly large proportion attaining higher than average standards. The trend in pupils' performance is sharply upwards between 1996 and 1999. This indicates an improvement in standards. The performances of boys and girls have differed significantly in the past but now there is no significant difference.

72 At the end of Year 2, all pupils complete bar graphs and can explain what they have done to achieve the results. Many pupils have a clear understanding of the elements that make a test fair. Higher attaining pupils write good accounts of the different states of water. All pupils gain a wide subject knowledge, which includes investigative work, such as a test into how easily paper tears. Pupils understand the difference between natural and human made objects, and that pushes and pulls are forces. Pupils study the parts of plants and what they do. Average attaining pupils demonstrate a similar level of knowledge, although their investigations are briefer. Lower attaining pupils concentrate successfully on completing one investigation for each topic with a level of detail that they can understand.

73 By the end of Year 6, pupils have studied a good curriculum. At the end of Year 6 their knowledge is wide and all pupils investigate and study similar topics. Pupils know the functions of joints and muscles and have monitored their own diets. Pupils have looked at the life cycle of a crocodile and the adaptation of teeth in living creatures for various purposes. An interesting investigation about how quickly ice cubes melts concluded that the bigger the piece of ice, the longer it took to melt. All pupils are expected to predict outcomes before they start experiments and to observe investigations closely. Investigative work has improved greatly in the school. Most pupils recognise the need for fair tests and are aware of the many potential variables in experiments. They draw points on simple graphs and use the graphs to interpret their results. Lower attaining pupils record observations in a variety of ways and explain clearly what they think may happen. Higher attaining pupils present their results systematically and see the value of repeating observations and measurements in order to make their work more reliable.

74 Across the school the teaching is good and pupils make good progress in lessons. The good teaching has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to work. Relationships are good and pupils' good listening skills help them learn more quickly. The good teaching encourages these qualities. A very good lesson in Year 1 explored sounds from a variety of sources. The teacher has a very good relationship with pupils and they listened carefully to all the different sources of sound both inside and outside the school. Their learning was very good. They recognised invisible sounds from pencil boxes, a scrubbing brush, and of leaves rubbing together in the trees. Overall, this was a very successful introduction to sound.

75 Pupils make good progress in many ways. For example, infant pupils describe what they see in simple drawings and phrases using the good investigation booklets. Pupils across the

school show interest, good concentration and most work successfully and independently for long periods for their ages. In a good lesson in Year 5, the teacher took the opportunity to revise again what pupils had struggled to learn in recent lessons. The teacher then went on to set a number of interesting problems about how to solve 'real-life' problems. Pupils were asked how they would separate mixtures of different things, such as rice, water and staples, using a given list of equipment. Pupils found this interesting and discovered that there were several ways that questions could be answered.

76 All teachers have good subject knowledge and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Many pupils are well challenged across the school in most classes. Pupils' learning is consolidated by good discussions at the end of lessons. For example, pupils successfully revised what they knew about their experiments in Year 6 by explaining what difference their key variables had made. The school has become good at moving large numbers of pupils up to national standards in science. This is, in part, is the result of consistently good teaching and the capacity of teachers to cause pupils to care about the standards they achieve. However, the school does not always match work to pupils' capabilities as well as it could. Some lessons were observed in which pupils studied topics at the same level of difficulty, which some pupils find relatively difficult and others find easy.

77 Pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy allow them to measure and record information successfully. The library contains sufficient modern books about scientific ideas. There is an appropriate policy for science and the teaching is well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work. Teachers' planning is checked by the effective co-ordinator who has an adequate view about what is happening throughout the school. However, teachers do not meet formally to discuss what they are doing often enough. Younger Year 4 pupils in the Year 3 class do at least some of the same work as Year 3. Good displays in classrooms enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of, for example, how fast water evaporates and about sources of light.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

78 Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with expectations by the age of seven and close to expectations by the age of eleven. In some aspects of the curriculum in the juniors, for example using e-mail and combining text and graphics, standards are above those expected. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were reported below average overall and the subject did not meet with statutory requirements. The development of the computer suite, additional computers in classrooms, a well-planned curriculum, training and support for teachers and additional adult expertise in lessons have been largely instrumental in the rapid learning that has taken place. Information technology is used frequently to support other subjects, with a particular emphasis on literacy and this contributes very effectively to pupils' confidence and achievement.

