

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wallasey

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105073

Headteacher: Mr B Lyonette

Reporting inspector: Mr F P Ravey  
11371

Dates of inspection: 16-19 October 2000

Inspection number: 224673

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Voluntary aided

School category: Infant and junior

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wheatland Lane  
Wallasey  
Merseyside

Postcode: CH44 7ED

Telephone number: 0151 638 3919

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Father Michael Murray

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

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Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr F Ravey 11371	Registered inspector	Information technology English as an additional language	What sort of school Results and achievements Teaching Finance
Mr K Ross 19361	Lay inspector	None	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and development) How well the school cares for its pupils Partnership with parents
Mrs B Clarke 30823	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History	Assessment
Mrs S Gordon 14816	Team inspector	Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mrs K McArthur 30935	Team inspector	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Science Art and design	How well the school is led and managed
Mr A Watson 7222	Team inspector	Equal opportunities English Music	Curricular and other opportunities

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Joseph's Primary School serves the Roman Catholic parish of Our Lady and St Joseph in Wallasey, near Birkenhead. Three hundred and sixteen pupils, aged four to 11, are taught in 13 classes from Reception to Year 6. Most year groups are divided into two classes containing pupils of similar ability. However, two year groups have only one class each. This is a result of decreasing numbers of pupils attending the school owing to a fall in birth rate in the local area. A further 16 children are taught in the school's nursery class for half-day sessions. Children's attainment when starting the nursery class varies widely but on balance it is below average. The vast majority of pupils are white. No pupils are at the early stages of learning the English language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is slightly below the national average. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school has identified a range of special needs amongst its pupils. These needs include moderate learning difficulties and behavioural difficulties. Local unemployment is much higher than the national average and the local area suffers from considerable social and economic deprivation. Nearly half the pupils attending the school are entitled to free school meals, well above the average for schools nationally.

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

The school is becoming increasingly effective in helping its pupils to attain standards which match nationally expected levels. It provides teaching of good quality and is very effective in meeting its pupils' personal and social needs. Good leadership and management contribute significantly to these positive educational outcomes. However, the quality and range of opportunities offered in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and information technology is restricted and standards in mathematics, at age seven, and information technology, at age 11, still need improving. The cost of educating pupils at St Joseph's is considerably above the national average but the school still gives sound value for money.

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

- Pupils attain standards by the age of 11 that are much better than those achieved in similar schools.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- Teaching is mostly of good quality.
- Behaviour and relationships are very good.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' moral development.
- The school is very successful in living out its Mission Statement.

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

- Standards in mathematics by the age of seven.
- Standards in information technology by the age of 11.
- The organisation of the curriculum in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, to improve the quality of pupils' learning opportunities.
- The use of assessment to set learning targets for pupils.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Since then, standards have improved significantly in English, mathematics and science. The rate of attendance has also improved to above average levels. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, especially for pupils aged from seven to 11. The school has addressed successfully most of the other key issues identified in the previous inspection report. A good range of assessment procedures is now in place. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved well. Improved procedures for monitoring teaching and pupils' learning are helping to ensure at least satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. Health and safety issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been dealt with satisfactorily. However, standards in information technology remain below the expected levels at age 11 and measures to oversee and support the skills of teachers who are subject coordinators still need further attention in many subjects. On balance, the school has made good improvement since its last inspection.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	D	C	C	A
mathematics	E	E	D	B
science	E*	D	C	A

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

The table shows that, in 1999, pupils aged 11 achieved standards in English and science which matched national averages and which were well above the average for similar schools nationally. In mathematics, standards were below the national average but above the average for pupils in similar schools nationally. These comparisons with similar schools show that pupils are achieving well in relation to their levels of attainment when they start school. More recent results, from Year 2000, show a continued trend of improvement in all three subjects.

Children start school in the nursery class with attainment that is below average in all aspects of their learning except mathematics, where attainment is well below average. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are at the expected levels in English and science at ages seven and 11 and in mathematics at age 11. Standards in mathematics are lower than expected at age seven owing to pupils' lower attainment when they start school, although standards are improving significantly. In other subjects, standards in information technology are at the expected level at the age of seven but remain below the expected level at age 11 despite good progress now being made in many lessons. Standards are at the expected levels at age seven and age 11 in art, music and physical education. Judgements on standards at these ages could not be made in design and technology, geography and history because insufficient work in these subjects was seen during the inspection. In the small amount of work seen, standards in these subjects were above average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes. They clearly enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good throughout the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils make the most of opportunities they are given to take responsibility. Relationships in the school are very good and form the basis of successful teaching and learning.
Attendance	Good. Above the national average.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching of literacy is good throughout the school, helping pupils to develop their skills effectively. Teaching of numeracy is satisfactory and is improving with the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy in daily lessons. Occasionally, work provided in mathematics lessons is not well matched to pupils' learning needs and progress suffers. Teaching of science is good, helping pupils to develop their skills well. Teaching of information technology was good in lessons observed during the inspection but occasionally teachers lack the confidence to move forward the learning of high attainers at a suitable pace. With these exceptions, teachers meet the needs of all pupils. Teaching of other subjects was good in the limited amount of lessons that could be observed. Teaching for young children in the new foundation stage of learning is good, helping these children to develop basic skills effectively. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They concentrate well and tackle their work eagerly. When working together, they share ideas well. When given the opportunity to organise their own work, they do so effectively. During the inspection 52 per cent of lessons were of good quality; 16 per cent were very good; 32 were satisfactory. No lessons were less than satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory range of good quality learning opportunities in English, mathematics, science and information technology but in other subjects the range of learning opportunities is too restricted and this has a negative effect upon the quality of provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils receive work which matches closely their learning needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school provides successfully for spiritual, social and cultural development. It is very successful in providing pupils with moral guidance. This contributes strongly to pupils' personal and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. It is a very happy and harmonious community.

The school works well in partnership with parents, doing all it can to involve them in their children's education. It is beginning to apply best value principles to spending decisions.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership. The headteacher has developed a staff team which is very committed to the school's aims and values. As a result, all staff work hard and effectively to improve standards and the quality of pupils' education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very committed to the good of the school, its staff and pupils. It fulfils its statutory obligations in all major respects.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This has improved since the last inspection but still needs strengthening in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
The strategic use of resources	The governing body makes satisfactory use of its resources, managing these well in difficult financial circumstances beyond its control.

The school has an adequate number of teachers and other staff. The accommodation is bright, welcoming and very well maintained by the caretaker and cleaning staff. It has been improved considerably recently with a new computer suite and school library being opened. The school generally has enough resources for learning. The quality of its computers is good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• The progress made by their children.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching and school leadership.</li> <li>• The way in which the school is helping children in their personal and social development.</li> <li>• The fact that children are expected to work hard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents expressed concerns about the amount of homework given and about the activities provided outside of lessons.</li> <li>• Some also expressed concern about the time allocated to subjects other than English, mathematics and religious education.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents. They found that the amount of homework now being given is satisfactory and that the range of activities provided out of lessons is also satisfactory. However, inspectors agree that too little time is allocated to some subjects, especially art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education and this restricts the quality of learning opportunities available in these subjects.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and achievements

##### Starting school and attainment at the start of Year 1

1. Children start school in the nursery with a broad range of attainments but on balance attainment is below average in literacy and in personal and social development. In mathematics, attainment is well below average. Children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes owing to effective teaching and to a curriculum that provides them with a good range of practical learning opportunities. By the start of Year 1, children have achieved well and have attained the nationally recognised levels of learning in personal and social development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. However, attainment in mathematics remains the weakest area. Children's low starting point in this area of learning means that although they make satisfactory progress, a significant minority have not attained the expected level at the start of Year 1.

##### Results at the age of seven

2. Over the three years from 1997 to 1999, attainment by the age of seven, as measured by National Curriculum test results, was below average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics. **Work seen during the inspection amongst pupils in Year 2 indicates that standards are improving, especially in reading and writing, where standards are now at the levels expected nationally. This is due to effective teaching of basic skills and to the effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. In mathematics, standards remain below the expected level at age seven although the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to benefit pupils' learning.** Pupils start Year 1 with slightly lower attainment in mathematics than in reading and writing. Although they make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, their attainment remains below average by the age of seven. Compared to pupils in similar schools nationally, pupils at St Joseph's do much better in reading and writing and perform at similar levels in mathematics.

##### Results at the age of 11

3. National test results for 11 year olds over the three years from 1997 to 1999 show an improving picture in English, mathematics and science, with attainment matching the national average in English and science in 1999 although attainment in mathematics remained below average that year. **Work seen during the inspection indicates that improvements continue to be made in all three subjects. Standards amongst the oldest pupils are at the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. The strongest attainment is in science and English but mathematics is improving most quickly, due to the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.** Improvements made in the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection contribute strongly to the improving picture in standards attained. However, in a minority of mathematics lessons pupils do not achieve the standards they should when work is not closely matched to their abilities. Compared to pupils in similar schools nationally, pupils at St Joseph's attain very much higher

standards in English and science, and higher standards in mathematics.

#### The school's targets

4. The school exceeded its targets for the attainment of 11 year olds in English and mathematics last year although the target for mathematics was rather low. The school expects to exceed the targets it has set for English and mathematics this year. Inspection evidence indicates that this should be the case.

#### Standards of work seen in literacy during the inspection

5. By the age of seven, average and higher attaining pupils read a range of texts with accuracy and good understanding. They have developed a good range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words. Most pupils read with good expression and growing confidence. By the age of 11, most pupils can search and retrieve information from reference books to support their studies in various subjects. The great majority read fluently, accurately and with good understanding.
6. In writing, by the age of seven, most pupils express their ideas in a sequence of sentences and use full stops and capital letters accurately. They recognise different types of writing, for example knowing the difference between writing a story and writing a recipe. By the age of 11, pupils often use imaginative vocabulary, developing their ideas in an orderly way. Spelling, handwriting and presentation are satisfactory.

