

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

**St. JOSEPH'S R. C. PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Darwen

LEA area: Blackburn and Darwen

Unique reference number: 119667

Headteacher: Miss S. Jackson

Reporting inspector: Mrs. K. Charlton 1718

Dates of inspection: 8 to 12 May 2000

Inspection number: 198780

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:	5 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Limes Avenue Darwen Lancashire
Postcode:	BB3 2SG
Telephone number:	01254 706264
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. D. Foster
Date of previous inspection:	24 to 28 November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kay Charlton	Registered inspector	Science Information technology Physical education Special educational needs	The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Guy Hirst	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Kathryn Butterfield	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Music Under Fives	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Barbara Davy	Team inspector	English Art Geography History Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school catering for girls and boys aged four to eleven years of age. There are 193 pupils on roll. Virtually all are of white European origin and none speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below average and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average. Pupils have a wide range of attainment on entry but taken overall their attainment is broadly average. There are seven classes in all, a reception class followed by a single age class for each subsequent year group. There has been only one change in staffing since the last inspection.

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

This is an effective school which provides a sound standard of education. By the age of eleven pupils achieve above average standards in English and mathematics. Their attitudes to school are good. They are motivated by a team of committed teachers and a curriculum which provides a good level of continuity and meets the needs of all pupils. The school is effectively led and there is a clear sense of purpose. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- By the age of eleven, pupils achieve above average standards in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good, as are their relationships with each other and with staff.
- Staff work well as a team with a shared commitment to school improvement.
- Within a strong Catholic ethos, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils achieve standards in history above those expected for their age, with a good focus on the development of their skills of enquiry.
- The provision for information technology is good and significantly improved since the last inspection.

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

- The standards pupils achieve in science.
- The consistency with which teachers use assessment information, feedback and marking to make it clear to pupils what they should do to improve.
- The information the school provides for parents to raise the school's profile.
- The procedures by which the Governing Body monitor and evaluate the school's performance.

*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 November 1997 and was found to have serious weaknesses. The standards the pupils achieved were judged to require improvement. The quality of education, including the quality of teaching, required substantial improvement as did the management and efficiency of the school. There has been significant improvement since that time. The present inspection findings show that by the age of eleven, pupils attainment is average in all subjects and above average in English, mathematics and history. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with good features in a number of areas. The curriculum is good and the school is effectively led by the headteacher and key staff.

## 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	B	A	B	B
mathematics	C	A	B	C
science	D	B	E	E

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

By the age of five, most children meet the outcomes expected and there are a significant number who achieve beyond this in language and literacy and mathematics.

The results of the national tests for seven-year-olds show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well above the national average in 1998 and above the national average in writing and mathematics in 1999. In 1999 standards in reading were average. The inspection findings show that girls and boys of all abilities achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and that standards in reading, writing and mathematics currently are average for seven-year-olds. In the present Year 2, fewer pupils than usual are attaining the higher level (Level 3) and this is directly related to the overall attainment on entry for this year group, which was below average.

The results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics were well above average in 1998 and above average in 1999. The English result compares favourably with the results of pupils in similar schools. The mathematics result is in line with the results of pupils in similar schools. The inspection findings confirm that pupils of all abilities are achieving above average standards in these subjects. The improvement in the school's results, particularly in English, is better than the national trend and this reflects the school's systematic approach to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and its commitment to continued improvement in these core subjects of the curriculum. The school has set suitably challenging targets for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics and is on line to meet them.

In science, there have been wide variations in the results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in the last three years. These were below average in 1997, above average in 1998 and then well below average in 1999. For this reason the school initiated a major school improvement project in Autumn 1999 and the inspection findings show that pupils' attainment is now broadly in line with that expected of pupils at both age seven and eleven. This improvement, however, is not well established particularly in the investigative aspect of the subject, and by the age of eleven pupils are still not achieving the standards of which they are capable.

Standards in information technology have improved since the last inspection. Overall, these are in line with those expected of pupils at the age of seven and eleven.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They show real interest in their classroom activities and take part enthusiastically. They are highly motivated and generally work at a good pace.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour is good. It is very good in more formal situations such as assemblies. Generally in school pupils are responsive to teachers and courteous to visitors. Pupils' behaviour in the playground at dinner-time is less consistent, but it is still satisfactory overall.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in school are good and contribute to the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils show increasing confidence as they move through the school.
Attendance	The attendance rate is in line with the national average for primary schools and unauthorised absence is lower than 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	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory overall. Five per cent of teaching was very good, 41 per cent good and 54 per cent was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The majority of the good and very good teaching is in English, mathematics, history and information technology. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills and most pupils make good gains in these areas. Overall, the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are met successfully.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good and successfully promotes continuity in pupils' learning. The school offers all its pupils a broad, well-balanced and relevant curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils who have special educational needs are fully integrated into their classes and considered to be valued members of the school community. They make good progress in relation to the targets in their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good and a strength of the school. A strong Catholic ethos is evident within the school and the mission statement is successfully promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school has a positive approach to ensuring pupils' welfare. Staff know pupils well as individuals, respond positively to them and are sensitive to their needs. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress in learning and behaviour and for supporting their personal development.



Overall, the school's partnership with parents contributes appropriately to many aspects of school life.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff work together well and provide clear educational direction for the work of the school. The headteacher effectively sets the tone for the work of the school, particularly in assemblies.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a clear commitment to the school and have worked hard to achieve improvement since the last inspection. The systems the governing body use to monitor and evaluate the school's performance, particularly in relation to pupils' attainment, are still not sufficiently well developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Generally, there is a clear sense of purpose in the school based on good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	There is good financial planning and the school makes effective use of its available resources, taking account of the principles of best value. Resources are good, and staffing and accommodation are adequate.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Children make good progress.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching.</li> <li>• Children's behaviour is good.</li> <li>• They are comfortable to approach the school.</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• Children become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• The way in which the school works with them.</li> <li>• The overall leadership and management.</li> <li>• The information about their child's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' views about what pleases them. The inspection team also agrees that overall, the information about what pupils are taught is limited. The school's annual reports to parents about pupils' achievements lack sufficient detail about the ways in which the child might improve. There is no regular means of updating parents about the school's 'news'. Also the school does not place sufficient emphasis on the development of a positive image to help to promote a close working relationship with parents. In the other areas where parents have reservations, the school is providing what is normally expected and the overall leadership and management is effective.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with that expected of four-year-olds. Generally, there is a wide range of attainment with a few children who have poorly developed skills in many areas of learning. However, there are also a few children who have well established skills. In the reception class, the children settle well and make good progress in many areas of learning, particularly in language and literacy, and in mathematics.
2. By the age of five, most children meet the outcomes expected and there are a significant number who achieve beyond these in language and literacy and in mathematics. Most are able to read simple sentences, write their names with suitable attention to upper and lower case letters and write for different purposes, such as a list of things they will buy at the flower shop. They quickly develop confidence in using numbers one to ten and a significant number of children are able to recognise and use numbers beyond this. Problem solving is encouraged and many children can add and subtract simple numbers. The children make good gains in developing their confidence and personal independence.
3. By the end of Key Stage 1, the results of the national tests in 1998 for seven-year-olds show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well above the national average. In 1999, standards were above the national average in writing and mathematics and average in reading. The inspection findings show that girls and boys of all abilities achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average for seven-year-olds. In the current Year 2, there are fewer pupils than usual attaining the higher level (Level 3) and this is directly related to the overall attainment on entry for this year group which was below average. The school is suitably focussing on the need to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in this cohort.
4. By the end of Key Stage 2, the results of the national test for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics were well above average in 1998 and above average in 1999. The English result compares favourably with the results of pupils in similar schools. The mathematics result is in line with the results of pupils in similar schools. The inspection findings confirm that pupils of all abilities are achieving well and above average standards in these subjects are being maintained. The improvement in the school's results in recent years, particularly in English, is better than the national trend and this reflects the school's systematic approach to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and its commitment to continued improvement in these core subjects of the curriculum. The school has set suitably challenging targets in English and mathematics and is on line to meet them.
5. Throughout the school, most pupils are confident when reading and writing and when solving mathematical problems. They use their skills in literacy and numeracy effectively in other subjects, such as history and design and technology. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are generally good. Most listen with interest and are confident to contribute in assemblies and whole class discussions as well as making their opinions known in a range of other situations. For example, in Year 2, pupils very effectively contributed their views to a discussion about the relative speed of toy vehicles traveling down a slope. By the age of eleven, pupils show that they can present their ideas well in order to argue a case; for example, when deciding whether Darwen was a healthy place to live at the end of the last century.
6. In science, there have been wide variations in the results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in the last three years. They were below average in 1997, above average in 1998 and then well below average in 1999. For this reason the school initiated a major school improvement project in Autumn 1999 and the inspection findings show that pupils' attainment is now broadly in line with that expected of pupils at both age seven and eleven. This improvement, however, is not well established particularly in the investigative aspect of the subject. By the age of eleven pupils are still not achieving the standards which they are capable in this area and they use a limited range of techniques to record their work.
7. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for in the school, and they make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans.

