

INSPECTION REPORT

St John Southworth's Catholic Primary School

Ashton-in-Markerfield

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106509

Headteacher: Mr V Brennan

Reporting inspector: Miss Jane Porter
8915

Dates of inspection: 11-12 October 2000

Inspection number: 225209

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Golborne Road Ashton-in-Markerfield Wigan
Postcode:	WN4 8XA
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Fr John Mc Loughlin
Date of previous inspection:	7-10 October 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John Southworth's Primary School is a smaller than average voluntary aided Catholic school within the parish of St Wilfrid in Ashton-in-Makerfield. The area has a mixture of private and rented accommodation. There are 178 pupils on the roll (89 boys, 89 girls aged between four and eleven). Pupils' attainment on entry is generally just below the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils on the register of special educational needs is higher than the national average. There are seven children with a statement of special educational needs, which is well above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. There are 20 children under six years of age in Reception.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with many strengths, where teachers and pupils are happy and enjoy the work they do. It has a strong ethos for learning, high expectations of pupils, and the commitment to improvement is evident in the good quality of teaching. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, governors and senior staff. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress overall as they move through the school. By the time they are eleven years of age, their average level of attainment is very high in English and above the national level in mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported which enables them to make good progress.
- The effective governing body, along with the headteacher and the senior management team, collectively provide sound leadership and management.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes to learning and their very good relationships with each other and the staff are significant factors in supporting the progress they make.
- 77% of teaching is at least good with 23% being very good. It provides opportunities for pupils to acquire a range of skills and allows them to work independently, with good levels of concentration.
- The successful implementation of National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has led to good teaching and pupils making significant progress and achieving high standards in both subjects.
- The significant improvement of the teaching and learning areas in the infant department and the provision of extra staffing are having a very positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

What could be improved

- The school improvement plan fails to give sufficient specific detail to all identified priorities.
- Schemes and policy documents: those in foundation subjects are in an early stage of development and lack assessment guidance, specific time allocations and identified opportunities for cross-curricular links.
- The role of the foundation subject co-ordinators is under-developed; they have limited opportunities for monitoring standards and providing support for colleagues.
- The provision for more able pupils: the provision of work across the curriculum for these pupils is limited, particularly in the area of writing.
- Homework: provision is variable and fails to sufficiently support the curriculum appropriately.
- Extra curricular activities: currently these are limited and irregular and fail to contribute effectively to pupils' learning.

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

The school has many strengths and the capacity to make the improvements which are required.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in October 1996, the school has made significant improvements in a number of areas. The refurbishment of the infant department has been significant; it is now a stimulating, attractive, learning environment. Detailed analysis of the school's performance has resulted in targets for improvement at both school and individual level. The successful introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has contributed well to the quality of teaching and learning. The provision of extra staff has been beneficial. Security has improved. Two areas previously identified the provision of schemes of work in all subject areas, and refinements to the school improvement plan are still being developed. Both areas have been reviewed and refined since the previous inspection but due to national developments they are in need of further attention. The school has responded appropriately to the previous inspection report and has made good progress overall.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils enter the Reception Year with levels of attainment that are just below those found nationally (particularly in mathematics) and below the average for the Local Education Authority. Pupils make good progress and most achieve standards broadly in line with those expected for their age by the time they are five.

The 1999 national assessments show that by the age of seven, pupils attain standards that are above the national average in reading and writing but just below national standards in mathematics. Pupils of higher abilities attain appropriate standards in reading and mathematics but they do not attain high enough standards in writing. The unconfirmed results for 2000 show an improvement in mathematics but a dip in reading. Although there have been fluctuations over time due to the changing composition of different year groups being assessed (in particular the very high percentage of pupils with special educational needs who took the national tests in 2000) a satisfactory standard has been generally sustained over time. In comparison with schools of a similar type, pupils attain standards that are broadly in line for reading and writing but standards that are just below for mathematics. The 1999 results show that by the age of eleven, standards in English are very high, standards in mathematics are above the national average and science standards are close to the national average in comparison with all schools. When compared to similar schools, standards in English are very high, performance being in the highest 5% nationally. Standards in mathematics are above similar schools and science standards are just below. Unconfirmed results for 2000 show a significant improvement in science showing a 15% increase of pupils gaining the average level Level 4. Over time, standards in English and mathematics have risen considerably. Results in science have fluctuated with a dip in 1999 and a significant rise in the year 2000. Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms that pupils entering

