

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**ST MARGARET MARY'S CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

New Moston

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105533

Headteacher: Sister J. McKillion

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Tracey  
20270

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 224742

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Margaret's Road New Moston Manchester
Postcode:	M40 OJE
Telephone number:	0161 681 1504
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. K. O'Connor
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J. Tracey 20270	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mr A. Dobson 9928	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr M. Bowers 17907	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs	
Mr J. Curley 3191	Team inspector	Information technology Art Geography History Equal opportunities	
Mrs K.McArthur 30935	Team inspector	English Under fives	
Mr J. Ratcliffe 3793	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Margaret Mary's Primary School is a larger than average school providing education for 318 pupils in the age range 3 to 11 years. Numbers are reducing slightly following the pattern of demographic change. Pupils come from areas in North Manchester bordering the City boundary with Oldham. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (20%) is broadly average. The number of pupils on the register of special educational need has increased, although at 12% it is still below the national average. Three pupils have formal statements of need. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds; none come from homes where English is not the first language. Attainment on entry to the nursery is average but spans a wide range.

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

St Margaret Mary's is a caring school, committed to providing well for its pupils. Standards of work have improved in the last two years. They are average in English and mathematics, and slightly higher in science by the time pupils leave the school. Overall the quality of teaching is good; it contributes well to the rising standards. The leadership and management structures are satisfactory although new initiatives are not always implemented fast enough. The school provides sound value for money.

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

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good, particularly in the Foundation stage.
- The school's Christian ethos permeates its work and is reflected in the supportive learning environment.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school has established strong links with the local high school to which most pupils transfer at eleven.

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

- Overall attainment, particularly through the development of numeracy and information technology skills
- Opportunities for senior managers to work more collaboratively with other staff.
- The use of assessment and monitoring systems to make planning for lessons and target setting for individual pupils more effective.
- The curriculum for design and technology
- Links with parents

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

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

The school was last inspected in October 1996 and has made a satisfactory response to the Key Issues of that inspection.

\*Pupils' results in national tests for seven and eleven-year-olds improved in 1999 and 2000 subsequent to a decline in the two preceding years.

\*Provision for pupils in mixed age classes has improved.

\*Teaching has improved. It is more consistent throughout the school and a high proportion is good.

\*The attainment of boys in English in Key Stage 2 has improved.

\*Improvement in the curricular provision for physical education has resulted in higher standards, particularly in Key Stage 1. Provision for information technology has improved this term with the acquisition of new computers; standards of work are improving but are still below those expected for pupils' ages.

In addition, provision for children in the Foundation stage has been enhanced and is of good quality.

The school has not responded to the weakness in the curriculum for design and technology. It is still unsatisfactory.

Action to improve management systems has been successful in part, but slow. The headteacher and governors need to ensure that the most recent initiatives become fully effective without undue delay.

There is good capacity for further improvement.



## 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	E	D	C
Mathematics	D	E	C	B
Science	D	E	D	C

  

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

The decline in pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science between 1996 and 1998 was reversed in 1999. The improvement was sustained in the current year, 2000, when higher proportions of pupils reached the standard expected for their age in all subjects. There was also a significant increase in the proportions exceeding this standard in English and science. The school sets itself realistic but challenging targets which are being met. The quality of work seen during the inspection shows standards to be average in English, mathematics, and above average in science by the time pupils leave the school. The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has contributed to the recent improvement, but more so in literacy than numeracy. Attainment in the national tests for seven-year-old in 1999 was average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. The downward trend in results during the period 1996 to 1998 relates to the lack of a secure foundation in basic skills in the pupils' earlier years in school. Provision in the Foundation stage is now very good and standards of work seen during the inspection reflect this. There was an improvement in the pupils' results in national tests in 2000, particularly in the proportions exceeding the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there was still some underachievement in reading amongst lower-attaining pupils. Overall, standards of work of seven-year-olds seen during the inspection were average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In other subjects standards are similar to those in most schools except in physical education in Key Stage 1 and music in Key Stage 2 where standards are above average. Attainment in information technology and design and technology is below average throughout the school because the full National Curriculum programmes of study are not covered.

Overall, the vast majority of pupils is achieving satisfactorily but there is capacity for further improvement.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to school. They are keen to learn and effectively transfer their enthusiasm to the whole range of activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. It successfully reflects the school's aims.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and adults are very good. They reflect friendship, trust and respect. The school satisfactorily promotes all-round development of pupils' talents.
Attendance	Attendance is similar to the national average.

The school has high expectations of behaviour and personal development. The caring ethos successfully promotes pupils' well being and achievement.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 percent of the lessons observed. It was good in 50 percent of these and very good in a further 13 percent. Teaching in English and mathematics is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are having a greater impact in the earlier years because pupils have been introduced to them from the start of their schooling. Particular strengths in the good and very good teaching are the high expectations and fast pace which move pupils of all abilities on to more challenging activities. Pupils then achieve well and progressively build on previous learning. The school's assessment procedures are not yet effective enough in enabling teachers to identify and direct support to the specific needs of individual pupils. Consequently, although achievement overall is satisfactory, it could be better.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broader than found in many schools but the full National Curriculum programmes of study are not covered in information technology and design and technology. Pupils enjoy an introduction to spoken Italian. The range of extra-curricular activities is narrow, mainly connected with sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, provision is satisfactory. It is good when pupils work in small groups with a specialist teacher and assistants. Pupils sometimes become frustrated when working in large classes with insufficient support from adults.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not applicable.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for all these aspects is well represented both in the curriculum as a whole and school life generally.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a high standard of care for its pupils. They are highly valued as individuals. The secure environment promotes good levels of confidence and self-esteem. Assessment procedures for tracking pupils' progress are not used effectively enough to enable pupils to work towards personal targets.

Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' academic and personal development. Links with the community, particularly the local high school, are strong and effective in extending pupils' learning. Partnership between the school and parents is very good in the early years. It is satisfactory in later years but opportunities are missed to involve parents in the daily life of the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers and non-teaching staff are highly committed to the pupils' interests but the school lacks a corporate approach to strategic planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and endeavour to incorporate necessary changes as priorities in the school's development plan. They have, however, been dilatory in checking the speed at which initiatives have been implemented.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school satisfactorily analyses its performance in relation to national and local standards. It is only just beginning to make effective use of the information to enhance individual pupil's learning and achievement.
The strategic use of resources	The budget and specific grants are put to appropriate use. Resources are generally adequate but teachers do not always make enough use of them to promote practical activity, for example in mathematics.

The quality of leadership and management ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-basis. The headteacher and staff are committed to maintaining a learning environment in which all pupils are valued and recognise the importance of their contribution to the whole community. New initiatives since the previous inspection have been effective in improving standards of teaching. Changes in organisational procedures, such as assessment and the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress have been slow. Their full impact is yet to be seen. Staffing, buildings and learning resources are adequate for the delivery of the curriculum. The school and governors take reasonable steps to ensure that the best value is obtained in respect to the cost-effectiveness of their decisions.

## 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>• The friendly, caring atmosphere</li> <li>• The school's high expectations of pupils</li> <li>• Good standards of teaching</li> <li>• The school helps children to become responsible</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework, particularly in Year 6</li> <li>• Information on their child's progress</li> <li>• The school working more closely with parents</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

Inspectors fully support the parents' positive views of the school. They also agree that the school could work more closely with parents, both in the sharing of information and in the involvement of parents in the school's daily life. Communication between teachers and parents in the Foundation stage is an exemplar of good practice. The quantity and quality of homework was considered to be satisfactory but there is a lack of clarity about what is expected in some classes; better communication between pupils, parents and teachers is needed. Provision for extra-curricular activities is limited except in sport. The school provided a wider range of opportunities in the past and plans to do so again.

At the meeting for parents some concern was expressed about the learning of pupils of different ages in mixed age classes. Inspectors looked at this very carefully during the inspection and found no reduction whatsoever in the quality of education. In fact, pupils' learning was often seen to benefit from greater stimulus and challenge.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry to the nursery children's speaking, listening, mathematical and personal skills are similar to those found in many schools. However, initial assessments conducted with these young children reveals a broad range. Children make good progress in the Foundation stage and by the time they start in Year 1 the majority have attained, and sometimes exceeded, the early learning goals in personal, physical, creative and mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, communication, language and literacy skills. This is due to the high quality of teaching which enables children to achieve well. Children have a good start to their school life. There has been a significant improvement in provision for the youngest children in the school since the previous inspection.

2. In 1999, the pupils' results in national tests for seven-year-olds were average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. In comparison with schools of similar background these results were well above average in writing, average in reading and well below average in mathematics. During the period 1997 to 1999 pupils' results declined in reading, writing and mathematics because pupils lacked the secure foundation now being provided in the nursery and reception classes. Standards of work are steadily improving in Key Stage 1 as is evident from the improved results in national tests in 2000. There was a significant improvement (almost 20%) in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in mathematics, and in the proportions reaching higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, performance in reading was not as high as in 1999. The school has identified the group of pupils whose attainment is below that expected and teachers are providing structured work to consolidate and extend their earlier learning.

3. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 1999, results were below average in English and science and average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools the results were above average in mathematics and average in English and science. They were average in comparison to other Manchester schools in English and mathematics but below average in science. Pupils' results in the three subjects declined in the two years subsequent to the previous inspection but there was an upturn in 1999. The overall trend in the school's results over this period was broadly similar to the national picture. The improvement in the school's results in 1999 was sustained in the national tests in 2000. The proportions reaching the expected levels for their age increased in English, mathematics and science. There was also a significant increase in the proportions reaching the higher levels in English and science. National figures are not yet available for comparison. In 1999/2000 the school had a good level of success in meeting the realistic targets set by governors for English and mathematics.