79 By the age of seven, pupils use the mouse well to 'start up' programs. In combined literacy and information technology lessons in the computer suite both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils eagerly start work by sharing the task of opening a word processing software program and quickly typing on to the screen. Higher attaining pupils in both Year 1 and Year 2 are beginning to use both hands for typing as the teacher encourages them to think about and memorise where the home keys are on the keyboard. Many pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 open and close files in order to access work from their disk. Higher attaining pupils in both classes use functions on the keyboard very well, for example the shift key to insert capitals, and the backspace to edit their work. They change fonts, save to disk and print out their work with very little support. Most pupils are working towards this standard already. Teachers now plan effectively using national guidelines to support the development of skills in a structured and progressive way. They move around the groups confidently correcting errors, consolidating skills and supporting new learning. Lessons are productive as a result due to very good organisation, pupil management and clear instructions executed with pace and challenge. The pupils enjoy their time in the computer suite enormously. They take turns in using the mouse control and keyboard and talking their partner through the skills

in order to fulfil the tasks set. By the age of seven most control programs easily and describe the effects of their actions. The pupils produce interesting pictures using an art program, enter and display information about hair colour and give directions to control a floor robot. The quality of teaching and learning is very good although there is some missed opportunity to use technical vocabulary. Because the resources are only recently in place, teachers have yet to develop the monitoring and modelling aspect of the curriculum fully.

79 In the juniors teachers continue to build on the skills developed in the infants although some older pupils who did not benefit from the increased range of resources early enough have further to go in developing their skills. For example some older pupils are still struggling with basic word processing skills such as changing fonts or deleting text. The pupils are set challenging tasks by teachers and are taught to use software to produce multi-media presentations, download pictures from the internet when researching information about 'bridges', for example or collect and present data using pie charts and line graphs. Pupils in Year 3 are already fluent in the basic operations of the computer using the keyboard and the mouse with confidence. They understand how to use menus correctly to move between programmes to illustrate written text for example. In the very good lessons seen the teachers confidently demonstrate new skills through giving clear instructions, consolidating knowledge and developing understanding by constant assessment of progress as the pupils work on the computers. Rapid and effective learning takes place as a result in an exciting environment where pupils work together sensibly and co-operatively.

80 Teaching and learning is very good overall. Planning is based on pupils' prior learning and supports other areas of the curriculum, particularly literacy and numeracy effectively. For example, the Year 4 pupils use sets of commands to control events and explore patterns and shapes to produce a 'crystal' both supporting the art and mathematics curriculum. They research the Roman Empire using a CD ROM, exchange e-mail with the headteacher in thoughtful argument about school uniform, write poems and import illustrative text or produce a line graph showing pulse rate. As a result many, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now on target to achieve above the level of skill expected for their age by the time they leave the school at eleven. The pupils have very good attitudes to the subject, enjoy learning new computer skills and share this knowledge with each other. Pupils of all ages can be seen sharing individual expertise by asking and answering each other's questions in order to learn as rapidly as possible.

81 Leadership and management of the subject are good. Planning is thorough and is carefully structured in order to ensure the effective progression of skills through the school. The school has worked hard to meet the key issue from the last inspection and has set realistic targets. Whilst learning has been rapid the co-ordinator recognises that further staff training and the expansion of resources, for example to support the modelling and monitoring aspects of the curriculum is needed to continue to raise standards for most pupils by the age of eleven.

