

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. MARIE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Kirkby, Liverpool

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104466

Headteacher: Mrs Pat Cooney

Reporting inspector: Michael Best, Rgl  
10413

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 225245

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bigdale Drive  
Northwood  
Kirkby  
Liverpool

Postcode: L33 6XL

Telephone number: 0151 546 3859

Fax number: 0151 549 0962

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M M Giblin

Date of previous inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Dr Michael Best 10413	Registered inspector	Science Music	Characteristics of the school Standards How well pupils are taught How the school is led and managed
Mrs Patricia Edwards 10965	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development Attendance
Dr Rosemary Saul 22526	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Equality of opportunity	Curricular and other opportunities
Mrs Suzannah Metcalfe 20003	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Geography History	
Mrs Trudy Cotton 3751	Team inspector	English Physical education Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Marie's is a Roman Catholic Aided primary school serving an area of mainly rented housing in Kirkby, to the east of Liverpool. Although unemployment has fallen in recent years, it is still above the national average. The majority of the pupils at the school come from the Northwood estate, where the school is situated. There are 299 pupils on roll, 154 girls and 145 boys, aged between three and 11 years of age. Children in the nursery attend part-time but in other year groups all pupils attend on a full-time basis. The school is bigger than the average for primary schools. The attainment of pupils on entry is well below that found nationally but the range is wide. Sixty-nine per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. At the time of the inspection no pupils came from minority ethnic backgrounds and all had English as their first language. Ninety-four pupils (38 per cent) are on the school's register of special educational need, which is also well above the national average. A third of pupils on the register are on Stages 3 and above of the Code of Practice and four pupils have statements of special educational need<sup>1</sup>. This is well above the national average. The majority of pupils on the register have moderate learning difficulties.

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

A strong, caring Catholic ethos underpins St. Marie's School. By the age of 11 years, the majority of pupils reach standards that are close to those found in all schools. Given their low starting point when they start school, they make good progress due to the hard work and encouragement of their teachers and support staff. The school is well led and managed by the governors, headteacher and staff. A strength of the school is the way in which everyone wants to raise and maintain standards. Their capacity for further improvement is good. The overall quality of teaching is good, with very little unsatisfactory teaching seen. Taking all the available information into account, the school provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching is good. Teachers and support staff work effectively to help children achieve their best.
- The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and staff are good.
- Children get a good start to their time in school.
- The school gathers information well to help pupils to improve.
- The school encourages all children to succeed and value their contribution to the community.
- The school fosters a loving and caring Catholic community.

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

- Standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing throughout the school.
- Standards in design and technology.
- Ways in which children can develop independence in their learning.
- Attendance and the procedures for improving it.
- The school's provision for pupils' cultural development for life in a diverse society.

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

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

This is a much improved school where standards have risen significantly since the time of the last inspection in November 1996. Staff and pupils have worked very hard to improve pupils' basic skills, double the proportions of pupils reaching the standards expected of 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science and to raise standards in teaching. In 1998 the school was judged to be one of the 10 most improved schools in the country. There is a strong determination to bring about further improvement.

Schemes of work, based on commercial schemes closely allied to the National Curriculum, are in place. Curriculum planning has been improved and good assessment procedures are now in place. These have all helped to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenging work is now planned for pupils who learn at different rates. Subject co-ordinators work hard to ensure that pupils in mixed-aged

<sup>1</sup> Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

Stages of special educational needs range from Stage 1, when limited additional support is provided for pupils entirely from within the school, to Stage 5, which ensures that a pupil has a statement outlining his or her needs and shows what additional and specific support that pupil will receive. Stages 3, 4 and 5 involve external specialists as well as staff within the school.

classes have full coverage of the National Curriculum. One area that has not been fully addressed is design and technology. National Curriculum requirements are still not met and the subject is not firmly in place.

## 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	E*	A	E	B
Mathematics	E*	A	C	A
Science	E*	A*	D	A

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E
Very low	E*

The above table shows that in 1999 (the latest year for which comparative figures are available), compared with all schools the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected at the age of 11 years was well below average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. Compared with similar schools, results were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Comparing the school's results for 2000 with those for 1999, lower proportions of pupils reached the standards expected of 11 year olds in English and mathematics but a higher proportion reached the standard expected in science. In the 2000 tests and assessments for seven years olds, 93 per cent of pupils reached the standards expected at this age in reading, writing, mathematics and science; these results are some of the best the school has achieved at this age. The school's results are rising faster than in most schools. The school's targets for improvement in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are suitably challenging.

Pupils make good progress from the time they start school until they leave at the end of Year 6. By the time they are five the majority of pupils reach the expected standard in their mathematical, creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Those who do not achieve the expected standard in communication, language and literacy development and in their personal, social and emotional development are well on track to do so. Inspection evidence indicates that in Years 2 and 6 attainment is below that expected nationally in English. Standards are rising in the school but there is still room for further improvement in the development of pupils' literacy skills. In mathematics and science attainment is similar to that expected nationally. Standards are in line with those expected nationally in Years 2 and 6 in art, geography, history, music and physical education. They are below national expectations in design and technology throughout the school. In information and communications technology, standards are in line with those expected nationally in Year 2 but below them in Year 6. However, pupils are making good progress with the newly installed computers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are keen to come to school. They are interested and involved in all the school's activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory in and out of lessons. Pupils work better when supported by adults but lose concentration when working by themselves.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is satisfactory but many pupils lack the confidence, skills and maturity to work independently. Relationships are good but some children do not always understand how what they do can effect others.
Attendance	Attendance is well below that found in most schools. The school does not have enough ways of encouraging children to attend regularly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	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. In 97 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better. Teaching is good in 63 per cent of lessons and very good in seven per cent of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in three per cent of lessons. The way in which teachers plan for the differing needs of pupils is a particular strength of the teaching in the school. Examples of good teaching are evident in all the subjects, including English and mathematics. Numeracy skills are well taught. Clear routines and practices have been established. Literacy skills are soundly taught with handwriting and spelling programmes starting to take effect. Information and communications technology skills are being successfully taught although technical problems with the school's new computer hardware are frustrating teachers' efforts to develop this across the curriculum.

When working directly with adults, pupils' learning is good because they are well supported. In the nursery and reception classes learning is good. In older classes it is more variable. When pupils have to work independently, the rate of learning falls off. There are a number of reasons for this including their limited skills and lack of confidence. In some classes there are not enough adults to support teaching and learning. The school does not have agreed policies and practices to help pupils to develop good personal working routines and to develop independence in their studies as they move through the school. The good foundations laid in the nursery and reception classes are not consistently developed.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes enables them to make a good start in learning. Older children study all subjects of the National Curriculum but design and technology is not fully established.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes satisfactory provision for children with special educational needs. The needs of children with statements are well met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is satisfactory overall. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is satisfactory. Provision for cultural development is unsatisfactory because the pupils do not have enough opportunities to find out about people from different communities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a caring Christian environment where everyone is valued. Parents hold the school in high regard. The school lets parents know what is going on. Class teachers are always available to talk to parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and staff. The headteacher is ably helped by all the people who work in the school. A strength of her leadership is the way in which she encourages everyone to do their best for the school. Everyone works very hard.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities soundly. They care very much for the school and are keen to use their skills and talents to help it to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has clear targets and good plans to help it improve. There are good systems in place to monitor teaching, learning and what pupils know and can do.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes sound use of the resources available to it and seeks to get the best value when ordering goods. The quantity and quality of books and equipment are good. The accommodation is well used and maintained to a high standard but there is no library. There are sufficient teachers but not enough adults to help the high number of pupils who have difficulty with reading and writing.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Forty-eight responses were received to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers. One parent attended the meeting with the registered inspector held for parents before the start of the inspection. During the inspection, inspectors spoke with over 30 parents in the playground before and after school.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and teachers have high expectations of pupils.</li> <li>• Class teachers are always available to see parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents feel that the amount of homework varies between classes.</li> <li>• Younger pupils have less opportunity to take part in after-school activities.</li> </ul>

A very high proportion of parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed their satisfaction with the work of the school and the inspection team agrees that parents' trust in the school is well founded.

The school seeks to increase the amount of homework given as pupils move through the school. Two-thirds of parents are pleased with the amount of homework their children get. Inspectors were unable to make a judgement about this so soon to the start of the school year but the school is planning to monitor this matter during the year.

In common with the majority of primary schools, extra-curricular activities are provided for pupils aged seven to 11 years. The range includes include sports, such as netball, football and cross-country running, and a computer club. Inspectors feel that the school is using the resources available to it as well as it can.