4. In summary, pupils' results have fluctuated since the previous inspection. The decline in both key stages in 1997/8 was halted and reversed in 1999, but to a greater extent in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. The improvements were sustained and further extended in 2000. The teaching of pupils in ability groups in English and mathematics in Year 6 is a contributory factor to the faster pace of improvement in Key Stage 2. It enables all pupils to be challenged at an appropriate level, and lower-attaining pupils to receive more individual support to boost their confidence. At the time of the previous inspection boys were underachieving in English in Key Stage 2. The school took action to raise teachers' awareness, targeted specific areas of the English curriculum and designed a range of activities to support boys' learning. Current results reflect the effectiveness of this action. There is now no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

5. Evidence from the inspection, including scrutiny of work, discussion with pupils and lesson observations, indicates that standards of work in English, mathematics and science are average at the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The inspection took place within the first three weeks of the new school year; the evidence takes into account pupils' work from the previous year. Improving standards reflect the better quality of teaching provision compared to that at the time of the previous inspection, also the impact of the greater emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the school most pupils are achieving satisfactorily and make appropriate progress from their starting point. However, progress for some could be accelerated through more individual target setting based on evidence obtained from assessment procedures. This is an area currently identified for development.

6. Pupils with special educational needs are identified at an early stage. The majority of those on the register of special educational need require support with literacy skills; 33 percent have difficulties with number work. Their standards are below those expected for their age but pupils generally make good progress towards the specific goals in their individual education plans. Progress is hindered in Key Stage 2 when there is insufficient adult support in the classroom to support the wide range of activities provided to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. This is of particular concern in English and mathematics because it slows the progress of all the pupils in the class. Pupils with statements of special educational need make good progress and gain in concentration and attentiveness.

7. Standards of work are similar to those in other schools in art, geography and history in both key stages, music in Key Stage 1 and physical education in Key Stage 2. Standards are above average in physical education in Key Stage 1 and music in Key Stage 2; in both cases due to good teaching which reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers involved. Standards of work in information technology and design and technology are below average throughout the school. They are improving in the former now that the school has acquired new computers. Pupils are being taught the skills more systematically. The curriculum for design and technology does not yet cover all the relevant aspects and there has been little improvement in this situation since the previous inspection.

8. The introduction of the Literacy Hour is having a satisfactory impact on pupils' standards of work. Although national tests in reading show standards to be below average in Key Stage 1, evidence gathered during the inspection shows an improving picture. Phonic skills are taught well and by the end of the key stage higher-attaining pupils read fluently and confidently. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are average. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge and use of a variety of strategies when they are reading. Some lower-attaining pupils are hesitant when reading aloud. Standards in writing are similar to those expected at the ages of seven and eleven. Most pupils can adapt their writing to the criteria of the moment, ranging from accurate description to imaginative prose. Opportunities to draft and re-draft written work using information technology are missed because pupils' word processing skills are currently below average. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to use their writing skills imaginatively in other subjects, for example, much of the work in science follows a prescribed pattern. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils progressively gain in confidence as they move up the school. By the time they reach Year 6 pupils join in discussion using a wide range of vocabulary. They express their opinions clearly and are prepared to adjust them in the light of convincing argument.

9. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is not yet fully effective, particularly in respect to the development of mental strategies for handling number. Some of the older pupils do not have a secure grasp of basic number concepts and this slows down their work. These pupils did not benefit from the more structured approach now being experienced by pupils from the Foundation stage upwards through Key Stage 1. Throughout the school pupils are more competent and confident when applying other mathematical skills such as measurement and data handling. These are satisfactorily used in other areas of the curriculum such as geography and science.

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

10. The pupils show a very positive attitude to school life. Parents say their children enjoy going to school and this is apparent in the pupils' good punctuality and the speed with which they settle down. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and know they go there to learn.

11. In lessons the pupils listen attentively and are keen to join in. Most respond well to challenging questions. Pupils are well motivated, most work hard when given an activity to do and stick at it. Pupils are proud to talk about their work. Homework is taken seriously.

12. Pupils with special educational needs develop positive attitudes, especially when working individually or in groups with the specialist teacher. Their self-worth is enhanced because they experience success and are encouraged by their new knowledge and skills. Occasionally older pupils working in a whole class situation lose interest and attention when they find tasks too difficult.

13. Behaviour is good – a judgement that confirms the views of most parents. High standards are achieved without the need for strict discipline. Behaviour in lessons is predominantly good or very good and reflects the degree to which the teaching has engaged all the pupils. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school that is very conducive to learning. Movement around the school is orderly. Dining is a civilised social occasion where behaviour is good and noise levels are reasonable. Table manners are generally good. The atmosphere in the playground is very friendly. Pupils are not concerned about bullying or racist behaviour and express confidence in the staff's ability to solve any problems. There have been no exclusions in recent times.

14. Pupils are polite and very friendly. They get on very well with each other. Relationships between the pupils and adults in the school are very good and reflect friendship, trust and deep respect. Pupils are not cheeky. Adults do not shout. In the classroom, pupils co-operate well and know the importance of taking turns and sharing. They are happy to listen to each other's views. Pupils mature very well as they move up the school and by Year 6 most are well rounded and confident, with a strong caring instinct and capable of expressing their ideas clearly and articulately. Pupils make good use of the opportunities for taking responsibility although these tend to be concentrated in Year 6. Throughout the school equipment and books are handled with care and respect. Pupils keep their classrooms tidy and there is hardly any litter around the school.

15. The very positive attitudes to school, the very friendly atmosphere and good behaviour provide a very firm foundation for the pupils' learning.

16. Attendance at the school is broadly in line with the national average for primary schools. Registration is prompt and efficient and gives a positive start to each session.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is good overall. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when 25 percent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The impact of the better provision is evident in higher standards of work and improved results in national tests in 1999 and 2000. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 percent of the lessons observed. It was good in 50 percent of these and very good in a further 13 percent. Three lessons were unsatisfactory.

18. Teaching is very good for children in the Foundation stage. Good teamwork between the teachers and classroom support workers, combined with very good understanding of the needs of the age group, enhances children's learning. Teaching is vibrant. Expectations of the children are high and staff extend children's interest and success through a good variety of well planned learning activities relevant to their ages. The teaching consolidates the skills children bring with them on entry and provides a secure foundation in readiness for mainstream schooling. As a result children achieve well in the Foundation stage

19. Teaching is good overall in Key Stage 1. It was satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed and good in 80 percent of them. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in information technology and design and technology because all the National Curriculum programmes of study are not yet being studied. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory. Common features of the good lessons included planned acquisition of new knowledge, good organisation of group activities and effective questioning which resulted in pupils sharing and feeding off other pupils' ideas. A typical example was a Year 2 English lesson in which pupils were introduced to alliteration. With minimum guidance from the teacher they quickly became adept at choosing relevant examples from the text. The good teaching enables pupils to learn well at a good pace.

20. In Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory overall but varies between classes. It is good at the end of the key stage and in mixed age classes because teaching is stimulating and expectations are high for pupils of all abilities. In these lessons teachers maintain a good pace, changing activities at strategic points to sustain pupils' interest. Follow up work is carefully planned to reinforce teaching points from the earlier part of the lesson. In addition, pupils are actively involved in practical activities which support their learning. In the few lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory the balance of time between direct teaching and pupils' active engagement in activities was inappropriate and pupils were not sufficiently challenged. This was partly due to the lack of additional adult help in classes with high proportions of pupils with special educational needs. Too often these lessons necessitated teachers spending a disproportionate amount of time with a few pupils to the detriment of others. Overall, learning in this key stage is satisfactory. Teaching is good in science and music. It is unsatisfactory in information technology and design and technology, for similar reasons to those in Key Stage 1. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory.

21. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy are good. Teachers are conscious of the need to maintain and further improve current standards. Within the Literacy Hour, the class teaching session is effective and the final part of the lesson is utilised well to gather information about pupils' perception of their achievement. The school is committed in principle to the National Numeracy Strategy but its implementation is at an earlier stage. Some teachers are not sufficiently confident when working with the whole class on mental mathematics. They do not make optimum use of practical teaching aids for this element of the lesson and there is a lack of spontaneity in questioning. Teachers need more training in this aspect, and also to share the good practices already in use in some classes. Lessons in literacy and numeracy are generally structured well but the relatively new whole school assessment system is not yet providing sufficient information for teachers to ensure a close match to the needs of individual pupils. In literacy lessons teachers work satisfactorily towards termly targets set for the whole class. Pupils are aware of these and noticeably work towards them. No such targets are set in numeracy and consequently teachers are less aware of pupils' previous achievement. This affects the progression of work and results in teachers in some classes having to re-track work at the beginning of the school year.

22. The quality of teaching provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in the Foundation years, Key Stage 1 and for older pupils when taught in small withdrawal groups. It is unsatisfactory in some situations in Key Stage 2 classes because the targets in pupils' individual education plans are not fully considered when whole class lessons are planned. On these occasions pupils with special educational needs are expected to complete a general class task with too little help. In other lessons, where progress is satisfactory or better, these pupils are carefully supported by well informed and skilled learning support assistants.

23. The school has adopted a pattern of curriculum planning which incorporates learning objectives for each lesson. In the best lessons teachers focus on these and make a point of discussing with pupils the extent to which objectives have been achieved. The school does not yet have a consistent strategy in place for monitoring teaching. This significantly reduces opportunities for sharing the best practice and overcoming weaknesses.

24. Marking is used satisfactorily to assist pupils' understanding of their success but it does not regularly contain information to indicate how pupils can improve their work. When, in mathematics, pupils are required to complete corrections they positively benefit from learning from their own mistakes. This practice could be applied more consistently. Some good quality homework

tasks are set to complement learning and encourage pupils to work independently. Parents said they were unsure about how much homework was given and expected within each class. The school needs to clarify this more explicitly in its information to parents.

