

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111373

Headteacher: Mrs S J Banister

Reporting inspector: Mrs P C Cox
19178

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th October 2000

Inspection number: 224260

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Walton Avenue Penketh Warrington
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Griffiths
Date of previous inspection:	14 October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Names of team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs P C Cox (19178) Registered inspector	Science Art Areas of learning for the youngest children (Foundation Stage)	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught Leadership and management
Mr J Bayliss (19664) Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr A Wilson (20846) Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Physical education	Equal opportunities The quality and range of curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
Mrs F Gaywood (22352) Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Design and technology Music	Special educational needs Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Pages
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-10
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11-14
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14-15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15-17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17-18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18-19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19-22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23-26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27-40

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's Catholic Primary school is situated in Penketh on the outskirts of Warrington in Cheshire. There are 277 pupils in the school, almost all of whom are of white ethnic heritage and all have English as their first language. There are more pupils than at the time of the previous inspection because the standard number for admission to each year group has increased. Consequently, the accommodation has been extended. Slightly less than three per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is a low percentage compared to the national average and reflects the level of employment in the neighbourhood. However, this is not an affluent area. Pupils come from a relatively wide geographical area, due to the denominational nature of the school. Twenty-four pupils are identified as having special educational needs, one of whom has a statement of special educational needs; this also represents a low proportion compared to the national average. Most children have attended a playgroup or nursery prior to starting school, and their attainment on entry to the school is generally above average.

Religious education and acts of collective worship are to be inspected by a diocesan team.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. The school's many strengths outweigh those areas that need developing. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and, by the time they are age eleven, their standards are high. Teaching is good overall, and it is very good at Key Stage 2. Leadership and management are very good and the school plans well for further improvement. In view of the relatively low level of income the school receives, it gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve high standards in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall and it is very good at Key Stage 2.
- The school is led and managed very well.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and pupils develop very good attitudes to school.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils.
- There is a strong partnership with parents.

What could be improved

- The arrangements for staffing for the children in reception, and their access to outside play activities.
- Standards are not high enough in scientific enquiry, the control aspect of information and communication technology, and in musical composition.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school is much improved since the previous inspection in October 1996. All subjects now have a scheme of work and a rich curriculum has been maintained. Subject co-ordinators undertake their roles well, taking responsibility for improvements in standards. Pupils have more opportunity for investigative work in mathematics and design and technology, although this is less consistent in science. Access to computers has been improved through the recent provision of a computer suite and there are appropriate plans to improve the control aspect of information and communication technology. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are now very good. Overall, management, teaching and links with parents and the community are better than at the time of the previous inspection, and the many strengths identified then have been maintained.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	1999	
English	A	B	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	A	B	
Science	A	B	A	B	

At Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum test results in 2000 were well above average in English, mathematics and science when compared with schools nationally. In general, results have been rising since 1996, and the trend of improvement is similar to that in other schools. Compared to similar schools¹, standards were above average in all three subjects. These results showed an improvement in English and science, and this is reflected in the standards of pupils currently in Year 6. They are working at levels that are well above average in English and mathematics and they are making good progress. In science, their standards are generally above average and they make satisfactory progress overall, although their investigative skills are not developed to a high enough level at both key stages.

At Key Stage 1, the National Curriculum test results in 2000 showed that standards were above the national average in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. Results in writing were higher than those of similar schools, and in reading and mathematics they were close to the average. Teachers' assessments showed that attainment in science was below average. Although standards have generally been rising since 1996, the results fell in 2000, because pupils in Year 2 had a disrupted year due to staff illness. Pupils at present in Year 2 are working at levels that are above average in all three subjects. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, and satisfactory progress in science.

Standards in physical education are above average at both key stages and pupils make good progress. In all other subjects, pupils are reaching the expected level for their age and making satisfactory progress overall. However, standards in the control aspect of information and communication technology, and in musical composition are not as high as they should be.

Children make good progress in the reception classes and, by the time they are five, their attainment continues to be above average. The school sets challenging targets for improvement and has exceeded them in recent years.

¹ The school's results are compared both to the national average (i.e. the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 2) and to the average for similar schools (i.e. the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals).

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and this makes a major contribution to the progress they make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in class and around school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils form strong relationships with adults and each other. They take responsibility and show initiative very well.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average and pupils come to school on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching at St Joseph's is good. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The teaching was consistently satisfactory and in just over half of lessons, it was good or better.

For the children in the reception classes, teaching is good overall. Half of lessons seen were good or better. Teachers have a good understanding of the needs of these children and provide them with interesting activities that are well designed to develop their knowledge and understanding. At Key Stage 1, teaching is satisfactory. In almost a third of lessons seen it was good and, on occasions, very good. Teaching at Key Stage 2 is particularly strong. In 71 per cent of lessons seen, it was good or better, and very good, or excellent, in a quarter of these.

A particular feature of this school is the enthusiasm of teachers and the way this is transmitted to the pupils, so that they become totally involved in many lessons and swept along by the rapid pace. Teachers plan well and have high expectations of learning; this is reflected in the challenging and interesting work in many lessons. Pupils' attainment is assessed very well and teachers use their findings effectively to plan their lessons to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Consequently, the more able, and those with special educational needs, make good progress.

Teaching is generally good in mathematics and very secure in English. Teachers use the literacy and numeracy strategies well to develop pupils' skills. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well throughout the curriculum.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school has maintained a rich and varied curriculum at a time when many schools have narrowed theirs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Support for these pupils is organised well and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school lives its faith and provides many opportunities for pupils to develop a strong moral sense, very close relationships and to take responsibility and show initiative.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. All staff are consistent in promoting good behaviour in a positive and supportive way. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are very effective

The school has a very effective partnership with the parents of its pupils and provides very good information for them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely together to provide clear leadership for the school and staff work closely as a team to raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body is thoroughly involved in plans for school improvement and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Senior staff have very effective methods for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and developing plans to tackle the priorities identified.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is planned very well to achieve the school's objectives.

The school is well aware of how its performance compares with other schools and the headteacher and governors look to provide best value when considering the school's use of resources. There are sufficient teaching staff, well qualified for their role, but the organisation of the teaching groups in the Foundation Stage² is not sufficiently effective. Staff make good use of the very inconvenient accommodation. Resources are sufficient in almost all areas and good in many, although the youngest children do not have enough play equipment.

² The Foundation Stage applies to children from the age of three of age to the end of the reception year in primary school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teaching is good and their children make good progress.• The school has high expectations and is led and managed well.• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible and they behave well.• The school works closely with parents and is open to questions and problems.• The teaching is good and parents are kept well-informed about their children's progress.• The school promotes very good values and relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few parents were concerned about provision for pupils in the mixed age class.• Some concern was raised about pupils having reading books for too long.

Twenty seven parents attended the meeting with inspectors, and 81 questionnaires were returned. The findings of the inspection support parents' positive views; this is a very effective, well-led school, where teaching is good. Parents' concerns about the mixed age class are not justified; this class operates successfully and the different age groups have their needs met. No evidence was found to substantiate the concern about reading books.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. At Key Stage 2, the results of the National Curriculum tests in 2000 showed that pupils were attaining levels in English, mathematics and science that were well above the national average, and higher than the average when compared with similar schools. Standards have been generally well above average since 1996, and have improved since the last inspection, in line with the national trend. Results are higher than in 1999, particularly in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and science. The findings of the inspection indicate that standards are well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science for the pupils currently in Year 6. The school has set challenging targets for improvement during the past two years and exceeded these targets in both years.
2. At Key Stage 1, the results of the National Curriculum tests in 2000 showed that pupils' levels of attainment in writing were well above the national average, and higher than the results of similar schools. Results were above the national average in reading and mathematics, and close to average when compared with similar schools. Teachers' assessments in science were below average both nationally and when compared with similar schools, as no pupils achieved the higher levels. The test results and assessments were lower than in 1999; a consequence of a disrupted year for these pupils, due to long-term staff illness. The findings of the inspection indicate that the attainment of pupils presently in Year 2 is above average in these subjects, because the school has taken action to ensure that these pupils now have a settled experience. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, and their progress in science is satisfactory.
3. Overall, on entry to reception, children have a level of attainment above the average for their age, although there is a wide spread of ability. Their language skills, mathematical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world are above average. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The good teaching and wide range of learning opportunities have a significant effect on the children's progress, and give them a good start to their school life.
4. By the age of five, children have exceeded the expectations in most of the recommended areas of learning, and are working at the early stages of the National Curriculum. They display above-average attainment in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. Most are developing a good mathematical understanding; some have already acquired a good depth of knowledge and understanding of the world. In creative development, most children are attaining the expected standard and their physical development is average for their age. They make less rapid progress in creative and physical development because their access to large and small toys is limited.
5. In English, at Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is above average. They listen with good understanding to each other and their teachers, answering questions clearly and in detail. Pupils' reading skills are well developed. Most read with fluency and accuracy, and use a variety of strategies to identify unknown words. Standards in writing are also above average. Pupils write stories, poems and factual accounts, with consistent use of punctuation and correct spelling. They make good progress in all areas, building rapidly on their skills and knowledge.
6. In mathematics, pupils attain standards above the average at the end Key Stage 1. They understand patterns in number and apply their knowledge to solving problems. They recognise two- and three-dimensional shapes and use data-handling skills to produce block graphs. Their mental computation is rapid and accurate. Pupils achieve well in mathematics because the teaching they receive is of a good quality.

