

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112898

Headteacher: Mrs. J. M. Bolton

Reporting inspector: Mr Jean-Pierre Kirkland
4483

Dates of inspection: 6th - 9th November 2000

Inspection number: 224889

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cross Street
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Paul McGinley

Date of previous inspection: July 1996

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		Music	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Special educational needs	Teaching and learning
		Equality of opportunity	Key Issues for action
		Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
William Orr 9907	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
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Susan Hall 21750		Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	
		History	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Primary School is a Catholic voluntary aided school situated close to Chesterfield town centre, but drawing its pupils from a wider surrounding area. There are currently 413 pupils on roll, making the school almost double the average size of most primary schools. The admissions policy gives priority to Catholic children of families living in the designated parishes. Economic circumstances of pupils attending the school are generally favourable, and attainment on entry to the Reception classes is broadly average in terms of literacy and numeracy development. The school has just over one per cent of its pupils with English as an additional language, a figure well below the national average. Six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well below the national average. There are just over forty pupils on the register of special educational needs, which is half the national average. Of these, five have statements of special educational need and this corresponds broadly to the national picture. Religious education and the Catholic ethos of the school are being inspected and reported on separately. The headteacher and chair of governors have both taken up their posts just over a year ago.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is now a good school although there are still some areas that should be improved. New management and leadership are effective in bringing a clear sense of purpose to the work of the school. The quality of teaching is good overall and this is now leading to good progress in most lessons and over time. The curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the school and provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The consistent use of assessment to influence lesson planning and to be used as an instrument for raising standards, especially at Key Stage 2, are areas for improvement, which the school recognises. Given the average attainment on entry, the low cost per pupil, and the good progress, teaching and leadership, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides good teaching overall, enabling pupils to make good progress, especially in English, mathematics and science, as well as in history, geography and music;
- Ensures pupils reach beyond national averages by Year 6 in English and science;
- The new headteacher with effective staff and governor support is providing clear leadership and strong direction and purpose for the work of the school;
- Has established very good links with parents who are effectively involved in their children's education;
- Cares well for pupils, including those with special educational needs, in a supportive Christian setting.

What could be improved

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support the curriculum at both key stages
- Monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, especially planning at Key Stage 2, and also teaching and pupils' progress at both key stages, in order to improve overall learning;
- Using assessment to set higher challenges and clear targets for pupils, so that overall standards are raised;
- Accommodation and resources, where cramped space and lack of resources are adversely affecting progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, improvement since the school was previously inspected in 1996 has been good. Most of the key issues have been successfully addressed, or are in the process of being developed further. New management and leadership are effective in shaping the future development of the school, with a committed and dedicated teaching staff sharing in the vision. Co-ordinators have a clearer view of their roles and responsibilities, and undertake appropriate training when necessary. The curriculum is broad, balanced and fully meets National Curriculum requirements. Parents are kept well informed of their children's education and many take an active part in supporting the school in this. Appropriate training has taken place in child protection and first aid. Assessment and its use to guide curriculum planning in the drive to raise standards is still in its early stages, and is an issue for the school to address. There have been other improvements, notably in the quality of teaching and in higher standards in music, geography and history. The school is now well placed to make further improvements.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	D	B	D
Mathematics	B	C	C	D
Science	A	B	A	B

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

Inspection findings largely confirm the most recent national test results at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards are above average in English and science and broadly average in mathematics. The well above average standards achieved in science last year are not yet being achieved by the current Year 6 pupils, although many are working at levels which are above average for their age. In comparison to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards are below average in English and mathematics and average in science. Pupils achieve well in the school, and make good progress overall. When results are compared to the standards achieved four years earlier at the end of Key Stage 1, the Year 2000 group of pupils has made good progress in all three subjects. Inspectors confirm good progress being made in lessons in all three subjects. When children enter the Reception classes, early assessment shows standards to be average in reading, writing and numeracy. Skills in speaking and listening and personal development are generally above average. The good progress results in above average test results at Key Stage 1 in writing, and well above average results in reading and mathematics. Teacher assessment in science shows pupils to be average nationally, but with above average numbers of higher attaining pupils. At Key Stage 1, when compared to similar schools, pupils were above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are also above expected levels in geography, history and music. Standards are generally below expected levels in ICT; in other subjects, standards meet national expectations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils like coming to school and like learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in classrooms although behaviour at lunchtimes is not always appropriate. There were no exclusions during the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Pupils become more mature in a harmonious community.
Attendance	Good, and consistently better than the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. This is a substantial improvement since the school was previously inspected. In this inspection, sixteen per cent was judged to be very good or excellent, forty-four per cent was judged as good, thirty-nine per cent was satisfactory, and a very small amount, one per cent, was unsatisfactory. Very good teaching contains high challenges for all groups of pupils, clear and achievable learning objectives and a brisk pace to the lesson. Good teachers ensure they organise their classes well and that pupils are well managed, so that different groups of pupils make good progress. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is good and this enables pupil to learn basic mathematical skills, reading, writing, spelling and punctuation well. The learning of skills in ICT is unsatisfactory overall across the curriculum, although the school has plans to develop this area shortly. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well provided for by teachers. However, the small amount of unsatisfactory practice was due to the level of work for lower attaining pupils being too difficult. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is generally satisfactory and improved since the previous inspection, with good practice when teachers challenge all pupils effectively. This enables a secure start to be made to children's learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory and fully meeting statutory requirements. Planning is still not developed consistently throughout the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; all documentation is thorough and planning makes good use of knowledge about pupils' individual needs
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good; pupils with English as an additional language are very few in the school, but staff are fully aware of their needs and address them appropriately
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good throughout the school, supporting the moral development of pupils well in its Catholic ethos.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; teachers know their pupils well and provide a secure and caring learning environment
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Very good links with parents ensure they are kept fully informed and share effectively in their children's education

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher, staff and governors are working effectively together to provide a clear direction for the future work of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; governors play an important role in shaping the work of the school. The governors always seek best value for money in spending decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; systems are now in place to undertake monitoring, evaluation and tracking pupils' progress, but this needs more regular and consistent development.
The strategic use of resources	Good use of scarce resources; accommodation is also used well but large classes in average sized rooms restrict some practical activities, especially in science and in design and technology. ICT is not fully integrated across the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in management and leadership • The standards and progress of pupils • Good provision at Key Stage 1 • The values and attitudes promoted by the school • Good levels of care and concern • The education towards developing a good all round pupil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and quantity of homework • Better information on progress • Continue to improve relationships with parents • Better extra-curricular activities • More and better teaching outside the main core subjects

Inspectors fully support the positive views of parents. Homework and extra-curricular activities were judged to be satisfactory, although the school is currently reviewing its homework policy in consultation with parents. It plans to evaluate the range of extra-curricular activities in the future. Inspectors judged the quality of information on progress to be good. The school is continuing to involve parents in its work, and the current partnership between home and school was judged as very good. There is now sufficient attention being paid to the teaching of all subjects of the curriculum with an appropriate spread of subjects across the school as a whole.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Inspection findings show that the standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average in English and science and close to national averages in mathematics. The results of the national tests in the Year 2000 are similar. They show that pupils' attainment in English is above average and a significant improvement since the previous year. It is still below the national average when compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, based on the number of free meals entitlement. The 2000 results show a doubling of the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5. In mathematics, the 2000 results were very similar to the results of the previous year, in line with averages nationally but below comparable schools in both years. Science results for 2000 place pupils well above the national average, with better performances, especially at the higher Level 5 than previously, and above average when compared to similar schools. Overall, the results are above average nationally and on a comparable level to similar schools. Over the past four years, the overall trend in results has been upwards and at a similar rate to the national average, and remaining above it.

2. Standards in ICT at the end of Key Stage 2 are below expected levels. Standards meet national expectations in art and design, design and technology and physical education, although performance in dance is above expected levels. Pupils' standards are above expected levels also in geography, history and in music.

3. Inspection findings show that standards at Key Stage 1 have improved considerably since the school was last inspected. Inspectors found that standards were consistent with the national tests taken in 2000. Pupils reached levels well above the national average in the Year 2000 tests in reading, above average in writing and well above average in mathematics. The teacher assessments in science show average performance overall, with higher numbers achieving Level 3 in the assessments, which is better than the national picture. Standards reach expectations in art and design, design and technology and physical education. Standards are below expectations in ICT. Pupils achieve standards above expectations in geography, history and music.

4. Pupils enter the school at age four with levels that are assessed as broadly average. A small minority each year is below average, and some years these pupils merit inclusion on the school's special educational needs register. Pupils' levels in reading and writing, and in numeracy are broadly average at age four. Most pupils perform better and above average when assessed in personal and social skills and in speaking and listening. Inspection findings show that improvements have taken place since the previous inspection. Progress is at least satisfactory, and on some occasions it is good. Most children will attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in the Reception class, and many will exceed them. The learning in the Foundation Stage provides a secure basis for further learning at Key Stages 1 and 2.

5. Progress at Key Stage 1 and 2 is good overall, with little difference in the rate of progress in different years. Progress is good in English, where pupils learn to read very well by age seven, and sustain this progress up to Year 6. They acquire good knowledge of the use of a library, they read a wide and varied range of fiction books freely, and they interpret texts well, understanding meaning and making viable predictions. Progress is good in handwriting and in writing expressively at both key stages. Pupils are very clear in their speech when they enter the school, and they build well on their speaking and listening skills,

with good opportunities provided for listening in music, for example. This helps re-inforce these skills effectively.

6. Progress in mathematics is good at both key stages. Pupils soon become familiar with patterns in numbers and their mental calculations become more accurate and faster as they mature. Higher attaining pupils offer sound explanations for their workings out, and other work on graphs and data develops well at Key Stage 2, with the skills transferred well to other subjects such as science and geography. Progress in science is also good at both key stages. Pupils begin to learn a suitable range of scientific language, which they use appropriately. They develop good listening skills and speak clearly when answering questions, enabling knowledge to be shared in the class as a whole. Pupils learn how to record their results and they do this well, especially at Key Stage 2.

7. The progress of the group of pupils who entered the national tests in 2000 is good. The table below compares the results of that group with their previous results at Key Stage 1 in 1996.