25. The improved quality of teaching since the previous inspection is having a positive impact and contributing to pupils' rising standards. Pupils' achievement is building satisfactorily on previous learning. To raise standards further, teachers need to work more corporately, both in respect to increasing their awareness of pupils' work and progress throughout the whole school (particularly at points of transition from one key stage to another) and in sharing the most successful classroom practices.

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

26. Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage are well covered, as are National Curriculum requirements for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Up to this point in a child's life learning opportunities are well balanced. However there are shortcomings in the curriculum offered to pupils in Years 3 and above. Time allocated to the core subject science is below the recommended minimum. Design and technology is inadequately planned and consequently too narrow. Despite the installation of a new computer suite information technology is, as yet, too little used to support learning in other subjects. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been the main focus of the school's recent drive for improvement; similar strategies for numeracy are not yet fully effective. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements.

27. For two years a special feature of the curriculum has been beginners' Italian lessons provided by the Education Department of the Italian Consulate in Manchester. This has involved all pupils from Year 1 upwards in spoken exchanges appropriate to their age. No lessons took place during the inspection, but parents and pupils spoke enthusiastically about this addition to learning. Display work and worksheets completed by pupils were of a standard appropriate to young beginners in a foreign language. The local high school also makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning at St Margaret Mary's. Pupils regularly visit the high school engaging in different activities timetabled by mutual agreement between the two schools. Ten pupils with special educational needs worked on a specific programme for most of the previous school year to take advantage of better facilities; pupils from other years engaged in science, technology and sport. In addition a teacher from the high school provides some drama lessons. All of these activities benefit pupils' educational development and, in addition, encourage good liaison in preparation for transfer to secondary education at a later stage. Links with the community are good.

28. Since the previous inspection the school has made satisfactory progress on curricular and related matters. Pupils are now better prepared for the cultural diversity of modern society. There are also better opportunities for outdoor physical education for all pupils. Provision for information technology has significantly improved, although the computers are not yet fully utilised to best advantage. Provision for design and technology remains a weakness.

29. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. All have personal education plans many of which have pertinent targets to enable teachers to provide learning activities which are realistic and challenging. In some cases, for example in spelling and mathematics, the targets are too general making it difficult for pupils to be aware of the progress they make.

30. The school provides a good range of learning activities for children under five in the nursery and in the reception class. Children become confident and secure in response to good teaching and quality of provision. Parents are closely involved through newsletters as their children take their first steps in language, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. A spiritual element is introduced through prayers and singing. Children are introduced to other cultures at an early stage, for instance, in the reception year pupils learn about the Jewish New Year.

31. The school has made a strategic decision to base its planning for Years 1 to 6 on national schemes of work. For this to be fully effective more in-service training is required, a fact already recognised in respect of numeracy and information technology. There are some occasions when the use of time is not well planned, for example when pupils in Year 1 leave their art work to do music, returning later to art. The quality of existing subject planning ranges from very good to poor in design and technology. Some plans incorporate cross-curricular links between subjects, for instance between music and history or science. A good example was when pupils in Year 3 learnt to sing a song about a Viking boat; other pupils made satisfactory attempts at expressing musical ideas related to themes from science lessons. Although the use of information technology is not fully exploited an example of good practice was the exploration of pattern and design using software which the school has recently acquired.

32. Pupils have access to books to take home both from school and class libraries but there is still a need for a properly managed resource base to allow pupils to develop skills in independent learning and investigative work. Pupils do work independently in some lessons, for example in the Year 6 science lesson when data about pulse rates was recorded. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to access information from CD-ROM, or from the Internet.

33. Personal, social and emotional development of pupils is catered for primarily in religious education lessons, and it is therefore to a large extent outside the scope of this inspection. Some is provided for within other subjects, for example science, where

healthy eating and drugs awareness are included. Sex education is satisfactorily provided for by a visiting nurse and in accordance with the governors' decisions.

34. The school provides some extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball and other sports, in which a number of pupils are involved. A significant number of parents would like to see a wider range of activities outside lessons catering for all pupils' interests. Evidence from the inspection confirms the narrowness of the range on offer for a school of this size.

35. The school provides very well for spiritual development. Spiritual experience other than through religion is achieved through other subjects and the overall atmosphere in the school. For example, in one lesson music and scented candles were used as a background to poetry reading. Both boys and girls write their own poetry, a high point of which has to be the conclusion of the millennium song: *You can trust your dreams to the children, everywhere*. There is also a good spiritual element in pupils' appreciation of art.

36. It is clear from the very good relationships in the entire school community that moral and social development are very good. Pupils know what is right and what is wrong from their consideration for others. Forgiveness was the theme of one assembly during the inspection week. Pupils recognise the needs of others less fortunate than themselves both in the United Kingdom and overseas through generous donations to appropriate charities. Over £1000 was raised in the previous school year. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones, sometimes listening to them reading. Some learning activities, for example in music, allow pupils to develop a sense of corporate identity and shared values in their group situation. They demonstrate a sense of responsibility by acting as monitors in a number of curriculum areas. A Soccer Club provides opportunity for some to become members of a team.

37. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of cultural experiences. Music is treated in depth in the context of the European cultural heritage, and both singers and instrumentalists have the opportunity to take part in public performance in the summer concert and in the Christmas Carol Service. Some music and poetry is written by pupils, and the millennium song "One tick of the Clock" is an outstanding example of what can be achieved. Drama is brought into the school via a visiting teacher from the high school and touring theatre groups. Art brings a contact with Africa, responding to a need highlighted in the previous report to prepare pupils for the increasing diversity of modern society. Out of school experience also figures: in the summer term of the year 2000 there were ten visits; that of the reception class to Manchester Airport certainly broadened the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Other places visited include Saddleworth, Tatton Park and Wigan Pier, and for Year 6, visits to Little Moreton Hall and a residential weekend at Wimmerleigh Hall.

38. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good in each of these areas separately, and collectively.

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

39. The level of care taken over the pupils' welfare is very good. This is a very friendly caring community where the Christian ethos permeates the whole life of the school. Pupils are highly valued as individuals and treated with respect. Adults in the school give the impression of enjoying the company of children. They are good listeners. The pupils are well looked after at all times. They are right to feel safe, secure and loved.

40. Health and safety are taken seriously – safety is stressed in lessons, any accidents are correctly recorded, equipment is checked and the premises are formally inspected on a regular basis. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and staff are familiar with the school's procedures.

41. There are very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. The school is working hard to meet its own high target for attendance (yet to be achieved). Parents of pupils who are absent without reason are contacted early in the day and this, combined with certificates for good attendance, effectively reminds parents of the importance the school attaches to attendance. The school tries hard to bring home to parents the implications of taking holidays in term time although holidays still represent a significant proportion of absences. The school has very few pupils with a record of consistently poor attendance.

42. The school's policy for encouraging good behaviour is effective and is based on high expectations. Good behaviour is positively recognised by praise and when appropriate the award of house points. Pupils fully understand the consequences of any inappropriate behaviour. Record keeping varies from class to class but is adequate. Bullying is not a problem in the school, however procedures are clear and familiar to pupils and parents.

43. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well as is shown by the generally good quality sections on personal development in the pupils' annual reports. Records of personal development are informal at the moment but should become more systematic with the new pupil tracking sheets currently being introduced. The school takes good care of pupils with special educational needs. These are diagnosed effectively and the practice of withdrawing small groups to



develop specific skills provides many pupils with good opportunities to gain literacy and numeracy skills. Links between this work and the tasks given to pupils when working with the whole class are not secure in Years 3, 4 and 5. This sometimes results in pupils' frustration when they are not sure how to proceed.

44. The previous inspection report recommended that more coherent policy and practice be developed to assess pupils' progress and attainment. Such a system has only recently been introduced. Results of ongoing assessment are beginning to be analysed but comparative data from previous years is not available against which progress can be measured. Consequently the school is not in a position to set targets for individual pupils in key subjects. Whole class targets are set in literacy and these have already had a positive impact on achievement in English. There is a marking policy to assist short-term assessment and planning but this is not used consistently throughout the school.

45. The school is very effective in providing for pupils' personal development. It is not as effective in relation to their academic development. The school has been relatively slow in responding to the monitoring of standards raised as an issue at the time of the previous inspection. This was because other issues, including the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, were considered to be of higher priority. Assessment procedures have now been established and the school has the means to identify any underachievement and take remedial action. This is an improvement. Teachers now need to make use of the information gained to assist planning and help pupils understand how to improve their work further.

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

46. On one level the partnership between school and parents is effective. Parents feel welcome in the school and find the headteacher and teachers easily approachable and accessible. However the school is less effective in involving parents in their children's learning and in the general life of the school.

47. Parents like the school. They commented particularly on the friendly caring atmosphere, the high expectations the school has for the children, the good quality of teaching, the way the school helps their children to mature and the good behaviour. All these positive points are confirmed by the inspection.

48. Some parents have reservations about homework and particularly that not enough is set in Year 6. The beginning of a school year is not the easiest time to assess this. Inspectors found that homework is generally satisfactory throughout the school and in Year 6 an appropriate amount is regularly set.

49. Some parents do not think they are kept well informed about their child's progress. The school provides a satisfactory number of formal opportunities for parents to meet their child's teacher, however the quality of the pupils' annual reports is variable. A few are good, but many are less so because they contain descriptions that are far too general, for instance 'he has a good knowledge of mathematical concepts'. This does not inform parents of what the child can actually do. Additionally very few reports contain information on what a child needs to do to improve, thus depriving parents of an opportunity to be involved in their child's learning. The parents' criticisms are endorsed by the inspection. With regard to pupils with special educational needs, the school acknowledges the importance of liaison between school and parents. Both formal and informal communication regularly take place and parents are involved when individual education plans are revised or adjusted.