Reception have lower mathematical ability than the average. In Key Stage 1, pupils' work indicates average standards for English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils are systematically acquiring good phonic skills and they read with enthusiasm and growing accuracy. In writing, their stories contain punctuated sentences and introduce characters. In mathematics, pupils attain well in number and their mental work is of a good standard. In science, many opportunities for practical investigations, enable pupils to attain appropriately. In Key Stage 2, pupils' work indicates above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics and science. In English, pupils are able to analyse text, to write creatively and present their work well. In mathematics and science, they are able to apply their knowledge to problems and use appropriate non-standard methods in mathematics to reach a correct answer. During this short inspection, pupils' work in the other subjects of the curriculum was not examined in detail. Consequently, no judgements about standards of attainment in these subjects are made.

From a generally lower than average level of attainment when they join the Reception class, pupils make good progress overall as they move through the school. The rate of progress increases in Key Stage 2, resulting in pupils achieving very well by the time they transfer to secondary school. The school exceeded its targets and is currently reviewing and revising subsequent targets in the light of its current monitoring evidence.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. They work hard and are keen to learn. They respond enthusiastically to the generally high expectations of the staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good. They behave sensibly and responsibly in lessons and when moving around the school site.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development overall is very good. Relationships with their peers and adults are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school works hard to encourage good attendance although some pupils still take family holidays in school time.

Pupils' very positive attitudes, relationships and very good behaviour are a strength of the school. These factors significantly contribute to the good progress made by pupils and the standards they attain.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	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 inspectors visited the school over two days and observed 15 complete sessions, two of which were assembly sessions. All class teachers were seen teaching. Teaching is of good quality overall. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. 100 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better; 77 per cent is at least good with 23 per cent being very good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy was observed in all classes. In one lesson it was satisfactory, and in all other lessons it was at least good, sometimes very good. Teachers show enthusiasm for their work, offer pupils a range of strategies for learning and are confident in their subject knowledge. Lessons are generally well planned and adjusted to meet the needs of the lower attaining pupils. However, they do not always contain sufficiently different tasks for the more able. Most

lessons succeed in moving the majority of pupils on at a challenging pace. As a result, they make good progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Established core subject schemes and plans are appropriate. Foundations subject plans are in an early stage of development, medium term planning is still to be completed and assessment opportunities, time allocations and cross-curricular links are not yet specifically defined. The new Reception curriculum meets the needs of the early learning goals very well. Regular extra-curricular activities are limited and fail to contribute effectively to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school plans a suitable range of visits and activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school gives a high priority to pupils' welfare and cares for its pupils well. Teachers know their pupils very well and generally give appropriate support and challenge.

The curriculum for children under five is of good quality. The school has developed a good learning environment in classrooms and in the shared areas, which are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy provision across the school is good. The school has effectively introduced the two strategies and as a result, pupils' standards of attainment have risen. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and all pupils have access to the curriculum provided. Regular opportunities for extra-curricular activities are limited; however, the school does provide access to some inter-school sporting activities and regularly stages musical productions. The school generally works very well in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides purposeful direction to the school's work and promotes a strong caring ethos and the drive to raise standards. He is ably supported by the senior staff. His commitment to the promotion of each pupil's personal worth, together with a striving for improvement, is shared by all staff. However, the role of foundation coordinators in monitoring their subjects and supporting other staff is under-developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and the life of the school and work in a very productive partnership with it. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Their growing knowledge and confidence has enabled them to be more effective in carrying out the role of critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring is in its early stages of development; there are effective arrangements in place to evaluate the school's performance. The school

	identifies its strengths and weaknesses and has plans to secure further improvement. The setting of specific targets enables staff to support each pupil effectively to make individual progress.
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Aspect	Comment
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well. The school's use of funding for extra staff is effective. The classrooms are well resourced. However, the library areas are under-developed and currently fail to offer a sufficiently wide range of books.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The productive relationship between the governing body, the headteacher and senior staff is a key factor in the school's continued improvement. The headteacher has successfully developed monitoring systems for teaching and learning which support the school's drive for improvement. The school improvement plan has limited usefulness as a tool for longer-term management of change due to the lack of detail given beyond that of curriculum development. The school employs the principles of best value to satisfactory effect.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good progress pupils make, their enjoyment while at school and their participation in musical productions. • The high standard of behaviour the school achieves and maintains and the care it provides. • The good quality teaching experienced by pupils. • That they can approach the school easily. • That the school is being well led and managed. • The school's high expectations of pupils' work. • That the school works closely with parents. • That the school helps pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents feel homework is not consistently given or sufficient, particularly for Year 6. • Some parents feel that the range of regular activities outside lessons is limited. • A few parents feel that they needed more information on the areas of the curriculum their children are studying each term and guidance on how to support their children at home.