7. In science, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' understanding of the properties of materials is good and their knowledge of plants and animals is secure. They have a firm knowledge of sound and electricity, but they do not make enough contribution to the experiments they undertake. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, developing their understanding through soundly-planned activities, but they make more rapid gains in scientific knowledge than in the skills of enquiry.
8. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English is well above average in all areas. They listen very carefully and show a good grasp of quite complex and abstract ideas. Most recognise the main and underlying themes of books and understand how language is used to create an atmosphere. They use reference books well for research in other subjects. Most pupils are fluent and confident writers, adapting their writing very well for a range of purposes and audiences. A few pupils produce exceptional writing. All produce well-organised pieces of work with precise use of language, and present their writing neatly.
9. In mathematics, standards are also well above average at this key stage. Pupils have a very good grasp of numbers and a well-developed ability to apply their knowledge to problems. Pupils have a good understanding of percentages and probability.
10. In science, pupils reach above average standards. They conduct experiments and understand well how to make them fair. However, they do not develop the ability to design their own experiments throughout the school. Their knowledge of conduction of heat and electricity, and of materials, is strong. Pupils have a secure understanding of physical processes, such as light, and the water cycle.
11. At Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is good in English and mathematics, and they achieve well, throughout the key stage, particularly in Year 6. This is because lessons proceed at a very rapid pace, are based well on what pupils know and understand, and challenge and stimulate them. Progress in science is satisfactory overall; pupils make consistent gains in their knowledge. However, few show evidence of working at the higher level because the curriculum is not planned to this level. In addition, their progress in scientific enquiry is not rapid enough.
12. In information technology pupils make sound progress and generally reach the expected levels of attainment at the end of both key stages. By the time they are aged eleven, pupils have well-developed word-processing skills and use computers. However, their skills in control technology are below average, because they have not had enough opportunity in the past to extend them. The school now has the necessary resources and scheme of work to teach this aspect effectively.
13. Pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school. The literacy and the numeracy strategies have been implemented well. There is generally a good emphasis on developing and extending pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Teachers promote correct language and use many opportunities to employ a range of writing styles and techniques through the broad curriculum, although these are sometimes missed in science. Pupils have a wide experience of using graphs, charts, measurements, and number, throughout the curriculum, particularly in science, geography, design and technology and information and communication technology. Information and communication technology skills are developed appropriately in other subjects.
14. In all other subjects, through both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve similar standards to pupils in other schools. In physical education, they achieve well and reach higher standards than are usual. However, although overall standards are average in music, pupils do not have enough experience of musical composition.
15. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the individual education plans and targets set for them. There is no evidence of underachievement, because their support and work are matched to their needs. This is largely due to the various setting arrangements for morning lessons, and the additional support provided, using

specialised programmes. The more able achieve well because the work is challenging for them and they reach suitable levels of attainment.

16. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen in English, mathematics, and science. Standards in other subjects have been maintained well at a time when pupils in other many schools have not been provided with such a wide and rich curriculum. The school has set realistic but challenging targets for improvement, based on previous attainment, for future years.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good overall. They are successfully promoted by the Christian ethos that is a major contributor to the constructive learning environment that exists within the school. The positive situation found at the time of the previous report has been maintained successfully.
18. In the Foundation Stage, children enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn. Their personal, social and emotional development is good. The reception classes provide secure learning environments that encourage children to grow in confidence. Relationships between adults and children are strong and children learn to work together quite rapidly. They settle quickly into routines and are encouraged to become independent from their first day in school.
19. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils have very good attitudes to learning and are well motivated. They listen politely and attentively to the teacher, and to each other, and are keen to answer questions, taking turns and respecting the views of others. The pupils show consideration for others and for property. They are courteous and helpful to each other, to staff and to visitors. They work well together, and individually, and show an interest in their work. Most are keen to participate in question and answer sessions and do so in a sensible and mature way. Pupils take turns readily and show a willingness to apply themselves to whatever task is presented to them. They are keen to be 'in the sunshine' and to collect rewards for good behaviour and good work. Such arrangements allow for confident, positive learning to take place.
20. Pupils with special educational needs contribute well in lessons and are successful in joining in the oral sessions of the literacy and numeracy lessons. Other pupils in the school are very supportive of and helpful to them in lessons, and outside, demonstrating acceptance and a caring attitude. This enables pupils with special educational needs to 'fit in' and become valued members of the community.
21. Except for occasional problems with a very small number of pupils, their behaviour in lessons, and around school, is always satisfactory and frequently good, or better. At lunchtimes, and when outside in the playground or elsewhere, pupils behave well while eating their meals. There are harmonious relationships throughout the school.
22. There is no evidence of bullying and very little unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during the inspection. There are occasional instances of classroom behaviour that can challenge some teachers at times when classroom support is not available. However, teachers react sensitively and secure classroom management strategies ensure that calm is maintained. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. There have been no incidences of pupil exclusions, either fixed term or permanent, in recent times.
23. Pupils' personal development is very good overall. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good. Pupils co-operate well with each other in lessons; they share materials and help each other well when working in pairs or larger groupings. Opportunities for displaying initiative have recently been increased by the introduction of a School Council. Its members are taking their responsibilities seriously and there are already indications that their contribution to the school's activities will be effective and treated positively.

24. Pupils' overall attendance is very good. The very high level of attendance found at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. Levels of unauthorised absence are very low and there is no evidence of truancy. Punctuality in the morning is good. When instances of lateness occur, they are of a minor nature and are not disruptive to lessons. Time-keeping throughout the day is generally good, although there is occasionally some time slippage.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. Overall, teaching throughout the school is good. Seventeen per cent of the teaching is very good or better, and a further 36 per cent of teaching is good. The quality of the teaching at Key Stage 2 is a significant strength. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and the school has worked hard to eliminate all unsatisfactory teaching.
26. Teaching is good overall for the children in the reception classes. It is good or better in half of lessons. Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of these children, and activities offered to them are matched well to their requirements. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the learning environment is generally of good quality, although the outside play area is not entirely suitable. Planning is carefully matched to six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. There is a clear focus on what children are to learn in each lesson so that activities are designed to enable children to practise and consolidate skills taught by the teacher. Assessment is thorough, and parents are involved at an early stage. Teaching and support staff work closely together to ensure activities are structured well. The classrooms are stimulating and attractive and there is a good balance of free choice and teacher-assisted activities.
27. At Key Stage 1, teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in almost a third of lessons and, on occasion, very good. At Key Stage 2, teaching is very good overall, with 71 per cent of lessons good or better; 26 per cent of these being very good or better. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Their management and organisation of their classrooms and pupils is good, particularly at Key Stage 2. In almost all lessons, teachers have a very clear idea of what they want their pupils to learn and set tasks which are well designed to achieve their objectives. Teachers at Key Stage 2 cope particularly well with their large classes and the additional work this entails. Their high expectations are demonstrated by the challenging and interesting work they set for their pupils and the brisk pace at which lessons proceed.
28. Enthusiasm is a particular characteristic of the staff at St Joseph's and, when the teaching is most effective, teachers carry pupils along with their own energy and enjoyment. In addition, they plan their lessons very carefully to ensure that work is matched well to all levels of attainment. Staff have a good rapport with pupils, and humour is used well to encourage and give confidence in helping pupils to make contributions. Teachers use resources imaginatively and constantly develop pupils' thinking skills through focused use of questions. The level of work set, and positive use of control strategies, reflect high expectations of achievement and behaviour. Lessons move briskly and teachers monitor their classrooms well, aware of progress and concentration, adjusting the pace of the lesson to the pace of learning.
29. These elements were evident in an outstanding mathematics lesson with Year 6. The teacher inspired pupils by her own enthusiasm and the rapid pace she employed. Her planning and subject knowledge were very secure and she made very good use of a range of interesting resources. Methods and techniques were reinforced constantly, and the teacher used questions very effectively to promote and check understanding. She gave very clear guidance and assessed pupils' progress throughout the lesson, adjusting the pace to match the speed of pupils' learning. The activities were involving, challenging and well designed to build on pupils' knowledge and skills.
30. The use of ongoing assessment to moderate the pace of lessons and modify planning for future lessons is a strong feature of teaching in this school. In English and mathematics, and often in other subjects, teachers set different levels of work for pupils of different levels of

attainment. The teaching of the class with two age groups is undertaken effectively for both groups. Teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all activities, even in the class where four fifths of the pupils are boys. Support staff, and parents who work in classrooms, make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They are clear about their role and work effectively to encourage and develop pupils' skills and language. However, the arrangements for support staff in the reception classes are not sufficiently effective.

31. Although teaching is never less than satisfactory, there are occasions when the pace of the lesson drops and pupils' learning is slower. In a few lessons, the work is not matched closely enough to the needs of all pupils. As a consequence, the more able do not reach the highest standards they could, or the less able have a struggle to complete the work.
32. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is organised well to allow them to benefit fully from the support available. The work is planned well and focused on pupils' specific needs, offering the same experiences at an appropriate level. When withdrawal takes place, it is planned to mirror and extend what is happening in the main lesson and pupils are well briefed to return and carry on. Tasks are challenging at an appropriate level and there are high expectations for good behaviour as well as work.
33. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well throughout the school. The literacy hour is used effectively and teachers have developed the range of strategies they employ to implement this programme. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading and writing in many other subjects. The numeracy strategy has had a positive impact on the standard of teaching mathematics and the progress pupils are making. There are suitable opportunities for practical work throughout the school. Work in science, information technology, design and technology and geography gives a wide range of opportunities to develop skills in numeracy through measurement, and the use of co-ordinates, tables and graphs.
34. Pupils' work is marked regularly and accurately. There are numerous encouraging comments, and many instances of marking being used to identify the next step for learning and set targets for pupils. Homework is used appropriately; pupils throughout the school receive a suitable amount, which is linked well to classroom work.