50. Some parents would like a closer relationship with the school. Overall the level of information about the school to parents is very good in the Foundation Stage; for the rest of the school it is satisfactory. The prospectus is well written and informative. The regular newsletters keep parents reasonably well informed on the life of the school. Parents are given advance notice of future class work. In Key Stage 2 this information is often too general to be useful, for instance parents are told that science in Year 3 this term will cover 'teeth and eating'. No advance information is given on English or mathematics. The lack of detailed information does not encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning.

51. The amount of notice and the timing of meetings were also criticised by some parents. Inspectors found some validity in these criticisms. Short notice of important meetings held in the middle of the afternoon shows a lack of understanding of the problems of many working parents and this is unsatisfactory.

52. There is very little involvement of parents within the school. Consequently, links with parents are not as effective as they could be, except in the Foundation Stage. Few parents help in the classroom. The school is missing an opportunity to make use of a valuable resource that can have a significant impact on the pupils' learning. Parents are not normally invited to class assemblies – again a missed opportunity for parents to see the work of the school and their children.

53. A few parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed concern about mixed-age classes. The inspectors found no reduction whatsoever in the quality of education in these classes.

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

54. The quality of leadership and management by the headteacher is satisfactory.

55. The previous report identified a number of aspects requiring attention. The management structure itself was in need of review, subject co-ordinators needed to be more pro-active, and the quality of teaching required improvement, as did the monitoring and evaluation of standards. In addition it was recommended that senior staff should approach change more positively. The governors have supported the headteacher in instituting change; some significant improvements have been made and the priorities listed in the action plan have been fulfilled in part. For example, teaching has improved and a new curriculum structure has been established together with a more appropriate and useful assessment system. The effect of the latter is yet to be evaluated in respect of its impact on individual pupil's achievement. The headteacher has monitored a minimal amount of teaching, mainly in literacy and numeracy. This needs to be extended so that good practice can be disseminated and shared by all staff. At present teachers work well, but, too often, in isolation from colleagues. In mathematics for instance, some teachers are less confident with mental mathematics whilst others make good use of practical resources to make learning enjoyable. Such practices could profitably be shared and promoted throughout the school. Subject co-ordinators and key staff need to have more clearly defined roles so that they can be more closely involved in strategic planning. In general teachers tend to work and plan in groups - foundation years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 - possibly dictated by the nature and spread of accommodation. Consequently there is insufficient sharing of information between the different stages. The school lacks a corporate approach in this respect. Teachers and non-teaching staff are committed and supportive of the pupils' interests. Pupils are well known by all staff whose concern is a clear reflection of the school's philosophy of care and concern for the individual. The headteacher has a high profile in the school and makes it a priority to regularly be seen about the school. Strategies for inspiring optimum achievement are working well, especially for children in the Foundation stage.

56. The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities and is well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A system of 'link governors' is being established so that governors can become better informed about the work in curriculum subjects prior to evaluating the effectiveness of work within them. Liaison between the governor responsible for special educational needs and the school is well advanced and particularly effective. The school development plan has appropriate priorities and takes account of forward planning. It is suitably modified on a regular basis to reflect changing needs and the success, or otherwise, of actions taken. Most recently the targets have embraced literacy and numeracy and the development of structures to underpin teaching. The governing body needs to review the impact of new initiatives more regularly to ensure that they are effected without undue delay. Governors failed to notice, for example, that the implementation of monitoring procedures for teaching was unsatisfactorily slow; also that there is no structured appraisal system to support the staff's professional development.

57. The staffing of the school is adequate and generally well deployed. The exception, on occasion, is the use of additional staff to support small groups of pupils. In Key Stage 2 there are some relatively large classes with high proportions of pupils with special educational needs. Without additional help, especially in English and mathematics, teachers find it difficult to maintain an appropriate pace for all pupils. As a result the pace of learning slows for all. When extra support is provided pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem.

58. The accommodation is of good quality and generous for the number of pupils currently on roll. In the Foundation Stage children are accommodated in a separate purpose built modern building, to which a fenced off outdoor play area has recently been added through the sponsorship of three local firms. The main school building is more than adequate for all pupils from Year 1 upwards, allowing some flexibility at the time of transfer from the Foundation Stage. Classrooms are of sufficient size to allow for freedom of movement in connection with practical activities. The siting of the library in a main thoroughfare is poor. It discourages pupils from indulging in leisurely reading and independent study. The long corridors provide good opportunities for display, which contributes to learning in several areas of the curriculum, for example history. They are also an important means by which the school affirms its ethos. Good use is made of the outdoor play space. There is good supervision and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Resources to support learning in the classroom are generally satisfactory, but not always put to optimum use. For example, some theoretical mathematics lessons would have benefited from a practical input. The new computer suite provides well for information technology but it is difficult for pupils to follow up the work with regular practice as most classrooms do not have computers.

59. The school makes good use of its funding from various sources, including a limited amount of sponsorship. Monies are spent prudently and linked to priorities in the development plan, in particular to improving pupils' attainment when they leave the school. The school carries a substantial surplus at present built up from a deficit position at the time of the headteacher's appointment. The budget is satisfactorily managed to take account of contingencies and the impact of reducing numbers due to demographic changes. The school and governors endeavour to ensure that spending decisions are cost-effective with respect to the quality of provision and its impact on pupils' achievement. Staff training is mainly linked to national initiatives, such as the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

60. The school has a good ethos which permeates all its activities. There has been satisfactory improvement in many aspects of its work since the previous inspection but there is still more to be done. Assessment systems need to be used to help individual pupils target higher standards, teaching needs to be monitored with the best treated as an exemplar of good practice, and, not

least, teachers need to work corporately towards agreed prioritised aims. Overall, the school provides a sound all-round education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. It has the will and capacity for further development.

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

61. To further improve the work of the school the headteacher, staff and governors should

- (1) Promote higher levels of achievement by focusing on the cumulative acquisition of basic skills, particularly in numeracy and information technology.  
*(Paragraphs 7, 9, 83, 88, 117-121)*
  
- (2) Improve management and organisational structures by:
  - \*providing opportunities for the senior managers to work more collaboratively with other staff so that there is a more corporate approach to school improvement
  - \*establishing better links between the key stages so that progression through the curriculum can be more carefully monitored
  - \*using the monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons to build on the good practices already existing in some classes
  - \*using assessment data to enable subject co-ordinators to match planning and target setting to pupils' individual needs.*(Paragraphs 25, 44, 45, 55, 60, 75, 87, 95)*
  
- (3) Devise and implement a clear, comprehensive and progressive scheme of work in design and technology so that pupils gain practical experience in all aspects of the required programmes of study in the National Curriculum.  
*(Paragraphs 7, 26, 102-105)*
  
- (4) Improve communication with parents by:
  - \*providing more timely information about activities and events
  - \*ensuring annual reports contain sufficient detail to enable parents to contribute to their children's progress
  - \*encouraging parents to become more involved in the daily life of the school.*(Paragraphs 46, 49-52)*

In addition to the issues listed above, the following should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- \*The governing body should check that new initiatives are implemented without undue delay.  
*(Paragraph 56 )*

**PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

**Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection**

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	7	28	21	3	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**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	288
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	4	62

FTE means full-time equivalent.

<b>Special educational needs</b>	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	43

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

**Attendance**

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.4

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	25	18	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	20	16
	Girls	17	17	16
	Total	35	37	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81(80)	86(87)	74(90)
	National	82(80)	83(81)	87(84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	20	21
	Girls	17	17	18
	Total	35	37	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81(88)	86(95)	91(95)
	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	28	29	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	17
	Girls	20	20	21
	Total	35	35	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	61(51)	61(49)	67(55)
	National	70(65)	69(59)	78(69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	19	17
	Girls	19	20	20
	Total	34	39	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60(51)	68(52)	65(59)
	National	68(65)	69(65)	75(71)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	5
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.2
Average class size	26.2

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	63

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	602937
Total expenditure	619455
Expenditure per pupil	1811
Balance brought forward from previous year	76329
Balance carried forward to next year	59811

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	42

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

279
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Number of questionnaires returned

67
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**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	29	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	31	6	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	46	3	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	32	18	8	0
The teaching is good.	55	42	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	35	21	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	27	9	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	42	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	36	19	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	44	36	12	3	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	46	1	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	36	12	22	6

## **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**

62. The Foundation Stage consists of the nursery and reception classes housed in a separate building with its own outdoor and covered play areas. The staff work hard to create a bright, secure and welcoming environment for the youngest children in school. The school has placed great emphasis on developing the Foundation stage since the previous inspection with the result that all children are given a good start to their school life.

63. On entry to the Foundation Stage, speaking and listening, mathematical and personal skills are broadly average, although initial assessments conducted with these young children reveal a very wide range. By the time they start Year 1 the majority have attained, and sometimes exceeded, the early learning goals in personal, physical, creative and mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, communication, language and literacy skills. Very good teaching in all these aspects of the work enables children to achieve well. Teachers have very good understanding of the early years curriculum, and of the learning needs of young children. They work well in a team with the nursery nurses and classroom assistants. Careful records are maintained and progress is monitored. Children who have special educational needs are identified, and sometimes work in a small group on focused tasks, learning colours for example. Liaison with the co-ordinator for special educational needs is good. Higher-attaining children in the nursery sometimes work with older children in the reception class and they respond well to the challenge and expectations.

64. Parents have positive views of the work of the Foundation Stage. There are good home- school links. Parents are sent regular, very informative newsletters about what their children are learning in school, welcoming helpers and giving ideas for supporting the children's learning at home. In the morning, parents are welcome to accompany their children into class and spend up to fifteen minutes with their child, reading or working on different activities. This is beneficial to both the children and parents.

65. There are 30 full-time places in the nursery. Children start in September or January. At the time of the inspection there were 22 children in the nursery some of whom had been attending for just two weeks, initially part-time. It was a credit to the school that children had settled so quickly and reacted so positively to the well programmed activities. Almost without exception children move from the nursery to the reception class to begin their compulsory education.