8. Standards in information technology have improved significantly since the last inspection. Overall, these are now in line with those expected of pupils at the age of seven and eleven, with aspects of word processing being above average. Aspects of monitoring, modelling and control are not well established, but overall, pupils' skills in this area are satisfactory. Resources have improved significantly since the last inspection and there is a well-planned curriculum in place. Teachers and support staff work very well together to ensure that pupils are now making good progress overall.
9. In history, pupils achieve well and they generally attain standards above those normally expected for pupils of their age. Since the last inspection the school has placed a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' skills of enquiry and in history they use these skills very well, showing good enthusiasm for the subject.
10. In design and technology, geography, art, music and physical education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory and they attain standards in line with those expected of pupils according to their age. In response to the issues raised at the last inspection there is now a clear focus on pupils using investigative approaches to learning and making choices about the resources they will use in all of these subjects.
11. Most parents indicated that their child is encouraged to work hard and make progress during their time at the school.

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

12. Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. In the Reception class, firm foundations are laid and children under five are confident, happy and they behave well. Good relationships are established and the children are eager to learn. Across the school, pupils show real interest in their classroom activities and take part enthusiastically. They are highly motivated and generally work at a good pace. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to develop pupils' skills of enquiry and pupils are now confident to express their ideas, to organise their own work, and to ask and answer questions. They take good levels of responsibility as they move through the school. When working individually or in small groups, they concentrate well and take pride in what they achieve. Their attitudes to the new information technology suite are very positive and they work on the computers with intense concentration.
13. Overall, behaviour in the school is good. It is very good in more formal situations such as assemblies. In lessons and around school generally, pupils are responsive to teachers and courteous to visitors. In the playground and at dinnertime, behaviour is less consistent but it is still satisfactory overall. The majority of pupils respond positively to the school's emphasis on self-discipline, and on respect and kindness for others. However, a few pupils behave less responsibly in the playground than they do in class and do not always show appropriate consideration towards others. Pupils understand the relationship between assembly themes such as 'sharing' and 'kindness', and the quality of relationships and behaviour in school.
14. Relationships in school are good and contribute to the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Older pupils make helpful contributions to school routines such as dinnertimes for the younger pupils or the voluntary rota for litter collection. Pupils show increasing confidence in organising themselves; for example, when working without direct supervision, or when reporting back to the class on their work. They also work well together in a range of situations. There is good emphasis in the school assemblies on understanding the importance of caring for others and the pupils respond well to this; for example, when explaining why they felt a range of different animals had been 'good friends' to two baby chicks who had lost their mother.
15. The attendance rate is in line with the national average for primary schools and the amount of unauthorised absence is below average. There are a small number of pupils who are regularly late for the start of school but overall punctuality is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, there have been no exclusions.
16. Almost all parents who returned the questionnaire confirmed that their children enjoy coming to school and expressed the view that behaviour in school is good.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory overall. Five per cent of teaching was very good, 41 per cent good and 54 per cent was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The majority of the good and very good teaching is in English, mathematics, history and information technology. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, when 22 percent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. There is a systematic approach to the development of pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy through the school and along with teaching which is never less than satisfactory, this enables most pupils to make good progress in these areas. All staff have worked hard to achieve improvement in their own practice since the last inspection.
18. Teaching in the Reception class is satisfactory overall with good features in the teaching of language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Staff are confident in working with young children and they set up activities which are of interest to them so that they are keen to learn. They have a secure knowledge of the learning outcomes expected of five-year-olds, as well as of the National Curriculum and they are confident to move the higher-attaining children onto work in the National Curriculum Key Stage 1 programmes of study before leaving the Reception class. Planning is good and much improved since the last inspection. Staff know the children well as individuals and have a good understanding of their needs and they ensure that the children grow in confidence and become secure in their relationships both with staff and each other. They manage children's behaviour effectively and sensitively, and most children behave well. There is good teaching of basic skills, such as phonics and counting; for example, when the children are encouraged to count forwards and backwards along with a puppet. Assessments are undertaken regularly, but these are not always sufficiently detailed and not used consistently to plan the next stages of children's learning. Resources are generally good in the Reception area and in the main used well by staff, for example in creative development. However, the present organisation of resources has a limiting effect on the extent to which children can use their initiative when making choices about those which they wish to use. The teaching related to children's physical development is satisfactory overall. There are strengths but limited opportunities in the development of children's skills of balancing and climbing in particular.
19. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers work hard and planning, which reflects the school's curriculum framework, is effectively translated into practice. Teachers generally have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach although there is some uncertainty about teaching investigative skills in science. Staff have good relationships with pupils, value the contributions they make to lessons and usually manage pupils' behaviour well. They set work which is interesting and often clearly relates to the pupils' own experiences and this motivates them to learn. For example, Year 4 pupils showed a good level of interest in their science work which focussed on classifying creatures found in the school environment because they were able to observe the animals first hand. Resources have improved since the last inspection and they are generally used well by staff, for example in information technology, 'Roamers', computers and sensing equipment are all used well. A suitable range of strategies is used for grouping pupils so that they have opportunities to work with different members of the class and they usually work quietly and productively. Good introductions to lessons often progress in a balanced way into group or individual activities and then into useful reviews of learning at the end of sessions. Generally, pupils work effectively within this structure, keeping to the timescales set for each part of the lesson. Occasionally, however, there is insufficient clarity about what is expected of the group work and the pupils work for too long without adult intervention. On other occasions there is insufficient time given to the plenary session and opportunities to review what has been learned are lost.
20. The challenge of lessons is satisfactory overall. Teachers know the pupils in their class well and generally take account of their levels of understanding when they plan the work. They place high emphasis on the development of pupils' basic skills in language and literacy and numeracy and they are usually very clear about what they expect in these aspects so that most pupils make good gains in their learning. Teachers often draw the pupils' attention to 'key' vocabulary to help improve their understanding. However, taken overall, assessment information is not used consistently and feedback and marking do not always inform the pupils about how to improve. In the best lessons, there is ongoing questioning and discussion which makes the pupils think and extends their learning. Also there is particularly good use of the plenary session to indicate to pupils what they must do to achieve the next level within the National Curriculum. Marking is used effectively so that pupils are very knowledgeable about their own learning. There are a significant number of occasions, however, where discussion is not sufficiently focussed, where the plenary is rushed and where marking of work is not sufficiently

analytical or evaluative. This is particularly evident in science where it is not made sufficiently clear to pupils how they can improve.

21. Pupils with special educational needs are considered to be important members of the class and extra support is arranged on a regular basis. Staff work well with a range of outside agencies ensuring that teaching programmes meet the pupils' needs. Consequently pupils make good gains in relation to the targets set out in their individual education plans.
22. A reasonable amount of homework is set in all classes and this contributes effectively to pupils' achievements. Parents expressed some concerns about homework but the amount given is in line with national recommendations for pupils of this age.
23. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching. Other significant developments have taken place in the teaching of information technology and history, where much of the teaching is now good and where pupils are making good progress.

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

24. Overall the curriculum provided by the school is good and successfully promotes continuity in pupils' learning. The school offers all its pupils a broad, well-balanced and relevant curriculum. All subjects of the National Curriculum are covered and an appropriate amount of time is allocated to each subject. The curriculum provision suitably reflects the aims of the school and statutory requirements are met.
25. The curriculum provided for the children under five has improved since the last inspection and overall it is now good. It is carefully planned to cover all the expected areas of learning and helps to ensure the children make a positive start to school. A wide range of purposeful activities is provided which offer the children many first hand experiences such as going on nature walks. However, there are limitations in the provision for physical development, particularly in developing skills in balancing and climbing. Children who attain the learning outcomes expected of five-year-olds are provided with suitable opportunities to begin work in the earlier stages of the National Curriculum programmes of study.
26. The curriculum provision for pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 has also improved since the last inspection and staff have responded well to new curriculum initiatives and guidelines. Subject policies and schemes of work have been appropriately reviewed, amended and adapted so that suitable guidelines and structured stages of learning are clearly identified for teaching all subjects. This, together with the clear 'curriculum map', the teamwork amongst the well-established staff, helps to ensure a good level of continuity and progression in pupils' learning. A good start has been made in implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Strong emphasis is placed on establishing a firm foundation in literacy and numeracy; for example, in understanding the relationship between letters and sounds and on learning key vocabulary. Problem solving and investigation now form a significant part of the curriculum for mathematics as well as being evident in many other subjects within the curriculum, for example in history. During the last year, the school has suitably focussed on improving the science curriculum which has included introducing a science club which runs on two evenings each week. This initiative is suitably helping to raise standards in this subject. The curriculum for information technology has considerably improved since the last inspection. Staff have been trained to make appropriate use of the available equipment. These factors have enabled information technology to become an integral part of the whole curriculum.
27. Staff ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and that they have opportunities to be fully involved in the activities provided. The school closely follows the Code of Practice for pupils who have special educational needs. These pupils are fully integrated into their classes and considered to be valued members of the school community. The support staff show a strong commitment to supporting pupils with special educational needs, for example by learning sign language. Overall the provision for these pupils is good. Individual education plans are used effectively to inform teaching and learning and targeted support is arranged to meet their identified needs.
28. The school places strong emphasis on pupils' personal and social development which is taught as an integral part of the whole curriculum. This is effectively supported, by an annual visit from the 'Life

Education' mobile classroom run by Life Education Centres for Lancashire. Suitable procedures are in place to inform pupils about the misuse of drugs. The governors have agreed a suitable policy for the teaching of sex education.