The inspectors fully support the parents' positive comments. The parents' view that extra curricular activities are too limited is endorsed. The school does provide some activities, however, these are not regular and are mainly sporting activities and musical productions. Provision of homework should be more regular. Guidance to parents on the use of homework to support learning and information on the curriculum to be studied needs to be more regular and comprehensive.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils make good progress overall as they move through the school. By the time they are eleven years of age, their average level of attainment is very high in English and above the national level in mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported which enables them to make good progress.

1. The school assesses the attainment of pupils when they join the Reception Year, using standardised materials, which enable comparison to be made with pupils in other schools both locally and nationally. The assessments show that pupils' attainment on entry is currently just below the Local Education Authority average, particularly in the area of mathematics.
2. The pupils of Reception age are taught effectively with activities being well matched to their needs. They follow a curriculum which is very well matched to the new early learning goals for children under five. The good quality support they receive enables these young pupils to make good progress and by the time they are five most are attaining standards that are broadly in line with those expected for pupils of their age. This good start is built on effectively as pupils move through the school.
3. The 1999 national assessments show that by the age of seven, pupils attain standards that are above the national average in reading and writing but just below national standards in mathematics. Pupils of higher abilities attain appropriate standards in reading and mathematics but they do not attain high enough standards in writing. The unconfirmed results for 2000 show an improvement in mathematics but a dip in reading. Although there have been fluctuations over time due to the changing composition of different year groups being assessed (in particular the very high percentage of pupils with special educational needs who took the national tests in 2000) a satisfactory standard has been generally sustained over time. In comparison with schools of a similar type, pupils attain standards that are broadly in line for reading and writing but standards that are just below for mathematics.
4. The 1999 results show that by the age of 11, standards in English are very high, standards in mathematics are above the national average and science standards are close to the national average in comparison with all schools. When compared to similar schools, standards in English are very high, performance being in the highest 5 per cent nationally. Standards in mathematics are above similar schools and science standards are just below. Unconfirmed results for 2000 show a significant improvement in science; with a 15 per cent increase of pupils gaining the average level - Level 4. Over time, standards in English and mathematics have risen considerably. Results in science have fluctuated, with a dip in 1999 and a significant rise in 2000.
5. Work seen during the inspection confirms that children entering Reception have lower mathematical ability than the average. In Key Stage 1, pupils' work indicates average standards for English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils are systematically acquiring good phonic skills and they read with enthusiasm and growing accuracy. In writing, their stories contain punctuated sentences and introduce characters. In mathematics, pupils attain well in number and their mental work is of a good standard. In science many opportunities for practical investigations enable pupils to attain appropriately. In Key Stage 2, pupils' work indicates above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics and science. In English, pupils are able to analyse text, to write creatively and present their work well. In mathematics and science, they are able to apply their knowledge to problems and use appropriate non-standard methods in mathematics to reach a correct answer.

During this short inspection, pupils' work in the other subjects of the curriculum was not examined in detail. Consequently, no judgements about standards of attainment in these subjects are made.

6. The evidence gained from looking at pupils' previous and current work, and from talking to pupils, confirms that from a generally lower than average level of attainment when they join Reception class, pupils make good progress overall as they move through the school. The rate of progress increases in Key Stage 2, resulting in pupils attaining standards by the age of eleven that are generally above, and sometimes well above, the national average. The current performance of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2 indicates that they are likely to maintain these high standards. During the two days of the inspection, teaching of good quality was seen. This, together with pupils' very good attitudes to their learning and very good behaviour, makes a significant contribution to the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve.
7. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It effectively engages them in the same activities experienced by other pupils. Activities are well matched to their needs and are developed to challenge and move their thinking forwards. They are very well supported both during their work in class and when they are taught individually. Consequently, they generally make good progress in achieving the targets set for them.
8. The school exceeded its targets and is presently reviewing and revising subsequent targets in the light of its current monitoring evidence. The school sets annual targets for the overall performance of pupils. These are based on teacher assessments of each pupil's capabilities, and include added challenge.