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

66. All staff develop good, caring relationships and are good role models. Children learn to share, to help each other, to take turns and to work co-operatively. They are taught good routines and tidy up equipment independently. 'Circle time', which involves group discussion with the teacher, is used to enable children to express their own feelings and to listen to the views of others. The worship area celebrates God's love for everyone, and children learn to give thanks and share harvest gifts. There is a calm, purposeful atmosphere that encourages good behaviour, and children show enthusiasm in all learning activities. By the time children reach the end of the Foundation Stage the majority have gained confidence in themselves and relate well to others.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

67. Children in both nursery and reception enjoy listening to stories and enjoy sharing books with a friend or an adult. They enjoy talking about a story, or recounting their 'news' and listen well. In a literacy lesson, children in the nursery were introduced to a new big book 'Two Feet'. They knew where to find the book's title and joined in when the teacher read the story. They can identify upper and lower case letters. Children in the reception class quickly identified the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' from pictures on the cover. All children know that print has meaning and that the words are read from left to right across the page. They enjoy using the phonic 'fans' to begin learning letter sounds, such as 'd' for Daddy Bear. Classrooms are rich in print on all the displays, many with children's own written labels. There are writing tables, well equipped with paper, crayons and pencils for children to practise their developing writing skills. Books are taken home regularly to be shared with parents. Most children meet the early learning goals, and some are able to read simple words and phrases when they leave the Foundation Stage.

#### **Mathematical development**

68. Teachers use every opportunity to count, recognise and use numbers, sequences and ordering. They make good use of action and counting songs to reinforce knowledge of numbers. In the nursery, older children who have been in school longest can count to ten and fifteen, and many can recognise numbers out of sequence. In reception, children can count further, some to 100, and can count on and back from a given number. Both classes have a good range of practical mathematical activities available, from the 'number train' for counting and sorting in the nursery to the greengrocer's shop in the reception class where children can buy, sell and weigh the produce. Mathematical language is used at all times; lower-attaining children in the reception class were helped to understand and use the words 'sphere' and 'cube' correctly when they threaded beads onto laces. All children learn to identify



and name basic two and three-dimensional shapes. In the reception class, children used the computer to sort shapes and copy a pattern. By the end of the Foundation Stage, nearly all the children are meeting, and sometimes exceeding, the early learning goals.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of the world**

69. The children were preparing for harvest, and learning how Jewish people celebrate harvest at Sukkot. Vibrant displays related to harvest and the autumn. Children successfully learned to use their five senses by looking at the displays, smelling the pot pourri, feeling the pine cones, tasting fruit and listening to rustling leaves and natural objects. They enjoy making masks and playing drums and pipes when they learn about people who live in Africa. The outside play area is marked with roads and paths for the children to follow trails and treasure hunts which provides a good start to the development of mapping skills. They satisfactorily locate places from photographs. The 'house' area is set up to enable children to compare old equipment with modern. Both classrooms have computers which are well used either independently by the children or as teaching aids. Children in the nursery learn to 'sign' their name when using the computer. Outside the nursery is a safe fenced area, equipped with a climbing frame, a soft surfaced play area, a covered area and grass. Children have planted bulbs ready for spring, and there are smaller shrubs. The fences are brightly painted with fairy tale characters. Teachers capitalise on topical events, such as the children's interest in the 2000 Olympic Games. Children were keeping a tally of medals and making an Olympic flag. The great majority of children achieve the early learning goals at the end of the Foundation stage.

### **Physical development**

70. Children are well taught to use apparatus and move with regard for the safety of themselves and others. They learn to run, jump, balance, climb and crawl, catch and throw. Children are encouraged to make full use of the opportunities presented by the large outdoor climbing frame. In the reception class they learn to work in groups and follow a leader, and are encouraged to improve their movements and develop greater control. Other physical skills, such as cutting, sticking, threading and building are developed through an interesting range of well structured activities. Children are meeting the early learning goals when they leave the Foundation Stage.

### **Creative development**

71. Children are provided with a very wide range of opportunities to promote their creative development and expression of ideas. Their work is mounted and displayed well throughout the area. Children are taught skills and techniques, and work in many different media. In the reception class they made good papier mache models of fruit for the harvest display. Some good observational drawings of fruit and vegetables were also seen. Children in the nursery painted self-portraits, and wrote their own name labels. They dipped feet in paint to print on large sheets of paper. Good use of musical Instruments supports children's music making. They enjoy singing and can clap to rhythms and tunes. Creative play areas include an optician's shop in the reception class to link with work on the senses, and a hospital area for role play in the nursery. The children meet the early learning goals at the end of the Foundation Stage.

72. The school has further improved its provision for the youngest children since the previous inspection.

## **ENGLISH**

73. In the 1999 national tests for seven-year-olds, the pupil's results in reading were below the national average. They were average when compared to schools of similar background. In writing, the results were in line with the national average, and well above those of similar schools. In the national tests in 2000, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in reading was lower than in 1999 although the proportion exceeding this level increased. Pupils' results in writing were higher, similar to those of the previous year. National and local comparisons for 2000 were not available at the time of the inspection. Taken over four years to 1999 pupils' results in reading tests at the age of seven have been close to the national average, and in writing have been well above average. However, performance in reading has shown a decline since the previous inspection. The school has identified the group of pupils whose performance is below that expected and teachers provide carefully structured work to consolidate and extend their earlier learning. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that currently pupils in Key Stage 1 are receiving a firm basis in literacy skills and are expected to achieve higher levels.

74. In national tests for eleven-year-olds in 1999 the pattern was similar to Key Stage 1, with results below the national average, but about the same when compared with similar schools. They were also similar to the average for Manchester schools. Averaged over the past four years attainment in English in Key Stage 2 has been below the national average. The school's own analysis shows a gradually rising trend in attainment. Boys and girls achieve similarly in relation to the averages for their age group. The previous inspection identified underachievement of some boys in English as a key issue. The school took action to raise staff awareness, targeted specific areas of the English curriculum and designed a range of activities to improve the performance of the boys. Current results show the effectiveness of this action. There was a significant improvement in pupils' results in 2000, aligned

with those in mathematics and science. Early indications suggest that the school's results for English are in line with national averages this year, and exceed the school's own targets.

75. The majority of pupils enter Key Stage 1 with average standards of attainment, although there is a wide spread of ability. Pupils make steady progress in the development of their skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing through both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 2, overall attainment in English is average. This was confirmed through scrutiny of work from the current and previous year and discussion with pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They receive good support from classroom and special needs assistants. A specialist teacher devises suitable activities to support pupils during the Literacy Hour. Some classes in Key Stage 2 have higher numbers of pupils with special educational needs and would benefit from more regular in-class support to ensure that the progress of all pupils is not hampered. Later in the school year, extra staffing enables pupils in Years 5 and 6 to be taught in classes grouped by ability. This creates smaller groups, and the performance of pupils of all ability levels is enhanced, as is illustrated by improved results in the 2000 national tests. Pupils' national test results are carefully analysed and comparisons drawn to evaluate overall progress. Teachers also keep records of individual pupil's work. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not as well developed – it is an area identified for improvement in the coming year. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented since the previous inspection, and is seen to be having a positive effect on the teaching of English. Overall, pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting point, but there is room for improvement.

### **Speaking and Listening**

76. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are average. Pupils can communicate their ideas clearly and confidently to their teachers and to each other. They are eager to answer questions. They listen well to the teacher, and are learning to listen to other pupils when they report back in the whole class session at the end of the lesson. Lower-attaining pupils who may find it difficult to write an account of their experiences are given good opportunities to respond orally, and some do so at length. More able pupils can recount their experiences, making appropriate choices of adjectives and holding the listeners' interest. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards of speaking and listening are average for pupils' age. In a Year 3/4 class, pupils listened carefully to a poem by an Indian chief and gave good, thoughtful oral comments that explored their response to the natural world. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy identifying alliteration in stories. There are further opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills when pupils participate in concerts or present a class assembly.

### **Reading**

77. Although the results of the national tests showed that standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 have been below average, evidence gathered during the inspection shows an improving picture. Phonic skills are taught well. Pupils enjoy reading aloud from the Big Books in the Literacy Hour. In Year 1, most pupils recognise the key words in the passage and begin to use their knowledge of letter sounds to blend letters together. By Year 2, higher-attaining pupils read fluently and confidently. All pupils can identify author and illustrator, know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and support their answers when they say that a dictionary is an example of a non-fiction book. Books are taken home and a reading diary is kept. Whilst lower-attaining pupils are more hesitant when they read aloud, by the end of Key Stage 2 the highest-attaining pupils can compare and contrast elements of the plot. All pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge of a variety of strategies when they are reading. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are average and there is a wide range of attainment. The great majority of pupils say they enjoy reading, either texts used in the Literacy Hour or in books selected for private reading. Pupils are encouraged to take books home to read with their parents. They enjoy the work of a wide variety of favourite authors and talk knowledgeably about J K Rowling, Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson and Enid Blyton. Many pupils visit the local library. The school library has been relocated since the previous inspection. Although it is more central, the library is now sited on the main thoroughfare, which is also the entrance to the school hall. It cannot be used by groups or for private study. An adequate stock of reference books is housed in the library, fiction books are held in classrooms.