29. The curriculum is enhanced by an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities which includes sporting events such as athletics, netball and cricket and musical activities such as singing in the choir and learning to play the guitar or recorder. A reasonable number of sporting events take place with other schools. Clubs, such as the science club, arouse a lot of interest and the Booster classes which support mainly the older pupils in English and mathematics, have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to their work and their learning.
30. Visits into the neighbourhood and further afield strongly support the curriculum for pupils of all ages. Since the last inspection the school is making greater use of visits to enhance the curriculum. Pupils have visited places such as Ribchester Roman Museum, Helmshore Textile Museum and the Science Museum. These visits, as well as field trips to places such as Houghton Towers and Blackpool effectively support pupils' learning, particularly in history and geography.
31. Good links are made with the community; for example, there are strong links with Blackburn Rovers Football Club, the school takes part in the Blackburn and Darwen Music Festival and enters the Darwen Civic Society Bulb Competition. Each year a group of pupils sing at a local home for the elderly. Good links have been made with the local secondary schools, with a teacher from the main receiver school providing French lessons for the older pupils at St. Joseph's. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in community events such as the Fire Safety Quiz and Highway Code Quiz and there are good links with local industry. A wide range of visitors come into school to talk to the pupils and this helps enhance the overall curriculum provision; for example, visits have been made by the Soda Club musicians and the Healthy Eating school meals service.
32. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is a strength of the school. A strong Catholic ethos is evident within the school and the mission statement is successfully promoted. Pupils are encouraged to learn about themselves, develop appropriate values and be considerate towards others. Since the last inspection the provision for pupils' cultural development has been improved.
33. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. It is developed as an integral part of pupils' daily life in school based on the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith and caters for the needs of all pupils regardless of their backgrounds, culture and religious beliefs. There are close ties to the parish of St Joseph's in Darwen. The school places strong emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual and this is nurtured sensitively. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils to engage in personal prayer and to have quiet moments of reflection and meditation. Prayers and hymns are well known and the pupils show reverence at the appropriate times and sing hymns enthusiastically. A prayer tree which is displayed in the hall is used very effectively and the pupils are encouraged to appreciate the gifts that God has given them. Assemblies are good and well supported by visits from the priest of St. Joseph's parish and other visitors, such as a retired headteacher. Pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of wonder about the world about them in many situations; for example as they watched chickens hatch in the incubator as part of their science work. Good provision is made for the pupils to express their inner feelings in a range of situations within their daily school life. For example, pupils are encouraged to write poems, express themselves through art, drama and school productions and whilst listening to music. Good focal points for worship are a feature of all classrooms and this supports pupils effectively in saying their own personal prayers.
34. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Clear guidelines are provided to promote good behaviour and effort. Pupils are successfully encouraged to take on roles of responsibility, such as being register monitors and setting out equipment, and older pupils can often be seen helping the younger ones. The staff provide good role models for the pupils to follow and place strong emphasis on the need to care for others and to be considerate. Values such as honesty, justice, trust and a sense of what is right and wrong are effectively promoted in religious education lessons and also in every day situations in the school. Pupils are sensitively encouraged to consider moral issues and this has resulted in them using their initiative to write letters to people belonging to world-wide groups to express their views about killing wildlife such as tigers, foxes and whales. Good work and behaviour is appropriately recognised in assemblies. Since the last inspection more emphasis has been placed on the pupils using their

initiative and this is evident in the way they are willing to solve problems and make decisions for themselves on a range of issues. The school effectively raises pupils' awareness about the need to help those less fortunate than themselves for example through the Blue Peter Appeal and fundraising events such as the St Joseph's Penny collection and Catholic Aid for Overseas Development. Social links are well developed through sporting activities and clubs and in preparing for school performances such as the Anno Domini Millennium production. Pupils are expected to take an active part in a caring community, for example, by distributing goods from the Harvest Festival and by visiting the housebound. Good social links are made by the choir when they sing to the elderly and in providing paintings for the Psychiatric Unit at Queens Park Hospital.

35. The provision for the cultural development of the pupils is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. More emphasis has been placed on learning about different religions and in making appropriate comparisons to the Roman Catholic religion. Pupils have learnt about Hanukkah and Sukkot as part of the Jewish faith and about Holi as part of the Hindu faith, as well as taking part in events at Easter as part of the Christian faith. An appreciation of art is effectively developed by introducing pupils to work of artists such as Monet and Mondrian and the school appropriately encourages the pupils to take part in art competitions, for example; to design Christmas cards, decorate eggs and paint pictures. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their cultural awareness; for example, through the work they have completed on Shakespeare and in learning about the Globe Theatre. Year 4 pupils learned about life in Chembakolli in India. A good number of visits are made into the local environment, for example, to Witton Park and the County Library, and a suitable number of museums are visited. The school makes a good effort to take part in local cultural events such as the Darwen Civic Society Bulb Competition. The choir is also currently rehearsing for their contribution in 'Godzwana' to be performed with a live orchestra, alongside other schools, as part of a large project to be performed in the Cathedral in Blackburn. An appreciation of music is successfully promoted through listening to music as part of assemblies and as part of music lessons.

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

36. Overall, the school's systems to care for its pupils are good.
37. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its positive approach to ensuring pupils' welfare. Staff know their pupils well as individuals, respond positively to them and are sensitive to their needs. This positive climate means that pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into school and well supported in their learning. Arrangements for child protection and for monitoring pupils' attendance are appropriate. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress in learning and behaviour and for supporting their personal development.
38. The school's behaviour policy is suitably based on the principles of 'rights and responsibilities', and pupils are encouraged to develop self-discipline and to behave with consideration for others. Overall, this has a good effect on behaviour and contributes to the quality of pupils' learning. There are suitable procedures for dealing with bullying and pupils are clear about the school's policy and know that they should tell a teacher if there are any instances.
39. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its procedures for assessing pupils' progress. Teachers in every year group use a wide range of tests and assessments, which they carry out at regular intervals. They keep detailed records, particularly in English and mathematics, and have an accurate picture of their pupils' progress. These records are used effectively to transfer information about pupils as they move through school. The marking policy is clear and helpful, and there are many occasions when good oral feedback is given to pupils within lessons, praising their achievements and explaining how they might further improve their work. However, teachers' detailed assessments of pupils are not used consistently to identify individual targets or as the basis for giving pupils specific feedback about their progress. For example, there are occasions where oral feedback is too general and there are too few written comments on pupils' work to help them understand how they might improve their work.
40. Generally, the school makes good use of assessment information to guide its whole school curriculum planning and this has led to many improvements. The information has been used effectively to set challenging whole school targets for eleven-year-olds based on accurate information about pupils' prior attainment. However, the whole school development plan does not always contain sufficiently

quantifiable targets related to pupils' attainment, as a means of gauging the success of particular initiatives. This makes it difficult, particularly for governors, to monitor the overall effectiveness of the school.

41. The school has good procedures for meeting pupils' special educational needs. Generally, individual education plans set out clear targets for improvement and they form a sound basis for planning and monitoring pupils' progress. Annual reviews of progress for those pupils with statements of special educational needs take place and the school fully meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

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

42. Overall, the school's partnership with parents contributes appropriately to many aspects of school life. The majority of parents have a positive view of the school but a significant minority have reservations about aspects of school life. The inspection findings show that overall, the information which the school provides about what pupils are taught is limited. The school's annual reports to parents about pupils' achievements, lack sufficient detail about the ways in which the child might improve. There is no regular means of updating parents about the school's 'news'. Also the school does not place sufficient emphasis on the development of a positive image to help to promote a close working relationship with parents. In the other areas where parents have reservations, the school is providing what is normally expected and the overall leadership and management is effective.
43. There is a suitable home-school agreement in place which helps to cement the partnership. It appropriately outlines a commitment to homework by all parties. Homework is set regularly throughout the school and pupils know what to expect and when to expect it. At the start of the year, parents are informed of the homework patterns and they are asked to co-operate to ensure it is done. The school has, for some time, encouraged co-operative working at home in mathematics through the 'Maths Magic Club' and this is effective in helping pupils to make progress. Methods for helping Reception class children at home to learn the letters of the alphabet are also successful.
44. There is insufficient information for parents about the curriculum, their child's progress and other aspects of school life. Publications such as the Prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report and the reports on the progress of each pupil all meet requirements. Also the school has organised events where parents are presented with information on aspects, such as literacy and numeracy. Taken overall, however, the information about what pupils are taught, including the information in the prospectus is limited. Also the annual report for each pupil lacks sufficient detail about the ways in which the child might improve, and there is no regular means of updating parents about the school's 'news'. There are channels of communication through the weekly parish newsletter and the monthly Parents, Teachers and Friends Association but since not all parents are part of the parish they do not receive these.
45. A reasonable number of parents help regularly in school, particularly in Key Stage 1, and their efforts significantly aid pupils' learning. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association adds much to the social life of the school and their fundraising is important in providing much needed equipment such as the overhead projectors and large play equipment.
46. Overall, the school does not place sufficient emphasis on the development of a positive image to help promote a close working relationship with parents. Since there are limitations in the information parents receive, not all have a secure understanding about the school's achievements or the progress it has made since the last inspection.

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

47. The headteacher and key staff work together well and provide clear educational direction for the work of the school. The headteacher effectively sets the tone for the work of the school, particularly in assemblies.
48. This is a shared commitment to achieving high standards within a Catholic ethos and this permeates all aspects of school life. The staff effectively monitor the school's performance by analysing data and



tracking the standards being achieved. Challenging targets are set for pupils at age eleven and effective action is taken in order to meet them. Teachers are reflective, they evaluate their work and are keen to develop and improve. They are well supported in this by the headteacher and the school is in a good position to go forward. The performance of teachers is regularly reviewed and targets are set for the future. Generally, there is a clear sense of purpose in the school, based on good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and this has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and achievements.