Pupils	Subject	1996		2000		Progress
		Level		Level		
Higher attainers	English	L3	9%	L5	34%	Very good
	Mathematics	L3	15%	L5	26%	Good
	Science	L3	32%	L5	56%	Very good
Average attainers	English	L2+	80%	L4+	82%	Steady
	Mathematics	L2+	64%	L4+	76%	Good
	Science	L2+	90%	L4+	98%	Good
Lower attainers	English	>L2	25%	>L4	16%	Good
	Mathematics	>L2	35%	>L4	22%	Very good
	Science	>L2	10%	>L4	2%	Good

Note: > indicates below Level 2 or 4; + indicates above Level 2 or 4.

8. The table shows the percentages of the same pupils achieving various levels in 1996 and 2000. It is a national expectation that pupils improve over the key stage by two levels. Two percentage points represent one pupil, with fifty in the group. The proportion of higher attaining pupils improving by more than the two level expectation is very good in English and science. In mathematics, improvement is good. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 and above, and going on 4 years later to achieve the expected Level 4 also improves for all subjects for average attaining pupils. Similarly, the lower attaining pupils identified as being below expected levels at Key Stage 1 diminish considerably, many of them making good progress, with very good progress in mathematics. Inspection findings confirm the good progress overall.

9. Progress is also good in geography, history and music at both key stages and in physical education at Key Stage 2. Progress is satisfactory in art and design and in design and technology at both key stages, and in physical education at Key Stage 1. Progress is unsatisfactory in ICT. Teachers have not yet incorporated new technology into their planning or lessons, and as a result, pupils do not acquire the skills over time that they should. There are plans soon to be implemented to rectify this.

10. The attainment of boys and girls shows some variation year on year, but broadly corresponds to the national pattern. The annual variation has been linked to the higher proportions of boys having special educational needs. The school, conscious of this, makes good provision to ensure that rates of progress for these pupils are maintained at a rate similar to the rest of the class. This is done particularly well in literacy, with a mixture of in-class support and some withdrawal for special lessons. This is less successful in mathematics so far, although the school is aware that more support is needed to drive up standards in numeracy, and has appropriate plans to address this in the near future. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress throughout the school.⁴

11. The school is in the early stages of target setting, and the use of assessment in planning new learning is also at an early stage. The targets set for the 2000 group of pupils was exceeded by the results in English and close to the mark in mathematics. Appropriately higher targets have been set for the Year 2001, which inspectors agreed were realistic and achievable, based on better knowledge by staff of the pupils in Year 6 currently.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes are good. They like coming to school. Children in the Foundation Stage show interest in their work and concentrate well on the tasks provided. They listen to teachers and follow instructions appropriately. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 enjoy learning all subjects, especially ICT, and indicate that they would appreciate further extra-curricular activities. Pupils settle down to work quickly in lessons; they concentrate well on their tasks and listen carefully to instructions from adults. As a result, no time is lost and the rate of progress is improved.

13. Behaviour is good overall, leading to a calm learning environment. It is good in the Foundation Stage and in the Key Stage 1 and 2 classrooms. The great majority of pupils move around the school in an orderly way. However a few pupils display inappropriate behaviour when not directly supervised, largely at lunchtime, when play outside is boisterous but non aggressive. Pupils are pleasant and communicative in manner. They are polite to adults and other pupils. Reception pupils remain absolutely quiet before and throughout assembly. There have been no exclusions during the past year.

14. Pupils are willing to take responsibility and they show initiative where opportunities arise. Prefects have regular duties such as moving chairs in the dining hall before and after dinner, with appropriate supervision. Less frequently they monitor the functioning of computers and produce test prints. Other pupils have duties such as replacing physical education equipment under supervision after lessons. Older pupils help younger pupils in the dining room at lunchtime. Throughout the school relationships are harmonious. Older pupils show consideration for younger pupils. All pupils wait their turn to speak in class and are confident and articulate. In classes throughout the school, many pupils openly express their feelings and talk about their experiences. Other pupils listen with respect and share in the experience.

15. Attendance is good and it is above the national average. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Good attendance results in continuous learning and good progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is good overall. This is a substantial improvement since the school was previously inspected. Sixteen per cent was judged to be very good or excellent,

forty-four per cent was judged as good, thirty-nine per cent was satisfactory, and a very small amount of one per cent was judged unsatisfactory.

17. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is always at least satisfactory, with good practice when teachers challenge all pupils effectively. This is an improvement since the school was previously inspected and now enables a secure start to be made to children's learning. Teachers manage their lessons in a calm and sensitive manner. Some of the worksheets in use do not challenge children's thinking sufficiently. However, learning is steady, especially in literacy and numeracy.

18. Teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2 is good overall, with a significant minority of very good teaching at both key stages. There was one example of excellent teaching at Key Stage 2, which combined geography, science, literacy and ICT, and enabled spiritual development to take place simultaneously. The very good teaching occurs when teachers have planned specific learning aims for the lesson, which then provide a sharp focus for the lesson. Many teachers write these aims on the board or inform the pupils from the start. Good examples occur in geography at Key Stage 2 and music at both key stages. In Year 1 and 2, the teacher states that 'we are going to focus on listening to sounds so we can decide which instruments make short sounds and which make long sounds'. Pupils are then very clear about the purpose of the exercise, they concentrate and listen well, and learn the distinction between the two quickly, making accurate decisions as a result.

19. Teachers' planning for individual lessons is generally good, with clear objectives and strategies for learning. Longer term planning is more variable. It is good and consistent at Key Stage 1, where joint approaches in the overall planning have proved successful. As a result, standards are rising and are much higher now than at the previous inspection, especially in English, mathematics and science. At Key Stage 2, schemes of work are new and teachers are only just beginning to plan together in a consistent manner. However, audits have been carried out in a number of subjects, including literacy, numeracy and geography, overlap has been eliminated and teachers now plan for the progressive development of skills. It will be some time before the final benefits of this planning are reflected in higher standards, but inspectors judged learning in lessons to be good or better in the majority of cases.

20. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well throughout the school. Both major national initiatives in these fields have been introduced successfully, so that pupils learn basic skills well. Reading, writing, speaking and listening and number skills are emphasised well in planning, with other subjects such as geography, history and music making important learning contributions. Teachers often put key technical words on the board, emphasising the appropriate use of this vocabulary in lessons. The skills of ICT are insufficiently well developed. The use of ICT generally to support other areas of the curriculum is not well planned for or implemented, although the school has plans to develop this area shortly. Nevertheless, some teachers have made good use of ICT, notably in Year 5 and 6 geography, where weather and climate maps have been produced using computers. In the same years, music is composed using the special CD ROM files available.

21. Challenges in lessons vary from satisfactory to very good and are good overall. A majority of teachers are beginning to plan work to suit differing groups of pupils, and the setting arrangements for numeracy and literacy work well. However, where large groups of lower attaining pupils are clustered together, progress is not always as good as it should be. The lack of support assistants in mathematics is a main reason for this. But most teachers have begun to plan suitable extension work for higher attaining pupils, and this work is appropriately challenging, enabling them to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, in Year 6, the teacher in a literacy lesson knew exactly what the pupils needed to learn in order to improve their understanding of clichés, and focused on newspaper cuttings with challenging language which made the pupils think. Similarly in some mental mathematics sessions, teachers throughout the school give pupils time to think and work out their answers when difficult questions are asked. Pupils are well managed in the vast majority of classes throughout the school.

22. There is generally satisfactory use of time in lessons, with appropriate pace to learning. Sometimes, specialist teaching and the rotation of classes puts pressure on teachers to condense a little too much into some sessions, such as Key Stage 1 music, for example, but the overall pattern is appropriate. Occasionally, large class sizes cause teachers to take time in distributing worksheets or resources in lessons, and the pace of working slackens. Pupils, however, maintain their interest and learn well when they complete tasks or answer questions. There is some evidence of independent work in some subjects, such as art and design, research in history and creative writing in English, but most lessons do focus on the teacher giving information. In most cases, this does not adversely affect the quality of learning as it is balanced by challenging practical work, such as in some of the Year 2 science lessons on electrical circuits.

23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers are fully aware of pupils' individual difficulties through having written the targets on most of the individual education plans. This enables them to have a clear set of objectives for each pupil in this category, and especially in literacy and numeracy where most of the problems occur. The special educational needs co-ordinator and outside staff plan the targets for pupils at Stages 3 to 5 of the Code of Practice with more intricate problems. They take to ensure that all class and group teachers have a clear understanding of the nature of the problem and how best to deal with it. Support assistants are fully briefed also, and play an important part in supporting the teachers and pupils. However, the lack of support assistants, especially in mathematics, is placing an additional burden on some teachers with large groups of lower attaining pupils. The teachers work very hard to ensure progress is made, and it is, but not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable due to a lack of additional help. Pupils with English as an additional language, of which there are very few, are well supported when and where necessary. The school has not identified any particular talented or gifted pupils, but teachers do plan for, and provide extension work for higher attaining pupils in most classes.

24. Teachers set appropriate amounts of homework at both key stages. The quality of the homework expected is also satisfactory. This varies from spellings and reading at Key Stage 1 to more involved research using ICT for older Key Stage 2 pupils. However, the regularity of homework setting is not secure or consistent between teachers, and the school is currently reviewing this position, including consulting with parents.

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

25. The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing satisfactorily for both key stages and for the Foundation Stage. Statutory requirements are met. Provision for sex education and drugs awareness is made through science and religious education lessons. Schemes of work are provided for most subjects or are currently being developed. This is satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The school is meeting the requirements of the Early Learning Goals, and provides an appropriately balanced curriculum for children in the Reception classes. Planning within Key Stage 1 and 2 is still an area for further development. When teachers collaborate, some good practice is evident, and this is especially the case at Key Stage 1. This needs to be extended across the whole school to provide consistency in approach and to ensure better progress over time. The school acknowledges this need in the current development plan. Some good cross-curricular links are made, notably in Years 5 and 6. However, ICT is not being used to support and extend pupils' learning sufficiently well. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2, where there is a lack of support assistants, especially in lower mathematics sets. Strategies for the teaching of both literacy and numeracy skills are good. In numeracy, for example, weaknesses have been analysed and addressed in planning.