#### Standards of work seen in numeracy

7. By the age of seven, most pupils can halve or double a number, add and subtract to 20, and a minority can compute successfully using bigger numbers. They recognise odd and even numbers and properties such as corners, faces and edges in two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. By the age of 11, pupils can satisfactorily add, subtract, multiply and divide when calculating problems on paper. They multiply decimals and whole numbers by 10, 100 and 1,000. Pupils correctly construct tables and graphs, interpreting accurately the information contained in them.

#### Standards of work seen in science

8. By the age of seven, pupils know how their senses help them to be aware of the world around them. They use their senses of taste and smell to identify different foods. By the age of 11, most pupils know that exercise causes the heart to beat faster, and that this increases the pulse rate and causes the blood to flow more quickly. They can explain how the heart functions and name its main parts. They plan and refine their own experiments, predict outcomes and explain the reasons behind these.

#### Other subjects

9. Standards in information technology are at the expected level at the age of seven but remain below the expected level at age 11. The school has made considerable improvements in its provision of information technology but these have not yet had time to have sufficient impact amongst the oldest pupils so as to raise standards to the expected level. Standards are at the expected levels at age seven and age 11 in art, music and physical education. Judgements on standards at ages seven and 11 could not be made in design and technology, geography and history because insufficient work in these subjects was seen during the inspection. In the small amount of work seen, standards were above average. For example, from examples of pupils' work, good

standards were seen in models involving levers, made in Key Stage 1. The limited time devoted to art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education limits the quality of pupils' learning experiences in these subjects.

### How well pupils achieve

10. Pupils start their education with below average attainment. Work seen during the inspection shows that the oldest pupils are attaining average levels in English, mathematics and science. This indicates that pupils mostly make good progress in these subjects during their time at St Joseph's school. This is true for pupils of all levels of prior attainment. Teachers demand a good level of work, mostly setting work that enables pupils to improve their learning. Occasionally, in mathematics and information technology, this is not the case and pupils do not progress as well as they should. In other subjects, pupils generally make good progress, although inspectors saw much less work in these subjects.
11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their work, even though their attainment is below those expected for pupils of their age. Progress is particularly good when pupils are given additional specialist support at Key Stage 1 in order to help them improve their skills of literacy.

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

#### Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to school and their response to opportunities for personal development are good. Behaviour and relationships are very good. The good standards identified in the previous inspection have been maintained and these remain a strong feature of the school. The vast majority of parents indicate that their children like coming to school. Conversations with pupils held during the inspection confirm this. Children under six develop good attitudes and respond very well to very effective provision in the nursery and reception classes. They leave their parents or carers readily to greet their friends and join in classroom activities. This is due largely to very effective procedures for introducing children to school and its routines. Discussions with pupils in Key Stage 2 indicate that they are proud of their school and appreciate the quality of learning and personal advice they are given by teachers and other school staff.
13. The school sets a very high priority on good behaviour and has high expectations of its pupils. This is positively reflected in the very good behaviour of pupils both in lessons and around the school. No incidents of bullying were seen or reported during the inspection. In the year prior to the inspection there were three fixed term exclusions involving two pupils. However, this in no way reflects the high standards of behaviour seen in the school. Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils are courteous, polite and cheerful and greet adults with a smile or "Hello!". They appreciate and show consideration for other people's feelings and respect their values and beliefs. They show respect for their own and other people's property.

14. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils take responsibility for tasks around the school, such as collecting and returning registers and routine classroom tasks. Older pupils help in the nursery and in the Key Stage 1 playground, helping with younger children. They also act as lunchtime helpers in and around the dining hall and some answer the telephone politely in the school office. Many older pupils have established good work habits and can work independently, organising their work well.

#### Attendance

15. Attendance is above the national average. This is particularly good for a school in an area of social deprivation. Pupils say that they like coming to school. This desire to attend is a good reflection of pupils' attitudes to school and of the school's success in living out its Mission Statement. Nearly all pupils arrive for school on time and as a result lessons start promptly.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Then, 16 per cent of teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory compared with no teaching being judged unsatisfactory during this inspection. Only four per cent of lessons were judged to be very good during the 1996 inspection, compared to 16 per cent being very good this time. Another 52 per cent of lessons observed during this inspection were of good quality. This improved quality of teaching is particularly evident at Key Stage 2, where weaknesses were identified during the previous inspection. However, teaching is having a strong impact in raising standards at both key stages. This is especially true of standards in literacy. About two thirds of lessons seen during the inspection were in literacy, numeracy and science.

#### Teaching in the Foundation Stage

17. Most lessons seen were of good quality. In addition, some very good teaching was seen. The quality of teaching is good in both the nursery and reception year groups. A strong feature of the teaching is the good quality of support staff and the good use made of their talents. This allows children to have that extra individual attention which helps them to make the most of learning opportunities. Teachers have a good understanding of the way in which young children learn and this is reflected in the quality of practical, lively and interesting learning activities they plan. Very good relationships help children to feel secure and make them all the more eager to learn. Strong and effective attention is paid to developing pupils' social and personal skills. For example, 'snack time' is a pleasant, orderly occasion in which children learn good manners. One afternoon group were observed sitting patiently, waiting their turn whilst some children gave out milk and apples. All the children said "Thank you!" as they were given their snack before sitting and eating sensibly. Teaching of the important basic skills of literacy and numeracy is done effectively, with children provided with well designed learning activities which encourage them to develop the basic skills.

#### Teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2

18. Teachers plan and prepare carefully in order to provide pupils with tasks that catch their interest and which challenge them to learn. This is mostly done successfully although, on occasions, tasks set in numeracy lessons at both key stages are too similar to challenge pupils of different ability levels. This results in teaching of mathematics being less effective than teaching of literacy and science, with high attaining pupils sometimes making less progress than they should. However, good implementation of

the recently introduced National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to have a beneficial effect on the teaching of numeracy and is leading to pupils being offered more challenging and better focused opportunities for learning.

19. In literacy lessons, the way in which teachers match work to pupils' learning needs is a strength. Teachers have good subject knowledge of literacy and implement the National Literacy Strategy well. For example, in a very good Year 5 lesson, the teacher was quick to focus pupils' attention on the different emphasis to be placed upon improving work when producing a first draft of writing as distinct from how one should edit a final draft. Her knowledge and understanding of the craft of story writing was also evident in guidance given to pupils in their work on display in the classroom. As a result, pupils learned very well in this lesson and the writing on display was of a good standard. Support staff provide good assistance to lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 3 in order to help them develop their reading and writing skills. This work is well planned by teachers to ensure that tasks challenge pupils and hold their interest. This strong match of work to pupils' learning needs is also a feature of teaching in science, especially at Key Stage 2, where, together with effective investigative work, it results in good progress.
20. In subjects other than English, mathematics and science, much less teaching was seen but in those lessons observed, teaching was usually of good quality. For example, in information technology lessons observed at Key Stage 2, teachers planned carefully to ensure that pupils developed their skills in accordance with national guidance. In a very good geography lesson in Year 3, the teacher had created a good climate for learning, enabling pupils to contribute confidently to discussions, readily sharing their ideas. The lesson progressed at a brisk pace, resulting in pupils maintaining interest and concentration. By the end of the lesson, pupils had made very good progress, developing a clear understanding of land usage in the local area.
21. Occasionally, teachers do not manage time effectively in lessons. This is very occasionally exacerbated by timetabled lessons being over-long, for example in science. As a result, pupils lose interest and concentration, making less progress than they should. Conversely, although literacy sessions are longer than the stipulated hour, time is used well prior to the formal literacy hour starting, in order to help pupils develop their skills and enjoyment of reading. For example, in Year 3, the pre-literacy hour session was used very effectively to encourage some pupils to work independently at reading tasks whilst the teacher focused attention effectively on developing the skills of a small group. Very occasionally in mathematics, pupils spend too long working in a large group. This results in them working less productively and in them failing to make enough progress in the lesson. Insufficient progress is made by high attaining pupils in some information technology lessons when teachers do not provide them with a suitable level of challenge.
22. A strong and effective feature of teaching throughout the school is the very good quality of relationships established by teachers with their pupils. This results in pupils being secure, happy and eager to work hard. Teachers always try hard to be pleasant, even when correcting behaviour. Such very good relationships are evident whether pupils are being told a story, for example in Year 1, or when they are working in the computer suite. A real feeling of care for pupils is evident and this results in pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes to learning.

#### Teaching of pupils with special educational needs

23. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. They are given work which

matches their learning needs. Specialist support teachers demand a good level of work but still form good relationships which ensure that pupils are well motivated. As a result, they learn well. An example of this was observed when a pupil was given individual learning support from a teacher with particular knowledge and understanding of a support programme for reading. The pupil worked very hard, helped by the teacher's calm manner and good technical knowledge of how to teach reading.

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

### The Curriculum in the Foundation Stage

24. The curriculum for children at the new foundation stage (in the nursery and reception classes) is based appropriately on the nationally agreed programme for children this age. In both classes, the programme is well planned to support the pupils' progress towards the early learning goals identified for them.