ART

82 Standards in art are well above the level expected of eleven-year-olds nationally. This is a vast improvement since the last inspection when standards were below those expected of seven-year-olds and in line with those expected of eleven-year-old pupils. Pupils now learn many different skills which they express in a wide variety of media. There were few books in the library to help pupils to pursue independent interests in art and the drab environment was criticised as having a detrimental effect on pupils' learning. The entrance hall to the school indicates the high regard the school has for art. An art gallery displays high quality prints of a wide range of pupils' work, which is individual with a distinctive modern trend. In one picture, infants' pictures of repeated wavy, straight, broken and looped lines are linked and reduced in size to form a very effective design to exhibit their developing control of line. In another, Year 5 pupils show a very good command of colour and movement using intense shades of primary colours to depict a volcanic eruption. The school's corridors and staircases are used very well to display pupils' work as well as framed prints of artists' paintings, with large size headings. Art reference books are

invitingly and accessibly displayed outside the school library. In these ways pupils are surrounded by visual stimuli of a high quality. This has a great impact on their work and sets high standards.

83 The quality of teaching is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Some particularly imaginative lessons help pupils to produce distinctive work. Younger pupils learn to experiment with colour as when they 'take a pencil for a walk' across a page and colour the random sections in related shades of blue and green. Year 1 pupils learn about subtle changes in shading when they piece together the background to a silhouetted boat using different shaded tissue paper from dark blue to white to suggest the sea and sky. Their printed designs in the style of Mondrian are quite ingenious. Printed black lines producing a random grid are interspersed with red, blue and yellow sponge-printed oblongs. The variation in thickness of paint contributes to the fine texture. In satisfactory lessons, activities are too closely modelled on the scheme of work rather than developing pupils' creative skills.

84 Teachers use the additional support of parents and governors well. In one lesson, infant boys and girls stitched neat samplers, learning how to form different stitches and to thread their own needles. This enabled the teacher to do some very creative needlecraft with small groups as they wove different textured ribbons and strips of material through framed canvases. Teachers understand what appeals to children and the brightly coloured feathers, saved until the end, were highly prized by pupils as the finishing touch. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers is evident as when pupils commented quite candidly that the teacher looked 'strange' when she tried on a circular woven tapestry complete with feathers.

85 The three staircases up to the junior corridor give a very good indication of the quality of art of older pupils. Observational drawings of still life show pupils have a very good command of shape and proportion using smudging and shading with oil pastels. Paintings of roads diminishing to a distant point show very good teaching and learning of perspective. Pupils learn to print using different techniques such as batik or stencilling with printing ink. The overall effect is very precise printing using interesting combinations of colours. The teaching is obviously highly imaginative, judging by the quality of display. For example, using five straws bonded together, pupils made three-dimensional water snakes using different techniques to expand and reduce the shape. The snakes hang from white threads under a looped canopy of cotton material, which pupils have painted with swirling patterns in blue and green to create a watery effect.

86 Some very good teaching was seen. In one lesson, related to angles which pupils had learnt about in mathematics earlier in the day, pupils studied the way Van Gogh used angles to draw rooftops in one of his paintings as preparatory work for a collage based on his ideas. The resources are good and in this lesson pupils had a huge variety of different textured materials to choose from. Pupils enjoy working together and mix paint, glitter and glue very well to create interesting effects. They dab on colour with great confidence. They are completely absorbed in their work and boys and girls work side by side amicably. Teachers' ideas raise the standard considerably as they help pupils to visualise so their drawings become more accurate as they urge them to 'look for the fine detail'. Pupils use technical vocabulary, pointing out, for instance, that 'the background becomes part of the foreground'. A very good feature of the teaching is the way teachers take note of what pupils say and by suggesting that pupils 'try it and see what you think' foster pupils' independence and creativity.

87 The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator has a clear view of the subject and a very good understanding of refinements to be made in the future. Portfolios for each year group indicate high standards as well as providing a folder of ideas for teachers. The subject is very well monitored and work from each year group is assessed. Art is used very well throughout the curriculum in conjunction with other subjects. For example, pupils scan their photographed work into the computer. They are encouraged to write about their work, which helps their skills in literacy, and to research paintings by particular artists. In one lesson, pupils pored over books illustrating Klimt, Beardsley and Blake. It is a measure of pupils' interest that they looked at pictures of nudes by Matisse without a trace of silliness. The Internet is used well to give pupils access to a wide range of paintings from around the world.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88 By time the pupils leave the school at age eleven, standards in design and technology are above the level expected for pupils of this age. Whilst it was only possible to observe a few lessons during the week of the inspection there is evidence of high quality work in individual portfolios and around the school. This shows that pupils' learning is good as a result of focussed practical tasks that build on prior knowledge, skills and understanding. This is an improvement since the last inspection where progress was judged to be satisfactory and standards in line with the level expected by the time the pupils left the school.