26. The school is well supported by the community through its Church relationship and other satisfactory links exist with the community as a whole. A local company sponsored the millennium window. Pupils involved in a design and technology project have linked with a large drinks company, and this helps pupils learn at first hand some of the complex processes involved. There are good links with the high school enabling smooth transition of pupils. Links established recently with other primary schools are beginning to provide support and shared knowledge in aspects of the curriculum. Further enhancement to the curriculum is provided by educational visits for geography and science fieldwork. Year 5 pupils spend a day experiencing team-building exercises, which provide well for their social development. Pupils also have appropriate cultural opportunities, for example to see the Northern Ballet Company and local drama performances. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory, with clubs for various games and modern foreign languages. Dance and drama activities, linked to music, enable pupils to perform in successful plays and musicals. The school is looking to expand the range of these activities in the future.

27. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good in all areas and this is the same finding as that of the previous inspection. The provision is closely linked to the tenets of the catholic faith and this aspect of the curriculum threads through the school's planning and is evident in the daily life of the school. The school aims to develop the whole child and is successful in this. Spiritual development occurs every day when the pupils are given some time to pray and reflect. A very good resource is the room set aside as a school chapel, with a stained glass window and banners proclaiming 'unity', 'peace', 'justice', and 'love'. There is a book opened at the right page for the reading of the day. As an oasis of peace, the chapel has a positive influence upon the behaviour of groups of pupils using the room for their assembly. Appropriate opportunity to reflect is provided during assemblies, and this supports the spiritual life of the school effectively. In classrooms there are also opportunities for spiritual growth. Pupils expressed wonder in a geography lesson when the teacher floated a plastic bag above an array of candles and a lesson on music appreciation enabled the pupils to think deeply and express their feelings both in words and in their drawings.

28. The school provides pupils with a strong sense of right and wrong and they take care to act in the right way and not upset anyone. They are caring and responsive. They are well aware of the need to support people less fortunate than themselves and four times each year

assemblies are held and money is collected to send to help communities in India and Africa. Giving of oneself and one's money is an integral part of the ethos of the school. During one assembly, pupils were asked to reflect on the plight of people presently coping with floods in this country. All pupils endeavour to meet the school's code of conduct, which requires them to love, respect and care for themselves and for each other.

29. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop social skills in the school, especially in the classroom. The teachers, who act as good role models, have high expectations and require everyone to be helpful and caring. Pupils discuss well in groups when afforded the opportunity. Staff bring about a calm, quiet and friendly climate and this reflects on the way pupils treat and show respect to each other. Development in this aspect of the school can be clearly seen in all classrooms. By Year 6 all pupils are very mature. They have very good speaking skills and are happy to share their views with their friends and all adults in the school. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are fully integrated in lessons and develop good levels of social skills with their peers. They listen and consider other peoples' opinions. Pupils are less socially aware outside the classroom environment especially at dinnertime when they can be inconsiderate and noisy. They have not yet learnt fully to act in a responsible way on less formal occasions.

30. Pupils are very secure in their own cultural traditions. The school actively promotes the Catholic culture of the majority of its pupils while showing tolerance to everyone. The study of other religions such as Judaism and aspects of the Hindu faith is part of the religious education curriculum, which is adhered to and helps to raise pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own. There is ongoing evidence of development of the cultures of other faiths and nations, such as the study of the West Indies in geography. In one class the pupils assume Greek names to answer the register, a display shows many forms of greeting and some pupils are learning Spanish every week. A study of the West Indian culture resulted in some fine, colourful paintings by Key Stage 1 pupils and these are on display throughout the school. Islamic patterns are part of a mathematics display.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. Health and safety provision is satisfactory overall and has improved since the previous school inspection. The school places high priority on pupils' welfare. For example in science lessons, the class teacher repeatedly emphasises the need for safety procedures and the Health and Safety policy defines how and when pupils should move equipment. Teachers know the pupils well and pastoral care is good. Two teachers are trained in first aid and all teachers and some governors are trained in child protection procedures. However, some steps in corridors are poorly marked and there is a need to improve the quality of supervision in the playground at lunchtime. Child protection procedures comply with statutory requirements.

32. Attendance monitoring procedures continue to be good and there are close supportive contacts with parents and the Educational Social Worker. A computerised registration system is shortly to be installed in order to enhance formal monitoring of attendance levels. The school has recently re-established a house system and good behaviour and merit assembly. This has yet to take full effect but it nevertheless has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour. Parents are supportive of the school's code of conduct. However there are discrepancies between sanctions applied by different class teachers and the school is considering standardising sanctions. There are appropriate policies to counteract racism and bullying.

33. Formal and informal monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is satisfactory. Annual reports to parents are analytical and constructive. These

detail pupils' academic, personal and social progress together with attendance and clearly indicate where assistance is needed and what needs to be done in order to improve through good targets. Educational and personal support and guidance is good. Teachers work collaboratively with pupils, parents and where appropriate with outside support such as the Educational Social Worker to ensure pupils' needs are met. Individual education plans and other support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs are good. There are good links to outside agencies, and especially education psychology. This enables assessments to take place quickly and efficiently so that pupils receive appropriate help without undue delay. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported in lessons and their language development is closely monitored as appropriate.

34. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made in the weaknesses in assessment identified in the previous inspection report. However, further improvement is still necessary because there is no overall uniformity in the systems so far established. Assessment procedures for children when they enter the school are satisfactory and appropriate use is made of this information in teachers' planning in the Foundation Stage. In the rest of the school, there has been some good analysis of mathematics and English test results to identify the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' attainment. This has begun to help the school plan for future improvements in teaching these subjects. However, this is at an early stage of development. Other arrangements for the assessment of pupils and the tracking of their progress, such as setting individual targets, are also in the process of development. Overall, the use of assessment is unsatisfactory, as it does not yet influence planning the curriculum to any significant extent.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. The school has a very good partnership with its parents and this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. All concerns raised by parents in the questionnaire were checked thoroughly. Inspectors did not agree with the concerns by and large, noting that some issues raised are currently under review, such as homework and extra-curricular activities. The very good partnership with parents begins in the Foundation Stage, where they have regular and valuable contact with staff. It continues throughout the school and parents' views of the school are positive. They perceive it as a good school, which is steadily improving, under clear and effective direction from the governors and the new headteacher with the support of staff. Parents are also happy with the standards and progress of pupils, good provision at Key Stage 1 and the values and attitudes promoted by the school. They appreciate the good levels of care and concern shown by all staff and an education aimed at developing a good all round citizen. Inspectors fully support the positive views of parents.

36. Information about the school and pupils progress is good overall. There are some minor omissions in the governors' annual report to parents. Weekly newsletters are informative and varied in content. They include matters such as inviting parents to a meeting about teaching reading at Key Stage 1, Parent Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) news, information on parent governors and school 'fayres'. Annual reports are detailed and analytical and indicate where pupils need guidance or support. Class teachers write to individual parents where concerns arise and parents are consulted in the preparation of individual education plans for pupils with special needs. All parents are involved in the statutory assessments of pupils on the special educational needs register, and kept fully informed of any changes. All parents have easy access to class teachers for informal discussions and they may attend a parents' evening for formal reports. There is now sufficient attention being paid to the teaching of all subjects of the curriculum with an appropriate spread of subjects across the school as a whole.

37. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home and the effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good and the school intends to reassess the potential of this resource. Parents are generous with their support. Many help regularly in classrooms or in school generally. A few have assisted in school every day for many years. This support is a strength of the school. The privately run pre- and after school club (the 4-11 Club) is complementary to the work of the school. Most children who attend it are pupils at the school. A number of parents are involved in its activities and this is mutually beneficial to both the club and the school. The PTFA is another strength of the school. It organises both social and fund raising events. The PTFA has provided very generous resources for mathematics, physical education and religious education and also equipment such as television, video recorder sets and computers. This has a positive effect on the education of the pupils by enhancing the overall level of resources.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. The quality of leadership and management by the new headteacher and key staff is good. There is clear direction for the work of the school, but the leadership role of co-ordinators is not so well developed. Most parents who returned the questionnaires agreed that the school is well managed and led by the headteacher, although a significant minority disagreed on some issues. The overall improvement in leadership since the previous inspection is good.

39. The headteacher's aim for the school is for it to be one of excellence. To this end, there has been good progress to establish effective management of necessary changes since her appointment, but much is still to be done and she is fully aware of this. There is a growing commitment by all members of staff to the improvement of standards and the quality of education that the school provides. This is because they are becoming more aware of what needs to be done through the headteacher's analysis of the work of the school and the priorities that have been established.

40. The senior management team and teachers with specific responsibilities make a satisfactory contribution to the work of the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the effectiveness of those staff then in positions of responsibility was very limited. There has been increased delegation of responsibilities to the deputy head and teachers, with clear job descriptions to support this. Where specific priorities have been identified, co-ordinators have had some non-teaching time made available for management duties. Although the formal role of co-ordinators in shaping and monitoring the development of their subjects is still in its early stages, it has improved since the school was previously inspected.

41. The governors provide a good level of support. They work effectively with the headteacher and staff and play an important role in shaping the future direction and work of the school. This is because they have a good awareness of its strengths and its weaknesses. They have produced a strategic vision document that clearly addresses areas for improvement and this has been shared in consultation with staff. The governors are very sensitive of the need to ensure that staff share the vision for improvement. Their aim is develop trust and mutual confidence so that their role as 'critical friend' is seen as positive and supportive. Their more formal role in the evaluation and analysis of data is less developed, but they receive regular reports from the headteacher and have begun to question and discuss appropriately, aspects of the provision that the school makes. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities well.

42. The school's evaluation of its performance is satisfactory. It has begun to assess the effectiveness of teaching through analysis of its test results and the attainments of pupils. This has begun to yield important information on what needs to be done to raise levels of attainment through revision of curriculum planning and a focus upon the professional development of teachers. The headteacher has observed all staff teaching literacy and numeracy. These observations and appraisal discussions with teachers have been effective because they have given the headteacher insight into what needs to be done to improve teaching, but formal targets for this have not yet been set. Because of the constraints of time and resources, the role of co-ordinators in monitoring planning, teaching and learning is not consistent throughout the school and is therefore underdeveloped.