### The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6

25. The school provides a broad curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6, consisting of all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. However, almost two thirds of yearly curriculum time is allocated to English, mathematics and religious education. Whilst this means that teachers can focus strongly upon developing pupils' skills in these subjects, and has contributed to improvements in standards, it also means that there is insufficient time for ensuring that effective learning opportunities are provided in some other subjects. This is particularly the case in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. Yearly time allocations for these subjects are significantly less than those found in most primary schools. Time allocated to science is also below average but teachers mostly make good use of this. However, the time allocated to some science lessons is too long, resulting in pupils losing concentration and the momentum for learning being lost. Time allocated to information technology has been low but has improved considerably this year, resulting in pupils receiving valuable regular opportunities to develop their skills and in their making good progress in lessons. The allocation of subject time for art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education in half-termly 'blocks' means that teachers can make little provision for revising skills regularly in these subjects. The concerns expressed by a few parents about the amount of time allocated to subjects other than English, mathematics and religious education is justified. Whilst there was no evidence during the inspection of this having a negative impact upon standards in work seen, pupils' learning opportunities in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education are restricted.
26. Weekly lesson timetables reflect the yearly time allocations, with a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and with much less emphasis in some classes on subjects such as art, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education. This restricts the number of learning opportunities provided for pupils. Having focused greatly and effectively on improving standards in literacy and numeracy in recent years, the school now recognises that the balance of learning opportunities within the curriculum is a priority for development, Senior management is now consulting with other staff in order to draw up a programme for improvement.
27. The school has effectively implemented the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and has established effective strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Homework is set regularly. For example, Year 6 pupils are to



complete an assignment on the circulatory system during the half term holiday. Reading partnership arrangements between home and school contribute well to pupils' progress.

### Special educational needs

28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Since the last inspection, rigorous annual assessment procedures have been introduced to identify pupils with special educational needs. Once identified, the coordinator for special educational needs works effectively with teachers to provide clear, well focused individual education plans for pupils and gives guidance to teachers on their implementation. These plans are of a good quality, precise, with manageable and achievable targets and realistic strategies for achieving them. They are good working documents. Teachers use them in lessons to provide work at a suitable level for pupils with special educational needs. Pupil files are well kept with thorough and ongoing records of all aspects of work. Reviews of progress and meetings with parents are clearly documented on a termly basis.

### Activities outside of lessons

29. The range of learning opportunities is enhanced through a varied programme of extracurricular activities which is well attended by boys and girls. Members of staff give willingly of their time to support a range of aesthetic, cultural, sporting, intellectual and creative activities. The Breakfast Club hosted by the school is well attended and effectively contributes to the social development of the pupils. The pupils have visited Barnston Dale outdoor pursuits centre and Irby Quarry. Visits are arranged to art galleries and museums. The school welcomes visitors from local services including the community policeman, rail, fire and water services. Lessons in personal, social and health education effectively address issues related to drug misuse and sex education. Pupils are given essential information and the necessary understanding to enable them to make informed decisions. The school has strong links with Saint Mary's College secondary school. This helps pupils feel positive about transferring schools at the age of 11. The school benefits from the skills of two teacher-training students from Liverpool Hope University each year.

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

30. The school provides well for its pupils' personal and social development. Provision for moral development is very good. Provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is good. This shows that the school is maintaining the good quality that was found at the time of its previous inspection.
31. Provision for the spiritual development of all pupils is good. Through the provision of weekly assemblies and suitable opportunities in lessons, pupils are encouraged to pray and reflect quietly. Each classroom has its own special area for prayer and reflection. Opportunities to develop feelings of spirituality are taken well in lessons, as demonstrated in a Reception class literacy lesson when pupils listened enrapt to the story of 'Mr Taddle's Hat'. This was also the case in a Year 1 lesson when, during the Story of Creation, the teacher made the various descriptions of the animals exciting and uplifting. The quality of display throughout the school makes the walls and corridors visually interesting. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the wonder of nature such as the growth of various plants as shown in a display 'What makes a plant', cared for by Year 6 pupils and in examples of pupils' poetry entitled 'What makes a rainbow'.

32. Provision for pupils' moral development is firmly rooted in the school's Mission Statement. Respect for others and positive caring relationships are central to the school's way of doing things. All staff provide pupils with a very good example of sensitive and caring behaviour. Pupils are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong. Classes have rules displayed, appropriate to each age group and written in a suitable language. The pupils have been fully involved in framing 'class promises' for the school year. These are displayed throughout the school. Many of the promises relate to moral issues and show pupils have strongly developed moral values.
33. Good provision for developing the skills of social responsibility is evident in all aspects of school life. Pupils are encouraged to be helpful to adults and to each other. Older pupils have special responsibilities such as setting out physical education equipment for use by younger pupils and befriending and caring for younger pupils in the Key Stage 1 playground. They carry out these responsibilities very sensibly. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups. They listen to others' points of view. For example, this was observed to be very effective in a Year 6 history lesson about Greek wars and warfare. The school's Breakfast Club, which provides pupils with cereals, toast and a range of games, is also an effective aspect of social provision. Pupils raise money for charity, providing for the less fortunate. A satisfactory range of educational visits including one to an outdoor pursuits centre and to Liverpool John Moores University for sports activities, is an effective aspect of social provision.
34. Provision for cultural development is good. It is promoted well through subjects and through an interesting range of educational visits linked to pupils' work. For instance, as part of their work on local geography, Year 4 pupils visited a mountain in North Wales. They also made a visit to The Maritime Museum and Tate Gallery in Liverpool. Visitors to school, such as Levi Tafari, a local poet, and Kim Hartley, a local artist, and an orchestral group help pupils to appreciate the rich diversity of cultures and practices which contribute to our society. Pupils learn to recognise and respect the beliefs of other faiths, for example when they learn about the Jewish religion, as shown in the attractive and thoughtful displays about Judaism seen around the school.

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

### Care and welfare

35. The school cares well for its pupils. Staff know pupils well and value them as individuals. The school is a caring community in which pupils' learning, self discipline and moral development are all given equal consideration. Parents are appreciative of the care and support provided. They feel the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible and believe that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. Inspectors support this view.
36. Procedures for child protection are very good and meet statutory requirements. There are two named coordinators for child protection, both of whom are members of the senior management team. There is an appropriate child protection policy and all staff have received training in how to identify and react to child protection issues.
37. The school is a safe place and staff have developed good working procedures to report health and safety concerns and to record any remedial action taken. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. However, the school still needs to complete risk assessment for all areas of the school. Regular safety checks of equipment are completed and fire drills occur at regular intervals. These are recorded correctly. Regular reviews are made of the condition of the premises and any issues

arising are dealt with promptly and effectively. The school encourages healthy living for its pupils, for example by discouraging pupils from eating sweets and by arranging for apples to be made available at the morning break. Good procedures are in place to care for pupils who become ill or get hurt whilst at school. Sufficient staff are trained in first aid procedures. Injuries are recorded systematically.

38. Procedures for helping children to settle in to the nursery and reception class are good, ensuring that children enjoy coming to school. Pupils are well supported in the transition from one stage of their education to the next. An appropriate programme is in place to ease pupils' transfer to secondary education. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory overall. Attendance is monitored well but the procedures for recording unauthorised absence in registers are not implemented consistently. The measures in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good and are applied consistently throughout the school. Rewards and sanctions are well understood and accepted by pupils. Lunchtime routines are well established and the midday supervisors work very effectively to ensure that the lunchtime is a pleasant social occasion.
39. The previous report highlighted concerns about the school's procedures for recording incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The school has addressed this concern well. For example, staff, parents and children have been involved in drawing up a code of behaviour for playtimes. Any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recorded.
40. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. No instances of bullying were observed during the inspection week. The school effectively deals with any bullying concerns as part of its health education programme. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare and if any do occur, they are confident that these will be dealt with properly. Parents comment appreciatively about the school's success in this. Teachers know pupils well and monitor their personal and social development effectively.

#### Assessment of pupils' progress

41. Procedures for monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are good. The school administers a comprehensive range of tests and assessments, which enable detailed records of pupils' academic progress in English, mathematics and science to be maintained. These are well used in mathematics and English to assess pupils' progress over periods of time and to identify groups of pupils who require additional support. This aspect of assessment shows good improvement since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are now consistently applied. They are particularly effective for the early identification of pupils with special education needs, and also for Key Stage 2 pupils of just below average ability, who then receive additional teacher support. The procedures for the assessment of children in the foundation stage are good. Information gathered from assessments made at ages three and five is used well to plan appropriate work for them.
42. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is still under-developed. Test results are effectively analysed to chart the progress of individual pupils and to compare the schools' performance against the national picture. However, there is insufficient detailed analysis of pupils' answers to test questions to help identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning.
43. In science, there are good procedures to assess pupils' attainment at the end of each module of work. In other subjects, assessment opportunities are not identified in

teachers' medium and short-term plans. This results in insufficient information being available to make any required modifications to curriculum plans or to help teachers plan work that builds accurately on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils' work is marked regularly. Supportive written comments are made but there are few comments to provide pupils with constructive guidance about ways in which they might improve their work.

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

### Parents' views of the school

44. Parents are strongly supportive of the school's work. They are particularly appreciative of provision for their children's welfare and education. They believe that the school promotes good behaviour, good attitudes and a Christian ethos and values. The school has continued to build well on its positive partnership with parents since the previous inspection.
45. Nearly all parents who expressed opinions during the inspection were supportive of the school. However, a small but significant minority have concerns about the amount of time the school allows in the timetable for subjects such as history and art. They feel that children who may not be successful in maths and English, could, if given sufficient opportunity, excel in other subjects. Inspection findings support these concerns.

### Information for parents

46. Appropriate home/school agreements are in place. These clearly identify the responsibilities of the school, of parents and of pupils. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. For example, the school prospectus is well presented and gives parents a useful insight into school life. The governors' annual report contains useful information about the work of the school and the governing body. However, there are some omissions in this document. The school intends to make the necessary amendments. Suitable newsletters written in an appropriately friendly style are sent home regularly. These keep parents informed on such matters as the school's child protection procedures, key dates for the term and St Joseph's Breakfast Club.
47. Procedures to welcome new parents to the school and helpful information to support their children are good and are particularly useful. An example of this is the school's toy library, which is used to help develop children's basic skills through play and encourage dialogue between parent and child. Parents also receive useful information on curriculum opportunities in the nursery and reception years.
48. Pupils' annual written reports are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. They also show some targets for improvement and a general overview of pupils' social development and achievement. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school provides parents with an appropriate number of opportunities to discuss their children's progress and the annual written reports. Parents' evenings are very well attended. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed about their children's progress. Parents are appreciative of all these opportunities.