The effective governing body, along with the headteacher and the senior management team, collectively provide sound leadership and management.

9. The management of the headteacher, key staff and the governing body is effective and has an influential effect on the quality of education provided. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior management team, has been successful in establishing a strong whole staff team approach to school improvement. The headteacher has successfully developed with staff a monitoring programme, which, although in its initial stages, has enabled all staff to constantly review pupils' progress and strive for higher standards. The headteacher and staff carefully analyse data, compare the pupils' performance with similar schools and national averages, check the standards of pupils' work, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and monitor the quality of teaching. Useful individual targets are set for pupils in these subjects and progress towards them is discussed. Core subject coordinators have a clear picture of their subject across the school and know which areas are going well and which need to be highlighted for further attention. For example, the school is concerned to improve writing standards particularly for students who are more able and the coordinator is aware of how this could be achieved.
10. All the issues from the previous report have been addressed. However, due to changing national initiatives, schemes of work for foundation subjects are currently going through a second stage of development in order to match the requirements of the new curriculum that started in September 2000. Coordinators for the core subjects have successfully developed their subject and teaching and standards have been monitored. Plans have been made to develop this approach with coordinators for foundation subjects, however this has not yet fully taken place. The auditors' report has been reviewed and a major overhaul of responsibilities and lines of action carried out. This has resulted in a much clearer accounting system and the use of a bursar to support the headteacher and governors in financial matters. The school improvement plan, which has been written with a much tighter focus, has key areas for development identified. The governors and headteacher are aware that the detailed planning

for each initiative needs to be of similar depth to that of the current curriculum section. It would also be beneficial to have all the supporting information and the plan in one folder for easy reference. The infant department learning environment has been successfully improved and staffing enhanced. All these initiatives have had a positive impact on school improvement overall.

11. The governing body contributes substantially to the effectiveness of the school. It has developed significantly since the last inspection and has gained a higher level of expertise and is now very well organised and thorough in its approach. The governors have trust in their headteacher but expect him to be fully accountable to them. The governors are proactive and keep themselves very well informed about what is going on in the school. The chair of governors spends time in the school each week and other governors make regular visits, sometimes helping in classrooms, which assists them to have a good understanding of day-to-day work and the curriculum being studied. They report back to meetings of the governing body. Governors are aware of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school and they readily question and contribute to decisions that need to be made. They are fully involved in long term planning, for example, the need for nursery provision, and are aware of the budgetary constraints.
12. The governors, headteacher and staff are well placed to move the school forward and to address the areas of weakness identified by this inspection.

Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes to learning and their very good relationships with each other and the staff are significant factors in supporting the progress they make.

13. Pupils throughout the school display consistently very good attitudes to their work and the learning opportunities presented to them. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn and succeed. They can take responsibility for their own learning. Good quality teaching successfully motivates pupils to participate in lessons. Pupils are willing to express their thinking and take a risk when answering questions because they know their views are valued. They concentrate well and sustain their interest and enthusiasm in lessons. Pupils were very keen to talk about their work to the inspection team, clearly proud of what they knew and could do. Parents confirmed that their children were very happy at school and keen to attend.
14. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils are friendly, courteous and helpful, both to adults and to each other. Pupils respond well to the school's rules and positive approach to discipline. They value highly the rewards they can attain and sharing their enjoyment in praise assemblies. Parents too appreciate the school's emphasis on good behaviour and the high expectations of the headteacher and staff.
15. Pupils' personal development and relationships within the school are effective in supporting the ethos for learning and the standards they achieve. Pupils work together very well in lessons, talk about their work and support each other. They show appropriate respect for all adults in school regardless of their role. This was evident when inspectors joined pupils for lunch and when they observed playtime activities. Older pupils welcome the opportunity to support younger boys and girls during playtimes and during wet lunch breaks. They take pride in their role as prefects and fulfill their responsibilities conscientiously.

77 per cent of teaching is at least good with 23 per cent being very good. It provides opportunities for pupils to acquire a range of skills and allows them to work independently, with good levels of concentration.