43. The school development plan is a good document that identifies priorities for improvement and these have been based upon analysis and audit of its strengths and weaknesses. Priorities are appropriate and carefully detailed with focus upon actions required, costs involved and the evaluation of success in meeting aims.

44. The school currently has a satisfactory number of teachers with a relevant range of subject interests and experience. There have been some temporary appointments in the past. This was a period of fragmented staff development. However, most appointments have now become permanent and this is leading to a period of much more continuity and stability for staff development. This is beginning to have a beneficial effect on the planning across year group teams, with the school accurately identifying the need for further staff development to enhance staff awareness of standards in similar schools. All staff have appropriate job descriptions that identify their areas of responsibility as teachers and as subject co-ordinators. A priority is now to develop the role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluation of the quality of planning, teaching and learning in areas for which they hold responsibility.

45. The school has a low number of support staff. This has a detrimental effect on the quality of support offered to pupils, especially in numeracy. Unusually, there is no permanent qualified staff support for the youngest children in the Reception classes. This hinders the quality of support available for the youngest pupils as they settle to school routines and especially in adjusting to the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Similarly there is little support for many older pupils, some of whom are taught in very large classes. This places additional burdens upon the teachers and whilst the school makes good use of parental and community help, this does not always provide continuous support. The school has a satisfactory number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to support pupils with special educational needs or those with English as an additional language.

46. The school has a barely adequate number of administration staff and is very reliant upon voluntary help to support the day-to-day organisation of activities. Administration staff work in very cramped conditions that requires flexibility and a sense of humour to maintain

efficiency. However, the overall quality of administration is efficient and effective. The quality of mid-day supervision is on occasions poor. At some times there is an inadequate number of staff in the dining hall and during the inspection the staff observed had few strategies to manage lively and noisy pupils.

47. The quality of the school accommodation, with the exception of the new block, is unsatisfactory. The new block houses four classrooms for the youngest pupils and is light and airy and provides an attractive learning environment for these pupils. This has been greatly welcomed by pupils, staff and parents. However, some of the old classrooms are very small for the numbers of pupils. This limits the effectiveness of teaching in practical activities that require pupils to move around the classroom. This particularly restricts work in science, design and technology and art and design, but also has an impact upon many other lessons such as English when pupils need to work in groups or simply fetch a dictionary or other materials.

48. The school is in the midst of re-furbishment. During the inspection a classroom was being redecorated to provide a computer suite to support the pupils' access to a greater number of computers for class teaching activities. Parts of the old school building are shabby and this detracts from the quality of the learning environment that most teachers strive to create. The school caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to support teachers in maintaining these high standards. The canteen accommodation is poor with the acoustics affecting the behaviour of pupils adversely.

49. The external accommodation whilst broadly adequate has some deficiencies. The surface of the school playground is uneven and worn and barely suited to pupils moving on it at speed in physical education lessons. There is very little seating for pupils. While the youngest children now have a play area with a safe landing surface there is no permanent large play equipment and this limits the children's opportunities to develop their physical skills further.

50. The adequacy and quality of learning resources are unsatisfactory. This is particularly in ICT, design and technology, geography and music. The school currently has a low number of computers per pupil. Whilst the school is in the process of substantially improving this ratio, over a period of some time the number of computers and other associated equipment has been inadequate and limited the quality of teaching and development of the subject. The school library is inadequate. The space is too small for a class to use the library for research purposes and the stock of books is often old and shabby. Several books are more than thirty years old and some contain stereotypical images of times gone by. The school PTFA has been very supportive in raising funds for the school and this has been very beneficial in physical education, for example where a recent large donation has made a significant improvement to the quantity and quality of games equipment. The school makes good use of library loans to support teaching and this is effective currently for work in history.

51. The school has had a very tight budget over several years and has found it very difficult to identify sufficient funds to maintain the quality of accommodation and resources that the pupils deserved. Because of this financial expenditure has been very carefully controlled but the school has recently had to work with deficit budgets largely due to the very high associated costs of staff absence. The school has established good financial procedures that are clearly based upon the principle of best value. In addition, quotations for all work undertaken and supplies purchased are scrutinised carefully for cost effectiveness and the principles of best value for money are applied well. Taking into account all relevant factors including the low expenditure per pupil and the above average standards attained, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In order to raise standards further, and to improve educational provision, the school should now:

- (1) Implement the policy of training and development for ICT in order to ensure so that learning in all areas of the curriculum is enhanced and improved;
(Paragraphs: 2, 9, 20, 50, 86, 99, 109-111, 113)
- (2) Ensure that the work already undertaken on monitoring and evaluation is extended and applied to:
 - all teaching throughout the school
 - all areas of curriculum planning, but especially at Key Stage 2 where some inconsistencies exist
 - all areas of pupil learning;(Paragraphs: 11, 19, 25, 41, 42, 86, 90, 96, 100, 109, 123)
- (3) Use the knowledge and understanding of pupils gained through current assessment procedures more effectively in planning and setting targets for their learning;
(Paragraphs: 11, 25, 34, 78, 91, 95, 109)
- (4) Seek ways of ensuring that teachers with large classes use accommodation and support assistants to best effect so that:
 - learning is not impeded in practical activities through lack of space;
 - there is an increased level of support in areas where pupils' needs are greatest;(Paragraphs: 21, 45, 47, 78, 99)
- (5) Increase the provision of resources in those areas identified in the report;
(Paragraphs: 50, 55, 56, 67, 78, 99, 104, 112, 117)

In addition, the governing body should also consider the following minor point for inclusion in its action plan:

- Provide more effective supervision of pupils at lunchtimes through a programme of training and awareness raising for the appropriate staff;
(Paragraphs: 46, 48, 55)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72*
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

* one lesson not graded for teaching

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	15	44	39	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	413
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	32	23	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	30	32
	Girls	21	22	22
	Total	50	52	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (88)	95 (94)	98 (98)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	28
	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	48	50	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (88)	91 (92)	89 (88)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	26	24	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	21	26
	Girls	21	18	23
	Total	41	39	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (70)	76 (73)	98 (87)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	21	26
	Girls	19	18	22
	Total	40	39	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (76)	78 (78)	96 (92)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	386
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	31
Average class size	34.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

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

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	577 604
Total expenditure	566 408
Expenditure per pupil	1 430
Balance brought forward from previous year	(15 920)
Balance carried forward to next year	(4 828)

Figures in parenthesis indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	413
Number of questionnaires returned	129

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	48	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	54	9	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	60	1	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	42	28	5	7
The teaching is good.	29	56	9	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	51	25	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	47	6	5	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	48	8	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	13	40	35	7	5
The school is well led and managed.	24	45	14	3	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	60	2	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	30	34	12	14

Other issues raised by parents

Most parents expressed confidence in the new headteacher, and many stated that improvements were already taking place, namely:

- improved communication between home and school
- standards and progress were improving
- Key Stage 1 was better now
- Parents expressed some dissatisfaction with the large class sizes and the lack of time spent on some subjects such as geography, history, physical education and art and design.

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

Pre-school experience and induction

53. The children have a very wide range of pre-school learning experiences, with most attending local playgroups or nurseries before they enter the school at the beginning of the year of their fifth birthday. Most parents have good expectations of their children's behaviour and development and families are supportive and caring. The school has devised a suitable programme for induction into school life with both children and carers visiting the school. Parents also complete a questionnaire about their child's development, which extends teachers' knowledge of the children and supports subsequent planning. Care is taken to listen to the concerns of the parents and there is good informal contact with many parents at the beginning and end of each day.

Overall attainment

54. Children's attainment is largely average when they enter the school although personal and social development and speaking and listening skills are mostly higher than average. Initial assessment is undertaken in the first half term in school and staff are beginning to make use of this information to group children and to match the tasks they undertake to their level of understanding. Inspection findings show that children make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. This indicates an improvement since the previous inspection. Nearly all children will reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year and many will exceed them. Staff are building good records of the work children undertake and achievements are noted. All children, including any with identified special needs or English as an additional language are taught from a carefully planned curriculum, which is broad and balanced.

Provision

55. The two parallel Reception classes are based in the recently opened new teaching block. The accommodation is light, airy and attractive. Currently there are fifty-six children in the two Reception classes with the majority under five years of age. The overall standard of accommodation is good. There is sufficient indoor space and a soft landing area outdoors. The children play happily on the playground especially as part of the infant department playtimes. Whilst lunchtimes are rather more daunting occasions due to the noise levels in the canteen and the large number of pupils in the playground, children quickly adjust to these challenges. The learning resources are adequate although there is no large outdoor play apparatus and this limits the development of physical skills.

56. There are two full time teachers but no permanent support staff. This puts a lot of pressure upon the teachers especially in the first few weeks in school when children are not familiar with the school routines. Whilst teachers are well supported by voluntary helpers this is not always sufficient to support the children when teachers are working with a focus group in literacy and numeracy activities. The school is very wisely considering extending the amount of qualified support for the youngest pupils.

Teaching and learning

57. The quality of teaching and the progress that the children make is satisfactory and there is some teaching that is good in both classes. This indicates an improvement since the previous inspection. Strengths in teaching are in the calm, sensitive management of children, which supports them well in adjusting to school routines. The level of challenge is generally sound although very occasionally the higher attaining children with good early literacy and numeracy skills are given work that, whilst consolidating what they know, is too easy. Staff are rightly considering limiting the use of worksheets and extending the use of open-ended tasks and opportunities for investigation. Sometimes when teachers challenge pupils more directly, teaching is good.

Personal, social and emotional development

58. The children make good progress due to good teaching and the good support of their family in developing co-operative and social skills. Most children have well-developed personal skills and relationships are good. They look after themselves well and most undress themselves for physical education and put on their coats for outdoor play. The vast majority of children behave well. They move quietly around school to assemblies and physical education. They show good levels of confidence in almost all situations. They readily approach adults and are eager to tell others about their experiences.