### Parental involvement in the life of the school

49. Parents and other helpers who are able to support aspects of the school's work are warmly welcomed into school. They are actively encouraged to help in school and a

significant number do so on a regular basis. They help in classrooms from nursery upwards and are involved in helping with a variety of learning activities. They are given clear instructions how to help and make a valuable contribution to pupils' education.

50. The St Joseph's Home School Association is an enthusiastic, hard working group that organises many fund raising events and makes a substantial contribution to school resources. Recent purchases include equipment for information technology and literacy. They also make a substantial annual contribution towards the leasing costs of computers in the computer suite. The support is much appreciated by the school and is helping to raise standards and the quality of pupils' learning.

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

### Leadership by key staff

51. The quality of school leadership is good. The previous report found that the procedures for monitoring teaching and learning needed to be strengthened and that the senior management team should be more involved in supporting the work of the curriculum co-ordinators. The school acted quickly on these issues and devised a policy to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the way the curriculum is taught throughout the school, in order to give pupils the best opportunities for learning. The senior management team was given a greater role in the monitoring process, and in overseeing teachers' planning. In practice, mainly the headteacher and deputy monitor teaching and learning in each class annually, looking at literacy and numeracy. Most other subject coordinators are not yet sufficiently involved in this process to give them greater awareness of standards of work throughout the school and to continue to seek improvements. Examples of successful subject coordination are evident, for example in science, where effective monitoring of the curriculum has taken place and has contributed to improvements in provision. However, in other subjects, coordinators do not yet have the opportunity to support teachers in lessons nor to check the effectiveness of curricular planning. The need to reduce staff has hampered efforts to improve this but nonetheless it hinders development in several subjects.

52. The senior management team meets regularly, helping to develop a strong and effective focus on educational priorities and the school's mission and contributing thoughtfully to the school improvement plan. Its members have a very clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the senior management team does not yet have a defined strategy for supporting subject coordinators that are new in post. This contributes to some weaknesses in subject coordination, for example. The senior management team has rightly identified a need to improve aspects of work in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and information technology. Teachers plan together for their year group to give pupils equality of opportunity in the learning experiences they receive. Whilst this is successful, subject coordinators are not always sufficiently aware of the work in different key stages. Coordination of special educational needs is good, with teachers being given useful guidance on the use of pupils' individual learning plans.
53. The headteacher's vision for the school is very firmly and effectively translated into the school's Mission Statement, which is shared with the whole school community, and is evident in all areas of school life. There is a clearly shared aim amongst staff and governors to value every child, to develop good relationships, to work together co-operatively and develop an atmosphere of trust in which to move the school forward. The headteacher makes it a priority to be seen regularly in all areas of the school and to develop a relationship with each pupil. This high profile adds to his effectiveness as a school leader. Each member of staff has an annual professional development review with the headteacher, and all results are used to help teachers improve their professional practice.

#### The governing body

54. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily and is very supportive of the life and work of the school. An effective committee structure, including a newly formed curriculum committee, helps governors keep a close watch on the work of the school. As well as nominated governors for literacy and numeracy, there is a 'Governor of the Month' who spends extra time in school. The chair of governors visits regularly each week and has a good knowledge of all aspects of the school, its staff, pupils and their families. The governing body is well informed about educational issues, is aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and makes an effective contribution to planning for improvement. The school improvement plan has appropriate priorities, is well structured and sets targets, but does not contain sharply focused criteria for evaluating success.

#### Staffing, accommodation and resources for learning

55. There is a broad and satisfactory range of experience and expertise amongst the staff. The school has an experienced and effective special educational needs coordinator. Staff supporting pupils with special educational needs work well with teachers for the benefit of pupils. Teachers working in the foundation stage are ably supported by three qualified, part-time assistants. Throughout the school, support staff work well to ensure the needs of pupils are met and daily routines run smoothly. Classroom assistants and midday supervisors provide valuable support which contributes positively to the care and welfare of pupils. The caretaker and cleaning staff make a strong contribution to the life of the school by maintaining a clean and comfortable environment. Some specialist skills are used effectively, for example when the music coordinator teaches a class other than her own. Effective procedures for teachers' professional development include identifying training needs, monitoring teaching in some subjects, setting targets for improvement and the discussing career development opportunities. The school is

aware of the need to draw all these procedures together into a performance management appraisal programme. A staff handbook provides a comprehensive guide for new teachers and a separate programme exists for newly qualified teachers.

56. Accommodation is of good quality. Apart from one rather cramped Year 4 classroom, it allows good opportunities for teaching the curriculum. Classrooms are light and airy with all year groups having access to additional areas outside rooms, which have been imaginatively adapted to provide practical curriculum opportunities. A newly completed computer room and spacious library help pupils develop their skills in information technology and English. Displays of work cover walls throughout the school, celebrating pupil success and contributing positively to the pleasant school environment. Two playgrounds and a field offer good space for recreational and sporting activities. There is good indoor and outdoor provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage, including an external covered play area and a safe, enclosed play area.
57. Resources for learning are satisfactory except in design and technology and geography. In information technology, resources are good: a new computer room containing ten modern computers has been opened and, in addition, each classroom has a modern computer. Parents actively support the school by raising finance to help provide pupils with these computers. This improvement in resources is having a good impact in raising standards and in the quality of pupils' learning. All school resources are in good condition, neatly stored and clearly labelled. The library is a bright and welcoming central area. It is neat and well organised. Pupils enjoy using the library to read, as a working space and they take pride in their jobs as librarians. All pupils use the library each week and they talk enthusiastically about the books they have read, demonstrating the positive effect regular access has on extending their reading experiences.

#### The use of finance and other resources

58. The governing body has devised a very clear and well-structured plan to help the school cope with the difficult financial consequences of diminishing pupil numbers. This plan is enabling governors to manage the situation so that it has the least possible disruptive effect upon pupils' learning and staff morale although the school is likely to have a deficit budget by the end of the current financial year. However, this deficit will lessen in the following two years and should be rectified in three years time if present careful predictions hold true. The governors' ability to plan strategically is very much limited by these circumstances but suitable attention is given to identifying important educational priorities and then providing whatever funds are possible in order to help the school attain these. In this, the school makes good use of specific government grants to help it achieve its targets for development. For example, very good use is being made of grants aimed at developing the use of information technology in the school. The governors' finance committee has the necessary procedures in place to ensure that it keeps a close watch on spending. Satisfactory attention is paid to ensuring that the school derives best value from major spending decisions. Much of this is achieved by working closely within the buying procedures advised by the local education authority and through the tendering procedures advised by the Roman Catholic diocese.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

59. In order to improve further, the school must:

**Improve standards in mathematics at age seven by:**

- identifying in planning a clearer focus on what is to be learned in lessons;
  - providing work that more closely matches pupils' abilities in some lessons;
  - using time more effectively in lessons;
  - developing pupils' skills in mathematics through work in other subjects.
- (The main references to this in the report can be found in paragraphs 3, 10, 21, 86, 87)*

**Improve standards in information technology at age 11 by:**

- appointing a subject coordinator to support teachers and monitor standards and quality;
  - evaluate success in implementing national guidelines;
  - developing teachers' subject skills and confidence further through in-service training, so that they can provide work that challenges pupils of all levels of attainment;
  - devising and implementing a systematic programme for the use of information technology to help develop pupils' skills in other subjects.
- (The main references to this in the report can be found in paragraphs 21, 112-116)*

**Improve the organisation of the curriculum in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, to improve the quality of pupils' learning opportunities by:**

- reviewing and amending yearly allocations of time to these subjects;
  - providing more detail in half-termly planning in order to identify opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate their skills in these subjects;
  - reviewing and amending weekly allocations of time for lessons in these subjects;
  - developing the skills of subject coordinators in these subjects to enable them to monitor and evaluate standards and quality and to support teachers throughout the school.
- (The main references to this in the report can be found in paragraphs 25, 26, 99, 103, 104, 108, 122, 126)*

**use assessments of pupils' progress in order to set individual, group and whole year targets for improvement.**

*(The main references to this in the report can be found in paragraphs 42, 43, 87, 116)*

60. In addition, the governing body should consider the following for inclusion in its action plan:

- implementing a system for the appraisal of teachers' professional performance.  
*(The main reference to this in the report can be found in paragraph 55)*
- undertaking a full programme of risk assessments.  
*(The main reference to this in the report can be found in paragraph 37)*



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	16	52	32	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	16	316
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	157

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	18	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	15
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	27	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (72)	81 (81)	84 (69)
	National	82 (77)	83 (81)	87(84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	18
	Girls	10	11	14
	Total	26	26	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (70)	81 (75)	100 (84)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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
		1999	27	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	14	21
	Girls	25	20	28
	Total	40	34	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (77)	61 (49)	88 (63)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	15	22
	Girls	26	20	28
	Total	43	35	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (65)	64 (52)	89 (65)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	308
Any other minority ethnic group	5

*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	3	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)	14.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4
Average class size	26

#### **Education support staff: YR - Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	609,587
Total expenditure	633,427
Expenditure per pupil	1,721
Balance brought forward from previous year	11,907
Balance carried forward to next year	-11,933

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	314
Number of questionnaires returned	63

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	35	6	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	59	33	8	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	40	8	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	38	16	3	0
The teaching is good.	65	24	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	32	13	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	21	10	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	27	6	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	38	8	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	57	33	8	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	30	6	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	33	19	3	14