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

35. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum of good quality for the Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2. All subjects meet statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to maintain and improve the quality and range of its curriculum and the extra-curricular activities it provides for its pupils. There is a wide range of learning opportunities to support pupils' academic and personal development. The school has been successful in ensuring that good schemes of work are in place for all subjects.
36. Appropriate time is allocated to each subject to ensure that almost all of the required elements of the National Curriculum are covered, and this continued even at a time when many other schools narrowed their curriculum. Teachers have achieved this by developing clear and effective links across the various subjects. For example, opportunities to develop literacy skills are carefully planned for and included in history lessons, where pupils discuss and write at length about topics such as the Irish famine. Similarly, pupils are asked to draw upon their knowledge of co-ordinates for reading ordnance survey maps in geography and this has a positive impact on the development of their numeracy skills. The school is well placed to adapt its schemes of work to the changes in the new National Curriculum.
37. However, there are a few areas where provision is less adequate. The good standards being achieved in scientific knowledge are not balanced by a sufficiently consistent emphasis on scientific enquiry across the school. In music, there are not enough opportunities for practising composition, whilst in information and communication technology there have been too few opportunities for pupils to use computer software to control events. However, the school is now in a strong position to develop this area of the curriculum. The organisation of

the timetable for some subjects results in classes spending too much time seated on the carpet. This happens most often in the morning when class assemblies, or personal and social education sessions, are followed by the introductory sessions of literacy or numeracy lessons.

38. The curriculum for children in the reception classes is matched well to the six areas of learning for this age group. Children are provided with appropriate opportunities to develop through selecting activities independently, exploring, and investigating. The curriculum is particularly well designed to develop the children's language and mathematical skills. However, staffing arrangements and a lack of resources limits children's access to play activities, both inside and outside. In spite of this, the school is well placed to implement any changes needed for the new Foundation Stage curriculum.
39. There is good provision for personal, social, and health education. Issues such as healthy eating and drugs awareness are explored effectively through science. Moral and social issues, which are important elements in the school's Roman Catholic ethos, are addressed during personal and social education sessions, and religious education lessons. The school nurse is involved in discussions about physical and sexual development and drug awareness. Parents are invited to attend evening meetings dealing with these issues and do so in large numbers. They fully appreciate the school's willingness to involve them in these aspects of their children's education. Educational visits, including a residential trip for older pupils to an environmental centre at Menai, play an important part in developing social skills and independence.
40. The quality of learning opportunities provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. The effectiveness of teaching strategies for the development of their literacy and numeracy skills is also good. These pupils are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum. All have well-constructed individual education plans which are closely matched to their needs.
41. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a very wide variety of after-school clubs, ranging from judo to French, all of which are well attended. All teachers generously devote their spare time to running an after school club for at least one term per year, and parents fully appreciate their commitment. The school's curriculum is fully inclusive and promotes equal opportunities well. All adults observe the school's policy conscientiously and each aspect of school life is accessible to everyone. This is clearly reflected in the very good relationships and strong sense of community which exist throughout the school.
42. The wider community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly through the strong links with the parish church and the Warrington Project. Pupils regularly visit nearby places of environmental interest, such as Lower Moss Wood. Visitors to the school, such as the fire brigade and road safety officers, make positive contributions to pupils' learning. The school is an effective provider of training opportunities for students on work experience or nursery nurse training and fifth and sixth form students from local high schools help regularly in the classrooms.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

43. Overall, the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school works hard to foster this from the moment children enter school and has maintained its high standards since the last inspection. Pupils conduct themselves very well around the school, playing and working well together in class. The school's aims are constantly re-affirmed and consistently applied to create a happy, secure and pleasant learning environment.
44. The provision for spiritual development is very good. Interwoven with the Catholic faith is a strong spiritual sense of awareness of self and others. Pupils have varied opportunities to consider lives other than their own, for example when the school joined in the Warrington reconciliation project. Another valuable experience took place at Tattenhall, where pupils

made and destroyed something personal in order to build something beautiful with others. There are appropriate times for calm, thoughtful reflection built into the school day such as at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions, as well as in the assemblies for collective worship. Other moments for reflection also occur naturally, for example in an English lesson, where pupils were striving to understand feelings and thoughts.

45. The school's provision for moral development is very good. The pupils are aware of the aims of the school and the rules that govern it. They know, for instance, why they must be careful in the playground, and why they are expected to be quiet and respectful in school assemblies. All the teachers and support staff in the school apply the rules consistently so that pupils know what is expected of them and what constitutes acceptable behaviour. However, the school is not overly burdened by the sense of rules. There are very good opportunities for pupils to exercise their growing self-discipline and build up their self-esteem. The school is a naturally orderly, calm and friendly place, where all are valued for their contribution. Parents are very pleased with this aspect of the school that demonstrates the shared values of the whole school community.
46. Provision for the development of social behaviour is also very good and pupils relate extremely well to each other and to adults. Indeed, all relationships in the school are very good. The adults are very good role models and pupils respond well to the responsibilities they are given. A good example of this is the special friend system where pupils in Year 6 are paired with the youngest children. They take their responsibilities very seriously, and some relationships develop into friendships, which last long after school days.
47. Other instances include fund raising. Pupils take responsibility for making a business plan for running a stall or ask to support appeals they see on television, devising their own means of doing so. The school has recently formed a School Council, with two pupils from each class, from Year 2 upwards. They make suggestions and ask pertinent questions, learning how the school and society works, in the process. In particular, they asked to form a Chess Club. The boards and sets have been bought and the club is due to start soon.
48. Provision for cultural development is good. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures than their own. Parent volunteers cook their ethnic food and sew with groups of pupils. Recently, there has been a visit from an Indian lady who discussed aspects of an Indian woman's life and talked about the dress code. Pupils wrote sensitively, and perceptively, about past life and times in Ireland during their Irish project. They consider stories, music, art and other ways of life and have a Judaism week, later in the year, where they celebrate the richness of another religion and culture.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is very good. It enhances the quality of education provided by the school and has a very strong impact on attainment and progress. The very positive situation found at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained successfully. St Joseph's provides a very caring and supportive environment in which the pupils feel happy, secure and able to concentrate on their learning.
50. All members of the school community work together to provide a very caring environment in which the pupils feel very well cared for and secure. All staff, well led by the very caring headteacher, have very good knowledge of the pupils as individuals. They respond sensitively and positively to the needs of the pupils in their care. Relationships amongst all members of the school community are very good. The pupils are happy at school and turn confidently to adults when they need help or advice. The resulting supportive atmosphere, within the school, provides a platform for effective learning to take place.
51. The procedures for supporting and monitoring the progress of pupils needing special support are good. Individual educational plans are used well to target behavioural problems where appropriate. Teachers remind pupils of their targets, when necessary, and how they can work towards them. These pupils work hard to get 'into the sunshine' and stay 'out of the

cloud' alongside the other pupils in the class. They are also well supported in their personal development by their teachers and the classroom assistants.

52. Mid-day supervisory staff relate well to the pupils. They are well-trained and conscientious. Their support during lunchtimes has a positive effect on behaviour and safety. First-aid and fire safety arrangements are good overall and the school provides a safe and supportive environment in classrooms and public areas. The school's procedures for dealing with accidents are secure. Regular rigorous risk assessments that are performed to ensure the safety of the school community. No health and safety hazards were observed inside the school during the inspection. However, the surface of the outdoor play area for children in the reception classes is unsuitable for their play activities.
53. The school's procedures for child protection are very good. They meet statutory requirements. The designated member of staff has received relevant training and is suitably experienced. She has ensured that teachers and support staff are aware of their obligations with regard to the proper support of the pupils in their charge.
54. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Records of attendance are maintained properly, and comply with statutory requirements. Procedures for recording unauthorised absence are rigorous and there are good procedures to liaise with parents to deal effectively with any unexpected absence.
55. The measures that are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. At their heart is recognition of the importance of being sensitive to the needs of the pupils as individuals. Rewards and sanctions are well understood and accepted by the pupils. The procedures are effective and allow the pupils to take advantage of the opportunities for learning presented to them in an environment in which there is an absence of oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism or racism. There is an ethos of good behaviour within the school that facilitates learning.
56. The school's arrangements for the monitoring of pupils' personal development are good. A comprehensive range of both formal and informal procedures is used to track the development of the pupils as individuals. Good use is made of the information that is assembled to ensure that the personal needs of each individual are met. Drug and sex education is organised appropriately. There is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education that is organised very well throughout the school. There is clear evidence of the success of the school's arrangements, with the pupils growing in confidence and maturity as they progress through their school life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. At the time of the previous inspection, a positive partnership with parents was reported. The school has worked successfully to develop these links even further and they are now very good. Parents are very supportive of the school, which they feel is a very good one. They consider it to be a caring school that provides well for their children. They think that the school works well with them and they are comfortable approaching the school when they have worries or concerns.
58. Parents are very happy with the quality of teaching and the progress made by their children. They feel that pupils' behaviour is good, that the school has very high expectations, develops mature and responsible attitudes in pupils, and is well led and managed. Inspection evidence generally supports these very positive features. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the amount of homework provided by the school, the impact of the mixed-age class and reading arrangements. Inspection evidence does not find that the school is doing anything other than the best it can for the pupils in its charge, given the circumstances in which it finds itself.
59. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. These have been strengthened by the introduction of a home-school contract that provides for commitment by

the school, parents and the pupil to the improvement of standards. Parents appreciate the arrangements made for children, when starting school, and the school has produced some helpful documents to support parents and children during this time. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed, at every stage, and are aware of their child's inclusion on the register. Regular times are organised to review targets and set new ones where necessary.