59. Children are well settled into school and have a good grasp of routines. During a range of activities children co-operate and share equipment well. In physical education they use equipment carefully and sensibly and take turns happily and without being told to. In personal and social education activities, children are encouraged to work together to pass an item around the circle without disturbing their friends. Very occasionally activities are overly teacher directed and give little opportunity for making choices or taking responsibility. Most children maintain their concentration well except at the end of the day when they are very tired.

Communication, language and literacy

60. Most children already speak clearly and well when they enter school. Many children have a wide vocabulary for their age and most listen well and react accordingly although some do not always listen carefully. Most children are fluent speakers who are interesting to listen and talk to. Most children answer questions and some higher attaining children ask them too. Children enjoy stories and have particularly enjoyed recent opportunities to act as doctor or patient in the class clinic. Levels of achievement are above average in speaking and listening. Teaching in this area is good as is the progress made due to the regularity of opportunities to speak to the class about a wide range of activities and experiences.

61. Children have an early interest in reading. Several are keen to read as their older brothers and sisters do. Several enter school with a good knowledge of initial sounds; they are familiar with using picture books and are keen to begin to read. However, there is a wide range of skill and interest in early reading and the attainment of the majority of children is no more than average. Children understand book conventions and can tell the story using pictures with many recognising the title page. They handle books properly and appreciate the humour in some reading scheme and library books. All children take books home on a regular basis and are encouraged to share these with their families.

62. Most children show a good level of interest in early writing. Several children write their names unaided although the majority need to copy this from a card. Many write in a mix of upper and lower case letters in the middle of words. Letter formation is satisfactory although many are confused which way round letters go and the spacing of words is haphazard. Very few children can write sentences unaided. The use of worksheets sometimes limits the opportunities for pupils to develop emergent writing although some opportunities to do this

are available. Through satisfactory teaching children make sound progress in early reading and writing.

Mathematical development

63. Children have an average knowledge of numbers. Teaching has some strengths but also some areas of weakness whilst being satisfactory overall. As a result, progress in learning is satisfactory. Most children are able to count to ten, many to twenty and some to one hundred. Higher attaining children can recognise 77 or 30 on a grid of 100 numbers. However, the limited challenge in some activities does not always extend children's learning as illustrated when higher attaining children who can recognise many numbers to 100 are asked to copy over rows of number seven. Whilst this consolidates their awareness of which way round to write the number and provides opportunities to stick paper shapes in sets of seven, such activities do little to interest children.

64. Most children can recognise triangles, circles and squares and some are able to name ovals, stars and other shapes when sticking them in sets. Children's use of mathematical language is sound although not all are consistent in their awareness of more or less, greater or smaller. Children have made a block graph of the colour of their eyes but the sample of recent work indicates they have made little use of the computer to support such activities. Relatively few children are able to combine groups of objects with an understanding of addition or subtraction.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

65. Children have a very mixed understanding of the world around them, but overall this is average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, as is the progress made. Some higher attaining children have good awareness of their surroundings and can talk with interest about their experiences whilst other children have little recall of recent work and struggle to identify the differences between items. The sample of recent work shows they have made satisfactory progress in learning about themselves and their senses.

66. Children write a list of smells they like or do not like. They identify which of three pieces of sandpaper are very rough, not so rough or smooth. They draw round their hand and label each finger with one of their senses. In a simple history lesson some children are able to put in the order of when a candle, lantern and a torch were used. However, several children were very confused over this and knew that they use candles now, but were not sure which were used then. Whilst the sample of children's recent work indicates only limited use of computers, samples of work observed during the inspection indicate opportunities are available and the school has clear plans to extend them.

Physical development

67. Children make satisfactory progress in developing their skills through satisfactory teaching. Most children handle a pair of scissors appropriately and some do this well. Most hold a pencil and crayons properly and photographic evidence indicates they can roll and cut mouldable materials with average skill. Children are given regular opportunities to take part in simple gymnastics activities using mats and benches in the school hall. Children get out and put away the apparatus with good levels of awareness of safety issues. Children walk along benches and jump from these often with bent knees. They make frog style jumps along the mats with confidence and enjoyment. However, the development of physical skills is limited by the lack of large play equipment for day-to-day usage.

Creative development

The standard of pupils' creative work is average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but the sample of pupils' work suggests there are some areas of weakness. Children have each recently painted pictures of a rainbow but the size and appearance of each piece of work is almost identical indicating too much adult influence on the activity. There is a lesser amount and narrower range of activities than is usual for children of this age. Photographic evidence shows appropriate opportunities for box modelling and working with mouldable materials as well as further opportunities to make effectively designed masks from paper plates.

ENGLISH

68. Standards in English are above the national average both at seven and eleven years of age mainly due to good teaching. These inspection findings are consistent with the national Year 2000 test results. Since the last Inspection standards in English overall have been maintained with some improvement particularly at Key Stage 1 where standards are higher in writing, handwriting and spelling. At Key Stage 2, a larger proportion of pupils are now achieving the higher Level 5 and the overall results are above the national average. However when the school's achievements are compared with those of pupils in similar schools they are still below average at Key Stage 2, but above average in reading at Key Stage 1. Girls attain higher standards than boys overall, but not to any great extent, and similar to the overall national trend.

69. Pupils throughout the school have highly developed speaking and listening skills. When they enter the school many already speak clearly and express themselves well. The school builds on this so that standards are above average throughout the school. The older pupils are very articulate and express their ideas and feelings very well. Many pupils can sustain a quite adult conversation and can be forceful when expressing views or criticisms of a perceived injustice. In class they show they have a high level of vocabulary using words such as 'extinct', 'species' 'raucous' and 'nutrition' quite naturally. They will talk confidently about their work to the whole class for example when older pupils explain fully their research on weather. Technical language is being acquired rapidly, especially by the higher attaining pupils. Pupils listen attentively and well in most classes and they understand clearly what is required of them. Teachers adapt well their use of language according to the age of the pupils they are teaching. Speaking and listening skills are a strength of the school.

70. Pupils gain in confidence when they take part in school drama and music productions. A recent millennium performance involved all pupils and established valuable curriculum links between English, history and music. The pupils were required to research the particular decade in which their 'playlet' was set, and dance was used throughout to link the various class performances, enabling good learning to take place. Literacy is usually well developed across the curriculum. Often, teachers display key technical words on their boards so that pupils focus on them through lessons. Good examples occur in Key Stage 2 geography and ICT and Key Stage 1 history and science. In other lessons, teachers insist on pupils using the correct technical terms, for example, when naming musical instruments, shapes in mathematics or for scientific equipment. This concerted effort by teachers helps all groups of pupils to acquire a better range of language and understanding of its use in different subject areas.

71. Standards in reading are well above average by age seven, and the good progress continues at Key Stage 2 so that standards remain well above average throughout the school. Reading begins at an early age and most pupils make steady progress, which accelerates in Years 4 and 5. A large proportion of pupils attain an above average level of

reading before they leave the school. The class teachers keep appropriate lists of the reading ages of all pupils and this is reviewed regularly.

72. At Key Stage 1, great emphasis is placed on the acquisition of reading skills. Phonic skills are taught and revised systematically in whole class lessons and group reading books chosen carefully at the right level to ensure progress. Confidence in the pupils' ability to read develops when they read a play aloud to the whole class with each reader assuming a character part. The older Key Stage 1 pupils state their book preferences and give reasons for what they like. Some pupils prefer to read poetry and non-fiction books and others read avidly books by J. K. Rowling and Roald Dahl. Many pupils have their own library at home.

73. At Key Stage 2 there are no home-school contact reading records, and the pupils' choice of books is carefully monitored by the teacher, and good quality reading records are kept.

74. The school identifies groups of pupils who need extra help and it is endeavouring to help them by enlisting the help of trained volunteer parents and helpers working under the guidance of class teachers. Already there is a core of parents who give valuable help during the literacy hour. A volunteer operates the school library and the pupils borrow and exchange books each week. The class teacher monitors their choice appropriately. All other reading books are arranged by level of difficulty, labelled and stored in corridors so as to be accessible to the pupils. There are good specific collections of new books for classroom group reading and these are kept in the library. A recently introduced good system of targets written on individual bookmarks or inside the cover of English workbooks involves parents in helping their children achieve specified objectives.

75. Progress in writing is good in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. The school has recently introduced a new handwriting scheme of work and this is proving successful. At the end of Key Stage 1 many pupils are writing a good volume of properly formed writing on a variety of subjects. Standards progress from average on entry to above average by age seven. By the time pupils reach Year 6, standards are still above average, and pupils write with application and care and for many purposes. For example, they record science experiments, report events, write about plays and authors, and recount religious events and stories. Some lower attaining pupils write specially prepared little booklets with pictures and this encourages them to stay on task and produce work of which they can be proud. Pupils achieve a 'licence' when they are deemed ready to write in pen and many pupils in Year 6 write fluently in ink large amounts of good script. However, across the school only one incidence of word processing was observed during the inspection which means this valuable aid for developing pupils' writing skills is seriously underused. Writing in Key Stage 1 develops well. There is an anthology of poetry written by individual pupils and bound by the teacher. The poems are well presented, the pupils' handwriting properly formed and the content interesting to read. They are accessible to the pupils and act as exemplars. Writing is used to support other curriculum areas such as a piece of work to describe the making of an artificial poppy.

76. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good. Most of their targets on the individual education plans involve literacy. The school uses a successful mixture of in-class support, especially for lower attaining groups, and withdrawal, where pupils are given specific help. This enables them to acquire good levels of vocabulary, extend their writing skills effectively, as well as improving their handwriting. Pupils who have English as an additional language are supported effectively by class teachers during lessons. They make good progress in all areas.