### **Writing**

78. At the end of Key Stage 1, overall standards are as expected for pupils' age. Evidence from work seen shows that Year 1 pupils write at length in stories, diaries and reporting, and work with effort. They are taught to use correct vocabulary, and the youngest pupils know that letters may be lower or upper case. They begin to refine and develop their handwriting style. In Year 2, higher-achieving pupils make increasing use of adjectives in well constructed stories. Pupils learn and practise spellings regularly. As they move through Key Stage 2, they begin to make wider and more accurate use of punctuation. In Year 3/4, pupils used their knowledge of nouns to write a poem about their senses and by Year 4 are presenting their work in a variety of ways. Standards of presentation are good. From the nursery, each child has a writing continuation book in which they complete several pieces of extended writing each year. This enables teachers to evaluate progress in the acquisition of writing skills, punctuation, spellings and the development of pupils' ability to express their ideas in written form. By the end of Key Stage 2, overall attainment is average for eleven-year-olds. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to use their writing skills in other curriculum areas. In history, pupils write the diary of a Victorian child, or a report from a factory inspector. There is some extended writing in religious education in Key Stage 1. In science, work is usually to a prescribed pattern, even in Year 6 where higher-attaining pupils

should be given more opportunities to organise and report their own findings. Very little use is made of information technology because the school has only recently acquired up-to-date computers. Consequently pupils have not been able to apply word processing skills to the drafting of their writing. Standards could be raised further if the school tackled the shortcomings more vigorously.

79. The previous inspection found the quality of teaching in English to be mostly satisfactory or better in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, teaching is now good, and one very good lesson was observed. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory overall. Four good lessons were observed but two others were unsatisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. The National Literacy Strategy is implemented well in all classes, which ensures a consistent approach throughout the school. Targets for improvement are displayed in each class, and all teachers remind pupils of their learning objectives in lessons. In Key Stage 1 pupils are taught a good range of basic skills and are surrounded by examples of print in displays. Teachers make learning fun and enjoyable by providing activities that involve, challenge and excite their pupils. They make skilled use of questions to ensure all pupils participate and contribute. All teachers make clear, detailed lesson plans, consistent with the school's planning system for literacy. The recently purchased textbooks and anthologies for Key Stage 2 have proved popular and useful. Classroom assistants are used well to support learning, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when teachers do not provide sufficient focus, shared text work takes too long and lessons are not well paced. Classes with high numbers of pupils with special educational needs would benefit from more regular in-class support - on occasion teachers face too many demands from individual pupils and this is detrimental to the learning of others.

80. Pupils generally have good attitudes, behave well and work hard in lessons. They settle quickly to their tasks, and work with sustained concentration. They share resources well, and discuss their work quietly. Pupils respond sensitively to aesthetic stimuli, for example when music, scented candles and natural objects were used to induce ideas for poetry.

81. The English curriculum is enriched by extra activities such as visits from the English Shakespeare Company Workshop and traditional storytellers. Poetry days and reading weeks are held each year, and two Book Fairs are held annually. The subject co-ordinator helps staff to plan and implement new initiatives to support the development of literacy skills. She has involved all staff in the implementation of the literacy strategy, in decision making and identifying areas for development, such as spelling. Future plans include monitoring teaching and learning, and in-service training on specific aspects such as guided reading. There is a need to ensure the quality of teaching is consistent throughout the school, and that good practice is disseminated to raise standards further. Teachers also need to be more aware of the work being done in the Foundation Stage and year groups other than their own. Pupils should be made aware of targets to improve their own individual learning, and this should be reflected when work is marked.

## **MATHEMATICS**

82. Pupils' results in the 1999 national tests for eleven-year-olds were average when compared to all schools and above average when compared to similar schools. Attainment was better than that in English and science. The improvement was sustained in 2000; an increased proportion of pupils reached the standard expected for their age. The school achieved a good measure of success in meeting the realistic but challenging targets set by the governors in 1999 and 2000. Results were better than in 1997/98 when there had been a marked decline in mathematics. In the national tests for seven-year-olds in 1999, pupils' results were well below average when compared to all schools and those of similar background. The downward trend from 1997 to 1999 was reversed in 2000 when there was a significant increase (almost 20%) in the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age, and in the proportion exceeding that level. National figures are not yet available for comparison. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily but there is scope for all-round improvement.

83. Observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that by the ages of seven and eleven, the overall standard of pupils' work is average, and steadily improving. This is the result of more focused teaching, the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and grouping of pupils by ability for the greater part of the year in Year 6. There is still much to be done to raise standards further, particularly with regard to the teaching of mental mathematics. Pupils' numerical and computational skills are generally below average because they have not previously developed the mental strategies to manipulate numbers quickly and accurately. Many pupils in the upper years are still unsure of multiplication tables. Currently, in Years 1 and 2, teachers are placing great emphasis on the understanding of basic number concepts. Pupils are responding well and this firm foundation augurs well for the future as pupils move through the school. Pupils in older year groups, and their teachers, are less confident with the work in mental mathematics as this is a relatively new element in the make up of lessons. Throughout the school there is insufficient emphasis on the application of mathematics through problem solving. A more practical approach would benefit all pupils. Resources are not always used effectively; they sometimes remain in cupboards. In contrast, when used well, they stimulate interest and motivation and reinforce learning. Information technology is not yet incorporated in lesson planning as up-dated computers have only recently been installed.

84. Bearing in mind the pupils' average mathematical ability on entry, they make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards are improving now that learning is based on the cumulative acquisition of knowledge and understanding and steady teaching. By the end of Year 2, pupils are familiar with number sequences and most can work with numbers up to 100. The more able pupils work independently but on occasion are not provided with enough work to occupy the time available. Hence opportunities to set new challenges are missed. The less able pupils work with simpler numbers and achieve best when under the direct supervision of an adult. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall and good in Year 6. This is due to work which is specifically related to pupils' individual needs and the grouping of pupils by ability for a considerable part of the year. In the two mixed-age classes, pupils work at an appropriate pace; there are benefits for pupils in each of the age groups and the rate of learning for both is good. In other year groups, where classes are sometimes large, there is insufficient adult support for the lower-attaining pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. As a result the pace of learning slows for all pupils. The below average attainment at the beginning of Year 3 in previous years has constrained progress in Key Stage 2. Teachers take account of this in their preparation and pupils' improving standards are indicative of an increasing grasp of mathematical principles. By the time pupils leave the school they have an adequate understanding of shape, space and measure and are competent in handling data. They lack speed in mental agility and the manipulation of numbers mentally. Written work is suitably marked and in working through corrections pupils learn from their mistakes. This is good practice but is not used consistently by all teachers. Similarly there is variation in the presentation of work. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting point. However, some pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 2 do not achieve as well as they might because they need more direct support from an adult to move them on.

85. Pupils' attitudes are good. They respond well to their teachers, particularly when teaching is varied, stimulating and demanding. Relationships between pupils and teachers are generally good so pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils respond particularly well when faced with challenge; they lose concentration and enthusiasm when demands are too low or not sufficiently exacting.

86. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. The new three-part format of lessons incorporating sharply focused mental work, independent work and summative class sessions is working well in Key Stage 1. Here teaching is good. It is more variable in Key Stage 2 but some good teaching was seen which produced enthusiastic response. In one such lesson the teacher used drama to illustrate why the £ and p signs never appear together when writing monetary sums in figures. The highest-attaining pupils explicitly explained why two pence is written £.02 and not £.2. The teaching points were so well reinforced that it is doubtful any of the pupils will forget them. Where teaching was satisfactory in contrast to good pupils did not work with a sense of urgency except when under the direct supervision of the teacher. In such situations teachers need to be more forceful in expecting pupils to comply with instructions, for example when settling down to work at the changeover of activities. It is evident that teachers are responding positively to the more structured approach of the National Numeracy Strategy. The whole class teaching sessions are providing pupils with opportunities to share experiences, test out ideas and contribute to the development of the lesson. In the best of these teachers use pupils' answers to open out discussion. The quality of the interactive mental work is the most variable. Not all teachers are confident about this element of the lesson. Some sessions lack brisk pace and spontaneity. Most, but not all, lessons end with succinct summaries of what has been achieved. When done well this provides the teacher with useful information on which to base future planning. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. This is a contributory factor to the improving standards.

87. The school has passed through a period of change since the previous inspection. Preparation for the new curriculum, analysis of results and assessment procedures are now in place. The follow-up, including evaluation of effectiveness, sharing of good teaching practices, tracking of pupils' progress and setting of targets is scheduled for the current year. Up to now the tendency has been for teachers to work independently. Liaison about pupils' work has centred on adjacent year groups rather than the wider context of the whole school. As a result there has been too little collaboration re. pupils' progress year-on-year or across key stages. This has reduced opportunities to identify underachievement and take corrective action. The school has identified the most immediate needs in mathematics namely; the improvement of pupils' mental skills; tracking of progression in learning throughout the school; fully effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and regular evaluation of teaching and learning. It has a suitable action plan to tackle them and good capacity to succeed.

#### *Numeracy across the curriculum*

88. Pupils cope adequately with numerical work when they have calculators to assist with operational skills such as multiplication and division. Mental skills are rarely fast enough because pupils do not know their multiplication tables well enough. Some pupils do not have a good grasp of the basic number concepts expected for their age. Pupils are more competent when applying other skills, such as measurement and graphical form. They handle data satisfactorily and are capable of sorting and classifying information. Such skills are used satisfactorily in science and other subjects of the curriculum.

## **SCIENCE**

89. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 1999 pupils' results were below average. They were average compared to schools of similar background. There was a significant improvement in 2000. 85 percent of pupils reached or exceeded the standard expected for their age; 33 percent attained the higher level. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment by the time they are seven indicates that standards are average for their age. This is confirmed by evidence from the inspection. Overall, standards of work are average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average at the end of Key Stage 2. These findings indicate a significant improvement on those of the previous inspection. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

90. In 1996 standards were slightly above the national levels when pupils left the school. They declined to well below the national average in the next two years. Pupils' attainment began to improve in 1999 at a better rate than the national trend. This is because the school has adopted a commercial scheme which it implements through careful termly planning. In doing so the school has responded well to the recommendations of the previous report. The quality of teaching has improved and is mostly good although pupils are not encouraged to use their own ideas when investigations are planned. An increase in time given to science, to that of the average in most schools, would enable pupils to be given more opportunities to develop their own more independent writing style. Pupils use correct scientific vocabulary when they discuss their work but written work is largely prescribed to follow the objectives of the lessons. Pupils are better prepared for the national assessment tests than at the time of the previous inspection and this contributes to the rising standards.