### Other issues raised by parents

**The time provided for pupils' learning in subjects other than English, mathematics and religious education.**

## **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**

61. The foundation stage comprises the nursery and the reception classes. Children are admitted to the nursery class in the term after their third birthday and attend either the morning or afternoon sessions. The younger children in the reception class attend during the mornings only for the first term. The previous inspection identified some areas for improvement. In the nursery, children worked in large groups that did not promote effective learning and staff did not always participate in planned activities and missed opportunities for language development. New ways of grouping the children have been implemented successfully so that the teacher and the nursery nurse each work with a small group of children, and interact well in all learning activities.
62. On entry to the nursery, initial assessments show that the attainment of the majority of children is below the nationally expected levels in all areas of learning except in mathematics, where their attainment is well below the nationally expected level. Good teaching enables children to progress well in their learning and acquisition of skills, so that they when enter the reception class their attainment is only just below the expected levels. Good progress continues in the reception class and, when the children reach Year 1, most are meeting the national standards of the early learning goals in all areas of their learning although mathematics is the weakest area of attainment, owing to children's low starting point in their learning in this area. As a result, a significant minority of pupils do not reach the expected level of attainment in mathematics by the time they end the foundation stage.
63. The quality of teaching is good throughout the foundation stage. All staff work hard to create a warm, welcoming and secure environment to make children's early years in school a positive experience. There are good relationships between teachers and the children. Teachers have secure knowledge of the curriculum for children this age, make good plans and provide the children with a wide range of practical opportunities to learn new skills. They have high expectations of the children and teach them to use appropriate vocabulary, for example in literacy when they identify the author of a book. Careful assessments are made and children's progress in all areas of learning is monitored well. A strong feature of the teaching is the good quality of work by support staff. This gives children a greater level of individual support. Children who have special educational needs are identified quickly and advice is sought from the coordinator for special educational needs or outside agencies. These children then make satisfactory progress.
64. Parents are kept well informed about activities in the foundation stage. They bring their children into the nursery at the start of a session, help them to find their name card and ensuring that they are settled. This helps promote children's good attitudes to school. The weekly planning sheets are displayed for parents on the class notice boards, to keep parents informed about the skills their children are learning, together with newsletters, photographs and displays of children's work. These help children and parents to have pride in their achievements and are a good source of motivation to achieve further. There are a few opportunities for parents to spend time in nursery and reception classes as helpers. Parents organise a toy library and bags of toys are available on weekly loan. Such activities add to the atmosphere of family so evident in the foundation stage.

## **Personal, social and emotional development**

65. Teaching is good. All staff implement the school's mission statement effectively by promoting good, caring relationships and this helps the children behave well and to develop their social skills. Activities such as snack time are used very well in the nursery to promote children's social development, as they learn good manners, to take turns and to share. In the reception class, the teacher puts children's activities on a 'task board' to encourage them to become more independent learners. Most children can change into their physical education kit and leave their clothes tidily. They develop self-confidence when they are given the responsibility of being helper for the day, taking the register to the office and collecting apples for the class. The children attain the expected level of learning in this area at the end of the foundation stage.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

66. Teaching of good quality helps children make good progress. Children in the nursery enjoy books and listen to stories with great enjoyment as the teacher reads with good expression. There is a good range of fiction and non-fiction books in the quiet rooms for children to choose from. This encourages children to begin developing an interest in books and they respond well, taking opportunities to sit and browse. All displays and equipment are clearly labelled, to show that print has meaning, and this is developed when children learn that greetings cards carry messages and make their own. In the reception class, nearly all children write their own names and many can read and copy short sentences. Many children come to school speaking in very short phrases or single words. To develop their speaking and listening skills, children are encouraged to bring favourite toys from home and stand on the 'hot spot' whilst they talk to the class about what they have brought. This encourages them to focus their talk on a particular subject and helps them, by the start of Year 1, to be speaking in more extended phrases and in simple sentences. They use the listening station to hear tapes of their favourite stories or nursery rhymes, enjoying the experience. The vast majority can listen attentively by the time they start Year 1. At the end of the foundation stage, nearly all children attain the expected level of learning.

## **Mathematical development**

67. Teaching is good. Children start in the nursery needing a great deal of help and support in this area of the curriculum, so teachers plan a wide range of practical activities to develop the concepts of numeracy. There is a number area where children count and recognise numbers, with tactile numbers, jigsaws and objects to count, sort, order and match. Children use simple mathematical language appropriate to their age when they make comparisons of size and length. Nursery children can count how many are present and how many are absent. They know different number rhymes and poems. Many children in the reception class can count accurately from 0 to ten and back to 0, and then count on one more. By making deliberate "mistakes", the teacher checks to see that children really understand and helps them to discover solutions for themselves. Good teaching helps the children to make good progress so that most are nearly attaining the expected level in their learning by the end of the foundation stage.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

68. Much of the work seen during the inspection was linked to a theme "Myself". Children looked in a mirror and discussed the colour of their eyes, making comparisons and identifying differences. Children begin early geography in the nursery when they record the weather accurately each day in simple form. They enjoy digging in the plots of soil outside and have planted bulbs and bedding plants in the garden area, developing their awareness of change in nature. They make comparisons between wet and dry sand. They learn how to feed and care for the goldfish. Teaching is good. A colourful display teaches the children about autumn and they know that the seasons change through the year. The science table is equipped with kaleidoscopes, magnifiers, a camera and books related to the theme of "what can you see?", encouraging children to develop their powers of observation. The Road Safety Officer talked to the children and they showed understanding of the need for road safety, taking stickers home to remind them to cross the road safely. Children attain the expected level of learning at the end of the foundation stage.

## **Creative development**

69. Children in the nursery use paint, pencil, pastels and mixed media and are beginning to learn a range of techniques when they make delicate prints by dipping their feet in talcum powder. Children in reception make self-portraits as part of their work on the "Myself" theme. They can represent facial features in collage and can use twigs, leaves and conkers to help them represent autumn. They can identify simple musical instruments such as a tambourine, maracas, or bells, and learn to follow a rhythm when they beat, shake, tap or clap in time. They enjoy singing. Teaching is good. Imaginative play is encouraged in the home corner as children act out well-known stories. A good range of dressing-up clothes is available.

## **Physical development**

70. Teaching is good. Children in the nursery develop their awareness of space, learn to control the way they move and are taught to use large and small apparatus safely. Pupils can run, hop and jump, and use different movements when they play a counting game. There is an outside area, where the children can use bicycles and small hoops and practise ball skills with a basketball net. Children in reception have a weekly physical education lesson in the school hall in which they develop these skills of moving to satisfactory levels. Children in both classes develop good control in practical activities, cutting, sticking and gluing. They learn to use scissors carefully and use crayons and pencils with increasing control. Building models with toy bricks and other toy construction materials helps develop greater hand-eye coordination and balancing skills. Children attain the expected level of learning by the end of the foundation stage. There has been consistently good improvement in the work of the foundation stage since the last inspection.

## **ENGLISH**

71. Work seen during the inspection shows that attainment broadly matches the levels expected nationally for pupils aged seven. This is a slightly improved picture from the 1999 National Curriculum test results which showed pupils' performance to be below average when compared with that of pupils in all schools but well above the average for pupils in similar schools nationally. For pupils aged 11, work seen during the inspection shows that attainment matches that expected nationally. This is consistent with the 1999 national test results, which showed the pupils' performance to be average when

compared with pupils in all schools and well above average for similar schools. The steadily improving picture over recent years is continued by the national test results for the year 2000, although comparative information is not yet available. The successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, effective teaching and a good programme of additional support for pupils in Year 3 are important factors in the improving picture.

72. At both key stages, pupils at all levels of attainment generally make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. This is particularly apparent in speaking and listening and in reading. In writing, there has been a significant improvement at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.
73. In speaking and listening, the great majority of the pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress at both key stages and reach the nationally expected levels at ages seven and 11. Younger pupils build progressively on the good foundation provided in the nursery and reception classes. Pupils participate well in the introductory activities for literacy lessons. They listen attentively during whole class elements of the lessons and demonstrate growing confidence when responding to the teacher's questions. They benefit from the opportunities to interact with their teacher particularly during whole class work. The substantial majority of the pupils demonstrate a growing vocabulary and an increasing awareness of the need for more formal expressions in some situations.
74. At Key Stage 2, the majority of the pupils broaden the range of their speaking skills effectively. For example in Year 6, following a visit to Barnston Dale, pupils commented critically upon the language, style and success of a leaflet relating to outdoor pursuits. At age 11, the pupils' ability to listen attentively and make appropriate contributions are evident in the whole-class element of literacy lessons. Most pupils adapt their talk and use an appropriate vocabulary for different purposes. They benefit from a range of opportunities to discuss and consider issues which affect them. For example, the pupils in Year 6 talked fluently about the risks to health involved in smoking.
75. In reading, pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress and a large majority reach appropriate standards for their age at 7 and 11 years. Younger pupils benefit from such initiatives as 'Reading Recovery' and from the support and interest provided by their parents for the home-school reading partnership. At age 7, average and higher attaining pupils read a range of texts with accuracy and good understanding. They have developed a good range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words and to establish meaning. The substantial majority read with good expression and growing confidence. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs benefit greatly from the additional help given by support staff. Although their reading standards are well below those expected for their age, they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
76. At Key Stage 2, the pupils extend their range of reading effectively. The majority begin to read independently from fiction and non-fiction books and materials. At age 11, the substantial majority of pupils can search for and retrieve information from reference books to support their studies in various subjects. Most pupils read fluently, accurately and with good understanding from books in the school library and other sources. Higher and average attaining pupils become more selective and express preferences for specific authors and titles. They can give reasons why they prefer some authors or enjoy particular books. Boys' reading has improved significantly since the last inspection, owing to a good variety of books which suit their interests. The use of



information and communication technology to support pupils' learning is less well developed, although this is improving with the more regular use of computers in lessons. As a result, pupils' writing skills are now being enhanced more regularly through information technology. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from carefully focused support and make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.