*The inspectors would like to thank the governors, staff, parents and pupils of St. Marie's Catholic Primary School for their warm welcome and every assistance during the inspection.*

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and achievements

1. The overall attainment of children on entry to the school is well below that found in the majority of schools in all respects. Speaking and listening and social skills are particularly low. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is almost twice the national average and a far higher than average number of pupils have statements of special educational need.
2. The findings of the last inspection, conducted in November 1996, showed that standards were below or well below those expected nationally in English, mathematics, science, information technology and design and technology throughout the school and in art in Years 3 to 6 (Key Stage 2). In art in Years 1 and 2 (Key Stage 1) and in geography, history, music and physical education throughout the school, standards were similar to those expected nationally. Standards in swimming were good. Although standards in the nursery and reception classes were below those expected nationally, pupils made good progress in these classes. Progress in Years 1 and 2 was judged satisfactory but this standard was not consistently maintained as pupils moved on through the school. However, progress at the end of Year 6 was judged to be good. The report found that pupils capable of higher standards were not being challenged by the work set for them.
3. The findings of this inspection show that children in the nursery make good progress and often very good progress in the nursery. This is maintained in the reception classes. By the time they are five most reach, and a small minority exceed, the nationally recommended Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> for five year olds in their mathematical, physical and creative development. In their personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy development, those who do not achieve the expected levels are firmly on the way to doing so. At the end of the reception year children transfer smoothly into the routines of the main school. It is the high quality of teaching that enables children in these classes to make this amount of progress and achieve well. A thorough emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development is at the heart of this success. In carefully planned activities covering all the areas of learning, members of the nursery and reception staff work hard to help the children to become increasingly independent, to share and take turns, and to look after equipment and each other.
4. The school's results in the 2000 National Curriculum statutory tests and assessments were available at the time of the inspection, but information to enable comparisons to be made with all schools and similar schools was not. Therefore, the 1999 results and comparisons are used in this report. These show that, at the end of Key Stage 1<sup>3</sup>, the proportion of seven year olds in the school reaching the expected standards for their age was well below the national average in reading and writing. In mathematics it was below the national average. In science the proportion of pupils assessed by their teachers as reaching the expected standard was well below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in these tests and assessments was below that found nationally in mathematics and science. In reading and writing it was well below the national averages. Compared with similar schools, pupils' results were above average in

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<sup>2</sup> The six Early Learning Goals for pupils at age five are: **P**ersonal, **S**ocial and **E**emotional development; **C**ommunication, **L**anguage and **L**iteracy; **M**athematics; **K**nowledge and **U**nderstanding of the **W**orld; **C**reative and **P**hysical development.

<sup>3</sup> By the end of Key Stage 1, at the age of seven years, pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in all National Curriculum subjects. Those pupils who achieve Level 3 are therefore attaining above nationally expected levels and those who achieve Level 1 are attaining below nationally expected levels.

reading and mathematics and similar to the national average in writing. Teacher assessments in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly similar to the test results.

5. However, the school's test and assessment results for 2000 show a sharp rise in the standards reached by last year's Year 2 pupils. Ninety-three per cent reach the standards expected of seven year olds in the tests in reading, writing and mathematics and in the teacher assessments in science.
6. In the 1999 National Curriculum statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 2<sup>4</sup> the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards for their age was similar to the national average in mathematics, just below the national average in science and well below in English. The number of pupils gaining the higher levels was well below those found nationally in English, below in mathematics and close to the national average in science. Compared with similar schools pupils' results in 1999 were well above the average in mathematics and science and above the average in English. Teacher assessments were broadly similar to the test results.
7. In the 2000 national tests, the proportions of pupils reaching the standards expected of 11 year olds were lower than those achieved in the 1999 tests in English and mathematics but higher in science. In these recent tests girls did significantly better than boys in English and mathematics. It must be borne in mind that the school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and that proportion varies between year groups. The school reports that the targets they set for last year's 11 year olds were exceeded.
8. The standards being achieved by the school show a significant improvement when compared to those reported at the time of the last inspection. At that time no pupils reached the higher levels. Over time, the results for pupils aged 11 years have risen faster than that found nationally. The school is right to be justly proud of the results pupils have achieved.
9. **Scrutiny of current pupils' work and lesson observations during the inspection indicate that, at the ages of seven and 11 years, attainment is below that expected nationally in English. Pupils' literacy skills are improving but although handwriting and spelling schemes have been introduced, they are not yet fully implemented, with the result that standards are still not high enough. In mathematics and science attainment is similar to that expected nationally. The school reports that the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the adoption of schemes of work in science closely related to the requirements of the National Curriculum have helped pupils to achieve better standards. Inspection evidence clearly supports this view. Pupils are becoming adept with oral work in mathematics and the skills are helping them focus on their work in lessons.**
10. **Since the last inspection the school has systematically supported, monitored and evaluated teaching and learning. This has made a great deal of difference to what the school believes to be the standards achievable by pupils. As a result, teachers have revised upwards their expectations of what pupils can do. This is reflected in the higher results achieved by pupils, especially at the higher levels in national tests. The school also reports that it has become much better at identifying pupils' needs and making appropriate provision for them. This is fully supported by evidence from the inspection.**
11. **Standards are in line with those expected nationally in Years 2 and 6 (at the end of the key stages) in art, geography, history, music and physical education. In all of**

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<sup>4</sup> By the end of Key Stage 2, at the age of ~~eleven~~ 11 years, pupils are expected to attain Level 4 in all National Curriculum subjects. Those who achieve Level 5 are therefore attaining above nationally expected levels.

**these subjects progress is sound, with some good achievement evident in the older classes. Standards are below national expectations in design and technology throughout the school; the school does not have schemes of work in place, the range of activities is too narrow and so the quality of pupils' learning and progress are unsatisfactory. In information and communications technology standards are in line with those expected nationally in Year 2 but below them in Year 6. That said, pupils make good progress and standards are rising in the older age groups as they become more familiar with, and are suitably challenged by, the recently installed suite of computers and associated software.**

12. Although inspection findings and test results show that pupils make good progress between starting school at the age of 3 years and leaving at the age of 11 years, the pace of progress is not even as pupils move through the school. The momentum established in the nursery and reception classes is not evenly maintained as pupils move through the school. Whilst progress is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1, it is better in Year 2, where the pace of lessons is brisker. In Key Stage 2, progress over time is satisfactory overall. Throughout the school a major factor in the progress pupils make is the extent to which their learning, and the development of independent learning skills, is supported by adults.
13. Because the number of pupils in each group is variable the school has mixed-aged classes. In these classes, there is a particularly wide range of academic ability even though the school groups pupils on the basis of what they know and can do. Where pupils are working closely with an adult, they make good progress in their learning. A significant number of pupils lack the maturity, speaking and listening, reading and writing skills to maintain their interest and concentration when working on tasks independently. What they achieve when working independently is less than when they are receiving support and direction from an adult. This has an impact on their overall progress. There are insufficient adults in the school to successfully support the wide-ranging needs of its pupils.
14. The school successfully identifies and provides effectively for a high number of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils make steady progress with their learning. Those with statements are well supported and achieve well in relation to the targets set for them. Work is well planned at different levels in order to meet the pupils' needs and enable them to achieve appropriate standards. Targets from individual learning programmes are used successfully to help improve reading, writing and mathematical skills. Teachers carefully monitor pupils' achievement of their individual learning targets and this helps to provide the next steps in learning. A significant number of pupils have limited basic skills and, although making good progress from low start, they rely on specific adult help and support in order to move their learning on.
15. No pupil has been disapplied from taking the National Curriculum statutory tests in 1999 or 2000. However, the school makes every effort to support pupils in these tests. Where appropriate, pupils are given extra time to complete their papers; those who have difficulty with reading have their papers read to them. Pupils who have difficulty with writing have their answers recorded for them. In this way the school enables all pupils to have full equality of opportunity to demonstrate their true potential.
16. In the report of the previous inspection the school was criticised for not making sufficient provision for pupils with the capacity to achieve above average standards. Good progress has been made in making provision for these pupils through teachers identifying and planning challenging tasks; the success of this improvement is evident in the increased number of pupils achieving higher levels in the National Curriculum statutory tests.

17. Analysis of statutory test results indicates that girls have attained higher scores than boys over time. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection did not reveal any significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls. However, there are uneven proportions of boys and girls in year groups. Additionally, the size of individual year groups can vary considerably as can the proportion of pupils with special educational needs within them. In some classes, the proportions of pupils with special educational needs are two or even three times the national average.
18. The school tracks pupils' progress well as they move through the school by analysis of baseline information, the results of National Curriculum tests and assessments, and a variety of other data. Teachers make effective use of such information to discuss and set individual targets for pupils. In conjunction with the local education authority the school has set targets for improvement in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. The targets set in English and mathematics for the present Year 6 group have recently been revised as evidence from assessments indicated that the original targets would be comfortable exceeded. The revised targets are suitably challenging.