16. All pupils are taught in single age classes. During the two days of the inspection, 13 complete lessons were observed and two assembly sessions. The teaching of all class teachers was observed. 100 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better, 77 per cent was at least good with 23 per cent being very good.
17. The teaching of literacy and numeracy was observed in all classes. In one lesson it was satisfactory, and in all other lessons it was at least good and often very good. Teachers show enjoyment in and enthusiasm for their work, and are generally confident in their subject knowledge and ability to offer pupils a range of strategies for learning. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of the average pupils and those with special educational needs. On a few occasions there is insufficient evidence of planning specific challenges for the more able, particularly in the area of writing. Pupils understand the clear learning objectives, which are shared with them.
18. The teaching of the younger pupils was judged to be very good. It was effective in ensuring that all pupils make progress at a good rate. In a literacy session, the emphasis on reading from a 'big book' and using initial sounds was effective in ensuring that pupils both understood the text but also enjoyed the story. Questions graded in difficulty were well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils spent most of the session on practical work, the teacher and skilled support staff checking their understanding of the tasks and sensitively supporting when appropriate. Good use was made of resources such as the guided play area, and wet and dry areas to support pupils' learning. A series of short tasks relating to the lesson's purpose secured pupils' interest and concentration and allowed the teacher to successfully carry out concentrated support for reading with a small group. The use of information and communication technology to support learning was well integrated in the sessions observed. Pupils had already gained the skills of 'click and drag' and were able to move through the programs independently and with enjoyment.
19. The teaching of pupils in Key Stage 1 was of good quality overall. Consequently, pupils make good progress. The best teaching was seen in English and mathematics. For example, an English lesson in Year 1 was very well linked to the previous day's work when a group of pupils was asked to recall the story and the key characters. The rest of the class was invited to add extra details. This activity, in which pupils played a central role, provided a successful introduction to the new learning. The teacher moved the lesson on at a brisk pace and pupils were very aware of the classroom rules and routines, moving swiftly from one activity to the next. Time is generally used very effectively. Tasks are well matched to pupils' needs but designed to move their thinking forward. Support staff sensitively supported individuals to access the tasks and to report their findings.
20. In Key Stage 2, teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good, and was of good quality overall. Pupils make good progress which is accelerated in the later years. The best teaching was again seen in English and mathematics. An English lesson in Year 5, for example, looking at past and present tenses, involved all pupils by the use of well thought out questions, which challenged pupils' understanding. In a Year 4 extended writing session entitled 'working as a playwright' pupils' drew on previous ideas sensitively supported by the teacher and drafted their thoughts and discussed them with others. In a Year 3 mathematics session on multiples, the teacher demonstrated good use of technical language, was well resourced and had planned appropriately for the pupils concerned.
21. Throughout the school, lessons are generally well planned and adjusted to meet the needs of the majority of pupils. However, in a few instances planning did not contain sufficiently different tasks for the more able. Most lessons succeed in moving the high proportion of pupils at a challenging pace. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. The well-targeted deployment of the support staff is of benefit to pupils throughout the school. During the inspection period, support staff were observed

working with pupils on many occasions. They clearly knew how best to support pupils' learning, combining skilled intervention with an awareness of when to let the pupil work through the challenge on their own.

22. Teaching is a strength of the school and contributes significantly to the standards pupils attain.

The successful implementation of National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has led to good teaching and pupils making significant progress and achieving high standards in both subjects.

23. The teaching of literacy and numeracy was observed in all classes. In one lesson it was satisfactory, and in all other lessons it was at least good and often very good. Teachers show enjoyment in and enthusiasm for their work, and are generally confident in their subject knowledge and ability to offer pupils a range of strategies for learning. The teachers regard high levels of skill in literacy and numeracy as fundamental to the pupils' academic success. A great deal of attention is given to ensuring that all pupils make the best progress they can. The literacy and numeracy sessions have been introduced with skill, ensuring that all teachers are confident about what they are doing. Teachers have received effective training and use the National Frameworks successfully. They plan appropriately with regard to most pupils' needs, although on occasions work for the more able is less well defined. They have reviewed schemes of work, and purchased appropriate resources, which they use with skill to support the lessons.