91. Overall, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The work recorded in pupils' books throughout the school highlights the good link between investigations and the learning of scientific knowledge. Mathematical techniques are used regularly to help pupils sort and classify the characteristics of materials and measure the distance travelled by model vehicles of different weights when they accelerate down inclined ramps. Bar charts and line graphs are constructed satisfactorily and pupils look for patterns as they examine their predictions about the insulation properties of materials and the relationship between gravity and friction. However, the most able pupils are sufficiently skilled to be able to investigate their own ideas rather than always follow the experiment organised by the teacher.

92. In Years 1 and 2 pupils successfully learn about all aspects of the science curriculum. Gains in knowledge result from practical investigations, such as when pupils in Year 2 engaged in physical exercise for one minute to find the increase in their pulse rate. Pupils satisfactorily learn to record their findings in labelled diagrams. Higher-attaining pupils could be challenged more through the provision of greater opportunities for independent work.

93. In Years 3 to 6 pupils progressively build on this knowledge and skills. They develop a good scientific knowledge and a sound awareness of scientific procedures. By the beginning of Year 6 they have a satisfactory understanding of a reliable fair test. In Year 3 pupils accurately define solids, liquids and gases and know how substances such as water, chocolate and butter change when they are heated. In Year 4 pupils create menus to demonstrate their understanding of the meaning of a balanced diet. They are aware of the impact of this on growth and healthy living. By Years 5 and 6 pupils have sound knowledge of the circulatory system. They know how the heart works and how it pumps blood to the lungs where oxygen is collected and waste gases are removed. They use correct vocabulary including such words as veins and arteries and know where organs are positioned in the body. Earlier work on body functions is extended to more sophisticated measurement and analysis, for example when pupils in Year 6 collect data about the variation of pulse rate before, during and after exercise. Data is recorded graphically and well used. Pupils reach conclusions that classmates have different heartbeat rates and that their own pulse rates alter when they change activities.

94. Overall, teaching is good. All the lessons observed were satisfactory or better and scrutiny of pupils' work from the previous year reflected the teachers' good preparation and familiarity with the subject matter. These findings are an improvement on those of the previous inspection when teaching was variable and sometimes too superficial. The practical activities promote well the pupils' interest in science. Teachers use simple apparatus effectively, such as when pupils in Year 1 used plastic cups covered with metal foil to test their sense of smell in identifying food samples. Most of the pupils' work is written up in science notebooks. It is of good quality but too often follows a prescribed pattern. More opportunities could be created for pupils to express themselves more freely. The good quality of the presentation, vocabulary, labelled diagrams and mathematical analysis are further indications of good teaching.

95. Good links are made with personal, social and health education. Teachers' planning is scrutinised but as yet there has been little evaluation of teaching to determine whether the planning ensures effective development in scientific concepts at the appropriate pace. Although teachers assess pupils' work regularly at the conclusion of a project, assessment does not guide teachers' planning. In addition, teachers need to be more conversant with the work completed in other year groups. This would ensure better progression, year on year. Plans are in place to analyse the national test results to identify the most effective areas of teaching and, where necessary, improve its quality. There is good capacity for further development.

## **ART**

96. Two lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are based on these, scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils and staff.

97. Pupils' attainment at the ages of seven and eleven is similar to that found in most schools. In Key Stage 1 pupils begin to use a variety of materials and skills to create pictures and design models. For example, some of the youngest pupils mixed their own paint to produce an appropriate colour to paint models of fruit that they had made out of clay. Others looked at the work of a Dutch artist who created portraits out of fruit. They successfully made their own portraits by cutting and pasting pictures of fruit taken from magazines. Yet another group practised using oil pastels in their sketchbooks before drawing a picture of Funnybones for the cover of their literacy book. Pupils are satisfactorily learning to evaluate their own work and that of others.

98. In Key Stage 2 skills are extended to a more advanced level. For instance, charcoal is used to produce portraits. Art is well used to support other subjects, such as when pupils used vivid poster paint and cardboard to make model shields with Viking designs. Other pupils made striking three-dimensional models of longboats and amulets using clay. This represents an improvement on the previous report which referred to lack of experience in this aspect of the artwork. Pupils are progressively gaining knowledge of world famous artists. They make good attempts at painting in the style of Picasso and Paup Klee. The use of information technology to complement art lessons is its infancy. Pupils responded well when given the opportunity to use an art package on the computer to make pictures in the style of Piet Mandrian.

99. Pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. They steadily increase their knowledge and skills through practice and the study of recognised artists. At the same time they are encouraged to be original and to view art as an opportunity for free expression. Pupils learn to celebrate and share their own success, such as when older pupils painted delightful flowers in Van Gogh style using yellow and orange paint thickened with flour. The finished pictures were hung in the school art gallery. Pupils' experience also extends to art from other cultures. For example, pupils created some impressive pictures of African animals on orange fabric.

100. Overall, the teaching of art is satisfactory throughout the school. Skills are taught directly so that the pupils can improve their techniques more quickly. Most teachers have a good knowledge of art and pass it on with enthusiasm. Evaluation of completed work is carried out routinely in most classes and pupils learn well from this practice. Pupils are interested in art, have good concentration and behave well because teachers motivate them and provide stimulating work which fires their imagination. Most pupils are pleased with the art they produce. The use of sketchbooks to practise and improve observational skills is at an early stage in development. In this aspect there is little change since the previous inspection. In some area of the school the display of artwork needs to be improved.

101. A comprehensive scheme of work ensures that all aspects are progressively covered to an overall plan. Procedures for the assessment and checking of pupils' progress are currently unsatisfactory. They are not yet informative enough to assist teachers in identifying areas of improvement for individual pupils. There is a wide range of good quality art materials in school to support the teaching of the subject. Art and design makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural and social development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

102. Limited evidence available during the inspection indicates that standards and teaching are unsatisfactory. The curriculum covers a very limited range of work. Two lessons were observed, one in each key stage, both on the same topic. Neither incorporated sufficiently rigorous techniques relevant to the design, making and evaluating of finished articles. Scrutiny of planning and discussions with pupils revealed that these lack lustre activities were typical.

103. In an activity in Year 1, pupils prepared salads choosing from a variety of foods. They showed a good level of interest because they were involved in a practical task. Sound links were established with science and personal education but pupils did not work to a design plan and consequently had no means of evaluating the completed work. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 were also studying food technology. The teacher focused well on hygiene and safety but the pupils were not challenged and expectations were too low. Pupils were poorly behaved because the practical demonstration was too long and did not sustain their interest.

104. The school does not yet have a co-ordinator for the subject. The termly planning is too general. It does not clearly identify the designing, making and evaluating tasks in which pupils will be involved, neither does it show progression from basic to more advanced skills for each of the different age groups. The long term planning is unsatisfactory because it often lists the same activities for consecutive age groups.

105. Provision for design and technology was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and there has been little improvement since then. Plans are now in hand for the appointment of a co-ordinator to promote the subject to fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

106. Two geography lessons were observed. Judgements are based on these, scrutiny of work, teachers' planning and discussion with pupils.

107. Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is similar to that in most primary schools. In Key Stage 1, pupils satisfactorily learn to use simple survey maps. For example, pupils used a large scale Ordnance map to follow their journey to school and then drew their own map of the route incorporating main roads and significant features. A survey of the housing identified flats, terraced and detached houses; pupils discovered that most people lived in semi-detached houses. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they make steady progress in the development of essential geographical skills.

108. By the time pupils leave the school they have acquired sufficient skills to make comparisons about factors which affect the daily life of peoples in different parts of the world. They understand how people can both damage and improve the environment. The oldest pupils investigate locations by finding out information from maps, books and, recently, the Internet. For example, pupils were comparing Moston in Manchester with Llandudno in Wales. Information about the Welsh location was being collated prior to a visit there to carry out fieldwork. Some pupils accessed the tourist office web site to investigate amenities. Discussions with pupils revealed their concern about the environment and conservation. Many have strong views that they support with reasoned argument. They demonstrate a fairly wide knowledge of geography. For instance, they talked with confidence about poverty in the Third World and were familiar with the background to countries such as Africa, India and Pakistan. Pupils satisfactorily use maps of the United Kingdom and the European Union and can indicate major countries and cities. Overall, pupils' achievement and progress through the key stage is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at an appropriate level.

109. Overall, teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of geography and their own interest motivates the pupils. As a result pupils find the subject stimulating and concentrate well. Time is not wasted and behaviour is good. Pupils use their acquired literary skills to find out information and record their findings. Mathematical skills are also used in mapwork when using co-ordinates, calculating distances and interpreting scales. Although the pupils have recently started using the Internet to research geographical information little use is made of word processing to write reports, or data handling to produce graphs.

110. A comprehensive scheme of work and an overall topic plan ensures that teachers know what to teach and when. However, assessment of the effectiveness of pupils' learning at the end of each topic is not well developed. Resources are adequate but pupils would benefit from the availability of more globes and a wider range of maps. More CD ROMS and software are also needed so that the use of information technology can add support to the subject. Geography makes a worthwhile contribution to the social and cultural development of the pupils through their study of locations at home and abroad. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory but faster progression through the curriculum would provide greater stimulation for the majority of pupils.

## **HISTORY**

111. The attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages is similar to that found in most schools. This is similar to the findings of the previous report.