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

19. Most pupils' attitudes are good. This is an improvement on those found at the time of the previous inspection. Parents feel that the school provides their children with a good start and they are pleased with the attitudes and values the school promotes.
20. Many children have limited personal and social skills when they come into the school and cannot relate easily to each other and to adults. With support they become more confident and willing to take the initiative in directing their own learning. In older classes, when given the opportunities to take responsibility for tasks both in and out of the classroom, pupils respond well. However, as found at the time of the previous inspection, in a number of lessons there are insufficient opportunities provided for pupils to take the initiative and this inhibits their personal development. The momentum established in the nursery and reception classes is not maintained.
21. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is good when working with adults but they tend to lose interest, confidence and concentration when working by themselves. Behaviour in the playground is satisfactory. Pupils treat staff, parents and visitors politely. Pupils are willing to try hard. This was well illustrated in a Year 3 swimming lesson where pupils listened carefully to their instructors and tried their best despite the novelty of this being only their second visit to the swimming baths. There were no exclusions in the last reporting year.
22. The school successfully promotes good relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils like their teachers and feel that they are well cared for. Relationships are open and friendly and pupils feel comfortable when chatting to teachers about their work. Pupils are pleased that their efforts are recognised by adults and that their contribution to the work of the school is valued. Throughout the school they enjoy being involved in their work and are eager to show others what they have produced. On occasions, some pupils do not fully understand how their actions can affect others but most respond quickly and positively to correction. Pupils treat property around the school with care and consideration and there is little evidence of damage or graffiti.
23. Attendance is unsatisfactory at 90.5 per cent for the last reporting year. This is very low in comparison with other schools. The amount of unauthorised absence is well above that found in most school. The school's records indicate that much of this is the result of pupils being taken out of school for family reasons. Pupils arrive punctually for school and lessons start and finish on time.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. Taking all the available evidence into account the quality of teaching is good overall. In 97 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better. Teaching is good in 63 per cent of lessons and very good in seven per cent of lessons. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. A notable strength of the teaching throughout the school is the consistent way in which teachers plan for the differing needs of their pupils. Teaching is also strengthened by the contributions of the local authority's special educational needs and performing arts staff. During the inspection unsatisfactory teaching was seen in three per cent of lessons. No poor or very poor lessons were seen. The proportion of good or better teaching is greater than that reported nationally in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.
25. Teaching is never less than good in the nursery and some lessons are very good. The great majority of lessons in the reception classes are good. The teachers choose activities carefully, plan them well and give the children every encouragement to develop the confidence to "have a go", to share and to make choices.
26. In Key Stage 1 teaching is satisfactory. Many good lessons were seen across the curriculum but there were two unsatisfactory lessons in Year 1, in science and physical education, where weaknesses outnumbered strengths. While clear learning objectives are to be found in the plans for all lessons in these year groups, the better lessons are characterised by well managed and carefully organised activities that focus the pupils' attention and concentration specifically on what is to be learnt in that lesson. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the teachers do not use time to the best advantage and pupils rapidly lose sight of the task in hand. The most effective lessons in these year groups move at a good pace, enthusing and interesting pupils and helping them to do their best.
27. In Key Stage 2 teaching is good. It is good or better in nearly three-quarters of the lessons with very good teaching seen in one in 10 lessons. Examples of good teaching were evident in all the subjects seen during the inspection. Strengths at this key stage include teachers' good subject knowledge and the high expectations of what pupils can do. In the best lessons teachers use a variety of different approaches to inspire and challenge pupils to achieve well.
28. Numeracy skills are well taught. The National Numeracy Strategy is well implemented and the teachers have established clear routines and practices. At the start of each lesson teachers set a brisk pace with oral work which successfully helps to focus pupils' mathematical thinking.
29. The National Literacy Strategy is clearly established in the school. Skills are soundly taught. Teachers make good use of the feedback sessions to enable pupils to share their learning and to use and practise their speaking and listening skills. However, teachers do not pay enough attention to developing pupils' independent learning skills and the standard of presentation of their work.
30. Information and communication technology skills are being successfully introduced across the curriculum although technical problems with the school's new computers are frustrating teachers' efforts to develop this across the curriculum.
31. Teachers' organisational skills are good but in those lessons where there are no supporting adults, the quality of pupils' learning falls off in the groups not working directly with an adult. In the lessons where teachers do not have adult support, pupils are put into groups to work independently on their tasks whilst the teacher works with one particular group at a time.

Despite the best possible efforts of teachers to set appropriate tasks, pupils do not sustain the good progress they make in guided group work. This is not only evident in lessons but also in the scrutiny of pupils' work. Many pupils lack sufficiently developed speaking, listening, reading and writing skills to discuss and develop their ideas; although willing, a significant proportion, particularly those with special educational needs, do not have the confidence and maturity to focus their concentration for a long enough time.

32. One contributory factor to this is the insufficient provision of adults to support teaching and learning. Another is the lack of agreed policies and practices to help pupils to develop good personal working routines and to develop independence in their studies as they move through the school. This was a criticism raised at the time of the last inspection. The good foundations laid in the nursery and reception classes are not consistently developed. This is a weakness.
33. Teachers plan work carefully for pupils with special educational needs, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. Tasks are generally well matched to pupils' needs and reflect the targets outlined in their individual education plans. Members of the support staff are generally well directed and give good quality support to pupils. In those lessons where they are available, support staff make a significant contribution to the quality of both teaching and learning. The work of the visiting special educational needs support teacher in providing expertise for teachers and in supporting pupils through short one-to-one and small group sessions, successfully supports the achievement of learning targets.
34. Since the last inspection the school has successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning. At that time teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in nearly a quarter of the lessons observed; it was good in just a quarter of lessons. The inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 have been successfully addressed. Across the curriculum, teachers' subject knowledge is good overall. In contrast to the findings of the last inspection, the learning objectives set for all the lessons seen during this inspection were clearly related to the requirements of the National Curriculum or the Early Learning Goals. In the vast majority of lessons these objectives are successfully shared with pupils so that they know what they are doing. Throughout the school learning resources are effectively and efficiently used.
35. Teachers' planning is very good in the Foundation Stage and good in other year groups. The inconsistencies reported at the time of the last of the inspection have been ironed out across the school systematically. Long, medium and short-term planning formats are now securely in place. They are monitored by subject co-ordinators and the headteacher and form the basis of lesson monitoring and evaluation. This process is a strength of the school.
36. Teachers' expectations of what pupils, particularly the more able, can learn are very good in the nursery and reception, satisfactory in Year 1 and good in Years 2 to 6. This is borne out by the school's exceptional results in the statutory tests for pupils at the age of 11 in 1998 where national standards were well exceeded in English, mathematics and science. This is also evident in other test results where the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has risen.
37. A contributory factor to this is the way in which teachers now successfully use the various items of assessment information to plan challenging work for different groups of pupils. In the nursery and reception classes very good use is made of the detailed information collected from observations. In Years 2 to 6 teachers make good use of the information from formal assessments; in Year 1 the use of such information is satisfactory. Pupils' work is regularly marked and teachers' comments generally encourage pupils to improve.

However, in English there is some inconsistency in teachers' response to unfinished, untidy and careless work.

38. The school makes satisfactory use of homework. Pupils who attend the weekly homework club appreciate the opportunity to complete their work where they have access to learning resources. The majority of parents feel that their children receive the right amount of homework but some feel that there are inconsistencies between classes in frequency with which homework is set.
39. Children in the nursery and reception classes are well managed; classrooms are well-organised and teaching methods varied. Activities are conducted at a good pace and staff work as one in engaging and developing pupils' interest and concentration. The nursery staff manage some very challenging situations calmly and sensitively.
40. In Years 3 to 6 the management of pupils is also good and, again, teachers call upon a variety of different ways of organising their teaching. A number of pupils in these year groups have behavioural difficulties. Realistic targets are set for improvement and pupils work well together for the majority of the time. The good pace of learning in the lessons observed during the inspection was rarely interrupted but when it was, matters were dealt with promptly and decisively.
41. Although a range of teaching methods are used in Years 1 and 2, the management of pupils is more variable in this key stage. Where activities are well organised and conducted at a brisk pace, pupils collaborate and share equipment successfully. Where the pace falls off, often because the teacher is concentrating on one particular group, voices become raised and pupils' interest in the given task lapses.

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

42. The school is providing a satisfactory curriculum overall. This is an area where there has been much improvement since the last inspection although not all the issues identified as giving rise for concern at that time have been fully addressed.
43. The quality of the curriculum for children under five in the Foundation Stage has improved and it is now good. Good provision is made in the nursery and reception classes for promoting children's personal, social and emotional development, for developing their skills in communication, language and literacy, for their mathematical development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and for promoting their physical and creative development.
44. There is good outdoor provision in the nursery class for children's physical development using large toys such as bikes and through other spontaneous play activities. Satisfactory provision in this area is also made for children in the reception classes despite the fact these children do not have ready access to an outdoor area. The provision is made through playtimes and physical education lessons.
45. The curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 generally meets statutory requirements and includes provision for personal, social and health education. It is of satisfactory quality overall, but there are some shortcomings. Teachers plan for all subjects of the National Curriculum. However, insufficient attention is being paid to design and technology. The school has no detailed scheme of work for this area and pupils' knowledge, understanding and practical skills are not being progressively developed to the expected standards as they move through the school. Provision for design and technology was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection.

46. The school has effective strategies for teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The literacy strategy has been satisfactorily implemented and this is making an important contribution to raising standards in this area. The numeracy strategy has been implemented well. Good quality teaching in this area is serving to motivate pupils and make them keen to improve.
47. Work in history and in geography focuses strongly on developing pupils' specific study skills. The curriculum for information and communication technology is in the process of full implementation following the installation of a new computer suite. Information and communication technology skills are starting to be effectively used across the curriculum.
48. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal, social and health education through the curriculum subjects, for example, through science, religious education and physical education. Visiting speakers also work with pupils to complement the work of the school in sex education and in drug misuse education.
49. The quality of curriculum planning has improved since the last inspection. The school has appropriate policies to guide its work in this area and is in the process of devising schemes of work for all subjects to reflect the new requirements of the National Curriculum and Early Learning Goals. These schemes are based on nationally available published guidance. There are good arrangements in place to ensure that there is continuity between the work in different year groups. Good efforts are made to plan for the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in most subjects. However, there are considerable difficulties caused by the need to have mixed-aged classes because of the significant differences in the size of year groups. Subject co-ordinators play an important role in helping teachers plan for this. They monitor the curriculum for each class and year group closely.
50. The curriculum provides opportunities for all to learn. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are more able than the others, have good access to a range of appropriate learning activities. Issues relating to equal opportunities for learning identified in the last inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed. The differing needs of pupils are being well planned for, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
51. There have been improvements in the provision for extra-curricular activities since the last inspection. There is now a programme of activities that extends pupils' interests, contributes to their social development and provides support for learning outside the school day. The range includes sports, such as netball, football and cross-country running, and a computer club. A homework club takes place once a week. All of these extra-curricular activities are open to all pupils from seven to 11 years. The school also provides opportunities for pupils in specific year groups. There is a dance club for Year 6, organised in the lunch hour. This is seen as a 'privilege' for the senior pupils in the school. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 have the opportunity to participate in a 'Junior Citizenship' programme run by the local council's Leisure and Community Services.
52. Links with the community enrich the curriculum and contribute to pupils' learning. The school has links with the Zeneca Project through Liverpool John Moores University. This is enriching work in science for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils make visits in the community linked to their work in history and environmental studies and they also attend performances at local theatres. The school has good working relationships with other schools in the area.