24. In literacy, the teaching of reading skills is carried out well, as seen for example in a Year 2 lesson, where pupils discuss the text using their word building skills to tackle new words and derive enjoyment from completing a story. Exploring complex text is handled very well in Year 6 when pupils discussed their understanding of two of Shakespeare's plays. In the shared reading sessions, learning objectives are clearly shared with pupils and the teachers modelled the behaviour of an effective reader. The chosen text provided good material to meet the lesson objectives and was at a challenging content level for pupils. The session was interactive with a balance of contributions from teacher and pupils. The teacher successfully used a variety of question types to involve all pupils.

25. Numeracy lessons are also taught well. Teachers use the mental mathematics sessions effectively. The lessons move at a brisk pace, teachers have high expectations, pupils respond with enjoyment and use previously learned methods effectively to answer new questions. Within the lessons there is a high proportion of direct teaching, and teachers use appropriate mathematical vocabulary, as in a Year 3 lesson on multiples. The sessions are well organised providing opportunities for pupils to practise what they know, and explain their methods. Most are willing to explain their methods and solutions to others and show respect for others, whether answers are correct or not. Pupils learn from their mistakes and use their targets to help them improve.

The significant improvement of the teaching and learning areas in the infant department and the provision of extra staffing are having a very positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

26. Since the previous inspection, the school has very successfully responded to the key issue, which emphasised that the learning environment in the infant department failed to significantly support pupils' learning. After reviewing the situation, the staff have successfully transformed the area into a stimulating environment that promotes pupils' learning and encourages them to have pride in their work. The refurbishment of the classrooms and shared areas and the reorganisation of the resources has made a significant difference. Classroom bases now have well defined areas for learning, with appropriately

situated resources which are easily accessible by pupils. The workspace is used well and has appropriate furniture, and all rooms have a computer to support the delivery of the curriculum. The wall space is used successfully to support learning. Displays of tasks and learning objectives remind pupils about what they are learning. Other sections of wall contain well-mounted pupils' work, which encourages them to try hard and gives them a sense of pride in what they have achieved. Many areas of the curriculum are celebrated, with examples of written work, pictures, word processing, artwork and examples of different kinds of mathematics. The shared area and corridor are bright and attractive spaces, which provide extra space and enable pupils to work in small groups or use larger equipment successfully.

27. In order to meet the needs of the younger pupils more fully and the wishes of parents, the school has reorganised the class structure in the infant department. The headteacher and governors have successfully gained a grant to support the employment of an extra member of staff. This has enabled single aged classes to be planned and Reception children to be with a specific member of staff. This has ensured a settled start to school for the youngest children and allowed other staff to concentrate their teaching more precisely on the needs of one age group.
28. The improvement in the teaching and learning areas in the infant department and the extra staffing are both having a very positive impact on teaching and learning and ensuring pupils make good progress.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school improvement plan fails to give sufficient specific detail to all identified priorities.

29. The school improvement plan has gone through a series of changes since the last inspection. It has been rewritten taking into account the guidance from the last report and now has fewer identified areas and a tighter focus. The curriculum development element has been well thought through giving detail of specific tasks, time scales, actions, success criteria and funding. However, this level of detail is not evident in the other sections of the plan, reducing its overall effectiveness as a management tool.
30. The costing of the plan is limited to the current year only. Outline plans for subsequent years do not indicate the funding anticipated as needed to secure their implementation. This does not support the efficient planning for long-term improvement and development. The uncertain nature of future school funding levels, rather than preventing such activity, makes it even more desirable that it should be carried out. The headteacher and governors have stated that they want to improve strategic planning, so the need has been recognised. The school is well placed to take this work forward.

Schemes and policy documents: those in foundation subjects are in an early stage of development and lack assessment guidance, specific time allocations and identified opportunities for cross curricular links.

31. The school has worked hard to develop curriculum schemes and policy documentation since the last inspection but has been overtaken by National Curriculum changes. Currently it has successfully implemented English and mathematics schemes, policy and planning, and is reviewing planning for science. Foundation subjects, schemes and policy documents are in various stages of development. The school is rightly working through this process, systematically reviewing national materials and commercial schemes, identifying how they will be adapted for use by St. John Southworth's. The process adopted currently does not show in sufficient detail time scale for completion. The draft documentation does not yet outline satisfactorily assessment opportunities, time allocations and cross-curricular links, particularly those for information and communication technology.