60. Parental support both in school and at home is good. The school actively seeks the support of parents in the work of the school and constantly seeks more involvement. Unfortunately, despite its best efforts, not many parents directly support in the classroom, because their personal circumstances make it difficult for them to do so. However, those that do have the time to help are used well to support groups or contribute their expertise to develop specific skills. Many parents help with school trips and visits. The contribution of these parents is valued and valuable to pupils' learning. There is a highly committed and well organised Parents' and Friends' Association, that fosters relationships between home and school successfully. Its activities provide opportunities for parents, staff and pupils to socialise and its arrangements for raising funds provide much welcome additional financial support to the school.
61. The overall quality of information provided by the school is very good, with some of it being excellent. There is no reason for parents to feel ill informed about any aspect of the school's activities and achievements, providing they take advantage of the opportunities presented to them.
62. Regular newsletters to parents are very well-planned, informative and helpful. They are much appreciated by parents. The school prospectus is an attractive document which, together with the well produced governors' annual report to parents, gives parents a very wide range of information presented in a friendly style. Other than some minor omissions, which are dealt with elsewhere in the school's documentation, all statutory reporting requirements are met.
63. There are frequent opportunities, both formal and informal, for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their children's progress. The headteacher makes herself available at any time to meet parents, and teachers are happy to meet them informally before or after school, or by appointment, to ensure availability, due to teaching commitments.
64. Pupils' annual reports are satisfactory overall. Some are of good quality, others less so. Those of high quality show clear evidence of much thought being given by teachers. The result is detailed, individual reports that are clear and valuable to parents. Less satisfactory reports have weaknesses especially in the reporting of some subjects. Overall, the reports provide a satisfactory summary of what the pupils have done and can do. However, a weakness that is common to almost all reports is a failure to provide parents with sufficient information about how their child's attainment compares with national expectations, except at the end of each key stage, when statutory assessment results are reported properly. This information is, nevertheless, given to parents at annual parents' meetings with teachers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

65. The school is led and managed very well. The school has made good overall progress in raising its standards since the last inspection and is very well placed for further improvement. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to ensure that there are appropriate aims, values and policies in place, and that these are shared by parents. They are reflected very well in the life and work of the school. There is a caring atmosphere in which pupils feel valued and develop their confidence and self-respect. The school has a most effective learning environment and relationships are very good. There is a particularly strong ethos, reflected especially in the close teamwork of all staff and governors.
66. The headteacher, capably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides very strong management that has been most effective in providing a clear educational direction for the school. The headteacher has built a strong team of committed teachers to take the school

forward. Development planning is undertaken very well; staff, parents and governors have a close involvement and the appropriate priorities for school improvement are identified accurately. Plans for the current year are set out thoroughly and logically, and, although those for future years lack detail, the management is very clear about the direction the school is to take.

67. Staff have appropriate responsibilities and specific job descriptions to support them in developing their role. They fulfil their responsibilities as subject co-ordinators very effectively. The lack of monitoring of the curriculum was one of the key issues of the last inspection and this has been addressed very successfully. Subject co-ordinators have developed their roles well. They check the standards and effectiveness of teaching in their subject by scrutinising planning and work, and holding discussions with their colleagues. They base their plans for raising standards on these informed evaluations. These procedures ensure that the planning for school improvement is most appropriate.
68. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor teaching through a programme of formal and informal lesson observations. This enables them to give focused support and identify areas of teaching that need development. The deputy headteacher gives valuable support to teachers in developing their skills, particularly in providing an exemplar of good teaching. The school is well advanced in adopting performance management systems. Teachers' performance is reviewed each year and new targets for performance negotiated. These measures have been very effective in raising the standards of teaching throughout the school since the last inspection.
69. The school uses all means possible to support pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator is an experienced member of staff, who manages the provision well. She has effective links with the teachers and classroom assistants and the school's procedures are efficient. This ensures that time is organised well and funding is spent judiciously for maximum benefit. The governing body has appointed a very committed and effective link governor. She works closely with the co-ordinator to ensure pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Outside agencies are used wisely for assessment and discussion purposes. The areas outside the classrooms provide a good environment for small groups of pupils to learn well, not too far removed from their classmates.
70. The governors are committed to the school and fulfil their statutory duties very well. They are strongly involved in the work of the school, particularly through their role in development planning and reviewing progress. Governors make a good contribution to strategic planning and have made particularly good progress in this aspect of their work since the last inspection. They have developed their knowledge of and involvement in the school through the reports they receive from subject co-ordinators. The governors have a clear overview of the curriculum, with the curriculum committee having a firm understanding of the work of the school. They are well-placed to implement their draft performance management policy, and already set well-focused targets for both headteacher and deputy headteacher.
71. The school is successful in promoting equal opportunities. This is reflected in lessons and pupils' work; the playground and classrooms are not generally dominated by particular groups of pupils. The arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs ensure their access to the whole curriculum.

Strategic use of resources and principles of best value

72. The governing body works very closely with the headteacher to plan the school's financial strategy and monitor its budget. The financial planning process is organised very well with good support being provided by the local authority's Budget Officer. Financial resources are used very effectively to meet the needs of the school as defined in its development plan and longer-term strategy. Since the previous inspection, substantial sums of money have been, and are planned to be, spent to upgrade the school's facilities and resources.

73. Planned financial reserve levels are low but the school has effective contingency plans in place to ensure that its finances will be sufficient to ensure the continuation of its present strategies. The school benefits from being a very popular, heavily over-subscribed school, meaning that future financial forecasts can be based on secure projections of pupil numbers. The headteacher and governors are very aware of the need to provide as high a standard of educational provision as possible. Their planning is based solidly on ensuring that the school's educational provision is sustainable and that its educational targets are met.
74. There is good liaison between governors, the headteacher and staff in formulating the budget. Governors take an active part and feel ownership of the budget and the strategies behind it. They explore all options open to them fully, and take decisions with confidence because of their individual expertise and the objective information provided to them by the headteacher. There is very effective corporate decision making. This ensures that the financial resources available to the school, which are lower than for similar schools nationally, are targeted properly to improving standards throughout the school. The specific funds element of the school's finances, which is small, is used effectively.
75. The school makes satisfactory use of new technologies. In addition to the support of administration activities, where computerised systems are used well, and the development of a well-equipped computer suite, the school has moved positively to embrace the Internet and has its own e-mail address and website. All members of staff have received recent training.
76. The school's overall administration arrangements, and the day-to-day control of its finances, are good. Effective use is made of the information available from the school's computerised management system. There are effective financial and administrative procedures in place that allow the very committed administration staff to support the work of the school efficiently. The school's most recent financial audit was satisfactory. Its few recommendations have been implemented.
77. Overall the governing body uses the principles of obtaining best value well. The school's self-evaluation procedures are well organised. Governors have a very good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school's spending is evaluated to ensure that the most economic, effective and efficient quality of education is provided for the pupils.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

78. The school is staffed appropriately and there are, at present, sufficient appropriately qualified teaching staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is a suitable range of teaching experience with the majority of teachers having been at the school less than ten years. The limited number of support staff is generally deployed well, although the arrangements for the reception classes are not effective enough because class teachers generally only have support for half the school day. Support staff are well trained and work closely with class teachers. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning through their well-planned work with groups and individuals. All members of staff are committed to the well being and support of the pupils. In their various ways, they make a good contribution to the effective running of the school, which enhances the quality of education provided.
79. Induction and mentoring procedures for the newly-qualified teachers are very good. The school is sensitive to their needs, provides appropriate training and release time, and has, very rapidly, made them feel valued and a full part of the school community.
80. The quality of accommodation overall is satisfactory. It has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection, with additional classrooms and a computer suite being provided recently. It is generally maintained well and kept clean and tidy. Internally, classrooms are of reasonable size, mostly bright and airy, and provide appropriate facilities for the effective delivery of the curriculum. However, some large class sizes at Key Stage 2 put pressure on space at times. The arrangements for entering some classrooms are very inconvenient. It is inappropriate to have to pass through the staffroom, or an infant classroom, to get to part of the infant department. The school has recognised the

unsuitability of its present arrangements and plans are at an advanced stage to address the problem, further improving the quality of the accommodation provided. Some public areas and some classrooms provide a very stimulating environment.

81. There is barely sufficient playground space for the size of the school, although, in good weather, the hard-standing areas are complemented by the use of the school's extensive grassed areas. The area used by the youngest children for their outdoor play is a pleasant facility but it is too small. Parts of the school grounds around the buildings have an uneven surface.
82. The quality and quantity of learning resources are satisfactory overall. The range and quality have improved considerably since a low level of resources was identified at the time of the previous inspection. There has been a high level of investment in this area in recent times. Expenditure has been targeted well and resources are now good for English, mathematics and information and communication technology. However, there is a weakness in the sufficiency of resources for music, and there is a lack of variety of play equipment for use by the youngest children.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to improve the standards in the school further, the governors, in partnership with the headteacher and staff, should:
 - improve provision for the children in the reception classes by:
 - reviewing the organisation of the teaching groups;
 - improving the provision of large and small play equipment and access to large play activities, (*paragraphs 4, 26, 30, 38, 52, 78, 81, 82, 85, 92*)
 - raise standards in science, information and communication technology, and music, at both key stages, by:
 - ensuring that the skills of scientific enquiry are taught consistently through the school; *
 - developing the use of control technology; *
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of musical composition, (*paragraphs 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 37, 121, 123, 124, 151, 155, 157, 158*).

**The school already has appropriate plans in place to address these issues.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	76
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	13	36	47	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)	277
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	7

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	24

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	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	19	17	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	18	19
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	33	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (100)	94 (97)	97 (94)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	18
	Girls	17	16	16
	Total	36	35	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	97 (97)	94 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	20	18	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	18	20
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	34	36	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (83)	95 (89)	100 (94)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	18
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	34	35	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (86)	92 (89)	95 (94)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	223
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.4
Average class size	29.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	107

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	415,186
Total expenditure	417,877
Expenditure per pupil	1,566
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,436
Balance carried forward to next year	44,745

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	267
Number of questionnaires returned	81
Percentage of questionnaires returned	30

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	31	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	27	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	28	2	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	47	7	0	2
The teaching is good.	64	32	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	36	9	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	22	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	30	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	54	40	5	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	16	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	31	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	52	6	1	9

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents were concerned about the provision in the mixed age class, and a few others felt that reading books were not changed often enough.