53. The school continues to promote pupils' personal development satisfactorily. However, there are some weaknesses in the way in which it provides for developing pupils' appreciation of the breadth and depth of their own cultural traditions and those of others in the wider community.
54. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to talk and to write about their feelings and emotions and special times in their own lives, such as the birth of a brother or sister. They have opportunities to marvel at the natural world, for example, in observing living creatures in science and in examining natural and man-made materials in art. They are encouraged to describe their feelings about pictures and other works of art. All of these opportunities encourage pupils to think about their place in the world and in society and the development of their self-awareness and self-knowledge.
55. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' moral and social development. School and class rules play an important part in helping pupils to understand what it means to be part of a community and how the actions of one member can affect the experiences of others. Pupils' sense of right and wrong develops well as they move through the school.
56. The school values the development of pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility. This is done through public appreciation for good behaviour and good work in school assemblies. Teachers praise achievement inside and outside the classroom. Some teachers encourage pupils to draw up class contracts to help pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour. Teachers also take opportunities, for example, during registration sessions, to encourage pupils to engage in discussions. Pupils in Year 6 receive a 'Welcome to Year 6' handbook. This sets out clearly the expectations the school has of its oldest pupils and tells them about their roles and responsibilities and contains pupils' writings about their hopes and aspirations for their final year in the school. These class contracts and the Year 6 handbook are making an important contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
57. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to take responsibility for small jobs in the classroom and pupils in Year 6 are encouraged to nominate themselves for consideration as prefects. As prefects they have opportunities to carry out tasks in the school as a whole during the playtimes and lunch breaks. Year 6 pupils write letters saying why they think they would make good prefects and, on appointment, take their prefect's duties very seriously.
58. A continuing weakness in the provision for pupils' social development is that there are no clear policies and practices that apply through the school to help pupils to develop good personal working routines and to develop independence in their studies. The lack of this provision means that pupils are not making the progress they might in some lessons because they look for prompting as to what to do next. They do not take the initiative, when appropriate, to ensure that they make the best use of the time available to them.
59. Provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory overall. The school does not have policies and practices to systematically promote this area of its work and insufficient emphasis is placed on promoting the cultural traditions of the local area and on developing pupils' understanding and appreciation of the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society. Pupils' understanding and appreciation of western European culture is satisfactorily promoted through the curriculum subjects such as English, art and music. However, a weakness in the art provision is that it focuses on the study of the work of dead, male artists to the detriment of women artists and living artists generally.

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

60. The school has maintained its effective care of pupils and continues to provide a caring Catholic environment where teachers know their pupils and value them as individuals. Most parents are happy with the care and guidance offered to their children. They acknowledge that their children are happy in school and able to concentrate on their work.
61. Teachers support and monitor pupils' personal and educational development well. Good procedures for assessing and recording what pupils know and can do have recently been introduced. These are starting to give teachers more accurate information about individual pupils and help teachers plan for pupils' needs. In the nursery careful records are kept. Assessments are made when children start school. Ongoing assessments and discussions in the nursery and reception classes, including the individual tracking of children through the range of activities and experiences provided, ensure that the adults identify targets to ensure progress and enable the children to contribute effectively to their own learning. In older classes teachers have regular discussions with pupils about their individual targets. The school makes good use of the information provided by statutory and other tests.
62. The progress made by pupils identified as having special educational needs is well monitored through their individual education plans, which are regularly reviewed and updated. The assessment of pupils' learning is of a high standard and the school benefits from the expertise provided by the local education authority's support teacher in helping to identify pupils' next steps in learning. Just occasionally, learning targets are less specific than they could be.
63. The school's recently agreed behaviour policy is in draft form awaiting ratification by the governing body. It is in the process of being implemented by all the adults working in the school. Due attention is being given to addressing incidents that arise in a consistent manner. Staff and pupils alike feel that the new policy will aid the promotion of good behaviour throughout the school. Incidents of reported bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Parents and pupils agree bullying is not a concern in the school.
64. The school has few procedures in place to encourage the attendance and punctuality of individual or groups of pupils. Registers are called at the beginning of every session and parents are made aware of the need to inform the school of the reason for any absence. The education welfare officer works closely with the school in those cases where there is perceived to be a problem with attendance.
65. The school has an appropriate child protection policy. Procedures comply with those of the area child protection committee and all members of staff are fully aware of these. The headteacher is the named member of staff with responsibility for child protection issues and regularly undertakes appropriate training.
66. Pupils' health, safety and general well-being are satisfactorily looked after. Lessons in sex education and drug awareness form part of the school's health education programme. The community police officers and school nurse assist with lessons as appropriate. The school maintains an accident book for recording incidents, first aid boxes are appropriately sited and stocked. Parents are informed of accidents involving their children and of any treatment given. The governors have approved a comprehensive health and safety policy and regular risk assessment is undertaken. The school's attention has been drawn to a small number of safety issues observed during the inspection.

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

67. The school continues to have effective links with its parents, the vast majority of whom indicate that they are pleased with what the school provides and achieves. Members of the nursery staff value their relationship with parents and involve them in their children's learning from the beginning. Parents are encouraged to work with their child at home, sharing a book or completing a simple task together, and parents are invited to contribute to lessons, helping with practical sessions and accompanying outings. This sets the firm foundations for an ongoing, positive relationship between home and school.
68. Parents are encouraged to take an active part in the education of their children and many are doing so. Family Literacy courses have been held in school and were well attended. The school provides a parent and toddler facility three mornings each week with one session exclusively for parents of the school's pre-nursery children staffed by a school nursery nurse. This enables the children to get to know staff and their parents to discuss any concerns. As was seen during the inspection, this provision allows the children to settle quickly when they start in the nursery class.
69. The information provided for parents is useful and the majority express satisfaction with the quality and quantity of the information they receive in newsletters and at the autumn and summer parent-teacher consultation meetings. Most parents feel that they are given a clear picture of what is happening in the school and how their children are progressing. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are detailed and helpful. Parents have been consulted regarding the home-school agreement and the review of the school's mission statement.
70. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and contain appropriate information on the curriculum covered, the progress made and areas for development. The school has a homework policy based on government guidelines and the majority of parents are happy with the amount of homework their children receive. Children are able to attend a homework club run by staff to assist them with the work set. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved in regular reviews and the targets set for their children.
71. Parents and helpers are made welcome in school and a number are actively involved in the life of the school. Some assist on trips, others in classes. Two parents come in each day to make toast for children to eat at breaktime. All this help is greatly appreciated by staff and enhances the provision made for the pupils. The parent, teacher and friends' association is open to all and is active in organising fund raising and social events. Considerable amounts of money are raised each year to assist with the purchase of resources for the school.

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

72. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is good. The governing body, headteacher and all the school staff have worked successfully to raise standards in the school. Their commitment to improvement is high and they have the capacity to raise standards further. The caring, Catholic ethos of the school underpins all its work, especially the commitment to helping pupils to achieve their best. The school successfully reflects its aims and values.
73. The headteacher is well regarded by the community, staff and pupils. Amongst her strengths are the way in which she gives clear educational direction, delegates responsibilities, and motivates and encourages people. The school's deputy headteacher teacher for the last eight years has recently been promoted to the headship of another school; she and the headteacher complemented each other very well. The deputy's work

in monitoring, evaluating and supporting the improvements in teaching and learning has been pivotal in the school's development since the last inspection. In planning for the future, the headteacher and the chair of governors are as one in seeking to maintain and improve further the standards achieved in the school.

74. The headteacher is assisted by a management team whose members competently take care of day-to-day routines. They work well together to help pupils make smooth progress from year to year and to prepare the older pupils for transfer to secondary school. The management of the nursery and reception classes by the acting deputy headteacher is very good and makes a significant contribution to the achievement made by the children at the start of their school careers.
75. Criticisms were made in the last report about the effectiveness and efficiency of some aspects of the school's management, particularly to do with the curriculum. Policies and schemes of work were not in place; National Curriculum statutory requirements were not being met in some subjects and curriculum co-ordinators had little impact on the standards being achieved. With the exception of design and technology, the requirements of the National Curriculum are now met; published schemes of work have been adopted and appropriate policies drawn up, although a number are still in draft form.
76. Curriculum co-ordinators are now well in control of their subject areas and have a good understanding of teaching and learning in them. The way in which curriculum co-ordinators carry out their responsibilities is a particular strength of the school. Good provision is made for them to observe lessons and teachers are given clear guidance as to what is to be taught during the year. This is especially important given the presence of mixed-aged classes where the curriculum has to be adapted each year as the composition of the classes changes.
77. The English co-ordinator has a clear action plan set to raise standards. Extra timetabled lessons for 'extended writing' are providing more time for pupils to write at length. However, ways of developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills are less clearly defined. The co-ordinator for mathematics has ensured that an appropriate scheme of work is in place. Careful analysis of pupils' achievements in formal tests and in the classroom is undertaken and lesson plans and teaching are systematically monitored. All the information gained is used to identify targets for improvement and is contributing to raising standards in the subject.
78. The science co-ordinator has effectively developed a scheme of work which ensures that all pupils, particularly those in mixed-aged classes, have full access to the science curriculum. He makes good use of the time provided for him to observe lessons and support teachers in their planning and delivery of lessons. The co-ordinator for information and communication technology has managed developments in computer technology with interest and confidence. She is successfully developing the confidence and competence of staff and has prepared a new policy to support learning and meet pupils' specific needs.
79. In other subjects co-ordinators are working well with class teachers. They sample planning and provide specialist knowledge and advice. Many are building up portfolios of pupils' work which show what pupils know, can understand and do. These will aid future planning and the accurate targeting of expectations.
80. The educational direction of the school was found to be lacking at the time of the last inspection. It is now good. Its strength lies in the fact that it is being driven successfully by the teaching and support staff. This illustrates the effectiveness of the headteacher's

delegation of responsibilities and the worth of the support, monitoring and evaluation that has been put in place.

81. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities soundly. With the exception of design and technology, which is not firmly in place in the school's curriculum, the governing body meets all its statutory responsibilities. Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and many visit the school on a regular basis. They are appropriately organised and the decisions they make at their meetings are properly recorded. The governing body is highly committed to the school and many of its members have a close connection with it.
82. The governors satisfactorily help shape the direction of the school. Since the last inspection they have become more involved with the curriculum and the monitoring of standards. Whilst supportive, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The chair of governors knows the school and the community well; one of her strengths is the way in which she identifies priorities for the future. For example, she is aware that, whilst the school makes satisfactory use of the funds available to it, the governing body lacks the financial expertise to evaluate more rigorously the impact of the school's priorities on raising standards.
83. Support for pupils with statements of special education need is met by specific budget grants. The school's special educational needs provision is well managed by the co-ordinator who has good working relationships with both staff and parents. The governor with oversight of special educational needs is well informed. A support teacher from the local education authority works successfully with specific pupils each week. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs has risen since the last inspection; the school reports that it has become more aware of how it can identify and meet pupils' needs. This is entirely borne out by the inspection evidence.
84. A new, thorough, assessment policy has recently been introduced. Analysis is made of test results and other information in order to monitor and predict pupils' future performance. Based on this information appropriate targets have been set in conjunction with the local education authority. The school's new procedures are starting to successfully inform teaching and learning throughout the school and are enabling staff to set more accurate targets for individual pupils. Using such information, the school was able to revise upwards the original targets it set for last year's 11 year olds.
85. The school makes effective arrangements for supporting new staff to the school. It is an effective provider of initial teacher training. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the professional development of staff and the school is successfully working towards the introduction of the new national arrangements for performance management.
86. Appropriate priorities and targets are clearly identified in the school's improvement plan. They are costed against the school budget and appropriate success criteria formulated. Financial planning is satisfactory and takes full account of the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The governing body gives due attention to the use of budget surpluses and pupils benefit directly from such targeted expenditure, for example, on books to support the teaching of literacy and the creation of a computer suite. Specific grants are effectively used for their intended purpose; additional funding to provide support for pupils with statements of special educational need is well applied.
88. The financial administration of the school is sound with appropriate systems for financial control in place. The school reports that the recommendations of the last audit report (1999), which identified a number of major issues, are being acted upon. The headteacher and governing body are provided with appropriate information to enable

them to monitor expenditure and the school usefully applies the principles of “best value” to its purchases.

89. There is an appropriate number of suitably qualified teaching staff for the delivery of the National Curriculum and for children aged five and under. The school makes good use of teachers’ specialist knowledge and experience in supporting and developing the curriculum.
90. Three members of the teaching staff moved to new posts at the end of the last school year, including the deputy headteacher whose position has yet to be filled on a permanent basis. In addition, a member of a religious order living in the community who taught pupils with special educational needs on a voluntary basis each morning, has had to give up this work due to the demands of her other work in the parish. Her contribution is greatly missed but she remains a much loved and respected governor and friend of the school. The school is aware that a number of fresh alternatives may need to be considered in order to fill the gaps that have been left.
91. Members of the classroom support staff make a significant contribution to the school’s provision, particularly for pupils with statements of special educational needs. They play a valued and important part in helping the school to put its aims and values into practice. However, there are insufficient adults in the school to meet the day-to-day learning needs of the high number of pupils who have special educational needs.
92. Pupil numbers vary considerably from year to year; for example, in one year group there are 24 pupils and in the next 40 pupils. As a result the majority of classes at both key stages have pupils from two years groups in them. Furthermore, the composition of these classes changes each academic year. Teachers plan effectively to meet the differing needs of the pupils in these mixed-aged classes but the steady, progressive development of skills is impeded by the lack of additional adult help to support pupils’ learning and their development of independent study skills.
93. Accommodation in the school is good. It was rationalised just before the last inspection. A programme of redecoration and refurbishment has made the school a welcoming and inviting place in which to work. The caretaker and his staff maintain the premises to a very high standard. Whilst the overall floor area is generous, there are limitations as to how the space can be used. The new computer suite is well appointed and the nursery generously proportioned. However, the absence of a library means that there is limited opportunity for pupils to develop their independent research and study skills either during lessons or in the voluntary homework club run in Year 6. The school is aware that there is no outside fenced area for children in the reception classes to use large apparatus.
94. The school hosts courses and meetings for local people in its community room. A parent and toddler group meet regularly in the nursery block. Although the school is not readily accessible by people who use wheelchairs, it has given thought as to how pupils who are unable to access the upper floor level can be provided for if required.
95. The quantity and quality of learning resources is generally good and they are accessible to staff. The provision of resources in the nursery is good. There is plenty of space for a wide variety of activities and easy access to a fenced outdoor area with both hard and grassed surfaces. The reception classes are also well equipped although they lack access to an outdoor area. The quality, choice and range of reading resources is good. Pupils are motivated to read and take books home regularly. Although class libraries are strengthened by loan stock from the local library service, the lack of a whole school library means that pupils have a limited opportunity to use a whole range of fiction and non-fiction books when involved in personal study. Good support for science has been

provided through the 'Zeneca project' and this has been of direct benefit to pupils as well as staff. Appropriate resources support learning in physical education.

96. Appropriate use is made of information and communication technology in the administration of the school. The school's well-equipped computer suite has recently been completed but outstanding operational problems, which are beyond the control of the school, are preventing pupils' access to a full range of programs and applications. This is impeding greater use of information and communication technology in the school at present.
97. Taking into account the attainment of children on entry to the school, the progress they make and the quality of the teaching they receive together with the amount of money the school has available to spend on pupils, the school is judged to provide good value for money.

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

The governors, headteacher and staff have worked hard to bring about improvement in the school. They should now:

- (1) raise further standards in speaking and listening, reading, writing and the presentation of work throughout the school by ensuring that skills are systematically developed and practised across the curriculum as pupils move through the school; (*paragraphs 9, 124-134*)
- (2) raise standards in design and technology by firmly establishing a scheme of work and ensuring that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are progressively developed; (*paragraphs 11, 165-168*)
- (3) improve pupils' capacity for independent learning by:
  - (i) agreeing, implementing and monitoring whole-school approaches to the development and practice of independent study skills;
  - (ii) ensuring that sufficient trained adults are available to support pupils' development of these skills;
  - (iii) ensuring that pupils' work is marked with greater consistency and indicates more clearly how improvement can be made;
  - (iv) making appropriate library provision to aid the development of pupils' research skills;(*paragraphs 12-13, 32, 91, 133, 149, 157, 173, 176, 183*)
- (4) improve procedures for promoting attendance in order to raise levels of attendance; (*paragraphs 23,64*)
- (5) improve the provision for pupils' cultural development, particularly in preparing them for life in a culturally diverse society. (*paragraph 59*)

In addition, the governors should take urgent steps to ensure that the operational difficulties with the new computer installation are thoroughly resolved without further delay. (*paragraphs 30, 96, 180*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	7	63	27	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	273
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	170

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	93

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	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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	12	19	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	93 (73)	93 (76)	93 (85)
	National	N/a (82)	N/a (83)	N/a (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	93 (80)	93 (85)	93 (76)
	National	N/a (82)	N/a (86)	N/a (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	15	21	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	5	8	12
	Girls	15	14	19
	Total	20	22	31
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	56 (60)	61 (74)	86 (77)
	National	N/a (70)	N/a (69)	N/a (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	5	9	13
	Girls	14	14	17
	Total	19	23	30
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	53 (57)	64 (77)	83 (80)
	National	N/a (68)	N/a (69)	N/a (75)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	222
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Average class size	25

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96

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

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

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

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	516,874
Total expenditure	517,606
Expenditure per pupil	1,862
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,783
Balance carried forward to next year	23,501

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 26.7%

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	48

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	25	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	38	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	48	4	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	27	27	2	2
The teaching is good.	59	39	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	38	12	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	17	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	31	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	38	8	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	60	34	2	2	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	31	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	28	25	8	8

- Class teachers are always available to see parents.
- The amount of homework varies between classes.
- Younger pupils have less opportunity to take part in after-school activities.

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

98. The provision for and the teaching of children under the age of five are strong within the school. Many enter the nursery with a limited range of experiences, especially weak personal and social skills and poor speaking and listening abilities. Children settle quickly into the nursery routine and make consistently good progress as a result of the high quality support and teamwork from the nursery teacher and the nursery nurse.
99. By the time they leave the nursery and enter the reception classes children have made good progress in their learning overall, although their communication, language and literacy skills and personal, social and emotional development still lag behind what is expected for children of similar ages and abilities. Again they are well supported and challenged in their learning by the reception teachers and nursery nurses.
100. Teaching in the nursery is good overall, with some very good teaching seen. Teaching in the reception classes is at least satisfactory and in 70 per cent of lessons the teaching is good. Activities are well planned and structured to encourage children's personal and social development, to establish the basic norms of living and working together. All the adults have knowledge of the abilities of the children and plan lessons to give confidence and reinforce skills development.
101. Teachers and nursery nurses plan well together, especially in the nursery, thus ensuring clarity of understanding of the tasks to support learning. They successfully harness learning by asking appropriate questions and giving full answers to children's questions, directly teaching, supporting and developing skills further. An especial focus is the development of speaking and listening skills. Members of staff constantly direct children to the key vocabulary that is the focus of tasks and encourage children to use language with a clarity of speech and thinking, giving extended answers.
102. All the adults use plenty of praise as children tackle and complete tasks but do not accept work that is not of quality. Teachers and nursery nurses are good role models for the children. They are especially skilful at refocusing children as concentration lapses, encouraging the development of perseverance skills and raising and extending children's concentration levels. Lessons generally have a brisk pace and with a good awareness of time and reinforcement of previous learning. They develop and extend skills further.
103. All adults are clearly concerned for the children's welfare and make clear to them acceptable standards of behaviour. They make careful selection of resources for all areas of the curriculum and are especially effective in supporting the learning of more and less able learners. In reception classes in particular, by the end of lessons the children know where they started and where they have arrived, seeing the progress they have made over the lesson.