77. In writing, pupils at Key Stage 1 make good progress and most are on course to reach standards which are expected of pupils nationally at age seven. The majority of the pupils express their ideas in a sequence of sentences and use full stops and capital letters accurately. Pupils in Year 2 understand the difference between the sort of writing needed for writing a story or a recipe. At Key Stage 2, the substantial majority of pupils are making good progress with their writing. Standards have improved since the last inspection and pupils now practise their writing skills in a good variety of ways. Year 5 pupils write instructions clearly to enable younger children to play a game of snap. Pupils' writing techniques are considerably enhanced through the work covered in the literacy lessons. They draw well on examples provided in introductory text work. For example, pupils in Year 3, after reading 'Shoe Shuffle', made good progress in understanding rhyme and rhythm before attempting their own poems. The writing of the substantial majority of the pupils during the group and independent elements of the lesson is of good quality with appropriate attention given to the quality of presentation and handwriting. A significant minority of pupils produce work of particularly good quality, using imaginative vocabulary and developing their ideas in an orderly way. Writing in other subjects is of satisfactory quality.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages and is having a positive impact upon pupils' learning. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory; 85 per cent were at least good and 38 per cent were very good. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and understand how pupils learn. This is particularly apparent in literacy lessons, during which the great majority of pupils make good progress in extending their language skills. When teaching is good, the purpose of the lesson is explained to pupils, giving them a clear understanding of what is expected of them. This helps them work successfully at the tasks set. Lesson planning is thorough, detailed and well structured following the guidance given in the National Literacy Strategy. At Key Stage 1, the effective interaction between class teachers and the pupils during whole class work helps to capture pupils' interest and sustain their concentration. For example, pupils in Year 1 used lists of words and sang a pirate song which effectively introduced them to verbs. At Key Stage 2, good questioning techniques encourages pupils to draw on their imagination and build on the illustrations provided by well selected texts for the introductory activities for literacy lessons. In Year 4 for example, good reading of 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' stimulated pupils' imagination. The quality of pupils' work is assessed well as the lesson proceeds and is used appropriately to set individual targets for pupils and to inform curriculum planning. Teaching is less effective when aspects of the lesson are occasionally not taught within the time allocated. Occasionally a lesson is too long for a minority of lower attaining pupils and attention lapses towards the end of the session.
79. The work in English is effectively co-ordinated and this is an important factor in the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. This is having a positive effect on the quality and standard of work in formal English lessons.

## **MATHEMATICS**

80. In the 1999 national tests for pupils aged seven, attainment was below average when

compared with all schools. Pupils' mental agility skills and their ability to use and apply mathematics to solve simple problems were not developed to the levels expected and this impacted significantly on their test scores. Compared with schools of a similar background, pupils' attainment was average. The 1999 national test results at the age of eleven, showed pupils' attainment to be below average, but above that of similar schools. The number of pupils' attaining high levels was well below the national average. The results for 2000 show improvements in the percentage of eleven year olds reaching the expected levels but currently there are no figures to give national comparisons. Results for seven year olds are similar to those of 1999.

81. Work seen during the inspection indicates that attainment is broadly at the nationally expected level by the age of eleven. It is below the nationally expected level by the age of seven. This reflects the limited range of mathematical experiences of most pupils when they first come into the school. Since the last inspection, standards attained in mathematics by the age of eleven have improved significantly. This is due largely to the effective procedures used to assess pupils' progress as they move through the key stage, enabling the school to identify under-achieving pupils and to provide additional teaching support at Year 6. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 and good progress at Key Stage 2.
82. Pupils in Year 1 make good progress because of the good teaching they receive, and the precise match of work to the differing abilities of pupils. For instance, in a Year 1 lesson, high attaining pupils used 'plus' and 'equals' signs in addition sums; pupils of average were able to write down their sums when given additional support. The use of a number line to carry out addition sums enabled pupils of below average attainment to develop their understanding of the process in a practical way. This clear focus on small steps pitched at the right level enabled all pupils to make good progress. Pupils in Year 2 make satisfactory progress. Scrutiny of pupils' work over time shows that activities are not always sufficiently matched to pupils' differing attainments and this reduces the rate of progress made. Throughout the key stage, pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory support and make sound progress against the objectives set for them in their individual education plans.
83. By the age of seven, most pupils can half or double a number, add and subtract to 20, and some can add or subtract beyond this number. They recognise odd and even numbers and identify properties such as corners, faces and edges in two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils of average attainment measure accurately using a metre stick and can identify and name a satisfactory range of three-dimensional shapes such as cuboid, cube and sphere. They add and subtract numbers to 10 and most can count up to 100. High attaining pupils are beginning to understand the concept of tens and units and can add a ten to a two-digit number.
84. Progress is good throughout Key Stage 2 for average and low attaining pupils. This is because teachers implement the National Numeracy Strategy effectively in order to plan work which meets these pupils' learning needs. The progress of high attaining pupils is generally satisfactory but they frequently complete the same work as other pupils and this results in insufficient challenge and slower progress. The use of computers to support pupils' mathematics work is under-developed. For instance, in one lesson observed, pupils constructed a range of graphs competently but did not use the computer to input data and produce computer-generated graphs. Pupils with special educational needs never make less than satisfactory progress and they make good progress, particularly when given additional adult support. Close liaison between the teacher and assistant enables carefully focused work to be undertaken that is directly related to pupils' individual learning plans. Pupils in Year 6 make good progress.

This relates to the effective teaching they receive and to the good use made of previous test results to place them in ability sets during the Spring term, when work can be more closely related to ability levels.

85. By the age of 11, pupils can satisfactorily add, subtract, multiply and divide when calculating problems on paper. They multiply decimals and whole numbers by 10, 100 and 1,000. They understand the concept of *range* and *mode* and apply this to differing sets of figures. For example, Year 6 pupils threw dice a given number of times; they recorded their findings in tabular form, and successfully found the range and occurrence of numbers thrown. They then applied this process to ranges of temperature and shoe size. Pupils correctly construct and interpret frequency tables and block graphs.
86. Attitudes to mathematics are good throughout the school. Pupils concentrate well and develop good work habits. As they move from year to year, they make good progress in developing independence; for instance, showing good organisational skills when setting out their work. Pupils work well together and give help and support to others when required. As they mature, pupils develop good levels of perseverance and concentration.
87. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in about 60 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection; it was good in most other lessons; some very good teaching was also observed, particularly at upper Key Stage 2. Subject knowledge is satisfactory and most lessons proceed at a good pace. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils. This results in a good working atmosphere in lessons, where pupils listen carefully to their teacher and each other; behaviour is at least good, and sometimes very good. Scrutiny of work over time indicates that work is insufficiently matched to pupils' different attainments. This sometimes results in work that is too difficult being given to low attaining pupils and a lack of challenge in the work of high attaining pupils. In the Year 2 lessons observed, a lack of clear focus about what the pupils knew, understood and could do, meant that tasks did not match the pupils' ability and resulted in insufficient progress by some pupils. Time was not used effectively so that pupils sat for too long and some lost concentration and interest. A feature of the very good teaching observed was the varied range of activities undertaken. This included a brief recap of the previous lesson, a game to reinforce mental strategies, direct teaching, and the provision of group tasks which were closely related to pupils' prior attainment and learning. Pupils were given opportunities to apply mathematics to a range of problems, making very good use of their prior knowledge. The teacher imparted a sense of excitement, and pupils responded well to this by concentrating hard, sustaining interest, clearly enjoying the activities and the good degree of challenge.

88. There are few examples of mathematics being applied in other subjects, such as design technology and science, for measurement and calculation purposes. The school improvement plan indicates the need to develop whole school strategies that focus on pupils' ability to solve problems, but this is not yet being implemented effectively. At Key Stage 2, much has been done to assess and track the progress of individual pupils and this information is now being well used to evaluate standards over time. However, short-term assessment opportunities are not identified in teachers' planning so that assessments of pupils' attainment are not made consistently. This sometimes results in inappropriate work being set for some pupils. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' test results is not used to set year group, key stage or individual pupil targets.
89. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. Members of the senior management team have monitored the effectiveness of the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, there are no opportunities for the coordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. This prevents her from gaining an understanding of attainment and progress across both key stages and to pick up issues such as the unsatisfactory match of work to ability in some lessons. At Key Stage 2, teachers regularly set homework that is effectively used to consolidate pupils' learning. This practice is less defined at Key Stage 1. All teachers regularly mark pupils' work but rarely provide written advice on how to make improvements.

## **SCIENCE**

90. In the national tests for 11 year olds in 1999, pupils' attainment was average. National Curriculum test results for 2000 show continued improvement from 1999. This is part of a good picture of improvement since the previous inspection. Key Stage 2 results in particular indicate a significant improvement on those of the previous inspection. In 1999, 11 year olds at St Joseph's did very much better than pupils at similar schools nationally. Teacher assessment of the attainment of seven year olds in 1999 and 2000 showed that most pupils achieved the standards expected for their age and a significant minority achieved higher standards. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards match the nationally expected levels at ages seven and 11.
91. From 1996 to 2000, there is a gradual trend of improvement for seven year olds. For 11 year olds, standards fell in 1997, but have risen considerably since then, improving at a better rate than the national trend in 1999. Responding to the findings of the previous inspection, the school identified a need to improve the area of experimental and investigative science. Teachers' knowledge has increased through in-service training, and planning for this aspect of science work has improved. The adoption of the local education authority scheme of work for science, with good attention to the matching of work to pupils' abilities to meet the learning needs of all pupils, has been a positive step and has contributed to raising standards. Science is part of the current school improvement plan, with the focus on updating the policy and monitoring the work in classrooms next summer.
92. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment make good progress as they learn and understand scientific ideas and concepts. The work recorded in their books throughout the school shows good links between investigations and the acquisition of scientific knowledge. Pupils learn to formulate questions and devise tests, to make predictions and compare the outcomes. They record their findings in a variety of ways, from simple drawings to diagrams and charts using symbols to represent electrical circuits. They receive a good foundation in the use of scientific techniques, and learn how to construct a fair test. Standards of presentation vary, but have developed well by the time pupils

reach the end of Key Stage 2.