77. Teaching overall is good although it varies from unsatisfactory to excellent. In the best lessons the work is well thought out according to the needs and prior attainment of the pupils. The work is challenging but not too difficult for them to achieve without the help of the teacher. Planning and preparation is thorough and there are high expectations of very good behaviour. The pupils listen carefully and settle quickly to work and often there is complete silence during this part of the lesson. Concentration is evident. In the less satisfactory lesson, whole class management was unsatisfactory, the class organisation too complicated. Towards the end of Key Stage 2 with higher attaining pupils, the teacher employs a particularly successful technique whereby pupils keep an ongoing record in their English books of what they are learning. This gives pupils valuable handwriting practice, helps them keep on task and provides each one with their own future reference book. The teachers' greatest strength is the pace maintained in lessons and their high expectations. These two elements ensure maximum learning takes place and is a strong feature in maintaining the pupils' good behaviour. Just occasionally lessons move at too fast a pace. Many teachers are skilled at bringing about incidental learning into a lesson when the opportunities occur. Good links are established with home particularly at Key Stage 1 in reading and throughout the school with weekly spellings to learn.

78. The teachers write appropriate comments and set work to correct in the pupils' books and these are followed up at an individual level. However, although present assessment methods are satisfactory, the school has not yet developed a cohesive system across the school to be followed by all teachers. Similarly, teachers' planning needs to be reviewed so that all teachers both in their year groups and across the school follow an agreed format. A whole school monitoring system which involves all staff and in particular the English curriculum leader in both key stages is not yet in place. Resources are adequate but some books are showing signs of wear and there are insufficient non-fiction books in the main school library. The size of the classrooms and number of pupils in them restricts the learning of some pupils, as they are unable to move around the classroom to collect books and materials for individual research. Targets for the Year 2000 were met. Targets set for the Year 2001 are appropriately high and are likely to be achieved by the current group of pupils in Year 6.

MATHEMATICS

79. National test results for 11-year-olds in 2000 show that pupils' attainments were broadly similar to the national average, but below average when compared with schools similar to St. Mary's. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the next higher level, about a quarter, was very similar to that found in other schools. There have been no significant variations in the results of boys and girls over the last four years but no significant difference between results in mathematics and those in English and science.

80. Test results over the last four years show that standards in mathematics have risen, although there has been some fluctuation from year to year. No judgement can be made about improvement since the previous inspection because there is no information in that report about standards at the end of Key Stage 2. The findings of this inspection indicate that by Year 6, the attainment of pupils is average and reflects the test results of 1999. There were no significant differences observed between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive support and make good progress. The school has set challenging targets for mathematics in 2001 so that improvements can be maintained.

81. By the age of eleven, most pupils use mental recall of multiplication facts to work out fractional parts of whole numbers and they use this knowledge to put fractions in order of size. Lower attaining pupils satisfactorily explain how this is done. They also show emerging

awareness of the principle of equivalence in their work on fractions. Higher attaining pupils use appropriate units of measurement to calculate areas of triangles with satisfactory accuracy and solve they related problems through practical activities. All pupils, relative to their prior attainment, have carried out work on the multiplication and division of numbers by 10 and by 100. They have explored the structures of large numbers, division and multiplication of decimal numbers and simple factors. Pupils make use of their mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, in a science lesson pupils in Year 6 used the mathematical ideas of frequency, average and mean when they measured pulse rates. This enabled them to collect data and transfer it by, careful recording, to a graph.

82. National test results for seven-year-olds in 2000 show that the attainments of pupils were well above the national average. Results were above the average of schools similar to St. Mary's. The test results of seven-year-olds over the last four years show that standards in mathematics have improved. The proportion of pupils reaching the next higher level, about a third, was above that found nationally. In 1996 it was below the national average. Test results indicate good improvement since the last inspection. The results of girls have been well above the national average over the last four years, whereas boys' results have been above average. Evidence from lesson observations and examination of their work, indicates that by the age of seven, pupils attain above average standards in mathematics. This is the result of the positive impact made by the National Numeracy Strategy. Its impact on raising standards at Key Stage 2 has not yet been realised fully.

83. By the age of seven, pupils count reliably in twos and fives. They do this orally and when they record answers to simple written problems that require them to use mental strategies. They know that multiplication is the same as repeated addition. In discussion, they show a sound grasp of the appropriate mathematical vocabulary that they learn and many explain clearly what they know and can do. They add and subtract in tens and units, have an understanding of simple number sequences and many count accurately to 100. They have begun to recognise and name two and three-dimensional shapes. They understand terms such as vertex and edge. Higher attaining pupils carry out operations that require them to place numbers in specific sequences and deal with money problems that involve work in pounds and pence.

84. The quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching was judged satisfactory. Good and very good lessons, based upon teachers' sound mathematical knowledge, are presented in a lively and interesting manner. This gains the attention of pupils and provides them with motivation to learn. When teachers plan interesting tasks for pupils, this creates a good challenge for them. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher gave a group of pupils the task of working out a 'formula' to solve the area of triangles. They were given clues through the dialogue that the teacher developed with them. This helped them gain good understanding of the basic mathematical principles of working out area. This problem-solving approach was very effective and pupils maintained motivation for a long period and achieved good results. High expectations of what pupils should do, also characterises good teaching. This results in pupils who are well managed and ready to learn. For example, in another Year 6 lesson the teacher firmly insisted that the pupils listened and watched very carefully when she was teaching the whole class. Because of this, they had a clear understanding of how they were to do the work set for them. In a Year 1 lesson, the pupils listened very attentively to the explanations that the teacher gave. She skilfully developed their understanding of the relationship between tens and units by open-ended questioning and the use of clear visual aids. A similar style of questioning was used in a Year 2 lesson on multiplication. Pupils effectively developed their thinking as they responded well to the different ways in which the teacher asked questions to extend their understanding. When teachers teach like this, it enables them to assess the understanding of their pupils

during the lesson. The very best use is made of this technique when teachers alter their approach or the language used during the lesson to match the observed needs of different pupils. Very good use is made of volunteer helpers; they are particularly useful in large classes.

85. Less effective teaching results when pupils do not understand what they are to do because the teacher does not explain the mathematics or the work very well. Sometimes pupils do not listen properly because teachers do not demand that they give their full attention to what is taught. When teachers talk for too long, pupils become restless and lose concentration. On some occasions, when teachers work with individuals or a group, they are not sufficiently aware of what other pupils in the class do. This results in relaxed efforts by some pupils and therefore progress is too slow. Some of the less effective teaching was more noticeable in the large Year 3/4 classes. The work of some lower attaining pupils is not well presented. This hinders the development of a logical approach in their thinking and recording.

86. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met and the school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy effectively. This has begun to have some positive effect, particularly at Key Stage 1 where teachers plan their work together. In Key Stage 2, pupils are taught in sets of similar achievement. This is a recent innovation and it is therefore too soon to judge how effective is this arrangement in raising standards. Planning for lessons in Key Stage 2 is not well co-ordinated, but there is recognition that this needs attention. Assessment data has been analysed by the co-ordinator and the school has begun to plan its curriculum to put right the mathematical weaknesses of pupils that testing has uncovered. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has begun a thorough review of what needs to be done to improve the attainments of pupils. An action plan has been established in collaboration with an adviser and the headteacher. This has a good focus on the monitoring and evaluation of planning for mathematics. However, there is insufficient attention given to the monitoring of teaching, pupils' work and the use of information and communication technology.

SCIENCE

87. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 show levels close to the national average overall. The Year 2000 national tests of Key Stage 2 pupils show attainment to be well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. There has been a consistent rise in standards achieved in the subject since the same group of pupils were previously tested at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1996. Inspection findings are that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with those seen in the majority of schools. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average and a large proportion of pupils show good levels of understanding and achieve the higher Level 5. Standards are similar to those reported in the previous inspection at Key Stage 1, but there has been a significant improvement at Key Stage 2. Throughout the school good progress is seen, including that of pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language.

88. The quality of teaching overall is good. This is evident particularly in lessons in Key Stage 1 and in the work produced in Years 5 and 6. Teachers throughout the school have good subject knowledge so that plenty of information is imparted in lessons. The good listening of the majority of pupils helps them to acquire knowledge passed on and many of them express their understanding very clearly. Management of pupils is generally effective but particularly in all the classes in Key Stage 1. When whole-class discussions take place pupils are very attentive and teachers prepare them well for their tasks. Pupils are then quickly involved and there is a good pace to learning. In some of the best lessons seen, Year

2 pupils investigated electrical circuits. When they had solved the basic problem they very eagerly moved on to extended tasks. Pupils were overheard saying, "look what I've done", reflecting their excitement and sense of achievement. The teacher worked hard, moving continually around the class checking understanding and setting further challenges. There is an awareness of the need for pupils to acquire the specific vocabulary to explain their understanding. In Key Stage 2 classes this is highlighted by displays of lists of key words. When teachers take time to check understanding at the end of a lesson most of them use the opportunity to review the newly acquired vocabulary. Pupils use this well and higher attaining pupils, particularly, give clear explanations. They also show their knowledge of data handling with their use of, for example, clear line graphs to illustrate changes in pulse rate.

89. Pupils in Key Stage 1 know about different materials. They know the uses of certain materials such as glass and wood and the reasons for their choice. Teachers provide them with knowledge of the basic process of investigation. When they investigate they predict, test and note what they find out. Pupils begin to use a range of methods of recording including the use of tables and graphs. Higher-attaining pupils write what they conclude from their findings. Pupils also begin to learn about tests needing to be fair.

90. A good lesson seen in Year 6 gave pupils the opportunity to learn from the teacher's knowledge, allied to further time observing a well-chosen range of plants which illustrated different ways of seed dispersal. Provision was also made for pupils to seek information using the computer. This was a rarity as very little use is made of this resource to support learning in the subject. When this method is used it is effective because of the quality of management and expectations, and the good response of pupils who want to learn. They respect the teachers' knowledge. In this lesson good learning took place, demonstrated by pupils when the teacher checked their understanding. However, Key Stage 2 pupils are given insufficient opportunities to investigate personally, so that some pupils lack enthusiasm for the subject. Volunteer helpers enable some practical work to be carried out more effectively by providing good support for teachers. In some classrooms, however, the space available for the numbers of pupils is restrictive for any active investigations. Planning is good where teachers collaborate across year groups and all pupils receive equal and thorough coverage of topics. This system is not currently operating across the whole school.