49. There is a suitable staffing structure and staff with management responsibilities contribute effectively to the running of the school. Subject leaders work hard to promote high standards in their subjects. They have produced sound policies and guidelines and have a clear idea of what they want to develop. A system of monitoring by co-ordinators is in place and this is focussing appropriately on developments in the core subjects of the curriculum in the first instance. The headteacher has responsibility for special educational needs provision and she fulfils this role effectively.
50. Governors have a clear commitment to the school and have worked hard to achieve improvement since the last inspection. They are kept well informed about the work of the school and are closely involved in decision making. For example, governors have full knowledge about the need to introduce performance management and they make decisions based on this. Since the last inspection they are more involved in strategic planning in the long term, through taking part in school review procedures. However, the systems to monitor and evaluate the school's performance, particularly in relation to pupils' attainment, are still not sufficiently well developed. This is complicated by the fact that the success criteria within the whole school development plan are not always quantified and they do not relate clearly to pupils' attainments. Therefore, it is difficult to check if targets have been achieved. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
51. There is good financial planning and the school makes effective use of its available resources. Spending decisions are linked closely to priorities in the school development plan and since the last inspection resources are much improved and are now good. There has been a high level of spending on resources for literacy, numeracy and information technology alongside development in these areas, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Specific grants are used effectively. The school suitably works to the principles of best value, for example in challenging themselves to justify the use of resources, making comparisons between themselves and other schools, and most particularly in consulting widely before major decisions are made. There is effective financial control and administration. The recommendations of the last audit report have been acted upon. Systems are well established and the school runs efficiently. New technology is used effectively.
52. The level of staffing is adequate and there is effective deployment of staff. The accommodation is adequate and well looked after. The environment is clean and well-organised and this enhances the overall sense of purpose in the school.
53. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the overall leadership and management of the school. There is a clearer sense of direction, governors are much more involved in decision making, and financial planning is now linked to school development planning. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the overall leadership and management of the school but the inspection findings show that it is effective overall.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

*The numbers in brackets after each key issue indicate the paragraphs in which the weaknesses are discussed.*

The headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Ensure that pupils achieve higher standards in science by:
  - establishing a more systematic approach to the development of scientific investigation through the school;
  - extending the range of techniques which pupils use to record their work in science;
  - setting out more clearly what the pupils need to do to improve their work and attain higher levels.

*(6, 19, 20, 88 - 93)*

- Ensure that teachers develop a consistent approach to the use of assessment information to guide feedback and marking, to make it clear to pupils what they should do to improve.

*(19, 20, 39, 63, 72, 85, 92, 98, 126, 129)*

- Improve the information for parents to raise the school's profile, by giving more detail about what the pupils are taught, making it clearer in the annual reports about the targets for improvement and ensuring that there is regular information about events in school.

*(42 - 46)*

- Improve the procedures by which the Governing Body monitor and evaluate the school's performance by:
  - ensuring there is a clearer focus on the standards the pupils' achieve, through which to gauge the overall effectiveness of the school;
  - including more quantifiable targets within the school development plan which relate to pupils' attainment.

*(40, 50)*

*In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in the paragraphs in brackets.*

Improve pupils' behaviour at lunch-time so that it is as good as at other times of the school day. *(13)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	88

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	41	54	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	193
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

*Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	9	16	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	22	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88	88	88
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	9	8
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	22	23	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88	92	88
	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	8	15	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	4
	Girls	13	12	12
	Total	18	18	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78	78	70
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	6
	Girls	13	12	12
	Total	18	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78	78	78
	National	68	69	75

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	161
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

***Teachers and classes*****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	24

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	149

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

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

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

***Financial information***

Financial year	1998 – 99
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	£
Total income	297178
Total expenditure	308482
Expenditure per pupil	1582
Balance brought forward from previous year	49195
Balance carried forward to next year	37891

*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	193
Number of questionnaires returned	105

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	32	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	36	6	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	37	2	6	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	42	17	2	1
The teaching is good.	48	47	2	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	52	12	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	35	5	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	44	4	3	2
The school works closely with parents.	32	43	18	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	32	48	11	6	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	56	7	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	31	26	10	13

**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**

54. Provision for the children under five is made in the Reception class. Children are admitted to the class at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five years old.
55. Children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Overall there is a wide range of attainment with a few children who have poorly developed personal and social, language and literacy as well as mathematical skills but there are also a few who have well developed skills in all these areas. In the Reception class the children quickly gain in confidence and settle well to their school life. By the time they are five years of age, most of them achieve the desirable learning outcomes in all the required six areas of learning. A significant number attain beyond this in language and literacy and in mathematics.
56. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in developing curriculum planning so that appropriate account is made of the Desirable Learning Outcomes which lead into the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Procedures for the assessment of the children have been improved. They take suitable account of the new Early Learning Goals in each of the six areas of learning.

**Personal and Social Development**

57. Overall, in the area of personal and social development children make satisfactory gains in their learning. The children are likely to achieve most of the desirable learning outcomes in this area of learning. The children's attitudes to their learning are good, they respond well towards adults and each other. The staff effectively encourages the children to feel at ease in their surroundings and this enables them to contribute their ideas and express their feelings. For example, they happily tell their news during circle time and talk about what makes them sad or happy. They expressed awe and wonder when the chickens hatched and delight as they watched them develop. The staff provide good role models for the children to follow and teach the children to be caring and considerate towards one another. Children's behaviour is mainly good, they are taught right from wrong and are eager to be helpful. They learn how to care for plants and how to take care of animals. They wait patiently in order to take turns to use equipment and they show respect for each other and for property. The children concentrate and persevere well when engaged in their tasks. Most children co-operate well in groups and are taught good manners and social skills. Good opportunities are provided for them to learn about different religious events such as Palm Sunday and Easter time, both in assemblies and through their classroom activities. The children learn many prayers and say them reverently. However, insufficient attention is given to learning about other cultures to prepare the children for life in a multicultural society. Children confidently wash their own hands, go to the toilet, and dress and undress themselves. They make good gains in developing their personal independence. However, the present organisation of resources places limitations on the extent to which children can develop their initiative when making choices.

**Language and Literacy**

58. Overall, the development of children's language and literacy skills is good although the development of their skills in listening is not always given sufficient attention. In most aspects the children achieve the desirable learning outcomes by the age of five and they suitably start to work in the early stages of the National Curriculum for English. The children are developing a good knowledge of the sounds and letters of the alphabet. This is effectively supported through using a commercial phonic scheme and playing a good range of alphabet and letter-matching games. Strong emphasis is placed on the children learning to read and they are able to recognise rhyming words such as 'look' and 'cook'. The children enjoy looking at books and sharing them in whole group situations as well as with each other and with adults. Most children are able to read simple text, pick out familiar words, follow the story and make a good attempt to work out new words for themselves. They use the pictures in the story to help them to predict what might come next. The children make good gains in learning to use language effectively to communicate with others. They enjoy sharing their experiences and also participating in role-play, for example, in the 'flower shop' where they use their imagination and make up their own stories. This has effectively encouraged the children to develop their conversational skills and to extend their understanding of vocabulary. Children make satisfactory gains in developing their listening skills, but



occasionally they become over enthusiastic and do not listen carefully to the teacher. They know a good number of rhymes and are confident in reciting them. Children's early skills in writing are good. A good range of resources is provided in different areas of the reception class and enables the children to practise writing in a range of situations and for different purposes. For example, the children wrote simple sentences whilst engaged in role-play in the 'flower shop' and in group work with their teacher, where they wrote the phrase 'some of the chicks have hatched'. All the children can recognise and write their first name and many are able to write a simple sentence by themselves using appropriate upper and lower case letters.

## **Mathematics**

59. The provision for mathematics is good and by the time the children are five they achieve all the desirable learning outcomes and a significant number make a good start in the earlier stages of the mathematics National Curriculum. In addition the children respond well to the introductory stages of the National Numeracy Strategy. Daily practice of counting numbers both forwards and backwards has enabled the children to quickly gain confidence in using numbers from one to ten, with a significant number of children who can recognise and use numbers well beyond this. The children know the basic shapes and can compare the sizes of objects such as the fruits in their 'flower shop'. They can measure the height of the plants they are growing. Early capacity is well understood; for example, when working in sand and water, the children can identify containers which are 'full', 'empty' and 'half full'. They are beginning to work out how many smaller containers it takes to fill a larger one. The children are able to make accurate repeated patterns, for example, by printing with shapes and paint and also by using pegs and threading beads. They are able to sort objects into sets by size, colour and shape and make simple block graphs to record data. Good opportunities are provided for the children to develop mathematical language, such as 'more than', 'less than', 'longer' and 'shorter'. This work is extended effectively through their shopping activities in the 'flower shop'. A good range of action number rhymes are known such as 'Ten Currant Buns' and 'Ten Fat Sausages', which are used effectively to help the children solve problems in addition and subtraction. For example, by taking two pretend sausages out of the pan and working out how many are left. More able children can double and half numbers and most can draw the correct number of objects to match a number. Good attention is given to writing numbers so that most children form them correctly and record their work accurately.