93. In Years 1 and 2, pupils successfully learn about all aspects of the science curriculum and are taught to use correct scientific vocabulary at the appropriate level. When studying the human body, Year 1 pupils identify different things they can do with their hands and feet. By the age of seven, pupils know how their senses help them to be aware of the world around them. They use their senses of taste and smell to identify different foods. Some pupils make links between the sense of smell and how their bodies' reaction can alert them to danger or stimulate their taste buds. Although pupils of all abilities are set similar tasks, there are opportunities within these tasks for high attaining pupils to extend their learning and they do so appropriately.
94. At Key Stage 2, pupils extend and develop their knowledge and skills, and build well on their previous experiences. They develop a wider scientific vocabulary. By the age of 11, most pupils know that exercise causes the heart to beat faster, which increases the pulse rate and causes the blood to flow more quickly. They can explain how the heart functions and name the main parts. They are able to plan and refine their own experiment, predict the outcome and support their answers with appropriate reasons. During the half-term holiday, pupils were due to complete further work on the heart as their homework, providing them with a stimulating extension to their learning.
95. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed. At Key Stage 1, two lessons were observed; one good and one satisfactory. At Key Stage 2, most lessons were good. In addition, two very good lessons were observed at Key Stage 2 and one satisfactory lesson was observed. Teachers at both key stages have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons clearly. This enables them to focus effectively on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. There has been a good response to the need to emphasise what is to be learned and they build well on previous learning. Pupils' work is assessed closely at the end of each unit of study to ensure they have made progress in the acquisition and consolidation of knowledge and skills. Correct scientific vocabulary is used in lessons, and careful questioning enables all pupils to participate and work out their answers. Pupils are appropriately challenged and this gives them both the tasks and the motivation to develop their skills well. Good links are made to literacy when pupils are encouraged to describe their findings. Very occasionally, a lesson is too long and pupils begin to lose concentration, making less progress than they should.
96. The science coordinator provides good leadership and support. He has monitored the curriculum and the results of tests. Findings are carefully analysed to plan and identify areas needing greater teaching input, for example, establishing stronger links with literacy work to ensure pupils use more precise language in their answers. This has helped improve the quality of pupils' written recording of scientific findings.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

97. During the inspection, it was possible to observe only one art lesson, at Key Stage 1. Work was scrutinised in classrooms and around the school and discussions were held with pupils and staff. At ages seven and 11, pupils attain at the levels expected for their age. The standards found in the previous inspection have been maintained.
98. At Key Stage 1, younger pupils work with a variety of materials to produce lively self-portraits using paint, charcoal, twigs, autumn leaves and conkers to represent their features. Working in the style of great artists, they add details in the portrait that tells the observers something about themselves. Year 1 pupils mix fabrics, tissue paper and

paint to make large representations of the Creation. Year 2 pupils develop their understanding of pattern in the environment by looking closely at designs on wallpaper, wrapping paper, pottery and around the room. They produce sensitive designs using pastels, paints and chalk, and enjoy the repetition of colour and pattern. Pupils know how to mix purple, green, pink or grey and how to alter the shade by using more or less of a colour. They are able to review their work and seek to improve it.

99. At Key Stage 2, no art lessons were timetabled during the inspection and judgements about attainment are made from scrutiny of work displayed on the walls. Pupils in Year 5 make skilful and carefully detailed observational drawings of flowers and still-life objects in pastel and pencil, with imaginative use of colour, texture and line. Much of the art work observed in Key Stage 2 was linked with other subjects such as design and technology, history, literacy and personal and social education. Year 6 produce bold anti-smoking posters and know how to vary colour, line and script to add impact. Year 4 know how to design Greek vases, using the appropriate colours of orange and black. Year 6 pupils who attend the extracurricular art club have worked in the style of a Brazilian artist, Jose Pinto. The art club has produced large colourful panels that hang in the school hall. Made from fabrics, quilted and textured with fabric paint, the panels celebrate landmarks of the local area. Every child in school has contributed a drawing of themselves on fabric for the final panel, which represents the school and St Joseph's Church.
100. The evidence from pupils' work indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory. In the lesson seen, pupils behaved well, showed good attitudes and worked with sustained concentration throughout. In this lesson, teaching was good. Relationships were good and pupils were able to share resources. They enjoyed showing their work to the class and made thoughtful suggestions to each other about how to refine their designs. Pupils are given a sense of pride in their work when they see it well displayed. Lesson plans are linked to a nationally used scheme, with suitable learning objectives, activities and resources. The organisation of the timetable means that pupils have all their art lessons in one half term a year. This amounts to insufficient time over the year and makes it difficult to ensure continuity in the way pupils acquire and make progress in skills and techniques.
101. The coordinator has only been in post since September, has not yet undertaken any action, and would welcome in-service training to update the school art policy to match National Curriculum developments and to review the way art is included in the school curriculum.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

102. No lessons took place during the period of the inspection. Some work of pupils in Key Stage 1 and Year 6 was scrutinised, school timetable planning was reviewed and discussion took place with the curriculum coordinator. However, insufficient work was available to make judgements about attainment at ages seven and 11.

103. It is evident from examples of work at Key Stage 1 that the learning tasks undertaken are completed successfully and that pupils achieve good standards in what they do. Pupils have made various items involving levers. They have drawn their ideas, chosen simple materials, cut out their parts, assembled, joined and finished their models. They have used various types of papers, fasteners, folds, levers, glue sticks and scissors. From simple cards with flaps they have moved to faces with moving parts, then faces using rotational movement in the form of bow ties. It is clear pupils have refined and developed their skills. Pupils can talk about what they have done; they know why they chose their materials and they talk about aspects which were difficult.
104. Teachers' plans are clear and precise, showing a sound understanding of the subject and a progressive introduction of skills. Design and technology lessons are taught for about seven weeks in the year. In such a short time, it is not possible to offer a satisfactory number or variety of learning experiences. In Year 6 pupils have undertaken a project to design a board game. This has been linked with the construction of the Millennium Dome. Each stage of the project is well documented, teachers have guided pupils through various stages of the design process. There is evidence of the ideas pupils produced, lists of materials they chose to use, health and safety considerations, possible problems they may encounter. The final objects were entered into a competition at the Dome and three pupils had their work chosen to be exhibited in the Education Zone. Throughout the whole process a member of staff participated in local education authority meetings to develop the project for schools. Pupils were clearly motivated by this project and the involvement of the teacher produced a challenging focus to their work. As in Key Stage 1, pupils only have access to this area of the curriculum for a period of six or seven weeks per year. The school pattern of designating curriculum time significantly restricts the possible learning experiences for all pupils, reducing their ability to consolidate, refine and extend skills and techniques. A new subject coordinator, aware of this problem, is currently working to offer the senior management team advice about the organisation of the curriculum in terms of time allocation, content, coverage of skills and assessment. Resources are unsatisfactory, being insufficient to support pupils' learning. However, the school does make good use of local authority arrangements for borrowing materials and this helps pupils develop their subject knowledge.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

105. The last inspection report judged standards to be consistent with national expectations for pupils aged seven and 11. During this inspection only one lesson was observed. Too little information was available to make a judgement about pupils' attainment and progress at ages seven and 11. However, the amount of time currently allocated to the teaching of geography is insufficient. Within the school year, geography is timetabled for one half term only. This arrangement works against pupils developing geographical knowledge, understanding and skills in a consistent way.
106. In the one lesson seen, in Year 3, teaching was judged to be very good. Clear learning objects were shared with the pupils enabling them to understand the work to be done. The teacher created a good climate for learning, where relationships were positive and supportive. This enabled pupils to contribute confidently to discussions, readily sharing their ideas. Time was used effectively and the lesson progressed at a brisk pace. This resulted in pupils maintaining interest and concentration. By the end of the lesson, pupils had a clear understanding of land usage in the local area. Using a map of the local area of Seacombe, they successfully identified areas of industry, housing, shops and leisure, and used this information well to make bar charts. Pupils made very good progress in the lesson. They were very well behaved, and worked conscientiously on

the task.

107. Coordination of the subject is unsatisfactory. Teachers choose geography work for their pupils from a nationally produced scheme. There is no system in place to ensure that pupils cover a comprehensive range of aspects over time or build on the knowledge and understanding of previously taught work in a systematic way. There are no procedures in place to assess pupils' attainment and progress. Resources to support the teaching of geography are unsatisfactory. There is a suitable range of maps, plans, and study packs on local and contrasting areas but there are insufficient up-to-date globes and world maps to help pupils develop their knowledge of world geography.
108. Scrutiny of photographs taken by the school shows that good use is made of the local area. Year 4 pupils used the ferry to cross the River Mersey. Pupils visit local shops and other facilities as part of their investigations on the human and physical features of their locality. Current Year 6 pupils completed a study project over the summer holidays. They compiled dossiers of information about Liverpool, suitable for use during an imaginary friend's visit. Many produced work of good quality.