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

84. Education for children in the Foundation Stage is provided in two reception classes. The children enter these classes in the September following their fourth birthday. At the time of the inspection, the children had only been in school for a few weeks. Their attainment is higher than the average for their age when they enter school. All children have had some pre-school playgroup or nursery experience before starting school. The provision for children under five is satisfactory overall, and the teaching is good. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, almost all children have attained the Early Learning Goals³, and many are working above this level.
85. Overall, teaching in the reception classes is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the children, and the work offered to them is generally matched well to their requirements. Children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and given appropriate support for their needs. Teachers are already well advanced in adapting the current curriculum to comply with the new Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage. However, staffing arrangements in the reception classes, whereby teachers generally only have classroom support for half the school day, are making it difficult to provide children with all the experiences they need.

Personal, social and emotional development

86. The personal and social development of children under five is very good. Children make good progress in this area of learning. They are confident and friendly and very well behaved at all times. They attend very well to their teachers and follow the rules if it is necessary for them to wait for their turn. All children are very quiet and respectful during times of prayer and show high levels of reverence during assemblies. They respond positively to their experiences at school, forming amicable relationships with each other, and sharing in their achievements with a real pride. All children take responsibility for fastening their own coats for outside play sessions and on entry to school, when they hang up their coats and put away their belongings confidently and efficiently.
87. They converse freely during social activities, for example in the dining hall, and they co-operate with one another very well during play activities, taking turns and helping one another. Children learn to dress and undress for physical education and to fold their own clothes carefully. At lunchtime, children who bring sandwiches to school, or have school meals, sit quietly and responsibly, and behave very politely, showing independence and asking for help when needed. Teaching of personal and social skills is good. Staff encourage children to take responsibility for their own belongings and behaviour. All staff act as excellent role models and the children learn well from the example they set. This enables almost all of them to reach the expected goals early in the year.

Communication, language and literacy

88. Children develop early language skills very effectively and, by the time they are five, their achievements are above what is expected for children of this age. Almost all achieve the Early Learning Goals and many are at a higher level. The school places a great emphasis on the development of the skills of literacy and the children make good progress in these areas. Many children are articulate speakers when they enter school, and they make rapid progress in developing these skills. Most speak clearly and in sentences, although some have poor articulation.

³ The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

89. Children show great enjoyment and interest in stories and in books and, by the time they are five years old, many children are good readers and are able to write well for their age. They have a good understanding of letter sounds, and the more able write well-structured short sentences, with an appropriate use of capital letters and full stops. Letter formation is good, with most letters correctly formed and relatively even. The teaching in this area has many strengths, particularly in the teaching of reading, where children attain high levels for their age. Children are taught to recognise and use rhyme from an early stage and they enjoy opportunities to use their new skills. Teachers involve children very well in whole class discussion. There is a strong emphasis on the development of free expression and interaction through role-play to allow the children to develop their communication skills.

Mathematical development

90. Children attain levels above those of most five-year-olds in mathematics and almost all reach the expected goals well before leaving reception. For instance, children compare the length of objects, with good levels of prediction about which will be longer. The more able develop a rapid understanding of 'long, longer, longest'. Most understand 'more than' and 'less than' to at least five. Children make good progress through the year so that by the end of their time in the reception class, many can add and subtract mentally to at least 20, and have a good knowledge of two-dimensional shapes. They understand and use a wide variety of mathematical language. The teaching of mathematics is good; teachers emphasise the correct language and have good subject knowledge. Their high expectations are shown in the challenging activities they set for children and the pace they maintain in the lessons.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

91. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are developing well. They talk with understanding about their growth from being a baby and understand that their parents and grandparents were younger in the past. Opportunities are provided for children to develop technological skills through their use of construction apparatus to make vehicles and to design and make their own models, using materials chosen from a pre-selected range. As they become more familiar with computers, children under five are developing early skills with the mouse. They develop the ability to drag icons to the desired position on screen, but they have restricted access to the computers. Children investigate the structure of fruit and record their observations carefully. They develop a good knowledge of their own bodies and the place where they live. The teaching of this area of learning is good; children are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Physical development

92. Children's physical development is generally average for their age. Children enjoy taking part in physical education lessons, use space well with good awareness of their position, and they move confidently and imaginatively. Most children show appropriate levels of co-ordination and balance as they move to music and form different shapes with their bodies. The skills of cutting, gluing, drawing and writing are developing well and children make good progress in these skills because they are taught carefully and thoroughly. Children learn through suitable structured and free play activities, but there is insufficient opportunity for access to outside play activities and children are, consequently, unable to develop this aspect of play appropriately and to practise and consolidate their skills effectively.

Creative development

93. Children's creative and artistic skills are developing appropriately. These are evident in the care they take when mixing paint and painting specific areas of their paper. Children attain levels that are typical for their age. They use paints, crayons, and pencils and collage to good effect and make well-constructed glove puppets. Musical expertise is developing at a suitable level, as children learn to listen to untuned percussion instruments and identify them from the sound they make. They clap simple rhythms in time with music. Children make the most of

their opportunities for role play, and co-operate well in the play house. For example, two children, playing with the tabletop house model, made a very imaginative story about the dustbin men, each adding parts and listening carefully to each other's contribution. Skills are generally taught satisfactorily, with suitable opportunities for children to develop their them. Consequently, most reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they are five.

ENGLISH

94. At Key Stage 2, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 were well above the national average, and above average when compared with similar schools. These results were much higher than those in 1999. In particular, there has been an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. These standards are reflected in the work of pupils presently in Year 6 and, overall, pupils achieve well. Over the last four years, the school's results have fluctuated, but risen overall and this gradual rise mirrors the national trend. The results for boys were better than the national trend. The school has set challenging targets for improvement and exceeded them for the past three years.
95. In the equivalent tests for seven-year-olds, taken in 2000, pupils' results in writing were well above the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. In reading, pupils' results were above average when compared nationally, and close to the average in comparison with similar schools. The results were lower than in 1999, because the class had had a disrupted year due to staff illness. Pupils presently in Year 2 are working at a level above average, and their standards are better than those of the previous year. Overall, they are achieving well in both reading and writing and are on course to maintain these standards by the end of the year. This is because the school's assessment processes are highlighting potential problems and focused teaching is concentrating on them. The trend over the last four years has been dipping and rising against a steady background nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and the more able pupils make good progress in both key stages, because of the support they receive and the work set for these groups is usually suitably challenging for their needs.

Speaking and listening

96. Overall, standards of speaking and listening are good. Pupils express themselves clearly, and listen well to teachers and to each other. Teachers value pupils' contributions, and constantly remind them about listening carefully and politely. This is particularly so at Key Stage 1 and the impact is clear by the end of Key Stage 2, where pupils listen intently to one another, and learn from the interactions around them. Teachers use appropriate technical language throughout, when teaching reading and writing, and pupils increase their vocabulary of everyday words well. This is generally the case, but is particularly so in the choice of texts made for reading.
97. At Key Stage 1, pupils achieve good standards in speaking and listening. They are articulate and offer good ideas in answer to questions. They demonstrate that they are listening by commenting on what they hear others say, for example, in a mixed Year 1/2 class, the pupils were finding long vowel words and they found six more good words after listening and thinking about what they had heard. Pupils are confident and polite when they speak to adults, demonstrating a growing awareness of situation and audience.
98. At Key Stage 2, pupils build upon their skills effectively. They make appropriate comments and contributions to group discussions, for example about the plague. Older pupils ask questions for clarification of others' ideas and criticise, positively, the work of others, justifying their views, for example as they discussed the lines of poetry they were writing in Year 6. They speak effectively and clearly, in most cases, when chosen to act or read in class assembly and they evaluate their performance and what they have learned afterwards.

Reading

99. Pupils' attainment in reading is consistently above average, and is well above average by the end of Year 6. The school places a strong emphasis on this skill and pupils evidently enjoy reading in school and at home. High expectations from teachers and parents are reflected in the pupils' achievements. In a Year 1 class, one pupil explained clearly how to use the words in the story to 'guess the missing words'. This is a useful skill, developing early. Pupils are confident when discussing characters and settings and they explore challenging texts in order to widen their vocabulary. For example, in one successful lesson pupils searched for all the 'time' words used such as, 'suddenly', 'soon', 'afterwards', 'before'. They retold the story with good use of a variety of a rich vocabulary.
100. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and join in, for instance, with their ideas in oral sessions of reading. There are also opportunities for more specific help from support teachers and classroom assistants. The headteacher maintains a very effective reading recovery programme and classroom assistants have undergone training for early intervention techniques and additional literacy support.
101. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop good reading skills further, and appropriately challenging texts are used. By the end of the key stage, pupils have reached high standards. They are independent, discerning readers who enjoy books of all types, for pleasure and information. Those who are more able readers have a 'feel' for the audience, an awareness of expression and humour, and note the vocabulary used to manipulate the reader. Other groups also read with understanding, fluently and with expression, discussing and offering opinions on what they read.