## **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

60. The development of children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good and children achieve all the desirable learning outcomes in this area of learning by the time they are five. Good use is made of topics such as 'Growth' to enable the children to talk about themselves and to discuss, for example, photographs of themselves as babies and how they have developed. During circle times the children are provided with good opportunities to talk about the world in which they live and about their environment. They link this to their small world play with toys such as the garage and the farm. The children enjoy exploring the features of living things and natural and man-made objects. They carry out experiments, for example, to germinate peas and beans, and make flower gardens in the sand tray with natural objects. They have particularly enjoyed learning about the development of a hen's eggs through watching the eggs hatch in the incubator. The children have learned the days of the week and they identify and record the daily weather, identifying any similarities, differences, pattern and change. Good opportunities are provided for the children to observe living things and note how they change. Children are able to use magnifying glasses, mirrors and magnets to help them question why and how things happen. This is supported by the careful questioning of the staff who encourage the children to extend their learning through investigation. Suitable skills in cutting, joining, folding and building techniques are successfully developed through the use of an appropriate range of materials and equipment. Children make baby books and cards, and make models from a good range of construction and junk materials. The children's skills in information technology are good. They are able to use the computer with good mouse control to operate a number of programs, for example, to paint pictures and support their number work. In an activity based on 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', the children demonstrated that they could operate a programmable toy and predict how many paces would be needed to pick up three spoons and then move to the bears' three bowls.

## **Physical Development**

61. Children's achievements in the area of physical development are satisfactory overall. There are strengths but the opportunities for children to explore large play equipment for climbing and balancing, as well as to use wheeled vehicles, are limited. There are good opportunities for them to listen to music and move their bodies imaginatively and with increasing control, in their weekly 'Let's Move' lessons in the hall. They demonstrate good body co-ordination and can, for example, stop and start their movements well. Children have developed an appropriate awareness of space and others and can explore different ways of travelling such as rolling, sliding and jumping. When making objects, children are able to manipulate tools and malleable materials with an appropriate amount of control and concentration. They use modelling tools, for example to make a decorative clay tile and rolling pins to shape the play dough. The children are able to cut shapes accurately with scissors and handle these and other tools safely. They can build a variety of models by fitting together different types of construction materials. Fine manual skills and hand-eye co-ordination are practised regularly through the use of small equipment and the children demonstrate suitable control of objects such as pencils, crayons and paint brushes.

## **Creative Development**

62. Provision for children's creative development is a strength, and the desirable learning outcomes are promoted well through the wide range of first hand experiences which is offered. The children have good opportunities to use the music room and they can explore sounds by playing percussion instruments and by using body actions such as clapping when they are responding to music. They listen to 'watery' sounds, they can echo a song they hear and they can also copy a low, medium and high speaking voice very well. Most children know a good range of songs and nursery rhymes such as 'Twinkle Twinkle' and they sing them confidently. They respond appropriately to instructions, using the 'Let's Move' tapes, and learn to move their bodies imaginatively and dance in time to the music. Good opportunities are provided for the children to use their imagination in role play and art; for example, they pretend to go shopping in the 'flower shop', they make patterns with paint and create their own imaginative pictures on the computer. They know the colours of paint and can mix them well to produce different colours for their pictures. Different techniques, such as printing are effectively taught. A wide range of media is used, such as cloth and paint to make flower pictures which successfully enable the children to express their ideas. Close observations are made by the children in their paintings of 'Joshua's bike' and children produce some very good work in the style of Monet inspired by his picture of 'Springtime in Giverny'. Most children respond well to what they hear, touch, smell and feel, such as when they finger paint and they are provided with an appropriate range of tools to make models and shape and mould, for example clay, to make cars.

## **Teaching**

63. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory with some good features in the teaching of language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. The reception teacher has a secure knowledge and understanding of the desirable learning outcomes and of how young children learn. Through in-service training she has prepared herself well for Early Learning Goals which are to be introduced nationally in September 2000. A stimulating and caring environment has been created in which the children can learn and develop. However, there are some limitations in the overall organisation of the space available although plans are in place to address this. A good range of activities is imaginatively planned for the children which successfully interest and motivate them. Planning is good and it is clear what children should learn. Staff work well together as a team and know the children well as individuals. They have a good understanding of their needs and they ensure that children grow in confidence and become secure in their relationships both with staff and each other. Good attention has been given to implementing the earlier stages of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and there is good teaching of the basic skills, such as phonics and accurate counting. Staff have high expectations of both work and behaviour and manage behaviour effectively and sensitively. This results in the children making at least satisfactory and often good progress at the start of their education. There is a reasonable balance between teacher-directed activities and those which children choose for themselves. However, the present layout of the resources does not readily lend itself to the children using their initiative and making their own choices about which equipment they are going to use. There is a good level of interaction with the children and questioning is successful in making the children think and extend their learning. Nevertheless, strategies to ensure that children listen carefully when they come together as a group are not always effective. Assessments are regularly undertaken but these are

not always sufficiently detailed and they are not used consistently to plan the next stages of children's learning. Display is used to good effect and reading books are regularly sent home to help develop a good home and school reading partnership as well as provide good support for the children in developing early skills in reading.

## ENGLISH

64. By the age of seven, attainment in English is in line with the national average and by the age of eleven, pupils' attainment is above average, particularly in writing.
65. The results of the national tests for seven-year-olds show that attainment in reading was well above the national average in 1998 and was average in 1999. In writing, attainment was well above average in 1998 and above average in 1999. The inspection findings show that girls and boys of all abilities achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry and that standards in reading and writing in this current year are average for seven-year-olds. Fewer pupils than usual are attaining the higher level. This relates directly to the pupils' attainment on entry, which was below average for this cohort.
66. The national tests for eleven-year-olds were well above average in 1998 and above average in 1999. When compared with similar schools, attainment in 1999 was above average. Inspection findings confirm that attainment is above average by the age of eleven, particularly in writing, and that pupils of all abilities are achieving well.
67. In Key Stage 1, pupils acquire a sound foundation in both reading and writing. They have a good understanding of the relationships between letters and sounds, and by the end of the key stage, almost all can read accurately and fluently. They are confident to express opinions and to discuss the story they are reading. They show interest in information books and they enjoy learning new words. When meeting unfamiliar words, they are confident to guess or to work out the meanings. They understand how information books are organised and they take pleasure in finding words in the index or the glossary. When writing, they construct clear, simple stories and descriptions, but few pupils in the present cohort produce well organised, longer pieces of writing. They enjoy writing and write quickly. Their vocabulary is good and they can recognise punctuation when they are reading but their writing does not fully reflect what they can express orally. Handwriting and presentation are average. Standards in spelling are good and are the result of systematic teaching of sound and letter patterns.
68. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils read and write with confidence and fluency. They can interpret different texts and can discuss the point of view of the author. Throughout the key stage, pupils respond well to teachers' challenging questions when working on complex texts. They are confident to express their own opinions and to give reasons for them. The Year 4 class, for example, offered their interpretations of a character's behaviour and motives in the story they were reading. When needing information for a topic they are studying, they know how to find and use relevant books, though they make little use of the school library. Many refer to their use of CD-ROMs or the internet in their search for information. They show pleasure in acquiring new knowledge and their research skills are soundly established. Pupils enjoy writing. In lessons, they write quickly and competently. Their writing includes a wide range of different forms, which include letters to real people about topics they are studying, a variety of poems, biographies and extended stories. They make use of different styles and show a good awareness of the audience for whom they are writing. They use an extensive vocabulary and show pleasure in using more unusual or adventurous words. Their ability to talk about language, including grammar and style, is good. The standard of spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation is good.
69. Throughout the school, pupils' literacy skills give good support to their work in other subjects, most notably history where they make very effective use of their literacy skills to extend their knowledge and understanding in the subject. The use in other subjects of pupils' ability to organise longer pieces of writing makes a significant contribution to the overall standard of literacy in school. Pupils' skills in information technology are used effectively to help develop their skills in writing.
70. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good, both in small groups and when the whole class is working together. They listen attentively and responsively; for example, when the teacher reads a shared text aloud or when they listen to each other. In groups, they co-operate well and share ideas constructively, for example, when the year 6 class discuss their various interpretations of a difficult text. Pupils have a good vocabulary and are articulate when expressing their ideas. There are now more opportunities for small group discussion than at the time of the last inspection and this is having a positive effect on pupils' speaking and listening skills.

71. Teaching in English is satisfactory, with many good features. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. There is a systematic approach to teaching basic skills through the school. This, along with teaching which is never less than satisfactory, enables pupils to make good progress as they move through the school. Teachers place great importance on the successful development of pupils' skills. Early reading and writing skills are effectively taught in the younger classes and are systematically extended in the older classes. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils, which can be seen in the challenging questions that they ask, the extended vocabulary they use and the pace of most lessons. As a result of these high expectations, pupils generally read and write an impressive amount in the time available.
72. Teachers make good use of the National Literacy framework as the basis for their lessons. Their plans include a reasonable amount of extended writing as well as a range of shorter tasks and exercises. The beginnings of lessons are consistently effective, and teachers choose stimulating texts as the basis for shared reading and discussion. Pupils respond well to these sessions and to the teachers' encouragement to express their ideas. The quality of small group work is often good. In the best lessons, work is well matched to pupils' different abilities, and time is used effectively. In these lessons, teachers explain clearly what they want their pupils to achieve and they also review the pupils' work with them, highlighting what was successful and how they might further improve. Occasionally, pupils work for too long on their own and there are missed opportunities to extend and review their learning. Some good examples were seen of pupils taking an active, positive role in evaluating their own and each other's work. Teachers generally give constructive oral feedback to pupils, and pupils are well motivated by this. However, some of the feedback is general and is not closely enough linked to the specific features that pupils are doing well or that they need to improve. Pupils sometimes redraft or edit their work and this helps them understand how improvement might be achieved but these processes are not extensively used. Books are regularly marked by teachers but there are few written comments related to the pupils' progress to ensure that they are clear about the next steps in their learning.
73. Teachers' management of lessons is good and relationships in class are positive. This climate has a positive impact on pupils' motivation and on their growing confidence in their reading, writing and speaking skills. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress against the targets set out in their individual education plans.
74. Leadership in the subject is effective. There has been focussed development based on a clear understanding about strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The curriculum is richer and better balanced than at the time of the last inspection. Resources are good and teachers use a wider range of interesting reading material and give pupils more opportunity for independent writing, discussion and the expression of ideas. A suitable level of monitoring of the subject is being undertaken.