## **HISTORY**

109. Few lessons were seen in history during the inspection due to the organisation of the school timetable. Each class has one lesson of history per week over one half term. This equates approximately to nine hours of curriculum time per year. The limited time allocated to history, studied at only one point in the school year, does not enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in a consistent way. Additionally, the large gap between blocks of history teaching gives little opportunity for pupils to revisit or consolidate previous learning. The last inspection report judged pupils' attainment to be at the levels expected for seven and 11 year olds. In the current inspection, evidence from the lessons observed enables a judgement to be made about the quality of teaching, and about pupils' work seen in those lessons. However, there is insufficient evidence available to show pupils' work over time and judgements about pupils' attainment at ages seven and 11 and about their progress cannot be made.
110. The three lessons observed were in Key Stage 2. Year 4 pupils made satisfactory progress in their study of the Egyptians and showed a developing understanding of life in another time and place. They were interested in the topic and made sound comparisons between their life experiences and those in Egyptian times. For example, pupils were enthralled when watching a video about the ritual of mummification. They ate a range of foods associated with that time and noted similarities and differences. Pupils in the Year 6 classes learnt that evidence could be obtained from a variety of sources. They used a range of maps, books, photographs and CD-ROM about the Ancient Greeks to develop their skills of deduction and inference. Using maps of Greece, they gave good reasons why the Greeks travelled by boat rather than climbed the adjoining mountains when travelling to fight the Persians. They examined the battle clothes and weapons of the opposing soldiers and gave reasoned answers as to who might win the battle and why. In both lessons, pupils of all abilities made good progress. They showed good attitudes to learning. Pupils were interested in the subject and sustained concentration. Pupils co-operated well as they discussed their work in pairs, listening carefully to others' contributions.
111. In the three lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. Teachers asked thoughtful questions to check pupils' understanding of the subject and to stimulate learning. They consolidated pupils' literacy skills by the effective use of reference books, and provided a good range of appropriate resources which enabled pupils to make reasoned



contributions to the class discussion. The teachers' enthusiastic approach was an important factor in the good progress made by pupils.

112. Coordination of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator acknowledges that there is insufficient curriculum time allowed for the teaching of history. She has distributed national guidelines to colleagues and has developed a satisfactory selection of topic resources to support pupils' learning. For example, a good range of visits has been effectively researched to enable maximum learning opportunities for pupils. Recent field trips include *The Liverpool Museum* for work on Egyptians and Greeks, *The Ellesmere Port Boat Museum*, and Victorian life at *Wigan Pier*. There is no opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms, or to ensure continuity of learning between key stages. This prevents important information being gained about the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. This is exacerbated by there being no procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

113. Since the last inspection, good improvements have been made in the quality and number of modern computers available for pupils to use. This has been matched by a good increase in the amount and variety of software available. Good improvement has also been made in the accommodation, with a bright and well-appointed new computer suite now being used regularly by pupils at Key Stage 2. Modern computers are also being used in all classrooms. National guidelines are now being used to help teachers plan suitable work. Good attention is being paid to training teachers in the skills required to make the most of these developments. As a result, pupils' attainment is improving and effective learning is taking place in lessons. Standards in work seen during the inspection indicate that by the age of seven pupils are now attaining the nationally expected levels. This is a similar picture to that seen with older pupils in Years 3 to 5. However, the recent good work has not yet had sufficient impact to improve standards sufficiently amongst pupils in Year 6. As a result, attainment at the age of 11 is still below the expected level. Given the amount and quality of development since the last inspection, improvement since that time is good.
114. By the age of seven, pupils enter work onto a word processing package. They know how to save and retrieve their work. They are comfortable in their understanding of how to use computers and can perform such tasks as deleting text and changing the size and colour of print. However, the level of attainment is rather uniform with little evidence of high attaining pupils reaching higher levels. This is also true throughout Key Stage 2 and is due in part to some teachers relying very strongly on national guidelines and not showing the confidence to work independently of these. By the age of 11, pupils use word-processing and desktop publishing packages confidently. They design posters, inserting pictures, moving and resizing them. However, their confidence is restricted to a rather narrow range of learning opportunities. They are much less sure of how to use spreadsheets and how to interpret data from these. They show little knowledge of how to use technology to control events or to monitor physical data such as temperature. As a result, attainment at age 11 is below the expected level.
115. No direct teaching was seen at Key Stage 1 during the inspection but at Key Stage 2, three lessons were seen. In all these lessons teaching was good. Pupils were given clear instructions. Close adherence to national guidelines meant that work was mostly well matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils were challenged by the tasks they were given, they worked hard and learned well. Only occasionally did teachers fail to capitalise on the fact that a few pupils were ready to take on a more difficult learning challenge. On such occasions, these pupils made less progress than they should. Very

good relationships between teachers and pupils resulted in pupils being eager to work and in very good behaviour in lessons. A strong, positive feature of lessons seen was the way in which pupils shared ideas and helped each other to find solutions.

116. Some evidence was seen during the inspection of pupils using computers to help them develop their skills in other subjects, for example by using a commercial spelling program in literacy but these opportunities were limited. As yet, a systematic programme for using such opportunities does not exist and this results in pupils not being given sufficient chance to develop subject skills through using computers.
117. There is no subject coordinator. Whilst this has not hindered improvement so far, the school is now at a stage of development where teachers need the support and guidance of a leading colleague in order to help them see how to develop pupils' skills to the best possible levels. Such skills of subject leadership are also necessary in order to promote the development of a shared system of checking pupils' progress so that learning programmes might be tailored more closely to individual needs. Further, implementation of national guidelines is at an early stage and needs to be monitored carefully to assess its effectiveness. The development of a systematic programme for using information technology to assist in other subjects is also being hindered by the lack of a teacher who will provide the necessary expertise to devise and lead this.

## **MUSIC**

118. Due to the school's timetabling arrangements, it was only possible to see music being taught in a small number of lessons at both key stages. Standards at both key stages are broadly in line with the national expectations for pupils aged seven and 11. The substantial majority of the pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in school.
119. Pupils at Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress in developing a sense of rhythm when singing such songs as 'Let the Trumpet Sound'. They memorise words and are able to recall simple melodies. They keep together in rhythmic clapping and in the 'Gather Song', make a satisfactory attempt at singing responses to musical phrases sung by the teacher. Although singing is lacking in tonal quality the pupils gently sing the hymn 'Be Glorified' without supportive accompaniment. A new song 'I've Got Eyes to See' was effectively linked to topic work on My Body.
120. Pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress. Year 5 pupils are able to identify the sounds which are made by a range of instruments including violin, banjo, cello and mandolin. They are familiar with the elements of music including timbre, texture, pitch and dynamics. A high attaining pupil competently performed a solo piece on the violin. The pupils effectively appraise their own and each other's performances. They develop good listening skills as they identify individual instruments in Vivaldi's 'Concerto in G'. Low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and have a good understanding of the instruments which are played in Prokofiev's 'Peter and the Wolf'. Twelve pupils benefit from instrumental tuition. Three other pupils were successful in Associated Board examinations last year. The subject makes an important contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils, particularly through the use of singing during worship and at other times.
121. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and how pupils learn. They are confident, able performers. Lessons are well prepared and planned and have clear learning objectives. When teaching is most effective there is a good range of strategies which makes a significant contribution to the pace of lessons and help to sustain the pupils' interest. Resources

and appropriate worksheets are well deployed to support the pupils' learning. The pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds. Music makes only a limited contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy skills with the emphasis being placed on performance rather than written work. No evidence is available of information technology being used to help pupils develop their skills of music.

122. The pupils are well motivated and enjoy all aspects of music lessons. They work well as a class and in small group activities. Relationships are mature and productive. The pupils carefully handle the expensive instruments and resources which they use. Three specialist teachers enhance the learning opportunities for some pupils at Key Stage 2.
123. Since the last inspection only a limited amount of time has been allocated to the subject. This has curtailed the effective delivery of programmes of work and the standards achieved by the pupils. Standards of work are not monitored. Resources are inadequate for the requirements of the National Curriculum and there is an absence of instruments which represent the music of other cultures. This hinders pupils' cultural development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

124. By the ages of seven and 11, pupils reach the nationally expected standards, with examples of good attainment in some areas. This represents a satisfactory maintenance of standards since the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
125. At Key Stage 1, pupils are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to move into the space around them. They move at different levels and link movements together to form simple sequences. These sequences develop to include changes in speed and direction with increasing control. Pupils in both Years 1 and 2 practise and improve their sequences of floor movements and transfer these satisfactorily to large apparatus to include work on balancing and landing. In Year 1, pupils learn to carry and handle apparatus safely. These pupils enjoy their work; they are enthusiastic learners. They change quickly and all have the required clothing. Pupils relate well to their teachers, who make expectations clear and keep lessons moving quickly, giving a strong purpose to what pupils do. Safety awareness was demonstrated well in a Year 1 lesson when pupils voluntarily stopped working when an adult walked across the hall during their balancing movements on large apparatus. Teachers observe pupils carefully and are always asking more of pupils, challenging them to achieve and praising progress made throughout the lesson. Good work is used as a model for class demonstration and pupils are courteous and responsive in acknowledging the success of others. By planning a series of lessons, teachers ensure pupils have time to progress. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge.
126. At Key Stage 2, pupils begin to enjoy participating in competitive team games. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are refining their ball skills, throwing and catching at different heights, at different speeds and using different catching styles. They are developing successful attack and defence tactics and transferring these to a team game. Pupils listen well to instructions which teachers deliver clearly so they play the game quickly with few errors. Most pupils move thoughtfully and accurately. They are enthusiastic but fair in their teams and use effective footwork to move quickly around the pitch. The pace of lessons is good, so pupils work hard and retain their interest in what is happening. Lessons are well planned and they build upon the pupils' existing skills. Pupils remember previous learning and develop and adapt during the lesson. Teachers use

technical terms when teaching and, as a result, pupils gain a good understanding of subject language. All pupils warm up and cool down safely and understand the reasons for doing so. Resources are ready and pupils use them carefully. The good relationships between pupils and teachers promote good behaviour and, where unacceptable behaviour occurs, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Teachers use examples of good practice to demonstrate skills to others and encourage pupils to explain how they can improve their performance. Pupils are competitive but fair.

127. The school has netball and football teams which participate in local fixtures with varying success. Pupils in Key Stage 2 swim regularly and 92 per cent of pupils have gained their 'Competent Swimmer' badges, which require them to swim different strokes safely and also to swim designated lengths. In Year 6 pupils are taken to a variety of outdoor activity workshops, where they gain experience in orienteering, rock climbing, obstacle course management and other outdoor activity skills. Although, over the school year, each aspect of the National Curriculum is presented to pupils, the limited weekly time available restricts coverage and opportunity for further development. This in turn limits the opportunities pupils have to develop their skills.