Writing

102. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in writing is above average. Typically, they progress well from more simple words and sentences when they first enter Year 1, to writing that is rapid, neat, well-presented and reasonably spelt. Teachers have high expectations for content and presentation and this shows in the pupils' finished work. They write for a good range of purposes, for example, letters, stories, lists, instructions, poems and descriptions. They usually take account of the helpful comments that teachers make about their writing, in order to improve and enhance it. For example, in one book, the teacher gave a written reminder to a pupil about the good connecting words they had used in the lesson and asked if the pupil had thought of using them. The pupil replied, 'No', and wrote a sentence underneath, using one of the best from the list. They have challenging targets set and work towards them with careful guidance from the teachers.
103. By the end of Year 6, the quality of pupils' writing is consistently well above average. Sometimes it is exceptional; so mature and perceptive, that an adult would be pleased to have written it. A good example of this is when the pupils used Shakespeare's, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', to write their own spells and poetry. One piece of work was very sensitively written as a lullaby for the pupil's own new baby brother. Other instances include writing in history when they considered Anne Frank, her feelings and the Holocaust; or the Irish potato famine and the devastation that brought to families and the nation of Ireland. Because teachers, throughout the school, constantly re-affirm high expectations, extend vocabulary and recommend reading, pupils build consistently to improve and achieve very good standards. Teachers also have high expectations of pupils with special educational needs and give them good support to make rapid progress. The arrangements made for literacy sessions ensure they are working at appropriate levels.
104. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good features. Teaching was judged to be at least good in three-quarters of lessons, and very good, or excellent, in a quarter. The consistent, clear, caring and skilful teaching is reflected in the quality and quantity of work the pupils produce and the standards they achieve by the end of each key stage. Lessons are well planned, purposeful and carried out at an appropriate pace. This allows time for quick-fire sessions, and times for reflection. Teachers use time, resources and support well. There is good liaison between classroom assistants and teachers. The support is effective for the pupils because the teachers brief the assistants well and they all work as teams,

sharing management of behaviour and teaching as appropriate. Resources are used well to reinforce an idea or to keep interest. For instance, the use of white boards, throughout the school, is good, especially where they act as notepads to extend and modify sentences, such as, during a poetry lesson in Year 6, when pupils' quickly voiced their ideas.

105. Teachers also plan good finishing sessions, which draw teaching points together successfully and consolidate the learning that has taken place. For example, in one Year 2 lesson, pupils were eager to share the findings of their investigations into long vowel words. The teacher skilfully guided them to thinking about their own learning, by questioning how they had carried out the search and how they had checked their work. In the best lessons, the teacher offers starting points and supports pupils in order to reach high standards at whatever level. In adequate, but less inspiring lessons, teachers do not consistently provide sufficient challenge for their most able pupils or provide suitable activities for those who find the work more difficult.
106. The school has analysed all test results carefully in order to find areas of common error. Work has begun to address these areas and results are already beginning to show, for example in a wider repertoire of vocabulary, and better use of connecting words at both key stages. Teachers are also improving their skills in teaching literacy and this has a cumulative effect throughout the school.
107. Generally, staff make good use of assessments when they plan for the next piece of work and all teachers set challenging targets for individuals and groups of pupils, according to need. Pupils' work is marked in a sensitive, consistent and helpful way; growing competence in literacy is starting to make a contribution to work in other subjects. In addition to history, some science work shows careful attention to spelling and layout, especially in charts and annotated diagrams. This is also true in design and technology. However, this is an area of the school's work in literacy that is not so fully developed as other elements. This is particularly the case in science, where many worksheets are used and there is a limited opportunity for pupils to write for themselves in some classes.
108. The subject is ably led by two co-ordinators, who manage the provision very well. The local education authority has selected them both to give sample lessons to teachers from other schools. The previous inspection report was generally favourable, but improvements have taken place in all aspects since then. The most influential of these is the improved quality of teaching.

MATHEMATICS

109. At Key Stage 2, in the National Curriculum tests in 2000, pupils attained standards that were well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, standards were above average. Standards of attainment have risen steadily in line with national trends over the past four years. Inspection findings closely reflect this pattern of continuing improvement and reflect the results of the tests. Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average and pupils are achieving well. This is due to the good overall quality of teaching across the key stage. There is also very thorough monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress so that teachers know their individual strengths and weaknesses well. The setting of pupils in groups according to their prior attainment in Years 5 and 6 also has a positive effect on standards, although the arrangements for the mixed-age group sometimes makes it difficult to work at a suitable pace for all pupils. The school has set challenging targets for test results and has exceeded them in the past three years.
110. At Key Stage 1, in the National Curriculum tests in 2000, pupils attained standards that were above the national average. They were average in comparison with similar schools. This represents a decline in the standards reported in the last inspection, when they were well above average, although results have remained above the national average overall during the past four years. Results showed a lower proportion of pupils attaining the higher level. This decline was brought about by long-term teacher absence that disrupted pupils' progress and had a negative effect on their achievement in the tests. The school has reacted promptly by placing experienced and capable teachers in Year 2. Inspection findings indicate that this is

having a positive impact, and the school is in a strong position to raise standards to their previous levels. Standards of attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the levels expected and pupils are achieving well.

111. By the end of Key Stage 1, about three-quarters of pupils count, add and subtract numbers to 20, confidently, and are beginning to understand the place value of each digit in numbers up to 100. They have competent mental calculation, and double or halve numbers using clear reasoning. For example, a pupil in Year 2 explains, 'I know that double seven is fourteen because two times five is ten and two times two is four, making fourteen altogether.' The majority of pupils confidently know the names and properties of common two- and three-dimensional shapes.
112. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a wide range of strategies for problem solving and use mathematical language accurately to explain their reasoning. Consequently, their application of mathematical knowledge is consistently very good. In Year 6, for example, a pupil very quickly calculated the total cost of tickets for six adults at £9.50 and 25 children at £6.50 each, offering a very clear explanation of the strategies used to arrive at the correct answer. Most pupils understand the value of a digit in six- or seven-figure numbers. They have a good understanding of percentages and probability. They draw plans to scale and know the properties of simple and complex three-dimensional shapes.
113. Pupils' attitudes make a strong contribution to the standards they achieve. Their attitudes to learning are good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. They enjoy their lessons, are interested and are generally enthusiastic when doing their work. They listen carefully and answer questions in whole-class discussions. They work hard to complete tasks and work with sustained concentration at Key Stage 2, but less so at Key Stage 1. In two lessons seen in Years 5 and 6 relationships were excellent. Pupils had clear respect for their teachers and their response to the very good pace and challenge of the teaching was exemplary.
114. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and it is very good at Key Stage 2. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. At Key Stage 1, teaching was judged to be good in 20 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. At Key Stage 2, 70 per cent of teaching was judged good or better, and 20 per cent was excellent. This represents good improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. This is because teachers throughout the school now place greater emphasis on the use and application of mathematical knowledge. In addition, the school has continued to develop its systems for assessing pupils' progress from year to year. This ensures that all teachers plan work that is well matched to individual needs. Consequently, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well.
115. In lessons where teaching is at its most effective, progress is more rapid and occasionally excellent. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort and this is supported by very good subject knowledge. They use these to extend pupils' thinking and set challenging but achievable goals for individuals. Teaching is occasionally less effective where teachers' management of pupils is inconsistent. This slows the pace of teaching and therefore the rate of progress. On some occasions, pupils are asked to spend too much time seated on the carpet at the beginning of lessons. This leads to restlessness and progress in these lessons could be better. All teachers plan lessons well and make effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy. They have high expectations of pupils' use of correct mathematical language and this promotes the development of literacy skills successfully.
116. Numeracy is promoted well throughout the school. Work on co-ordinates and direction in geography; the use of careful designing and measuring in design and technology; and the developing use of charts and graphs in science all make a good contribution to pupils' skills and knowledge.
117. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator. She has developed systems for assessing pupils' performance and progress, and for passing this information on to colleagues, successfully.

Consequently, they have a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and groups of pupils and this is having a positive impact on achievement.

SCIENCE

118. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000, standards were well above the national average, with nearly half of pupils reaching the higher Level 5. Compared to similar schools, the results were above average. These test results reflect a generally continuing trend of rising standards. The pupils presently in Year 6 are also working at an above-average level, in that almost all of them are on course to reach the required standards by the end of the year.
119. Teacher assessments undertaken at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2000, show that pupils' attainment was below average when compared both nationally and with similar schools. Although an average number of pupils reached the expected standard, none attained the higher Level 3. These assessments show a fall in standards, due to a period of disruption in these pupils' schooling. The standard of work of those pupils, presently in Year 2, show that this decline has been halted and standards are, again, above average. Pupils are working at an appropriate level to reach the required standards and some are attaining them at an early stage in the year. Standards at both key stages have, generally, been maintained since the previous inspection.
120. By the age of seven, pupils observe carefully and recognise unfair tests or comparisons. Their knowledge of how the applied forces of pushing or pulling can affect the direction or speed of an object is secure. Pupils competently construct simple circuits to light a bulb, and they investigate reversible and irreversible changes. They study mini-beasts and research the growth of seeds. Pupils in Year 2 make informed predictions, for example, when experimenting with soundproofing. They record their observations carefully in charts and simple graphs.
121. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress through the key stage. Pupils make steady gains in their knowledge and understanding both in lessons and over time. Appropriate emphasis is placed on pupils using scientific skills of observation, prediction, sorting, classifying and communicating results. Less able pupils are given appropriate support and work to enable them to learn effectively. However, few opportunities are given for pupils to carry out their own investigations.
122. By the time pupils reach the age of eleven, they have investigated a wide range of topics. Those with special educational needs are mainly reaching the required standards because they receive a good level of support and the work is generally matched to their needs. Pupils have secure knowledge about the effect of heat on materials and the water cycle. They know about the effects of gravity and the positions of the Sun, Earth, Moon and beyond to the planets. Pupils have very clear understanding of the processes of evaporation and condensation, and their effect.
123. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, and they develop their scientific knowledge securely at the appropriate level. Pupils enjoy science lessons. They work hard and are often totally involved in their lessons, and this contributes well to the progress they make. However, they do not develop their skills of scientific enquiry to a high enough level. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to carry out tests, and have a secure understanding of how a test can be made fair. However, the skills of investigation, and the ways in which a scientific investigation is carried out, are not taught consistently enough for pupils to be able to develop them thoroughly. The enthusiastic and well-informed co-ordinator is aware of this lack of balance and has already begun to address it.
124. Teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and often good at Key Stage 2. When teaching is most effective, teachers know exactly at what stage of understanding the pupils are, and appropriately challenging activities are set to develop pupils' knowledge. However, not enough opportunities are given for pupils to design their own experiments, based on their

previous scientific knowledge. This is an aspect which was criticised in the last inspection, and which has not yet been addressed fully. Teachers make their lessons interesting and concentrate well on developing specific scientific language. They prepare work carefully and are precise about what they want their pupils to learn. Consequently pupils acquire scientific knowledge in a structured way. Good use is made of day to day assessment to ensure that teaching points are thoroughly understood before moving on. Teachers make it clear to their pupils what they expect them to learn in the lesson, and use questioning well to ensure that the pupils fully understand.