## **MATHEMATICS**

75. By the age of seven, pupils' attainment is in line with that expected nationally and by the age of eleven it is above that which would be expected. In 1998, the results in the national tests for seven-year-olds were well above the national average. In 1999, the results were above the national average and in line with those in similar schools. The inspection findings show that by the end of Key Stage 1, girls and boys of all abilities achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school, which for the present Year 2 cohort, was below average. Standards in mathematics are average for seven year olds. Currently there are fewer pupils than usual attaining the higher level (Level 3) and this relates directly to the pupils' attainment on entry. The school is appropriately focussing its attention on trying to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in this cohort.
76. In 1998 the school's results in the national tests for eleven-year-olds were well above the national average and in 1999 they were above average. These results are in line with the results of pupils in similar schools. The inspection findings confirm that pupils of all abilities are achieving well and above average standards in mathematics are being maintained.
77. The school has set suitably challenging targets to reach their national tests results and is on line to meet them.
78. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and receive a good amount of attention. This enables them to make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior learning.

79. Overall a good start has been made to implementing the National Numeracy Strategy with teachers placing great importance on the successful development of pupils' skills. Pupils have developed good mental computational skills and quickly recognise patterns in numbers. In both key stages, pupils' skills in measuring are good and are effectively applied to other subjects of the curriculum, for example, to draw accurate designs in design and technology. Mathematical terminology is well developed and in the introductions to most lessons, key words are appropriately identified. Good attention is often given to encouraging the pupils to talk about their work and explain what methods they used to achieve their answers to mathematical problems. Information technology is used well to support work in mathematics.
80. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are able to confidently count to 20 and beyond, both forwards and backwards. They count in tens to a hundred and most of them know their two, five and ten times tables and the more able know their three times tables. The pupils can identify odd and even numbers and basic two and three-dimensional shapes and their properties. Pupils' computational skills are good for their age in all four rules of number so that, for example, most pupils can add two digit numbers together, double and halve numbers to a hundred and identify missing numbers on a hundred square. Measuring skills are accurate. Pupils can tell the time by the hour, half hour and quarter hour and use grams and centimetres to weigh and measure objects. Pupils use their skills in handling data effectively to make block graphs, for example, to show favourite drinks, and the pupils are able to correctly interpret the information collated. The few pupils reaching the higher levels can add three digit numbers together and use a wider range of methods to calculate the answers to mathematical problems.
81. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils know their times tables well. They can calculate mentally in numbers up to 100 and have a good understanding of place value to multiply and divide numbers by 10, 100 and 1000. The majority of pupils can record numbers accurately using all four number operations and add and subtract decimals to two places. The pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of factors and prime and square numbers. They are able to use their mathematical knowledge well to work out, for example, the money they would receive when exchanging foreign currency. Most pupils can find the perimeter of a shape, including irregular shapes, and have a good knowledge and understanding of rotational symmetry and the more able can accurately draw angles to the nearest degree. In handling data, the pupils are able to produce a range of tables and graphs such as line graphs and they are able to interpret the results correctly.
82. In both key stages, good attention is given to the development of problem solving and investigative skills. In Key Stage 1, pupils have gained sufficient confidence to try different approaches to working out problems and are able to discuss the different methods they use. In Key Stage 2, pupils have developed a wide range of problem solving skills which they apply to other subjects of the curriculum, for example, to work out co-ordinates in geography and to work out the series of commands required to manoeuvre a programmable toy in information technology. Pupils are able to organise their information in a systematic way in order to present and analyse their results.
83. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and has many good features. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This consistency in teaching, along with systematic development of pupils' skills over time, ensures that pupils make good gains in their learning.
84. Plans for lessons are thorough and teaching and non-teaching staff work well together to support the pupils. Clear learning objectives are identified and they are appropriately shared with the pupils at the beginning of lessons. Mathematics lessons are effectively organised to follow the National Numeracy Strategy. They are generally well structured so that an appropriate amount of time is allowed for the introduction, the main activity and group work as well as the plenary, although there are occasions where teachers do not allow sufficient time for the plenary. Introductions to lessons are generally good. Clear demonstrations and instruction are provided for the pupils at the outset of the lesson and then the pupils are suitably grouped according to their ability to complete their individual tasks. The tasks set are often interesting so that the pupils are keen to begin and are effectively motivated to learn. Occasionally, however, pupils are left too long with insufficient adult support and opportunities are missed to extend their learning. There is also a heavy reliance on the use of worksheets rather than on the pupils learning how to set out their work in their exercise books.
85. Since the last inspection, better use is made of resources to support the pupils' learning, as these are more accessible and clearly labelled. A number of teachers have made some useful workcards and prompt

cards to help them teach and guide pupils in their learning but in some lessons more could be made of these. Expectations of pupils in lessons are generally appropriate and most pupils are suitably challenged. Staff generally question pupils well to support them in their learning and to encourage them to talk about their mathematical work, although on occasions discussion lacks sufficient focus about how the pupils might improve. Relationships between staff and the pupils are good and this means that pupils feel confident to ask for help and are able to concentrate on their set tasks. Marking of work is regularly completed and encouraging comments are made. Nevertheless, insufficient information is given to give a clear indication of how pupils can improve to inform the next stage of their learning. A suitable amount of homework is set which appropriately includes the learning of tables and effective use is made of mathematical games to reinforce what has been learnt in class.

86. Where teaching is good or very good, staff are confident in their subject knowledge and they use it effectively to teach the pupils a range of mathematical skills. There are high expectations and pupils' behaviour and the presentation of their work are both good. Introductions are led at a lively pace, sometimes using, for example, a pendulum to encourage the pupils to speed up their answers or by chanting in 'rap' style to which the pupils respond well. Pupils receive a good level of oral feedback in such lessons and appropriate targets are set which motivate the pupils. Effective questioning is a feature of these lessons which helps the pupils consolidate their learning and develop their confidence so that they quickly move on to the next stage and produce a good volume of work. Strong emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' understanding of mathematics terminology, particularly at the beginning of the lesson. Conclusions to lessons are used well as a useful time to share difficulties experienced and as a valuable time to reinforce and consolidate learning.
87. Curriculum leadership in mathematics is good overall and a broad and balanced curriculum is provided which is relevant to the pupils' needs and interests. The co-ordinator has made a strong commitment to attending a good amount of in-service training in order to increase her subject knowledge and to help lead and support staff in the teaching of mathematics, particularly in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. The mathematics policy and scheme of work have been appropriately reviewed and updated to take account of this. A good number of resources have been purchased to respond to the findings at the last inspection and also to be used to support the introductory and mental agility part of the numeracy lessons and to incorporate the use of information technology. Overall the subject is well resourced and since the last inspection improvements have been made in ensuring that they more readily accessible to the pupils. Games are regularly used through the introduction of the Maths Magic Club and a wider range of problem solving activities and investigations are available for the staff to introduce to the pupils. In the Key Stage 2 corridor, there are good opportunities for pupils to experiment with mathematics investigations and problem solving. A suitable level of monitoring of the subject is being undertaken.

## SCIENCE

88. By the age of seven and eleven, pupils achieve standards in science which are in line with those expected at these ages. There have been wide variations in the results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in the last three years. They were below average in 1997, above average in 1998 and then well below average in 1999. For this reason the school initiated a major school improvement project in Autumn 1999 and the inspection findings show that pupils' attainment is now broadly in line with that expected of pupils at both age seven and eleven. This improvement, however, is not well established, particularly in the investigative aspect of the subject, and by the age of eleven pupils are still not achieving the standards of which they are capable. Pupils in both key stages cover a wide range of topics in line with National Curriculum requirements and develop a sound knowledge base but their skills in investigative work are not sufficiently well developed.
89. By the end of Key Stage 1, overall standards are average for seven-year-olds. Earlier in the key stage pupils know the names of the basic parts of a plant, such as seeds, leaves and flower, and they understand that plants need certain conditions for optimum growth. They observe carefully and are aware that plants have a cycle of growth. Later in the key stage, based on their work about Forces, pupils are able to describe their ideas about 'push' and 'pull' successfully when noting the movement of a toy car. Many make careful observations about the effect of changing either the angle of the slope which the car travels down or the effect of changing the surface over which an item, such as a brick, is pulled. They are able to talk confidently about their work.