32. At the parents' meeting, parents stated that they were pleased with the education their children receive but would welcome regular information about the curriculum they were studying. Currently the school does this through discussions at parents' meetings but does not regularly inform parents in writing about the areas of study for the term and how parents can support their children's learning. In the light of the current curriculum changes, this lack of information limits the support parents can offer.

The role of the foundation coordinators is under-developed; they have limited opportunities for monitoring standards and providing support for colleagues.

33. The headteacher has significantly developed the role of the core subject coordinators but has not as yet developed the role of foundation subject coordinators sufficiently. They have been involved in the development and use of national schemes and medium term planning but have had little opportunity to monitor standards of work, teaching, or to provide formal support to colleagues. Much discussion takes place informally. A formal timetable for foundation coordinators to monitor and review their subject does not exist and this limits their effectiveness as managers.

The provision for more able: the provision of work across the curriculum for these pupils is limited, particularly in the area of writing.

34. Teachers have worked hard to identify long, medium and short term planning for the term which takes account of the new curriculum requirements. In the planning and work seen during the inspection it is evident that consideration has been given to planning for special educational needs pupils, lower ability groups and the average pupils. Some planning identified extension tasks for the more able but this is not consistent. The tasks do not always have a sufficiently challenging element that demands even higher standards from this group of pupils. The school has identified this need and is currently seeking ways of extending the more able, particularly in writing. Monitoring of planning does take place but is not stringent enough in this particular area. Further evaluation is needed to identify precisely what needs to be done to plan for the more able pupils' needs in all lessons.

Homework: provision is variable and fails to sufficiently support the curriculum appropriately.

35. At the meeting for parents, and on the questionnaires they returned, some parents raised concerns about homework. Their understanding of what is required and when, is not always clear to them. The inspection found that there is currently no policy in place and homework is not consistently used throughout the school. A policy which clearly defines the range, amount and frequency of homework for each year group, is needed. This information should be communicated to parents in a way that gives them insight into how they can support their child at home.

Extra curricular activities: currently these are limited and irregular and fail to contribute effectively to pupils' learning.

36. The school does provide opportunities for some extra curricular activities. However, they are not on a regular basis and are chiefly in the area of sport and musical productions. Parents are justified in wanting details of the range and timing of activities. The current provision fails to sufficiently support the school curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. To support their stated aims the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

Issue 1

further develop the School Improvement Plan to ensure all priorities are carefully planned, costed and have the appropriate supportive documentation, which should include time scales for delivery, evaluation and criteria for success (paragraphs 29,30);

Issue 2

complete the development of schemes of work in all subjects ensuring the identification of assessment opportunities, cross-curricular links and methods of monitoring and evaluation, all with an agreed timetable for completion;

make sure that time in school is used to best advantage in order to deliver the new curriculum plans successfully;

ensure that parents are fully informed about the curriculum their children are studying, aware of its purpose and its contribution to their child's learning, and how they can support it (paragraphs 31, 32);

Issue 3

develop more fully the role of the foundation subject coordinators in order that they can all make appropriate contributions to the leadership and management of their subject (paragraph 33);

Issue 4

define more specifically work for the more able pupils, in all curriculum areas, with special attention being given to writing (paragraph 34);

Issue 5

improve the provision of homework across both key stages ensuring it is a regular, planned activity which supports pupils' learning and that parents are informed of how they can support their child at home (paragraph 35);

Issue 6

the school should endeavour to provide a regular, planned range of extra-curricular activities which will enrich pupils' learning and development (paragraph 36).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	23	54	23	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	179
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	49

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	14	8	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	7	7	6
	Total	20	20	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (83)	90 (93)	87 (84)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	86 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	7	7	7
	Total	20	20	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (88)	91 (87)	91 (100)
	National	82 (81)	89 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	8	12	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	6
	Girls	12	12	10
	Total	18	19	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (50)	95 (63)	80 (80)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	6	6
	Girls	10	12	10
	Total	16	18	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (67)	90 (63)	80 (88)
	National	68 (63)	69 (64)	75 (69)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	158
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y2000– Y2001

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	25.4

Education support staff: Y2000– Y2001

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	330500
Total expenditure	335013
Expenditure per pupil	1871
Balance brought forward from previous year	6029
Balance carried forward to next year	1516

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	177
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	31	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	39	6	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	33	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	58	3	2	5
The teaching is good.	56	37	5	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	50	9	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	36	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	33	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	44	41	8	2	6
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	5	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	39	3	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	36	28	8	16