91. The subject co-ordinator is planning for the improvement and extension of the investigative element of the subject. Assessment procedures are established but analysis has yet to take place in order for the impact to be seen. Numeracy skills are used when pupils display data on various graphs. The emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary provides strong reinforcement of literacy skills. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

92. Standards in art and design in the school are in line with nationally expected levels. This is an improvement since the school was previously inspected. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good knowledge of art techniques and materials and can name many ways of producing a particular effect. They know about the use of chalk to achieve blurring and shadows and they can name the primary colours and explain in detail how to mix and dilute them to get a new colour. They know the difference between landscape and portrait pictures. They know about scraperboard pictures and are proud to show a fine firework display achieved by this method. They can name both modern and more traditional artists and some of their work. With their families they have visited various art galleries and are very clear about the type of picture they prefer. At the end of Key Stage 1 they can use a number of techniques to produce pictures and displays which link with other areas of the curriculum. An understanding of materials in science is reinforced through weaving twigs and paper and

grasses, collage is used to make a display of upper and lower case letters, and mathematical shapes are used to portray people and for printing fabrics.

93. Standards in art and design meet national expectations at both key stages. The progress and learning over time and in lessons made by all pupils is satisfactory, including pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

94. The pupils like their art and design lessons and are well motivated to achieve. They behave well, try hard, give help to each other where appropriate and show pleasure at what they produce. Pupils develop good hand control for painting and cutting. At Key Stage 1 they try out tools and techniques when they make a standing poppy from tissue paper, wire and play dough and represent their own experiences in pictures of their holidays using oil pastels. They bring understanding to their learning on the West Indies by making composite colourfully painted pictures of a sunset with added black silhouettes. At Key Stage 2, they combine their knowledge of techniques and colour to produce carefully executed printed fabrics. To achieve this they cut foam to represent shapes or objects such as a leaf or a triangle and arrange them imaginatively. They take great care during this activity recognising that they are working in a very cramped space. Pupils create drawings after the style of the illustrator Corky Paul following a visit to see him and examples of his work at the local library. These humorous pictures are at a high level and show good observational and drawing skills.

95. Teaching is satisfactory in all lessons. The lessons are carefully planned and organised with all materials set out and ready. Teachers take care to move the lessons along at a good pace. The good class control of the teachers and their relationships with the pupils contributes significantly to the success of the lessons. At Key Stage 2 there is little opportunity for the pupils to explore or experiment individually because of the small room sizes. However with help from the local High School sixth form, some Year 6 pupils have produced very fine representations of Egyptian Gods. Computers are not used to support art in the school. Pupils cannot access information on artists and have no opportunity to explore with shape and form or to produce their own computer pictures. At the present time there is no assessment of the pupils' understanding art or of their technical competencies and no portfolio of finished artwork.

96. The school is following the nationally recognised guidelines introduced last September. The co-ordinator at the present time is not engaged in monitoring classroom practice but she helped to develop the resources which are adequate.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Standards in design and technology are in line with expected levels at both key stages. This is an improvement since the school was previously inspected. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils generate and produce their own ideas when they are making and decorating book cover for stories they have written. The finished results are interesting and well executed. They think ahead when planning for a piece of fabric printing, practising their ideas on paper beforehand. Most pupils cut their own stencils from foam with care and precision. In Year 6, pupils are making moving toys, about twenty five per cent choosing their own design and materials. They have undertaken this type of activity before, using a commercial scheme, or flattened art straws and are very confident in their approach to the task. They have highly developed colouring and cutting skills. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 1 during which the pupils constructed Remembrance Day poppies to a high standard. Standing together after completion they looked like a field of poppies and made a valuable link with history and religious education and the teacher quickly seized the opportunity to bring the link to the pupils' notice. In this lesson also, the pupils drew their poppies and wrote up the steps involved in their construction, helping to consolidate learning.

98. Progress and learning are satisfactory across the school. The pupils increase their skills, use of materials and their hand control. They take care to work safely and this was particularly evident in one printing lesson where there were vulnerable palettes all over the room. The pupils apply themselves well to the tasks and write and draw about their activities very carefully. They enjoy the lessons and are justifiably pleased with what they achieve. The class atmosphere is settled and busy and pupils co-operate with each other and share well. Special educational needs pupils are fully integrated in the lessons.

99. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are properly planned, well organised and proceed at a good pace. Teaching ensures that the whole process of planning, design, review and evaluation is completed over time. The pupils are well controlled with a kind, firm discipline. Teachers make the best possible use of cramped space, inadequate storage and a lack of materials. The resources available to the teachers are inadequate. There is central storage for Key Stage 2 but this is shared with the After School Club and the cupboard is over full and disorganised. In one lesson, the teacher had brought her own well prepared resources from home. Partly because of the lack of space and the fear of spillage, there is no use of computers in design and technology lessons and, except in some Year 6 classes, little opportunity for pupils to experiment or have sufficiently free access to materials.

100. The present curriculum is in its second year and is being successfully implemented although there is no single format for planning for the longer term. Planning makes appropriate provision for Food Technology at Key Stage 2. There is no system for assessment at the present time, no uniformity in the use of workbooks and no available portfolio of work although the co-ordinator is beginning to collect pieces of work.

GEOGRAPHY

101. Standards in geography in the school as a whole are above expected levels. This is an improvement since the school was previously inspected. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have developed a good appreciation of some of the technical aspects of the subject, such as how our climate and weather is determined. They understand the process of erosion and the work of rivers. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 have a high level of knowledge and understanding of the West Indies. This is achieved through a good quality comparable study, and higher attaining pupils are able to begin to synthesise information and make comparisons between the differing lifestyles of the West Indies and the UK. Other pupils have a good understanding of differences and similarities between the two areas.

102. Progress overall is good. In lessons, pupils benefit from good quality focused teaching enabling pupils to develop their skills well. In Year 5 and 6, for example, teaching was focused on the principle of hot air rising, with an excellent link to science, to ICT and to literacy. By participating in an experiment with candles and plastic bags, all levels of pupils grasped immediately the notion of the rising hot air as the bag filled up and sailed into the air. Computer generated weather maps were used as worksheets to record information, with the teacher stressing key technical words such as stratosphere and ozone layer. Teaching is good overall. The teaching in Years 3 and 4 makes very good use of a locally shot video, with pupils using a map alongside to locate local features and then explain their use. Major skills are developed successfully, such as scale, direction and changes over time. No teaching was seen at Key Stage 1, but the good range of pupils' work and high quality displays revealed a growing understanding of different places and cultures. Pupils learn how to list similarities and differences, and how to extract information from diagrams and books. The work of lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs and English as an additional language shows a similar rate of progress to other pupils in similar classes. These pupils learn to draw diagrams and maps, extract information and summarise it. Although their

work is not as extensive, it shows understanding of the world around them and the different lifestyles in other areas.

103. Pupils' interest and imagination is often captured by the good lessons, with clear and pertinent explanations and good quality questioning which challenges pupils well. Pupils enjoy their lessons and concentrate well. And although progress is good, there is still a lack of opportunities for group discussion. In some classes, it was evident that they would have welcomed such opportunities. However, when asked to share work at the end of one particular session, pupils did so with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

104. Geography benefits from a new enthusiastic co-ordinator. The resources, which are in need of replenishment, especially globes and atlases, have recently been fully audited, as has the curriculum. All areas of overlap have been removed and a new scheme is now being introduced which assures that learning is continuous across the key stages and encourages the building of geographical skills as pupils mature. The new scheme is an improvement since the previous inspection.

HISTORY

105. Standards in history in the school overall are above the levels expected. This indicates good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in standards for pupils age seven. This is due to teachers good subject knowledge throughout the school and in the use of specialist teaching in Key Stage 2. One teacher in lower Key Stage 2 and another in upper Key Stage 2 provide similar teaching experiences to all pupils in the parallel classes. This supports equality of opportunity well through equal access to good quality curriculum planning and teaching.

106. The quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are interested in the lives and experiences of famous people and well known events in the past. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of the events of the Great Fire of London through the use of stories and a video to illustrate the events. Virtually all pupils have sufficient knowledge of the event to take part in discussion sessions about the fire. Pupils know when and where the fire started and talk with interest about why the fire spread so quickly. They know about the types of housing at the time and how King Charles II ordered some houses to be blown up to stop the fire moving from house to house. Pupils in Year 1 are able to sequence statements about the fire with a good level of understanding of the events. Pupils in Year 2 are able to answer a series of questions in order to create a paragraph describing the main events of the fire. This supports the development of literacy skills well. Samples of pupils recent work indicates that they have also found out about the lives of Grace Darling, Florence Nightingale, Robin Hood and Dick Turpin.

107. Pupils in Key Stage 2 maintain a good level of interest in historical events. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 find out about life in Ancient Greece. They are able to sequence several important events on a time line and mark on a map the main cities and islands of Ancient Greece. They identify some of the main features of society in Athens and Sparta and find out about Greek Gods and take part in a quiz about the Olympic games. Pupils in Years 5 / 6 study the events and details of daily life and society in Ancient Egypt. Pupils are able to work out what their name would be and sequence important events. Most pupils answer detailed and searching questions about events and explain what sources of evidence are available. They identify the causes and consequences of too much, just enough or too little flooding in the area. In a homework challenge higher attaining pupils produce very detailed descriptions of some aspect of Egyptian life. Pupils are able to use a pictorial representation of a pyramid of power and identify how roles and occupations were available to certain sectors of Egyptian society but not to others.

108. The quality of teaching is good.. The planning for the four parallel Year 1 and 2 classes is shared and makes effective use of resources to support pupils learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make particularly effective use of open-ended questions to pupils of all ages to encourage them to describe what they know and why events occurred. Teachers have good background knowledge to the subject so that they are able to answer questions about the Great Fire or Egyptian life with confidence and accuracy. Teachers provide well considered activities where pupils discuss their ideas with a colleague and then answer relevant questions. They organise a good mix of activities that require pupils to use the information they have to answer in their own words how and why events happened. Teachers appropriately the use of commercial worksheets in favour of extending the pupils skills of writing for a purpose. However, very occasionally in otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers do too much for younger pupils by telling them the order that events occurred in rather than allowing the pupils to work this out for themselves.