90. By the end of Key Stage 2, overall standards are average for eleven-year-olds. Earlier in the key stage pupils suitably apply their understanding about magnetism and in discussion show that they are able to group materials depending on whether they are magnetic or non-magnetic. They show suitable understanding of the scientific process when they set up an investigation to determine whether magnets will maintain their magnetic properties through materials. In Year 4, pupils make good gains in learning about creatures in the local environment and show sound understanding in order to classify them as either vertebrates or invertebrates. In Years 5 and 6, pupils further develop their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of suitable topics. For example in Year 6, pupils find out about which materials are better thermal insulators than others and many show good levels of understanding in this area.
91. Generally, however, pupils of all ages are capable of achieving more in investigative work. Pupils' ideas about prediction and fair testing are developing well but this is not systematically established across the whole school. They gain good understanding about what is meant by diagrammatic presentation but they are not always using a sufficient variety of ways of recording their findings, for example, using tabular and graphical formats. Consequently, too few pupils are confident to describe patterns and relationships within the data presented.
92. Teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils make sound gains in their learning. Most staff are secure in teaching the basic scientific knowledge associated with the topics, but there is some uncertainty about teaching the investigative skills associated with the subject. Usually lessons proceed in well-planned stages but there are not always effective use of reviews about what has been learned at the end of a session to set clear targets about how to achieve the next levels within the National Curriculum. Throughout the school, staff make good references to safety and pupils respect this advice showing care in practical work. Teachers use resources well and this helps to motivate the pupils, particularly in one lesson in Year 6 when the pupils were finding out about materials and they were investigating their properties. Teachers plan work which is generally well matched to the pupils' levels of understanding and they work together effectively with support staff to ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs are met. Most lessons are undertaken at a satisfactory pace with a range of different strategies used to move on the pupils' learning. Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively and pupils concentrate for suitable periods of time. Praise is given by staff to encourage pupils and marking is conscientiously undertaken but it is not always sufficiently evaluative and does not indicate clearly how the pupils can improve their work. Where the teaching was good very effective discussion helped to deepen pupils' understanding but in other lessons, particularly during investigative work, the pupils were not clear enough about what is expected of them and the standards they should achieve.
93. Staff plan well together and this is effectively helping to build continuity through the school. Curriculum leadership is effective. The co-ordinator works hard and a suitable policy and effective curriculum guidance are in place. The subject is well-resourced and information technology is used effectively to support pupils' learning in science. Monitoring and evaluation of provision is suitably undertaken. Improvements are taking place in science but the school has suitably highlighted this subject as a continued priority within its development plan, since these are not well established. During the last year the school has run a science club for two evenings each week and this is also helping to raise standards.

## **THE OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM**

94. The school's timetable, in common with many primary schools, allocates English and mathematics in most classes to the two morning sessions. This leaves the afternoon sessions to cover the other subjects of the curriculum. The observation timetable for the inspection gave priority to the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information technology. Consequently it was only possible to make selected observations of other subjects in the curriculum.

## **ART**

95. Attainment in art has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with national expectations for seven and eleven-year-olds. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory.
96. In Key Stage 1, pupils work with a wide range of different media and undertake activities which include observational drawing, printing, painting and collage work. They also have opportunities to work in three-dimensional format often using clay and dough. They make careful observations and express these



in their own way, making appropriate decisions about the materials they will use. They study some paintings by well-known artists and use them as a starting-point for their own work. They also do careful colour-mixing to produce the effect they want. Some of their art work is appropriately based on stories they have read as, for example, their collages of The Iron Man.

97. In Key Stage 2, pupils use an increasing variety of media and enjoy experimenting with different ways of expressing their ideas. They make good use of their work in other subjects to enrich their work in art, as in their decoration of Roman-style clay pots or their use of Indian decorative designs. Much of the work in the key stage shows careful attention to detail. By the time they leave school, they produce detailed and complex observational drawings.
98. The teaching of art is satisfactory. Teachers have worked hard to improve the teaching of art, and this has led to improvements in pupils' learning. Lessons are organised to allow pupils to make important decisions about their work and to experiment with different materials. Pupils respond to this with enthusiasm. In the lessons seen, they worked with good levels of concentration and at a brisk pace. However, there were missed opportunities for pupils to improve the standard of the finished product by spending longer on the critical evaluation of each other's work. Pupils' work is well displayed and acts as a stimulus for other classes. Some of the displays are of a very high standard, which contributes to the overall level of achievement in school.
99. Co-ordination of the subject is effective. The scheme of work and teachers' plans show that the curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in different aspects of the subject as they move through school. Resources are adequate and the school now rightly plans to build up the collection of work by other artists, in order to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. During the inspection it was not possible to observe any teaching of design technology and therefore insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. Judgements about the provision and standards achieved are based on samples of pupils' work, display, scrutiny of planning and through talking to pupils and teachers.
101. The standards the pupils achieve throughout the school are satisfactory and in line with those expected for their age. Standards in Key Stage 1 have been maintained since the last inspection and in Key Stage 2 they have improved as previously they were below those expected of eleven-year-olds.
102. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are able to plan, design and make cards using a variety of techniques appropriate to their age. In Year 1, for example, pupils have made Humpty Dumpty cards and in Year 2, pupils have made 'pop up' cards after testing which materials are the most suitable. Most pupils are confident to share their ideas and use different ways of joining materials together, for example, to make a picture frame and a Christmas party hat. Junk materials are used effectively create a 'theatre' and make a moveable vehicle such as a car or an aeroplane. Pupils show that they understand the importance of planning their work before they begin, testing the results and finding ways to improve the end product.
103. In Key Stage 2, pupils effectively build on the skills they have learnt in Key Stage 1. They are able to use their imaginations to a greater extent to generate designs for a given purpose. Pupils in Year 4, for example, make suitable drawings to show their designs for purses and wallets. They indicate the purpose for which they are made and appropriately identify the materials they are going to use and the tools they will need. Sewing skills are used effectively to make the end product attractive. As pupils move through the key stage they become more adventurous and make more complex designs. These incorporate greater detail and need accurate measurement and a wider range of skills in assembly. In Year 5, for example, pupils make a template for a pair of slippers and investigate different ways of joining materials together. In Year 6, pupils develop a suitable knowledge of how to build structures for different purposes and are confident to experiment to find different ways of adding additional strength to the bridges they have made. They can produce scale drawings to design and make packaging for cherry shortcake, which they made as part of a food technology project. Most pupils are able to make good use of their information technology skills to design labels for the packaging and also to design a poster to encourage people to attend the Sea World.

104. Throughout the school, pupils are able to use a suitable range of construction materials to create models. Young pupils explore the different ways they can be fitted together and how to make winding mechanisms whilst older pupils make more complex models with moving parts, sometimes powered by motors. Pupils have developed appropriate skills in food technology and they sometimes effectively link them to work covered in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 have learnt about the food supply during the war as part of a history project. Likewise skills learnt in subjects such as mathematics and information technology are successfully applied in design and technology.
105. Teachers' planning shows an appropriate coverage of skills are taught as pupils progress through school. The curriculum provided is organised so that there is clear continuity and progression in teaching and appropriate attention is given to safety. Resources and equipment have been improved since the last inspection. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said they enjoyed design and technology lessons, and that both boys and girls were equally involved in all aspects of construction, food technology and needlework.
106. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory and some good advice has been provided for colleagues. In- depth monitoring of planning and pupils' progress, however, is not well established. Staff have received a suitable amount of staff training to increase their confidence and improve their consistency of approach and they have gained a good understanding of all the elements of the design process. Overall, the subject is much improved since the last inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

107. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection. Judgements are based on pupils' work, displays and discussions with pupils and teachers.
108. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards which are broadly in line with those expected of pupils of this age. In Key Stage 1, pupils chart the weather using graphs, posters and symbols. They begin to use early mapping skills by developing a bird's eye view of familiar places, drawing plans and relating compass points to a simple plan. They also identify and describe features in the local environment, and label them on plans. Pupils in Year 4 are able to make detailed comparisons of a local and a distant locality. Their comparisons include rainfall, temperature, water supply and people's daily routines which result from the geographical conditions. By the time pupils leave school, they have a good level of knowledge of their local area. They can explain and evaluate major changes, for example the impact of the new motorway on the environment and on people in Darwen. In their local study they used mapping skills, interpreted newspaper articles, drew plans based on aerial photographs, wrote questionnaires, recorded and presented their findings. They are confident to express their own points of view. When using the new information technology suite, Year 6 pupils can plot routes round Britain by estimating angles and directions. In both key stages, pupils make good use of their literacy and enquiry skills to develop their knowledge and understanding in geography.
109. Teachers' planning is based on a broad and balanced curriculum and the key skills of geography are systematically taught. Good use is made of resources, and teachers also plan a number of visits and field trips to enhance pupils' learning. Lesson plans include the use of pupils' enquiry, literacy and numeracy skills, as well as teachers' explanations of new knowledge and information.
110. There have been significant improvements in the teaching and learning of geography since the last inspection. The curriculum is now broader and involves pupils much more actively in using their geographical skills and knowledge. Co-ordination is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has suitable plans to review the curriculum in the light of the new national guidelines.

## **HISTORY**

111. Pupils achieve well in history and attain standards that are above those expected of pupils of this age. Since the last inspection, the school has placed a much greater emphasis on developing pupils' skills of enquiry. The teaching of the subject also makes good use of pupils' literacy skills. These two factors have a very positive effect on pupils' attainment.
112. Pupils in both key stages have a good knowledge of the periods they are studying. In Key Stage 1, they are able to interpret both pictures and texts to provide information about earlier periods. They are

confident to ask questions and to suggest possible answers, for example in their work on games past and present. They show good levels of interest and curiosity about the past. In Key Stage 2, pupils use their knowledge well. Year 4 pupils, for example, show understanding of what they have learned by making comparisons between life in ancient Egypt and life in Egypt today. In Year 6, pupils are able to interpret a range of different sources to increase their understanding of life in Darwen in the nineteenth century. They show that they are able to appreciate different points of view and to give reasons for their own interpretation.