112. In Key Stage 1, pupils begin to realise that their own lives are different from those of people who lived in the past. In one class for example, pupils compared seaside holidays at the present with holidays in the past. The lesson was made more interesting through the recollections and reminiscences of an elderly visitor who recounted her experiences of childhood holidays in Blackpool. The pupils were keen to ask her questions and were surprised to learn that children only paddled in the sea and that very few knew how to swim. Pupils know about some of the famous events in history, such as the Great Fire of London. They understand how Samuel Pepys' famous diaries have provided evidence for future generations. Pupils make steady progress in understanding how events in the past can influence the future. Achievement is satisfactory. It is constrained only by the limited amount of time available for the subject.

113. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have an expanding knowledge of the history of Great Britain and the wider world. They recognise the value of different techniques for finding out about the past. For example, when studying the Vikings and the reasons for their settlement in Britain they recognised that evidence of the Viking society is to be found in some of the place names still used today. Similarly the influences of Greek culture were recognised in the modern Olympic Games – particularly relevant as the Games were taking place at the time of the inspection. Overall, pupils make consistent progress in this key stage leading to an increasing awareness of modern history in the twentieth century. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at an appropriate level.

114. Pupils enjoy history lessons. They listen attentively to the teacher, show an interest in their work and are curious about the past. Good relationships between the teachers and the pupils create a lively atmosphere that promotes inquisitiveness. This makes a valuable contribution to the standards of attainment in the subject. Pupils' work in history is well illustrated and neatly presented. At this early stage in the new school year some of the emerging displays of pupils' work are attractive and enhance the educational environment. The quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of history and their interest is transferred to the pupils. Organisation of the lessons is effective and enhances learning.

115. The overall plan of topics to be studied by each year group is based on a comprehensive and well-balanced scheme of work. As a result the teachers know what to teach and when.

116. The teaching of history is enhanced by visits to historical sites such as Saddleworth Museum, Tatton Park and Ordsall Hall. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of literacy skills through promotion of good quality writing, especially in Year 6. Information technology skills could be incorporated to a greater extent – opportunities for research are missed at present. History makes a worthwhile contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

117. Pupils do not have enough experience of information technology. Standards of work are below those expected of pupils of similar age at the end of both key stages. Pupils do not use computers often enough to support work in other subjects. Until recently the school had been working with a variety of computers, some of which were old and incompatible with new software programs. Consequently the whole approach lacked consistency. A new computer suite has recently been installed and the school has adopted a good scheme of work which, when fully implemented, will progressively build up the operational skills required to match the programmes of study in the National Curriculum.

118. Some pupils have experience of information technology through the use of home computers. They are competent with the basic technical skills and simple word processing. Other pupils, in both key stages, are being systematically introduced to simple controls, such as the use of the mouse, logging on and off etc. Direct teaching and 'hands on' experience is already having an impact and after using the computer suite for only a short time pupils are quickly learning how to save and retrieve their work. They are gaining confidence in the use of the computer by practising on an art package. They have enjoyed this work and gained satisfaction from the finished results. In Year 6, pupils investigated the Internet and successfully logged into the web site of the Llandudno Tourist office to obtain information for their forthcoming field study in the area. Overall, pupils show interest and excitement about the development of information technology skills. They are enjoying their regular lessons in the computer suite and are achieving well in the aspects being taught. At present they lack opportunities to back up this successful learning as few classrooms are equipped with computers. This is a disadvantage as pupils do need regular practice. In summary, although attainment is below average at present, progress is beginning to be made. This is equally true for pupils with special educational needs; they have more access to the computer when they go out of class to work with the specialist teacher.

119. The overall plan for the current year rightly focuses on developing word processing skills. This will also reinforce the emphasis on improvement of literacy skills. Pupils already have some knowledge of control from the work they do with a robotic toy. They understand how movement can be controlled through electronically conveyed instructions. Other strands of the work, such as data handling and the use of simulated events to explore problem solving are scheduled to be introduced later. The school does not yet have monitoring equipment, for example temperature probes, to support science but these are to be phased in very soon.

120. Overall, teaching is unsatisfactory because not all aspects of the subject are taught at the present time. Teachers do not organise information technology to ensure that it supports other subjects of the curriculum, neither do pupils use the computers often enough to reinforce learning. However in those aspects currently being taught on the regular timetable, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers lack expertise in some strands of the subject and, although some training has taken place, more is required. Pupils respond well to the teaching. Although their experience is fairly restricted at present they are interested in and motivated by the subject. They persist when difficulties arise and share their knowledge and understanding with others. Behaviour is good, because of the ethos of the school and the good relationships between teachers and pupils. The expensive equipment is well cared for.

121. The school recognises that there is much work to be done in the subject, not least in promoting the progressive teaching of all the relevant skills from the beginning of Key Stage 1. Regular assessment needs to be built into lesson plans so that pupils' standards and progress can be tracked and used to plan for improvement. The pupils' attainment has not advanced since the previous inspection – mainly due to the lack of up-to-date equipment. Now that this situation has been rectified the school is in a good position to raise standards.

## **MUSIC**



122. Standards of work are similar to those found in most schools in Key Stage 1. They are above average in Key Stage 2 because there are instances of very good attainment, notably by older pupils. Overall, pupils achieve well and enjoy their music making.

123. Children get their first experience of singing in the nursery. This is a basis for good corporate singing further up the school. Musical ideas are developed well in Years 1 and 2. Pupils learn to associate music with movement and to accompany themselves with untuned percussion instruments in addition to piano accompaniment by the teacher. They satisfactorily develop skills of appraisal by listening to recorded music and exploring the feelings it arouses and the purposes for which it is appropriate.

124. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1; it is good where the class teacher enters wholeheartedly into a team teaching situation along with the visiting part-time music teacher. Teaching is good overall in Key Stage 2, particularly where there is specialist teaching. This has a strong impact on standards. Pupils learn good singing skills because the teacher both plays and sings for them, teaching them to distinguish good from indifferent practice. They quickly develop a sense of group identity and shared sense of purpose. Very good planning allows them to express themselves in music that they create themselves based on themes taken from other areas of the curriculum, for example English, science or history. The outcome of learning and performance at its best was heard in the form of a recording of a song for the millennium produced by teacher and pupils working together on both words and music. The song has genuine spiritual quality.

125. Whole class recorder work taken by a visiting specialist teacher was cancelled during the inspection in favour of additional literacy, so could not be evaluated. Instrumental teaching in brass, woodwind and strings is also provided by peripatetic teachers; at this time violin and guitar are popular with eight year olds, and it seems likely that additional teacher time will be needed in future to provide continuity for them whilst starting a new group. Music teaching by class teachers was not seen during the inspection, but the very good planning and support offered them by the co-ordinator was evaluated. Time needs to be found for training if the new national guidance is to be properly worked through with non-specialist teachers.

126. Resources are traditional but basically adequate for teaching and learning. There is interest in using keyboards in association with the new computer suite but neither hardware nor software are available to support this.

127. Music provides good opportunities for performance in high profile events in the overall spiritual, social and cultural life of the school. These include a summer concert, a Carol Service and other contributions to school worship. Such events are highly valued by parents.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

128. Pupils' attainment at age seven is above that achieved in most schools. Their attainment at age eleven is similar to that in other schools. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily, constantly building on previous performance. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve well in swimming. All float and move with or without buoyancy aids. Many swim unaided for a sustained period of time using recognised strokes. Collectively these findings indicate an improvement on those of the previous report.

129. The oldest pupils in Key Stage 1 develop good ball control skills. Individual pupils, some of whom have special educational needs, demonstrate very good football related skills, controlling a large ball with different parts of their feet and legs as they travel around the playground. The youngest pupils confidently assemble the gymnastic apparatus. They hold balanced positions and travel on, around, over and through the apparatus, climbing, rolling, turning, jumping and landing. A more advanced pupil skilfully performs tumbling routines linking flick-flacks to rolls.

130. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils move confidently in different ways and know how to control their movements by varying their body shape, speed and direction. They demonstrate originality by interpreting African music through dance, responding positively to the music. A substantial proportion introduce tactics into a small-sided ball game and work well together to keep the game going.

131. In Years 1 and 2 pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject. They listen attentively to instructions and carry out tasks enthusiastically. They are mindful of space and obey the rules of the lesson. They enjoy their lessons, working energetically to increase their skills. In later years pupils respond well in swimming. They are aware of the safety rules and of what is expected of them. They continually practise to improve their stroke style and efficiency in the water. This enthusiasm is present when the older pupils are involved in dance but, because the teaching does not fully challenge them, their enthusiasm is not always sustained.

132. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Good lesson planning, organisation and control ensure that pupils know what is expected of them, enabling them to form their groups quickly to begin their activities. The quality of the specialist swimming teaching is good and this significantly boosts pupils' enthusiasm and progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge is particularly evident in Key Stage 1. It promotes

pupils' understanding of the discipline underpinning physical activities. Lessons are well resourced enabling pupils to gain plenty of practice. In games lessons in Key Stage 1 and swimming lessons in Key Stage 2, teachers choose pupils to demonstrate their personal skills. This very effective intervention motivates and challenges pupils to increase their own levels of performance. All lessons effectively begin with warm up activities, have good pace to ensure pupils' heart rate is increased and end with a cool down session.

133. The school's approach to the subject ensures that pupils have a wide experience of physical activities. The usual range of extra-curricular sports clubs and teams meet regularly and the school enters teams in local inter-school competitions. Older pupils enjoy the experience of an adventure weekend which provides good opportunities for them to engage in activities which would otherwise be beyond the scope of the school's provision. Overall, effective planning ensures the smooth implementation of the commercial scheme of work. This is a further improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Other than in swimming there is little assessment of pupils' progress. This is an area for development, as is the school's own evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching. There is scope for further improvement in standards in Key Stage 2 through the targeting of pupils who have not reached their full potential.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

134. Religious education was inspected separately by the Salford diocese at the same as the Ofsted inspection.