Personal, social and emotional development

104. Children make good, and often very good, progress in this area and although some do not reach the expected level, they are on the right tracks. Personal, social and emotional development is at the core of all the work in the nursery and underpins the work in the reception classes. Many children have very low personal skills when they come into the school and cannot relate easily to each other and adults. The nursery and reception staff spend a lot of time encouraging the children to become increasingly independent, to take

care of each other, to share and to take turns. Cakes are baked to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays.

105. Children new to the nursery are paired with a more experienced child who helps them find toys and equipment and generally ensures they feel comfortable and know what is happening. The overall timetable for the nursery is simple with many opportunities to talk, sing and share a book as well as experience the range of creative and physical activities that make up the foundation curriculum. The timetable for reception children is more structured as they take part in more whole school activities such as assemblies and have timetabled physical education, music and computer suite time.
106. The nursery teacher and nursery nurse are keen to ensure that parents are involved with their children's education. They greet each adult who brings the child to school, personally having made home visits to meet all the family who support the child at home before the child starts school. They regularly share news with parents and encourage them to be partners in their children's learning. To enhance this family spirit the nursery takes each child and their family, including brothers, sisters, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles on a Christmas trip, last year to Gulliver's World, earlier years to a pantomime. Parents of older children are offered the opportunity to collaborate with preparing their child for main school via the Portage scheme and the nursery provides homework packs for those parents who wish to join in with this.
107. With the support of these adults children become increasingly competent learners. As they get older children become more confident and willing to take the initiative in directing their own learning. They relate with improving confidence to each other and adults, select the resources they wish to use and contribute with developing fluency to discussions. They share, concentrate and persevere for some length of time over the activities in which they are engaged. They gain an understanding of right and wrong and consider fair treatment for others by thinking about how they like to be treated. They are learning to show respect for the beliefs of others, are eager to explore and willing to have a go at new activities.
108. The teachers and nursery nurses provide a good range of activities and role models, especially developing the children's literacy skills of speaking and listening to empower them to access a full curriculum via communication. Routines are well established and this helps the children know what is expected of them.

#### Communication, language and literacy

109. By the age of five the children's standards in communication, language and literacy are still below that expected for their ages and abilities but they have made good progress in their learning. Their communication skills affect their learning in all other areas of the curriculum. They start developing their comprehension and listening skills in the nursery and respond to stories, poems and facts with enthusiasm and vigour.
110. By the time they reach the reception classes they have knowledge of the structure of books, know that these contain stories and information and have made a start on developing reading skills. In reception they use sound recognition, initial letters and 'look and say' in decoding print. They are able to identify words from the key vocabulary and practice reading such words appropriately. They are given the opportunity to work at their own levels on specifically targeted tasks, practising, consolidating and extending their prior learning.

111. Through role-play in the home corner they practise their speaking skills with each other, laying a table and caring for babies. At the same time as they are developing a range of skills to read print they are developing and practising the recording skills necessary to be able to communicate their ideas to others. In work, for instance, on the letter 'c', the children practised 'air writing' the letter shape, identified the letter on the labels in a bag of shopping, practised writing the letter on the marker board and used play dough to make models starting with the initial sound 'c'.

## Mathematics

112. By the age of five, the majority of children reach the expected level in this area of learning. Children's good progress in mathematics is supported by their developing language skills as they become more familiar with the vocabulary needed. They are able to recognise order patterns, for instance using chronological order when focused on the smallest to largest. In formal mathematical sessions using the National Numeracy Project work the children are making good progress. Children count on to 10 and are able to match 1:1 with one child counting to over 25 plus, which is well above that expected at this age.
113. Nursery children identify simple two-dimensional shapes and those in reception have progressed to three-dimensional shapes, using the correct vocabulary to identify key features such as sides and corners. Individual children are carefully challenged by the teacher to develop as far as they can and make rapid progress. Older children know that shapes can be grouped using common criteria into such as the number of sides and corners or no sides and corners as found in a round or ball.
114. Children do not just work orally in mathematics but are developing the different ways of recording their number work. These young children are developing their understanding of number through a range of opportunities to sort, match and order play objects. In their water and sand work they are able to experiment with weight, volume and capacity.

## Knowledge and understanding of the world

115. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world is varied upon entry to the nursery but good standards and progress in work are achieved and by the age of five the majority reach the expected level. In the nursery children undertake work on the effects of heat and cold on materials by freezing the water in a balloon and observing it as it defrosts. In the reception classes they consider the common needs of living things – food, water and sleep. Children in the nursery make predictions about what will happen next, for instance, that the ice balloon in a warm room will melt. Those in reception are starting to work out how to test their predictions, making simple decisions about constructing a fair test.
116. Children are confident in sharing their opinions and offering suggestions to the teachers while nursery nurses support the teaching of the main points effectively during whole class discussions, extending the rate of learning very well. As a result children thoroughly enjoy their work and try hard in practical activities. Children in the nursery also have the opportunity to explore programs on the computer, especially concerned with the sounds and colours of the week, with a part time general assistant or the teacher and nursery nurse. Children in the reception classes have the opportunity to develop their control skills on the computers in the new computer suite.

## Creative development

117. Achievement is good and the majority of children reach the expected level by the age of five because of the quality of teaching both in the nursery and in reception classes. Children use a range of creative media to paint, model, construct and reproduce what they can see in the world around them. They are encouraged to imagine and create collages and three-dimensional effects from stories and have access to a range of musical instruments to develop their creative skills musically, composing tunes and sound effects to illustrate stories, taking part in performances for others.
118. Other creative activities include the opportunity to act out stories using simple costumes and props, recording on video their performances to review later. An example of the development of children's creativity occurred in a reception class where the teacher used the stimulus of the "Funny Bones" story. The teacher dressed in a black and white 'skeleton' costume, moving to a drumbeat produced by the children and encouraging the children to join her on the way out to play. During the lesson the children used finger paints, artstraws and pastels to create their own skeleton pictures, the whole being linked to their science project "our body".

#### Physical development

119. By the age of five the majority reach the expected standard. All children make good progress in developing their fine motor skills, for instance in putting on and zipping up coats, turning sleeves the correct way round, using scissors, glue and brushes in creative work and pencils and other markers in their written work and in mathematics when they draw shapes. Nursery children have the opportunity to develop their gross motor skills in the outdoor area using bikes and trikes and engage in spontaneous activities. Children also have access to a range of construction equipment to hone skills further.
120. Children in reception do not have access to planned outdoor play; instead they have to rely on playtimes. They are, however, given the opportunity to develop specific physical skills using the hall physical education equipment and show good control in moving round and on skills development. In these lessons they strive hard to match the demonstrations of the best, use physical equipment correctly with due care and attention to health and safety requirements, especially when learning the sequencing of instructions as well as waiting and taking turns. They demonstrate understanding of the technical language, making movements with associated body control according to instructions and are starting to evaluate their own and other work. Teaching is consistently good and enables the children to learn within a safe environment with a good number of role models to ensure good progress.

#### ENGLISH

121. Children start school with very limited speaking and listening skills. Standards reached by most seven and 11 year olds in the school in speaking and listening, reading and writing have generally been well below that expected nationally. However, there is a clear pattern of improvement over time. For example, the proportion of 11 year olds reaching the expected standard rose from 30 per cent in 1997 to 60 per cent in 1999. In some years, test results have been significantly higher.
122. The proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected for seven year olds in the 1999 National Curriculum test and assessments was well below the national average. Compared with similar schools, standards were average in writing and above average in reading. The school's results in the 2000 tests and assessments show a significant improvement with 93 per cent of pupils reaching the standard expected at the age of seven years in reading and writing.