113. The teaching of history is good. Teachers have a sound subject knowledge and communicate their own interest in the subject to the pupils. Lessons are lively and interesting. Year 2, for example, had the opportunity to try playing some games from earlier generations, and classes in Key Stage 2 had used a variety of well chosen artefacts and resources. In the lessons seen, teachers used an effective variety of teaching methods and made good use of pupils' speaking and literacy skills. They also plan well for the use of CD-ROMs and video material to enhance the teaching of the subject. Links with other subjects contribute to pupils' learning in the subject. As one example, pupils used their observational skills in art to draw artefacts from the historical period they were studying. Most year groups take part in a visit to a place of historical interest, which further enhances pupils' interest and learning.
114. Co-ordination of the subject is effective. There has been clear improvement in planning and organisation since the last inspection. Effective use has been made of staff development to improve the overall quality of teaching.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

115. Overall, by the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2, standards are in line with those expected of pupils at seven and eleven years respectively. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the provision and pupils are now generally making good progress. Most pupils attain good standards in communicating and handling data but aspects of modelling, monitoring and control are not well established, although attainment overall in this area is satisfactory.
116. In Key Stage 1, pupils use the 'mouse' with a good level of control and they are using an appropriate range of computer programmes. They make effective use of word processing packages to write stories and poems and also use information technology for handling data; for example, in Year 2, the pupils effectively presented data about the weather. They indicated the number of days when the sun shone, when it rained or was snowing within a given period of observation. Pupils create pictures using simple graphics and most can effectively control the movements of a programmable toy; for example, when they moved a 'Roamer' down the street to deliver 'pizzas' at house number 5, then at house number 8 and then ensured that it returned to base. The pupils can explain how information technology is used by adults to undertake tasks in school.
117. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop suitable understanding across most relevant aspects of information technology. As they progress through the key stage, they continue to develop their understanding about the use of text and graphics and by the end many can effectively manipulate these together, for example, in their imaginative work about the moon. When entering text pupils learn how to experiment with different fonts and sizes, check their spelling and use a computer to draft and redraft work. Most can do this successfully by the end of the key stage. Pupils build up a sound understanding of the use of databases; for example, when they make use of information about a traffic survey in Year 3 and when they present information about the number of times they brush their teeth in Year 4. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to search a database for information using more than one criterion. They gain suitable understanding of using a CD-ROM and they use this effectively to find information about a range of subjects. A variety of suitable programmes are used to build up pupils' ideas about modelling. In addition, pupils' understanding of control technology is being effectively built up throughout Key Stage 2 so that by Year 6 pupils make predictions about the angle and distance needed to move an aeroplane around the British Isles to ensure that it goes to the relevant landing strip. They then write programmes to ensure that this is achieved. Appropriate use is also being made of sensing equipment, for example, to record findings during scientific experiments.
118. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with many good features and along with pupils' positive attitudes to the subject this ensures that pupils are making good gains in learning. Staff identify information technology as a specific area to be taught within their planning and appropriate activities are set up for the pupils.

These both relate specifically to the skills needed in information technology and are also suitably linked to other curriculum areas. Generally staff showed clear understanding of the aspects being taught during the inspection to ensure that pupils' learning moved along at a good pace. Teachers make effective use of pupils with expertise and very effective support staff to ensure that teaching is effective. Further staff development is suitably highlighted as a priority for the forthcoming year. This is aimed at consolidating teachers' expertise in the area of monitoring, modelling and control and to ensure that best use is made of information technology to support the school's literacy and numeracy strategies.

119. There have been significant improvements in the resources to support information technology since the last inspection and also in the level of staff expertise. Compatible computers have suitably been introduced through the school and old and outdated ones have been scrapped. This means that there is clear progression through the school. As well as investing its own resources in this area the school has benefited from being included in the National Grid for Learning project. As a result resources are now good enough to undertake all aspects of the subject. The co-ordinator is very confident in the subject and she provides good leadership. She is clear about future development in the subject.

## MUSIC

120. Only a small amount of teaching of music was seen during the course of the inspection. Judgements have been made following a scrutiny of teachers' planning, discussion with staff and pupils, observation of three lessons and from listening to pupils singing in assemblies.
121. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in music which are in line with those expected for their age. Standards in singing and appraising music are better than the pupils' skills in performing and composing.
122. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to join in musical activities enthusiastically as part of a group as well as individually. They can use percussion instruments to explore rhythmic patterns and are able to compose a basic tune using a simple graphic score. Most pupils listen attentively to music, and can, for example, create weather sounds and atmosphere by exploring the sounds that can be made on a selection of instruments to represent snow, fog and rain. They can recognise repetitive phrases of music in a song and suggest new words to fit into the tune. Pupils are able to maintain a pulse whilst listening to taped music using different body actions such as clapping and tapping with hands and feet.
123. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils can listen carefully to music and identify the instruments they hear and the different ways they can be played such as by plucking and blowing. They are able to write their own words to create a Nursery Rhyme Rap and vary the dynamics by singing both loudly and softly. A good range of songs is well known such as 'Campdown Races' and pupils listen and analyse the everyday sounds they hear. Most pupils know that musical notes have different values and are written to represent the beats to be played. In groups, the pupils can clap a rhythmic pattern reading a graphic score and maintain the rhythm as part of a six-part performance.
124. Pupils in both key stages are able to sing songs and hymns tunefully and with good control and pitch. They have a good appreciation of music of different cultures as they have many opportunities to listen to music, for example, samba rhythms and Zulu songs. Some of the older pupils benefit from learning to play the recorder or the guitar. These pupils are able to read music and listen carefully to each other in order to play their instrument as part of a group. The older pupils have had good opportunities to experiment with different instruments at St Bede's High School, they take part in choral work at Moorland High School and have listened to Caribbean music at Darwen Vale.
125. A number of pupils sing in the choir and have good opportunities to sing in public; for example, in the local home for the elderly and in the local Darwen Music Festival. With other schools, they will take part in a production of Gondwana and will perform with a live orchestra in Blackburn Cathedral. Other appropriate opportunities are provided for the pupils to perform in front of others such as during Holy Mass and in the Anno Domini Millennium production.
126. The quality of teaching in both key stages is satisfactory and pupils make sound gains in their learning. Each class teacher teaches the subject to their own class. Overall, teachers have a sound subject knowledge and use the new commercial scheme well to support them. Planning for lessons is thorough and appropriate learning objectives are identified. Lessons are introduced well and hold the attention of

the pupils. Resources are used appropriately to support the pupils' learning. A Brueghel painting was used effectively during the inspection to set the scene for creating weather sounds and atmosphere. Pupils are well managed and good relationships are firmly established. Expectations of the pupils are appropriate and the activities presented are suitably matched to their needs and abilities. A suitable amount of oral feedback is provided for pupils in lessons but insufficient attention is given to refining the pupils' overall performance and giving them guidance on how they might improve.

127. Overall, the curriculum is reasonably broad and well balanced and meets requirements. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The music policy has been reviewed and improved so that appropriate reference is made to National Curriculum guidance. A good school scheme of work, planned to link to the new commercial scheme and the resources available is almost complete. However, because it is not currently in use, it has not had the chance to have an impact on the quality of teaching and the overall standards the pupils achieve. An appropriate system to record pupils' attainment and progress to support future planning has been drawn up but it is not firmly established to support the monitoring of the subject across the curriculum.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

128. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in physical education which are in line with those expected of pupils of this age. They have suitable opportunities to undertake all the areas of activity outlined in the National Curriculum and they make sound gains in learning. Pupils of all ages have established a satisfactory level of co-ordination and control their movements and awareness of space and others. They usually sustain a suitable level of energetic activity in their work and many are able to explain the effects of exercise on their bodies; for example, in a Year 2 lesson when pupils had completed their warm-up activity. Most pupils demonstrate the ability to plan ahead and show that they have some good ideas, especially in dance. Many pupils are appropriately developing their skills of critical evaluation but this aspect is not well established.
129. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and there is a direct relationship with the quality of pupils' learning. Planning is in place for lessons and it generally is appropriate. Staff make sure that pupils understand the overall purpose of the session so that the pupils' interest is engaged from the start. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils show that they enjoy physical activity. Staff dress appropriately for the lessons and they make the best use of the time available and achieve a suitable pace to learning. Staff manage behaviour well and pupils respond appropriately. The pupils are clear about the need to take turns in some situations and they use equipment sensibly. The importance of safety is stressed by staff and the pupils respond to this appropriately. Although there is often praise given for effort and achievement there is not always sufficient focus given to the ways in which pupils might improve their performance.
130. Overall leadership in the subject is effective. An appropriate policy is in place and there are suitable units of work planned to cover all the expected areas. Indoor accommodation is appropriate and the school grounds provide a good environment for physical education. Resources are good and used effectively. The provision is effectively supported by the swimming sessions. The school takes part in a reasonable number of local sporting fixtures. There is an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities to support the work undertaken in physical education, these include rounders, cricket, football and netball. The present co-ordinator has very recently taken up this post.