89 The pupils are given a good start to design and technology in the infant classes where well-finished models such as musical instruments are made using a variety of materials. Teachers plan carefully using appropriate guidance from a useful scheme of work that includes all the elements of the designing and making process. In Year 1 the pupils learn how to join and combine materials to make models with moving parts. In Year 2 they link science and design and technology by developing a pneumatic system to plan and make a moving monster and reinforce corners in sturdy frames to display pictures designed on the computer.

90 In the very good lesson seen in Year 3, the teacher encouraged the pupils to work independently or in small groups to select and combine appropriate materials to make a pulley. Clear learning objectives linked effectively to the expectations for making and designing at this level are successfully developed in this lesson. The pupils have drawn and labelled their plans in a previous lesson and in discussion with the teacher share thoughts and ideas sensibly about the problems they need to consider in the next steps. Health and safety issues are carefully considered, specific vocabulary for tools and tasks discussed and utilised effectively so that the pupils are well prepared and an industrious session results. Continuous assessment and support reinforces understanding and develops learning so that the pupils are successful in their work. By the time they reach Year 6, for example the pupils have the necessary skills, knowledge, and perseverance to select a variety of materials to design and make accurate and well finished models of different types of bridges.

91 Pupils very effectively learn new skills. Pupils know how to carefully use tools and equipment as when they made moving vehicles in Year 3. Year 6 pupils generate ideas effectively and begin to produce well-planned and labelled designs before they begin their work. In an excellent lesson in Year 6, the pupils' exemplary attitudes to the practical task meant that they co-operated very effectively to evaluate the strength and reliability in the designs and materials used to make bridges. They are good at planning and labelling designs with clear evaluations of the finished product. Pupils have a good grasp of the need to identify features that work and others that require improvement.

92 Although the co-ordinator for the subject is relatively new she has a clear understanding of her role in developing the subject further. Areas for development in the light of curriculum 2000 have already been identified including for example, more formal assessment procedures and evidence of progress across the school.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

93 Development in these subjects has taken a subsidiary place in the past two years, whilst teachers concentrated on developments in the core subjects. As a result, not enough time has been given to these subjects, particularly in the upper juniors, and standards are below those expected for pupils of the same age.

94 In the infants, pupils follow the planned history and geography curriculum and topics are taught in some detail. In geography for example, Year 1 pupils are learning about life on a small island through their study of the Isle of Struay from the books about Katie Morag. Year 2 pupils are developing their understanding of maps and plans very effectively through a study of the school

building and the plans drawn up as a result of improvements to it last year. Pupils can find their own classroom on the school plan and trace the route to various other parts of the school. In the juniors, Year 3 and 4 pupils have carried out a comprehensive study of invaders and settlers in history. A particularly good feature of the work in Year 3 is the attention given to the development of historical research skills. A scrutiny of pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 indicates that very little of the planned curriculum had been studied in sufficient depth in either subject, although there was more evidence of history than geography.

95 In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was good. In a Year 5 geography lesson, the teacher planned a well structured lesson to enable pupils to consider the impact of change on the local area from a range of different viewpoints. Pupils worked in groups to consider how the proposal to move the local sports ground would affect different people and then presented their arguments to the rest of the class. The lesson was particularly successful in developing pupils' geographical enquiry skills, and raising their awareness of the features of their local neighbourhood. Pupils discussed their work sensibly with each other and listened carefully to other opinions. In a successful history lesson in Year 3, the teacher made good use of the overhead projector to help pupils organise their findings about King Alfred, to enable them to understand why he was known as 'Alfred the Great'. Pupils enjoyed their work because the lesson was well structured to ensure success. When questioned, pupils could discuss previous work enthusiastically. They knew that the Vikings had invaded in long boats and they could explain the difference between supply boats and warships.