123. The proportion of 11 year olds reaching the standards expected at this age in the 1999 National Curriculum tests results were well below the average for all schools but above average for similar schools. The 2000 results show a slightly lower proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in comparison with the 1999 results.
124. Inspection findings indicate standards in English are below average for seven and 11 year olds. In all year groups pupils are still developing their confidence and competence as speakers and listeners. Many pupils have difficulty in expressing their ideas and feelings clearly and this, in turn, is restricting their achievement in spelling, reading and writing. The school also has a higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs and this is affecting the national test results. For instance, in one class of older pupils, three-quarters having been identified as needing extra help with their literacy skills. Overall, the pupils with special educational needs make steady progress with their learning. Meeting pupils' specific needs in mixed-aged classes in group work in the Literacy Hour is not always successfully achieved due to the absence of sufficient adult support to help these pupils work independently whilst the teacher works with a target group.
125. Attainment in English has improved since the previous inspection. There is now a scheme of work and a shared commitment to improve standards, particularly in writing and spelling. Basic skills are beginning to improve through the clearly established structure of the literacy strategy and the introduction of handwriting and spelling programmes. However, the organisation of pupils in mixed year groups does not lend itself readily to planning for skills that are built up year on year. For instance, handwriting skills do not show a clear progression and improvement in Years 3, 4 and 5. Older pupils are still unsteady with aspects of grammar and make less progress than expected with their learning. Some Year 5 pupils of average ability have difficulty with identifying and using proper nouns and adverbs.
126. There are good examples of how English can be developed through purposeful writing in other subjects. Pupils reflect on their inner feelings in religious education and in science lessons give accounts of how plants grow. However, poor handwriting skills and untidy presentation of work are evident in all subjects.
127. Pupils' standards in speaking and listening are below average at the ages of seven and 11 years. Early assessment shows that the majority of pupils start school with poor speaking and listening skills. Few younger pupils ask and answer questions confidently without prompting. They are still learning how to follow instructions and listen carefully to the teacher. By seven progress is steady as pupils learn to answer in simple sentences, but it is mainly a minority of more confident, capable speakers who lead and respond well in class discussions. By Years 4 and 5 pupils are beginning to use their speaking and listening skills more specifically when, for example, describing a hidden object to their partner or prioritising instructions in group work. The great majority of pupils have a limited range of vocabulary. They are still learning how to respond in different social groups, especially when standard English is required. By Year 6, some good progress is being made as more pupils become involved with discussions and put forward their own point of view as, for instance, when comparing different autobiographies and learning to look at things from a different perspective.
128. Standards in reading are below average at the end of both key stages. Very few pupils start school with a wide experience of books and reading. However, they enjoy sharing stories, and develop their reading skills by handling books, using illustrations to help with the storyline and memorising their favourite parts. By the age of seven, most can link letters with sounds and recognise well-used words by sight. In all year groups, including

those with older pupils, poorer speaking skills limit the depth at which pupils can explain their ideas and feelings as they explore books at greater length.

129. A focus on book reviews in Year 6 is being met enthusiastically by the pupils, many of whom are meeting new challenges as they learn about *genre* and begin to study characters and plot in greater detail. Older pupils are still developing their fluency and expression with reading. Some Year 6 pupils do not use the whole sentence or make a 'good guess' to help identify unknown words. Nevertheless, there is good progress being made in Year 3 and Year 5, where pupils read with greater understanding and reach average standards. Progress with using library skills and knowledge of retrieving information is less than expected. A contributory factor may be the limited access pupils have to library facilities in the school.
130. Although there has been improvement since the last inspection, standards in writing are below average throughout the school. Handwriting and presentation are untidy: younger pupils have difficulty with pencil control and letter formation and many older pupils do not write in a cursive style. Writing is crossed out and produced in a range of different coloured pens. A scrutiny of the pupils' past and present work shows that standards in spelling are below average, but that younger pupils are making better progress as they attempt to use letter strings and patterns more regularly in their written work. However, a significant number of pupils spell as they speak. The present Year 6 is producing more consistently correct spelling than last year's group.
131. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are encouraged to express their thoughts in writing and begin to organise their story writing, identifying beginnings and endings. This process is less well developed from Year 3 onwards, where less editing and drafting is used to improve and clarify work. For instance, when the drafting process is used in work in Years 5 and 6 on 'Superstar' poems, not only writing but also speaking and listening skills are used and developed further.
132. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is sound. In Years 3 to 6 it is good. In all year groups teachers are making good use of the plenary session (feedback time) in literacy lessons to enable pupils to share their learning and to use and practise their speaking and listening skills. Teachers in all year groups plan different levels of work to match the pupils' learning needs in guided group time. Most teachers provide suitably challenging work for their pupils. Expectations of behaviour are high and the vast majority of lessons are well managed.
133. During lessons behaviour is generally good. Pupils concentrate well on the tasks set and make good progress in their learning when they are working under the direct supervision of an adult; when not directly supervised, for example, when working on independent tasks they have been set, their attention sometimes wavers and concentration wanes. When this happens, the progress slows and is therefore satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy sharing their work, but many are still developing the confidence to do so in different social groups. Fewer older pupils show great initiative for personal research and study. In the absence of a school library there are limited opportunities for these skills to be developed and built upon.
134. Teachers' expectations of the quality and presentation of written work are rising but there are inconsistencies. The school has put a handwriting scheme in place but it is not yet fully implemented in each year group; teachers' marking, while encouraging, varies in response to unfinished, untidy and careless work.
135. At present there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language within the school.

## MATHEMATICS

136. Standards of attainment are in line with national averages. In National Curriculum tests in 1999, the last year for which comparative figures are available, pupils at the age of seven were attaining standards that were below the national average. However, since then standards have improved and the proportion of pupils at the age of seven reaching the expected standards or above in the tests in 2000 rose considerably to 93 per cent. At the time of this inspection, pupils in Year 2 were attaining average standards.
137. In the 1999 tests pupils at the age of 11 were attaining standards close to the national average, although the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels was below the national average. The school's results for 2000 are lower than those achieved in the previous year. The findings of this inspection are that standards at the age of 11 are similar to those found nationally. Pupils are achieving standards commensurate with their ability.
138. National Curriculum test results indicate that girls attain slightly higher standards than boys at both seven and 11, but this is no different from the difference found nationally. No significant difference was seen during the inspection.
139. At the time of the last inspection standards were below average. Mathematics is a subject where there has been an overall improvement in standards in recent years. Several factors contribute to this improvement. Firstly, good arrangements have been put in place for managing the subject. Secondly, the school participated in the numeracy project and has subsequently effectively implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. This has focused the school's attention on the subject and has led to innovations and improvements in teaching. The school has also successfully targeted a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6 in order to increase the proportions of pupils gaining the expected standards or better in the National Curriculum assessment tests.
140. During the inspection, the focus in lessons in all classes was on work with numbers, with an emphasis in Years 4, 5 and 6 on solving problems involving money. By the age of seven pupils have a sound understanding of basic number and the majority can use their knowledge to solve problems using a variety of different approaches. For example, in Year 2 pupils use their knowledge of the double of a number and numbers that are close to doubles to develop strategies for adding and subtracting numbers up to 10. Many pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, lack the necessary speaking skills to explain their thinking clearly. More able pupils can explain their thinking and are able to apply previously learned principles to help them to extend the number range in which they work.
141. By the age of 11 pupils handle numbers confidently. They make good use of simple apparatus such as a 100 number square to help them to solve problems in their heads. They are able to formulate a simple mathematical sum involving money from a written statement and can correctly identify which mathematical operation it is appropriate to use to obtain a correct answer. More able pupils can give reasons for their approaches to solving a problem but the majority of pupils are unable to give oral explanations for their thinking. Older pupils use calculators sensibly to check their work.
142. Pupils make sound progress in all aspects of mathematics. However, the low standards of speaking on the part of the majority of pupils is slowing their rate of progress down in lessons as they find it difficult to explain their thinking and to express mathematical ideas clearly. The well-planned curriculum is ensuring that they are building up their knowledge and skills in the subject progressively. In their workbooks there is evidence that they are developing increasing skills in handling numbers, greater understanding of the principles

of measurement, knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes and increasing understanding of collecting and processing data. However, standards of presentation of work through the school are generally low. Pupils pay insufficient attention to displaying their work on the page and to forming numbers clearly. This means that sometimes the work is inaccurate and does not communicate mathematical thinking clearly to the reader.

143. Overall, pupils have satisfactory attitudes to the subject. Some older pupils have very positive views on the importance and usefulness of mathematics to them in their lives and this helps them to see the relevance of their work and motivates them to succeed. The great majority of pupils show interest and excitement at the prospect of oral work in the subject and this is well harnessed by teachers. However, when it comes to more formal exercises, despite the efforts of teachers, their concentration wanes quickly and they need to be reminded by their teacher to focus on their work. This slows down the progress they make during the lesson.
144. The overall quality of teaching is good. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy well. The teachers have established sound routines and practices in lessons. Pupils know what is expected of them and respond appropriately. This is helping to improve the quality of learning through ensuring that time is used efficiently and that pupils are focused on the work of the lesson from the start. Teachers make good use of opportunities for oral work and are conscious of the need to encourage pupils to develop their speaking skills and to use mathematical language correctly. They also make good use of opportunities for formal, written exercises to ensure that pupils consolidate their understanding and make progress.
145. The quality of teachers' planning is good. Teachers have clear expectations as to what individual pupils and groups of pupils will achieve, which are based on their knowledge of pupils' capabilities gained through formal and informal assessments.
146. Teachers ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through providing appropriate tasks so that all can experience suitable levels of challenge and enjoy success. This is helping to contribute to the quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make. It is also helping to sustain positive attitudes to the subject as pupils move through the school. Teachers constantly praise pupils for their achievements and this serves to raise their confidence and self-esteem, which helps their learning. Teachers value pupils' comments and encourage them to put forward their own ideas, supporting pupils in their hesitant use of mathematical language.
147. The majority of teachers manage lessons well and time is used effectively. They make good use of resources for learning and, in the majority of lessons, ensure that pupils have easy access to apparatus and to calculators so that they can progress.
148. Although teaching is good, the quality of pupils' learning is more variable. It is satisfactory overall. Several factors contribute to this situation. Pupils' language skills are not as well developed as expected and this is slowing their progress as they struggle to understand problems and to explain their thinking. Pupils' general levels of social maturity are less than expected for their age.
149. Many pupils respond well to oral work but when left to complete more formal exercises their concentration falters and they do not complete the amount of work expected, limiting their opportunities to practise routines and to consolidate their learning. In some classes where there is a wide range in pupils' ability, the absence of additional adult support in the classroom means that the teacher has to spend a disproportionately long time with

one group of pupils and consequently the progress made by others is slower than it might be. Teachers are aware of all these factors and seek constantly to compensate for them.