125. The school uses a scheme of work that gives a good structure for teachers, enabling them to plan a progression of activities. All the areas of the curriculum are covered but, at present, there is some repetition and not enough planning directed at the higher levels of attainment. Work in science makes a good contribution to the skills of numeracy through the use of careful measurements, charts and graphs. However, pupils' literacy skills are not developed as consistently. In some classes, pupils are given many opportunities to use and develop their own writing, whilst in other classes, these opportunities are limited by the use of many worksheets or pupils copying substantial amounts of text.
126. Assessment is good and the school has a good knowledge of what pupils can do and understand. Test results are analysed at Key Stage 2 for weaknesses and this has resulted in some change being made to the amount of time spent on weaker areas. Individual pupils' progress is monitored to highlight difficulties. Teachers assess pupils' understanding after each unit of work so that they are aware of the impact of their teaching and any alterations needed.

ART

127. Standards, throughout the school, are similar to those seen in the majority of schools. Pupils in Year 6 have mastered a good range of techniques in a wide variety of media. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills in all areas of the subject. This is unusual at a time when many schools have slimmed down the curriculum.
128. Pupils at Key Stage 1 experience an appropriate range of different techniques and media, to print, sketch and draw, using pastel, collage and observational drawings. They mix colours to obtain tints and shades. They have studied the techniques used by Van Gogh and Picasso and used these competently in their own work.
129. At Key Stage 2, pupils use sketchbooks to develop sound pencil techniques, although progression is not always clear. They use different media such as pencils, charcoal, oil pastels and focus on different elements such as shape, pattern, proportion and perspective. As they move through the key stage, they have the opportunity to develop their skills and understanding in a very wide range of materials. By the time they are eleven, pupils have secure techniques in using batik, needlework, painting, sketching and printing. They use a great variety of artistic media, including fabric and acrylic paint, and have a well-developed sense of colour and contrast.
130. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and good at Key Stage 2, with some teachers showing very good knowledge of the subject. In Year 6, pupils were fascinated by an art activity, linked to their geography work on the rainforest. They were keen to try out different media and techniques to see the effect. The very high quality of the teaching led to pupils of all abilities achieving well, when making very effective masks, which were carefully and imaginatively decorated. They explored techniques and tools, independently, and were very eager to display their work to others.
131. In Year 4, pupils became engrossed in their activity, using geometric and non-geometric designs. The teacher used pupils' own ideas well to develop pupils' knowledge and abilities, and promoted their willingness to make constructive criticisms of their own work. Pupils

throughout the school are extremely attentive and interested during both the lesson introduction, and the review, when they share and appreciate each other's work. Their enjoyment of lessons, and close concentration on their work, makes a strong contribution to the quantity and quality of art produced. Pupils particularly enjoy using the computers to produce interesting patterns and pictures. They make clay pots at Key Stage 1, and decorate triptychs in Year 6, but there was little other evidence of three-dimensional work. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and keen to raise standards. She is already aware of the need for more three-dimensional work through the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. The provision for design and technology has improved notably since the last inspection. The improvements have resulted from a thorough analysis of what was indicated at the last inspection and a careful, effective implementation of new principles. The deficiencies highlighted in the previous inspection report concerned the lack of opportunities offered to pupils in the process of design, testing, and evaluating their work, and the use of tools and equipment. The school has addressed these points very well, and pupils now make satisfactory progress and achieve the standards usual for their age in all elements of the subject by the time they reach the end of both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, and they, and the more able pupils, also make satisfactory progress because there is a stimulating learning environment.
133. At Key Stage 1, pupils consider a range of different kinds of puppets. They plan their own design, draw and label items carefully, and record what materials and tools they will need. For example, one pupil decided he would need wooden parts for his crocodile, and that it would not be a simple glove or finger puppet. The design process is well established as a routine, and pupils keep careful note of what they do and what they change. This makes a strong contribution to their literacy and numeracy skills. They choose appropriate finishing techniques and take a pride in the presentation of their written work and the completed object. These principles are also applied well to other projects, such as the vehicles they make, and the 'Incy Wincy Spider' models they design. The activity is thorough, with well thought out designs that work well. Incy is wound up on his thread in several very appealing and humorous forms. Pupils have a wide range of equipment and materials to use and, in particular, enjoy exploring the intricacies of how levers work.
134. At Key Stage 2, pupils' skills are developed suitably. Teachers are very aware of health and safety considerations. They teach the pupils the principles of careful work with tools and the safe handling of food. Younger pupils investigate the stability of paper, by folding, testing with weights, and discussing what they find. Older pupils research different types of slippers and who might wear them. Their ideas are clearly developed, with a sequence of actions drawn up and modifications noted. They practise careful finishing techniques, such as embroidery, including these in their finished article. They evaluate their work and decide whether their slippers are fit for the purpose. However, all the designs seen were based upon a template and the slippers were a variation upon a theme. This was not the case when the pupils made biscuits. After a survey, graph, and research into a variety of different biscuits, a basic recipe was chosen. The pupils had decisions to make about the optional ingredients they would need to turn their simple mixture into something special for a celebration, or a gift. The work was very thorough and well considered. Varied and interesting designs were made, used, or discarded, and the final cooking session produced well-decorated, individual and tasty results.
135. The standard of teaching and learning is good, overall. The lesson plans indicate what is to be learned and lessons are organised and prepared well. This ensures that all the pupils are ready to work without wasting time. Where help is available, teachers also brief their classroom assistants well and, working as a team, discuss work with pupils and encourage improvements. Some lessons observed were full of excitement and pupils were very keen to investigate and solve their problems. Where lessons are adequate, but less effective, pupils draw rather than design, listen rather than discuss, and have fewer opportunities to think for themselves. The school has very carefully considered its approach to creating a more structured programme since the last inspection. The curriculum is now planned directly from

government guidelines to build the appropriate skills progressively, and provide a rolling programme for pupils in mixed-age classes.

GEOGRAPHY

136. Pupils are attaining at the level expected for their age at both key stages. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection, and done so in all aspects of the curriculum. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils describe their local area competently and offer opinions on its attractiveness. They develop a secure awareness of where Warrington is in relation to other places in their own country, such as London. Through the travels of 'Barnaby Bear', pupils become familiar with the names and locations of places in the world such as Sydney in Australia, and countries in the European Community.
137. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils carry out appropriate surveys and investigations and use these to make knowledgeable comparisons with conditions elsewhere. Pupils in Year 5, for example, examined the water outlets around the school building. They then commented on the relative difficulties faced by people in the hotter parts of South Africa in gaining access to water. In Year 6, pupils study South American rainforests and offer informed views about the dangers of de-forestation.
138. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress to reach the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. This is reflected in the development of their map reading skills. Pupils in Key Stage 1 initially use simple keys to identify, for example, important features on their journey to school. By the time they are aged eleven, most pupils accurately interpret maps using grid references. These activities make a positive contribution to the development of their numeracy skills. The majority shows great interest in learning about life in other countries. They take care with the written work, and produce accurate drawings and diagrams.
139. The quality of teaching is sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers introduce a range of imaginative ideas to stimulate interest and this has a positive impact on achievement. Pupils in Year 1, for example, are asked to design their own passport so that they can 'visit' other countries. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher produced envelopes containing aerial photographs of the area taken from a helicopter that had visited the school a few weeks earlier. This stimulated great interest and provided the basis for a successful lesson. He went on to make good use of open-ended questions to encourage pupils to make accurate observations from the photographs. Although satisfactory, teaching is occasionally less successful where the management of pupils is inconsistent or the work provided either lacks sufficient challenge, or is too difficult. All teachers plan topics well and evaluate the effectiveness of lessons on a weekly basis.
140. The co-ordinator has produced a good scheme of work that ensures that pupils can achieve what is expected of them from year to year. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the quality and depth of pupils' recording of their work. Teaching in the subject is supported well by field trips in the local area and elsewhere. The residential trip to Menai makes a significant contribution to the development of geographical knowledge and skills through beach and river studies. It also promotes pupils' social development and their appreciation of environmental issues. Computer software is used to increase pupils' knowledge of world climates, although computers were not seen in use in classrooms during the inspection. Teaching in the subject makes a very good contribution to the development of literacy skills. Pupils have numerous opportunities to write at length about issues such as traffic congestion outside the school gates.

HISTORY

141. Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is similar to that expected for their age. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a suitable awareness of the differences between the past and the present. For example, they know that modern toys and games are much different from those used in

Victorian times. Through their study of famous people from the past, such as Florence Nightingale, they distinguish competently between the past and the present. They appreciate, for instance, that it took her fourteen days to travel to Scutari and that she worked by lamplight in a rat-infested hospital.

142. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a clear understanding of periods in history they have studied, such as the Ancient Greeks. They explain clearly how society was organised and that Sparta was a monarchy, whilst Athens was governed democratically. They examine artefacts, such as vases, to establish the type of armour and weapons used in battles. They clearly understand how the lives of individuals in history, such as Doctor Barnardo, can bring about significant changes in society.
143. Pupils enjoy history and are curious about past events. All, including those with special educational needs, tackle investigative research with enthusiasm and particularly enjoy activities that involve role-play. This is reflected through a wide range of activities, such as pretending to be Victorian schoolchildren or a soldier in the First World War writing a diary. The quality of the research and creative writing produced by pupils at Key Stage 2 demonstrates a very mature attitude to their work. Their enthusiasm makes a positive contribution to the standards they reach.
144. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. Planning throughout the school is good and teachers evaluate the success of lessons on a weekly basis. This good practice ensures that pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, achieve as well as, and sometimes better, than expected for their age. On a small number of occasions, planning reflects an uneven balance between investigation and creative writing. However, the subject makes a significant contribution overall to the development of literacy skills. Teachers throughout the school provide regular opportunities for pupils to listen to others, provide ideas of their own and write at length about historical topics. Although always satisfactory, teaching is occasionally less effective where inconsistent management of pupils leads to some restlessness and slows the progress of lessons. Planning ensures good links with other subjects. For example, pupils study the French coastline in their topic on the First World War. They extend their numeracy skills through the use of time lines and use computer software for research work.
145. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and supports the scheme of work with a good variety of visits and visitors at all stages. She has made a good start in adjusting planning to meet the revised requirements of the National Curriculum. The school is in a strong position to maintain and improve standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. The provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school has addressed the problems reported at that time and, by the end of each key stage, pupils now achieve similar standards to seven and eleven year olds in other schools. Because of the improvements, younger pupils are acquiring skills at an earlier stage than was previously the case. The staff have improved their knowledge, skills and confidence, with both computers and software, and this has had a positive impact on the pupils' learning.
147. There has also been a substantial investment in the technology in terms of machines around the school, and a brand new computer suite which was only opened in the two weeks prior to this inspection. The evident delight and concentration of younger pupils learning how to use the networked system, logging in and out, and writing in a word-processing package, was a good indication of future success. The range of software and extra equipment has been improved and many innovations are ready to be incorporated, as soon as teachers and pupils become familiar with the system.
148. At Key Stage 1, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are very skilful with the computer mouse and keyboard. They understand how to click in appropriate places to

achieve the screen 'window' needed and how to type into the program. They understand how to save work and how to print it when necessary. They enter, store and retrieve information capably. During the inspection, pupils were rarely observed using the computers in their classrooms, but discussions with them revealed a satisfactory level of use as a rule. Pupils with special educational needs use programs appropriately to help them overcome difficulties with reading and number. Pupils also understand that information can be gained from other sources and effective use is made of video, for example in history, to show pupils what it was like in hospitals, before Florence Nightingale's time.

149. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils use computers competently to reinforce and develop their literacy skills, for instance re-drafting work, in English. They make good use of data-handling to record the findings of their surveys, for example in a study of how they all travel to school. They entered their data and manipulated it to make graphs and pie charts. Some of them decided that it was 'easier to see the percentages, using the pie chart, than by other ways'. This experience makes a positive contribution to pupils' numeracy. Recently, some have had an appropriate opportunity to use the Internet to search for information about their rainforest, and Victorians topics, at the weekly computer club. They have satisfactory knowledge about transmission of information through e-mail, but have not had an opportunity to use it at school yet, because the computer network is so new.
150. Throughout the key stage, pupils develop skills to use graphics programs and manipulate images at a suitable level. They make repeating patterns, using 'copy', 'paste' and 'edit' functions. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. The school has provided a laptop computer for a pupil with specific needs, who helps others in the class to use computers successfully, because he is so familiar with the technology. This greatly enhances his self-esteem.
151. The school has a digital camera, which is used frequently, but pupils have not incorporated its use into their work as yet. They make very effective use of different fonts in a range of sizes and colours to enhance work in several subjects, often for cover illustrations, as well as threaded through the text. Computers are also used effectively in mathematics, as a quick-fire, mental agility exercise against the machine and the clock. The pupils in one lesson were bursting to answer, as the computer generated problems for them to solve. Pupils have had some limited use of control technology when using the programmable robots to move at different angles and distances. However, this area of the programme of study is insufficiently developed at present. The school recognises this and has already purchased probes and sensors for use in the suite, as soon as pupils and teachers become familiar with these resources.
152. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers are honing their own skills and will start a course of government training in the New Year, which is designed to enhance and improve their computer skills further. They already use the technology to produce high-quality resources for pupils, such as writing frames, booklet covers and classroom displays. This reflects, complements and increases the value that teachers place on pupils' work.
153. Teachers are coming to grips with the new ways of working in the computer suite, trying out how best to ensure pupils optimise their time there. The school recognises that it will be important to consider how to keep all pupils involved, especially when large classes use the room. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, keen and experienced, and leads very well. His grasp of the subject is very helpful to the staff as a whole and raises their confidence, which, in turn, has a positive impact on pupils' learning. His enthusiasm and commitment are effective in enabling the school to carry out planned developments successfully. Whilst, overall, standards in the school are reaching the nationally expected level, the subject is generally advancing rapidly.

MUSIC

154. Overall, the standards of work in music match those seen in other schools at both key stages. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and there has been a change of approach to the teaching of the subject. There is now a specialist, part-time teacher, who teaches all music lessons in the mobile classroom. This ensures that lessons do not disturb others in school. However, pupils have to walk through the school, taking time to get to there and this sometimes leads to a slow start to the lesson.
155. On the whole, the subject has maintained a satisfactory status since the last inspection. All pupils make satisfactory progress overall, including those with special educational needs. However, some elements of the National Curriculum have not yet been implemented fully. There is too little opportunity for pupils to explore, choose, and organise their own sounds, at Key Stage 1, and to improvise and combine sounds, exploring melodic and rhythmic material in performance at Key Stage 2. The purchase of some new instruments has helped the situation a little, but there is still insufficient untuned percussion to allow pupils to compose effectively.
156. At Key Stage 1, pupils sing repetitive songs with some degree of control. They use hand actions to keep a steady beat and demonstrate a developing sense of tempo, as they respond to changes, such as the tune slowing down towards the end. There is no evidence of the understanding of dynamics, as they sing at the same sound level throughout. It is evident from the few lessons that were seen at this early stage of the year that pupils are used to playing instruments, starting and stopping their playing competently, according to signals from the conductor, and many keeping good time with the patterns they play.
157. At Key Stage 2, pupils competently play the same range of untuned percussion instruments to accompany their songs. They use the songbooks from the published music scheme and many older pupils read the notation alongside the words. There are several musically talented pupils who take instrumental lessons with peripatetic teachers. This now takes place at appropriate times and no longer disrupts other learning. During a lesson with older pupils, five volunteered to sing solo parts to a Chinese song. Most of them sang clearly and expressively. Others played quite complicated patterns on the instruments, but no opportunity was given for them to try alternative sounds or arrangements.
158. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and has some good points. The teacher uses the published scheme well to ensure that appropriate levels of skills are developed. There is good use of humour with the older pupils and a supportive manner with the younger children. Lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace, so that pupils' interest is maintained. Classroom control is generally successful and pupils know how to behave in their lessons. They enjoy music and want to play and sing. The activities are organised well but are too structured to allow pupils to experiment with sounds and develop music of their own. For example, whilst singing a song about a horse, one pupil noticed they could use the coconut shells from an earlier song to make the 'clipping' sound but the opportunity for development was missed. The choice and range of instruments is limited. In some cases, classes are large and there are insufficient instruments, of a high enough quality, for enough pupils to have sufficient access for investigation and performance.
159. The role of the co-ordinator is insufficiently developed, at present. There are no formal assessment procedures, but pupils are observed and heard, informally, for reporting at a later date. There is a wide range of musical opportunities for pupils to enjoy, away from lessons, such as giving concerts, learning Christmas carols, singing at the Irish evening and playing the recorder. They also work on their music for special events and celebrations, such as First Communion. These opportunities make a effective additional contribution to their learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

160. By the end of both key stages, pupils' performance is above that expected for their age and the school has improved the standards reported in the last inspection. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
161. There were no opportunities to observe direct teaching at Key Stage 1. Judgements are based on the performance of children in reception class and younger pupils who left Key Stage 1 in the summer and have just begun Year 3. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils show increased confidence and good physical control. They develop a series of movements in time to music and demonstrate good levels of interpretation and poise. They show a good awareness of space and use it safely. They are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of exercise and the need for co-operation with a partner.
162. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate a more sophisticated approach to movement through dance and gymnastics. For example, in one lesson, pupils in Year 4 used their knowledge of forces in science to interpret the movement of a machine. They worked very co-operatively in groups of six, showing good synchronisation and appreciation of tension. By the time they reach the age of eleven, most pupils devise their own sequences of gymnastic movement and perform them well, incorporating good style and technique in their work. A small minority of boys, however, are self-conscious when interpreting music, and this inhibits the quality of their movement. The majority of pupils are competent swimmers by the time they leave the school.
163. The attitude of pupils to physical education is consistently good and often very good. They enjoy the activities planned for them, participate with enthusiasm and generally behave well. This is reflected in the good attendance at extra-curricular sports and dance clubs. They develop responsibility and self-control and they learn to participate with a sense of fair play. There are regular interruptions to lessons in the hall because the layout of the building dictates that classes often have to pass through there. This leads to some lapses in concentration but the majority of pupils remain focused on what they are doing.
164. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was judged to be good or better in 75 per cent of lessons, and there were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers plan appropriate activities for all areas of the curriculum, using the guidelines in the scheme of work. They follow lesson plans carefully and this ensures that the lesson objectives are met satisfactorily. The main strength of teaching is teachers' insistence on the quality of pupils' performance. To achieve this, they stop the lesson at opportune moments to praise high standards and ask good performers to demonstrate for the rest of the class. This raises pupils' awareness of their own learning, encourages them to try harder and ensures higher standards. Teachers and pupils dress appropriately for lessons. This promotes good attitudes and a positive ethos for learning.
165. Since the last inspection, a new co-ordinator has been appointed. She has introduced a different scheme of work and has involved staff in training to familiarise themselves with its use. Consequently, there are improved systems in place for planning and assessment. Teachers are confident and well organised and this has helped to raise standards. The co-ordinator leads the subject very well. The scheme of work that she has introduced provides opportunities for pupils to achieve well in sports, gymnastics and dance. Teachers generously give up their time to provide a very wide range of extra-curricular sports clubs and teams compete against other schools in sports such as rugby. These additional activities make a very positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development.