96 Some significant strengths in teaching lie in the use that teachers make of work in these subjects to support learning across the curriculum. A visit to Styal, a Victorian working mill, generated high quality written and creative work from ten and eleven-year-old. Pupils dressed and acted in role as Styal mill apprentices, and as a result their writing was thoughtful and imaginative, illustrating a good understanding of how hard life must have been for the young apprentices. Last year, the celebration of the school's one hundredth anniversary work provided the stimulus for role play, drama, creative writing and art in all classes. The oldest pupils make a residential visit to Ambleside which forms the basis of work in English as well as geography. Weaknesses in teaching lie in the planning. Teachers do not have a cohesive scheme of work in place to support their lesson planning, and to ensure that knowledge and study skills are taught systematically each year. This means that pupils' learning is disjointed and at the top of the school they do not learn enough to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The action plan following the last inspection makes adequate provision for these subjects to be developed in line with Curriculum 2000.

MUSIC

97 Standards in music are well above the expected level for eleven-year-old pupils. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection when standards were in line with those expected nationally, though it was recognised that pupils attained a very good standard of performance. The improvement is largely due to the improved quality of teaching, which is now very good. Recent appointments to the teaching staff have ensured that teachers at both key stages have expertise in this subject and so pupils receive specialised instruction.

98 The quality of pupils' singing is well above average by the time they leave school. It is extraordinarily tuneful, enhanced by boys' voices, trained to sing in mass each week. This gives the singing a tone and sonority not often found in primary schools. Pupils articulate the words well and even pupils who find it difficult to pitch their voices accurately succeed in varying the notes in a similar pattern to those who naturally sing in tune. Because teachers are themselves musical, they can hear when pupils sing flat, for example, and know how to help pupils to improve the accuracy of their pitch. Younger pupils are given regular opportunities to sing. The very good quality of learning is seen in their singing quite unselfconsciously a recently learnt song in assembly after a two-week holiday without faltering.

99 The quality of teaching is very good overall and ranges from good to excellent. Teachers choose lively and interesting music. Pupils gave a telling explanation of rhythm, saying that it means 'to bounce along'. In an excellent lesson, the teacher used variations on the 12 bar blues form to teach pupils firstly to recognise and echo patterns and then to improvise their own rhythmic patterns with appropriate phrasing. The lesson moved at a swift pace from whole class singing, individual echoes and improvisation, and paired question and answer in musical form. Pupils are able to imitate complex rhythms successfully, with precise attention to note value, and to tap out in groups simultaneously four different but related rhythms, coming in at the appropriate time. In a very good lesson, pupils played percussion absolutely rhythmically, emphasising different beats of the bar as directed. They imitate each other's invented rhythms based on a series of long and short notes, concentrating absolutely as they strive to repeat the phrase accurately.

100 Most lessons use taped music as a basis for the lesson, following a series of programmes connected with the scheme of work. Teachers use the tapes very well, to support and not lead the lesson. Pupils have good general knowledge of musical terms and can identify and perform changes in phrasing and dynamics. When listening to music they are sensitive to changes in mood and, using words like 'tempo', they explain that a piece of music is sung 'slowly to match how the words feel'. When the teacher draws their attention to the changes from loud to soft one suggests that the slow music is 'darker to match the darkness of space'. Older pupils learn to distinguish major from minor and can explain why music might shift from one to the other, citing 'Orpheus' as an example. They listen carefully and begin to decipher repeated melodies, learning how to write down the pattern. As a measure of their well above average attainment, ten-year-old pupils could all draw a more or less accurate shape to denote the rises and falls in a melody. The music was fast and changed four times almost imperceptibly to the untutored ear. They could clearly read and interpret their own score.