109. The subject co-ordinator has a good level of subject knowledge and interest in developing the subject much further. There are good cross curricular links especially to English and the school makes good use of visits and visitors such as drama groups to enhance pupils learning about historical characters. The management of planning for parallel year group's works well and has been instrumental in boosting the quality of teaching and learning. However, as yet the co-ordinator has minimal opportunity to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning across the school but is keen to do so. This makes it difficult to identify whether teaching builds in a progressive manner on what the pupils know, understand and can do. Similarly assessment is at a very early and informal stage. The school makes inadequate use of ICT to support the teaching of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

110. Standards in the subject are below national expectations at both key stages. This is broadly similar to the standards reported on in the previous inspection, although standards at Key Stage 1 have failed to keep pace with national changes. All classes have specific time allocated each week for the teaching of computer skills. However insufficient use is made of computer technology across the curriculum. Consequently pupils have insufficient time to practise and reinforce the skills they are taught. There is, however, good practice taking place in Years 5 and 6 so that those pupils are making good and sometimes very good progress in acquiring skills and developing confidence.

111. Year 2 pupils were seen using a paint program, combining shapes and colours. They show satisfactory proficiency in deleting, saving and printing work, and in their control of the mouse. The teacher reassured and encouraged less confident pupils. No other examples of direct teaching were seen. There was little evidence of ICT being used in other subjects to support direct teaching, and the progress made by pupils across the key stages over time is unsatisfactory.

112. Teaching and learning for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, in Years 5 and 6 is good. The subject co-ordinator teaches the subject to all pupils in each year group. Although there is only one computer to 40 pupils, the best possible use is made of the time available. Pupils are given related tasks so that when they have opportunities to work on the computer they know clearly what to do and acquire skills quickly. When learning about the use of formulae on spreadsheets Year 6 pupils initially learn by working on paper simulations of the spreadsheet on the screen. They have individual work booklets which contain a series of activities to develop their understanding of data handling which progress ultimately to a high level of challenge. Good cross-curricular links are made. Some pupils reinforce their knowledge of desktop publishing by producing posters about holidays in Egypt. In this task they employ their knowledge of literacy, history and art. In these lessons pupils' behaviour and application to their tasks is very good. They respect their teacher's knowledge and know what he expects of them. As a consequence learning is accelerated. Some Year 6 pupils are working already at a level commensurate with their age, whilst others are still developing confidence. This stems from a current insufficiency of resources. However the imminent installation of the computer suite will rectify this and provide all pupils with considerably more 'hands-on' time to acquire and practise skills.

113. The subject co-ordinator has planned well and has a keen desire to raise standards. Assessment criteria have been set down and a start has been made on collecting examples of levelled work. Although progress in standards since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory, action taken recently to address this has been good. The weakness for the school to rectify comes from the lack of ICT skills being taught across the whole curriculum. While individual and specific lessons are good, too many lessons in a majority of subjects fail to incorporate any technology in them. As a result, the skills of applying new technology to other subjects is not being appropriately developed, except in Year 5 and 6 music and geography lessons.

MUSIC

114. Standards in music in the school as a whole are above expected levels. This is a very significant improvement overall since the school was previously inspected. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils have a very good critical appreciation of music of the great composers. When listening to the 'Planets Suite' by Gustav Holst, they are able to offer sensible and accurate descriptions of what the music sounds suggests to them, and usually this corresponds to the intentions of the composer. Pupils listen well; they interpret mood and

emotion well, and they compose their own melodies and tunes using the midi files from the CD ROM, linking in to new technology very well. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils understand well the differences between long, short, soft and loud sounds. They demonstrate these sounds effectively on a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments.

115. Progress and learning is good and a substantial improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils develop good control in their voices as they learn to sing in harmony and in parts. Diction becomes clearer and the tone of the voice sweeter with practice. In Key Stage 1 hymn singing, pupils learn quickly how to sing syncopated rhythms, while maintaining good clear diction. Pupils can phrase their passages well, and with practice, they learn effective voice control. At Key Stage 2, Year 3 and 4 pupils learn a new religious piece with astonishing speed. Coping with difficult musical phrases on a sharply rising and falling chromatic scale, five verses and the chorus were successfully learnt in ten minutes unaccompanied. Understanding of technical terms develops well at both key stages, and pupils are familiar with the names of instruments, such as triangle, violin and synthesiser. Pupils develop good levels of critical awareness and use appropriate descriptive words such as 'raucous' for Mars the God of War, or 'floating' for Mercury the Winged Messenger.

116. Teaching is good overall. Staff have a good understanding of how to involve pupils effectively in lessons and in learning. For example, teachers make very good use of a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, work is linked very successfully to ICT so that pupils could compose their own versions of music similar to the 'Planets Suite'. In another lesson, pupils learnt to play musical instruments as accompaniment to a story, effectively linking the subject to language development. Management of pupils is good and challenges are high. Teachers expect good levels of performance and with perseverance they obtain it, especially in composition and singing. Pupils become readily engaged in their lessons and learn well because they enjoy experimenting and creating sounds. Pupils have very good attitudes generally, and behaviour is good. Appropriate care is taken when handling instruments, and resources are shared fairly by pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to listen carefully to sounds, to describe them accurately, and this is a very successful component of lessons and a strength of the subject.

117. Music is a strongly developed subject within the school, and the curriculum is broad and balanced and gives pupils frequent opportunities for experimentation and for developing their creativity. Music makes a major contribution to pupils' spiritual, creative, social and cultural development. There are regular musical performances during the year, at Christmas, Easter and in summer, each one performed by groups of pupils from different years. The school choir has been very successful recently in the town's music competition, winning first and second places in successive years. The subject is taught in such a way so as to encourage pupils to think about the emotions and feelings in what they are hearing, helping to develop good levels of spiritual awareness through reflection. Co-ordination of the subject is good and the enthusiasm of the music specialist helps greatly in inspiring confidence in other staff, who teach well as a result. All these are significant improvements since the school was previously inspected. It is now a strength of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. Standards in physical education throughout the school are in line with expected levels. This indicates an improvement especially in Key Stage 2 from the time of the previous inspection when standards were below average. Improvements have mainly been brought about by the effective introduction of schemes of work for both key stages that build in a progressive manner on the pupils' levels of skill in various activities. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 has been improved by the arrangement for parallel classes to receive teaching from the same teacher in a 'carousel' arrangement where pupils change classes for specialist teaching. This arrangement works well and advantage is taken of teachers good subject knowledge.

119. The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory overall and is good in the progress made in dance. In Key Stage 1 pupils improve their gymnastic skills by practising their movements on and around benches and large mats. In Year 1 and 2 virtually all pupils are able to produce springy jumps and high jumps to make stretched, narrow body shapes or wide, spread out shapes. They walk along wooden benches and jump from the bench, sometimes with outstretched arms and legs and land in a satisfactory manner, usually with bent knees. In dance, pupils make good attempts to produce different shapes to illustrate their reflection in a distorted mirror. They produce wobbly shapes and enjoy matching these to a musical stimulus. Pupils work well in pairs to produce mirror images of a partner and virtually all, make good progress in identifying and refining three different balances. Pupils enjoy this work and try hard to produce unusual body shapes rather than simply copy those of others.

120. In Key Stage 2 the quality of pupils' learning is often good and in dance it is sometimes very good. In Years 3 and 4 pupils continue to extend their skills appropriately. In gymnastics, for example, through activities requiring them to move along a wooden bench including gripping the sides of the bench and jumping with their feet together over the bench. Other pupils travel in different ways and can dismount by producing quarter turns in the air and landing in different shapes. Better progress is made by the oldest pupils, including those with special educational needs, due to the good and sometimes very good quality of teaching provided by the subject co-ordinator. In outdoor games, pupils make good progress in practising their skills of quick and accurate 'chest passes' of a large ball enabling them to increase the number of times they can pass the ball around a group of four pupils in one minute. They learn the skills of how to evaluate the success or otherwise of their activity. This also serves as a good problem-solving exercise.

121. Very good progress is made by the oldest pupils in dance or aerobic movement activities. Pupils enjoy creating a series of strong, sharp and quick movements in response to vibrant and insistent tambour beats to represent the repetitive response of a machine. There are good links to music in this activity with good progress made in the awareness of different rhythms. The pace of such lessons is very good with the teacher making very clear her high expectations of pupils' response to the musical stimuli. The pupils also make appropriate and often good progress in swimming. It was not possible to observe any such lessons but records indicate the vast majority of pupils leave the school swimming at least the required 25 metres and many pupils swim well.

122. The good quality of teaching is effective in motivating and managing the pupils who enjoy activities and behave well even when large numbers of pupils share equipment. All teachers show a good awareness of safety issues. They encourage even the youngest children to get out and put away large gymnastics equipment carefully and with good regard to their own and others safety. Some teachers give good demonstrations to pupils of the type of movement to aim for and this motivates the pupils to try harder. However, not all teachers change their own footwear or clothing and do not follow the expectations that they have of the

pupils to do so. Pupils behave well in physical education lessons; they take turns happily and use equipment sensibly.

123. The subject co-ordinator has a good level of subject knowledge and has been instrumental in raising standards in the subject through the quality of her teaching. However, she has very little opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of planning, teaching and learning throughout the school and particularly in Key Stage 1. This on occasion has allowed some minor lack of development of gymnastic skills so that pupils in Years 3 and 4 move on and from mats and benches in a somewhat similar manner to children in Reception. The co-ordinator has identified monitoring and evaluation as an area for development and is keen to extend the opportunities to work with Key Stage 1 colleagues and pupils.

124. The school has an appropriate range of extra curricular activities including football for boys and girls and netball and summer games. The school has also developed good opportunities, especially for the older pupils, to take part in dance and drama activities linked to school performances. Parents speak highly of these activities and of the opportunities for the pupils to further their interest in such areas. This is illustrated in the much-appreciated recent donation of £2,000 from the PTFA towards the replacement of games equipment. The school has also identified the replacement of large-scale apparatus as a long term aim. Teachers are keen to develop extra curricular opportunities even further, especially for younger pupils. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to visit the ballet and other local performances, which extends their cultural development well.