101 Music is very much part of the life of the school. Many pupils bring instruments to school each day, music clubs take place most lunchtimes and boys and girls join in very well as they make music together. Some of the practices are linked to services in church. Pupils are encouraged to play and to harmonise. Because of the expertise of teachers, pupils understand how different chords can be related and so begin to improvise harmonies as the teacher subtly makes one section easier for less experienced players. Pupils have good musical memories and so they learn quickly. The resources are good and are used well both in lessons and in pupils' free time. The scheme of work is due to be replaced as the co-ordinator is keen to try something new. In this way, the subject continues to develop well.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

102 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve standards expected of their age in the infant classes and above expected standards in the junior classes. Overall, pupils' attainments are above typical standards nationally at the age of eleven in swimming and games skills. Standards since the previous inspection have improved for junior age pupils. Extra-curricular sport and regular swimming lessons raise the overall standard in physical education but achievement could be well above average if pupils followed a consistent programme of work in lessons. Although physical education is not a priority, most of the good features of the provision reported four years ago have been maintained.

103 At eleven years old, virtually all pupils can swim and most achieve a 25 metre distance comfortably. Higher attainers have good stamina and work very hard indeed. They float well on their backs for three minutes and have strong leg actions when attempting to improve their front crawl technique by crossing the pool many times using a float. Their teacher has an advanced swimming qualification and pupils make good progress. Average attainers also make many crossings of the width of the pool. They jump into the water from the side with confidence and about a half of them pick up a rubber brick successfully from the bottom of the pool, in water one metre deep. The small proportion of lower attainers effectively practises crossing the learner pool with varying degrees of effectiveness using floats. All pupils apply themselves well and make good

progress. Many pupils learn, for example, where to place their hands in front of their heads and how to pull them through correctly for an efficient stroke. The arrangements for swimming are good.

104 Year 6 standards of work in basketball are also above average. All pupils can bounce a ball around a set of cones successfully without losing control. They repeat this activity using their other hands with the same level of success, if a little more slowly. Pupils have very good attitudes to work and try their very best to carry out the tasks to the best of their abilities. Progress with ball skills has been good over the years. Higher attainers can dribble their ball and successfully knock another's away during a game. The high expectations the teacher has for the group leads to high levels of performance.

105 The teaching is good at Key Stage 2. Too few lessons were observed in the infant classes to allow a judgement to be made. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and all the elements of physical education are present. Teachers' levels of expertise and expectations of what pupils should do are good. Pupils are clear what they have to do and lessons are well organised. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mostly good. However, in one dance lesson, some boys initially did not apply themselves as well as they might and they made less progress than they should. Pupils of all ages are mostly interested in what they do and they make good attempts to carry out the teachers' instructions. For example, in the Year 1 class, pupils made satisfactory progress with learning to throw and catch a ball, which they found difficult to do.

106 There is a good emphasis on the use of space and good use is made of group evaluations in dance lessons. Pupils are capable of deciding who has done well and who needs to improve their work. Some teachers, such as in Year 4, demonstrate the required movements well, using higher attaining pupils or themselves to inspire pupils. Good demonstrations have a positive impact on the effort pupils make and the learning and quality of work. Some teachers also make good use of praise to motivate pupils. The very good teaching of dance in Year 3 was based in part on the relationship between the teacher and pupils. High standards of control and co-operation were achieved as pupils practised their symmetrical shapes.

107 The daily lesson planning is satisfactory and shows little evidence that a more detailed scheme of work is required. Higher attaining pupils are given tasks that extend them in swimming and dance lessons. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills and develop ideas well, judged on their performances in Years 3 to 6. Most pupils are productive and work at a good pace and sustain concentration. The teaching overall leads to pupils' good attitudes to work and to above average attainment by the time they are eleven years old.

108 The co-ordinator has a good knowledge of physical education and is expert in dance. Because of the greater importance of other subjects, she has had few opportunities to develop the subject. The school does not have an overall scheme of work. However, teachers do not have the guidance in physical education that they have in many other subjects, with the exception of games. Teachers do not consistently use the whole-school system for assessing what pupils know, understand and can do to help with planning. However, through informal discussion between teachers, the curriculum is reasonably broad and balanced. The school's programme of extra curricular activities is good. It includes netball, football, rugby and outdoor and adventurous activities, which raise the standards of pupils' work.

109 The school's accommodation is satisfactory. The hall and playground are small and pupils have just sufficient room in which to work, because the school uses these spaces to very good effect, for example, by limiting the size of groups. The school also has the use of a field at a nearby school.