## SCIENCE

150. Standards of attainment are in line with those expected of pupils at the ages of seven and 11 years. This represents an improvement in the standards reported at the time of the last inspection.
151. In the 1999 National Curriculum assessments at the age of seven years, pupils' overall results were below average. The school reports that many pupils find it very difficult to discuss and develop their ideas without help and support from adults. This is fully reflected in the low scores in the assessment of experimental and investigative elements of science. Results in the 2000 assessments are much higher with 93 per cent of pupils reaching the standard expected by this age. It was evident during this inspection that pupils are keen and willing to do investigative work in science but they need the security of having equipment and materials organised for them. Although some are able to talk confidently about their work, many have difficulty putting their ideas into words although they clearly understand much of what they have done.
152. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 years the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected of pupils of this age was just below the national average. Compared with similar schools the results were well above average. The school's results for 2000 show a further improvement in the proportion reaching the expected standard. The school makes every possible effort to ensure that in these written tests, pupils' difficulties in reading and writing do not stop them from demonstrating their true achievement. Any pupil who needs help with reading the questions, recording the answers or extra time to complete the paper is given it, in accordance with the regulations.
153. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were working on the theme of "health and growth". They know that we need food and water to live and that our diets should include a range of foods to help us grow and keep healthy. They can recognise the differences between sweet and savoury foods. They describe what they mean by "sweet", "sour" and "spicy" and know that too much sugar is not good for the teeth. In the lesson seen pupils were finding out what was in "special" foods that they might eat at a party. With help, they can plan a menu that includes some healthy foods, as well as treats. They know that, in moderation, foods high in sugar and fat can be eaten without lasting harm to their health.
154. Pupils in Year 6 understand the importance of a fair test and that one variable should be changed at a time when undertaking an experiment. They understand that some liquids, such as those with spirit base, evaporate more quickly than others that are water-based. With some prompting from their teacher and each other, most pupils are able to conduct their investigations step-by-step. They try hard to predict what the outcomes of their investigation may be although some have difficulty in expressing succinctly what they want to say and do.
155. Pupils who learn at different rates are given every opportunity to participate in science work. Progress is sound as they move through the school. Teachers plan well for those with special educational needs and statemented pupils are well supported in their work. This was seen in Year 3 where these pupils were well supported in finding out how well different types of paper absorb water. Teachers also provide a good challenge for the higher attaining pupils, posing questions that require them to make the connection between different aspects of the work they are doing. The success of this is evident in

the increasing proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in the statutory tests at the age of 11 years.

156. Most pupils have positive attitudes to science and conduct their investigative work sensibly. Where they are required to write up their work without the direct supervision of an adult, their concentration span is often short and their learning tails off. This is a particular problem in classes where pupils have wide ranging levels of achievement and maturity which require the teacher to spend time working closely with individual groups.
157. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is strengthened by good quality planning and the school's emphasis on practical work which captures pupils' interest and helps them to successfully acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding required of young scientists. Teaching and learning are well supported by the scheme of work and the practical advice and help given by the co-ordinator. There is, however, some variation in the quality of teaching, particularly in those classes where there are pupils from two age groups and no additional adult help is available. Despite the best efforts of teachers, it is evident that the varying needs of pupils cannot be fully met without additional adult help. Overall, progress is sound. Where the brisk pace necessary to keep pupils on task is not maintained, and where the time allocated to the completion of independent activities is too long, the quality of learning deteriorates. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen the focus of the lesson was not maintained once groups embarked upon their tasks. Pupils became distracted from their given tasks and the lesson's objectives were not successfully met.

## ART

158. Standards are in line with those expected for pupils at the ages of seven and 11 years. Standards at 11 have improved since the last inspection when they were below those expected whilst standards at the age of seven have been maintained. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress.
159. Pupils have opportunities to undertake work in two- and three-dimensions. They gain experience in handling a range of materials, learn a variety of techniques and take inspiration from their studies of the work of other artists. By the age of seven pupils use colour confidently, for example, in painting self-portraits in Year 1. They know about 'hot' and 'cold' colours and experiment with colour mixing to achieve desired effects. They are developing an appreciation of the work of other artists; for example, pupils in Year 2 are studying Paul Klee. They enjoy developing their own response to the artist's work, take a critical view of their efforts and are full of suggestions for change and improvement.
160. By the age of 11 pupils' skills in drawing and painting and in working in three-dimensions have developed satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 use pencils and pastels confidently in their drawings of figures and of still life. In Year 6, in their work on William Morris, pupils show that they are aware of the main features of his work and comment on his use of colour and images, identifying their 'favourites' and giving reasons for their choice.
161. Pupils' attitude to art is good. They enjoy art lessons and work hard. They make good progress. They quickly become engrossed in their work and most behave well. Pupils use materials and equipment responsibly. They are courteous in their appreciation of the efforts of others and take pride in their own achievements.
162. The quality of teaching in both key stages is good. Teachers are providing a wide range of learning experiences for pupils. Lessons are generally well planned and appropriate resources are to hand. Teachers have high expectations and offer good support to

individual pupils, helping them to improve and develop their work through questioning and encouraging them. This makes for good quality learning. Pupils' progress is only satisfactory because they lack confidence and independence in their learning and are reluctant to draw on skills, for example, colour mixing or drawing skills, acquired in previous lessons in order to raise the standard of their work. Teachers have to take time to prompt pupils to use these skills and this slows down progress.

163. A particular strength in the teaching is the development of a critical approach, for example, in evaluating the work of other artists in Year 2 and Year 6, and in opportunities for evaluating textile designs in Year 6. This encourages pupils to talk and, in the case of Year 6 pupils, to write about their perceptions and feelings. It is helping to develop language skills.
164. The curriculum for art was replanned in 1999 and a scheme of work is in process of development, which is based on published materials. Currently there is an overemphasis on the study of western European, male artists to the detriment of studies of the work of women artists and art from other cultures.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

165. Standards in design and technology are below those expected nationally. Standards in this subject were also below national expectations at the time of the last inspection. No lessons in the subject were seen during this inspection and the judgements are based on examination of available work, photographic records and conversations with pupils and teachers.
166. The range of activities in this area of learning is too narrow. Pupils have opportunities to design and make things. For example, they make puppets in Year 2, picture frames in Years 3 and 4 and weave and make moving toys in Year 5. Through these projects pupils learn to think about solving design problems and to record and evaluate their work. The projects provide opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills such as measuring, cutting and joining. The work on puppets and on picture frames indicates that pupils keep careful records of their work and examine it with critical eyes. Although pupils use a range of materials, including paper and card and wood, to make their picture frames and pay appropriate attention to their decoration and finish, they do not have the width of experience the National Curriculum demands.
167. Pupils' learning and progress in the subject, including the progress made by pupils with special educational needs, are unsatisfactory because they have access to a restricted range of materials and components and have insufficient opportunities to systematically develop their practical skills as they move through the school.
168. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met and there is no scheme of work that sets out how pupils' practical skills and their knowledge and understanding in this area are to be developed as they pass through the school. The school is currently devising a scheme of work based on existing outline plans for the subject for each year group.

## GEOGRAPHY

169. It was not possible to observe lessons in geography during the inspection as history and geography alternate on the school timetable. Samples of pupils' work, along with that in displays and discussions with pupils indicate that they are making at least satisfactory progress in their learning and are reaching the expected standards at the ages of seven and 11 years. This reflects the findings of the previous report in 1996.

170. A particular focus of work is the development of geographical language and skills through opportunities to investigate at first hand features of the local environment. In 1999 and 2000 older pupils made field trips in the local area. By the end of Year 6 pupils are aware of environmental issues. They have knowledge about the different types and uses of buildings, different locations, employment and transport and they can successfully use this knowledge to make comparisons with village life in India. Pupils also successfully use secondary evidence such as photographs and video programmes to develop their observational and analytical skills.
171. Pupils look at maps as well as globes and atlases and make general observations as a result of their investigations. They are aware of the different needs in land use as well as being able to locate landmarks from different perspectives. Younger pupils consider community needs using the “Katie Morag” stories to answer such questions as, “If you live on an island, what basic needs do you have?” By the end of Year 2, they know about transport to and around the island, shops, postal services and housing. They have also developed their map reading skills by using simple grid referencing and studying photographic evidence including aerial photographs. At both seven and 11 pupils know more by the end of lessons than at the beginning.
172. Pupils have positive attitudes to geography. They are involved with their tasks, being clear of what they are to do, sustain their concentration, persevere and work with application. Teachers provide pupils with a range of resources to help develop and extend their learning, especially when using texts and information sources. Pupils are keen to look at photographs and maps. They enjoy identifying common features such as their school and homes on local maps. Most of their written work is complete and they are enthusiastic and quick to pick up on geographical language. Unfortunately, in some books their lack of presentational and written skills does not do justice to what they have learned and the progress they have made.
173. The teaching of geography is sound. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use resources well to support learning. They support the development of pupils’ geographical skills, especially the development of appropriate vocabulary and observational abilities. They hold high expectations that pupils will be challenged by their tasks. Written work is marked regularly but there is little guidance given to develop specific research skills.

## HISTORY

174. Evidence from the previous inspection indicated that pupils were making satisfactory progress. During the current inspection it was only possible to see lessons for the older pupils. However, by also considering samples of work and discussions, it is judged that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making satisfactory progress in their learning and pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making good progress. The samples indicate that the development of historical skills through activities is leading pupils’ learning.
175. By the end of Year 2 pupils develop an appropriate sense of chronology through considering changes in their lives over time and through making detailed studies of the lives of others, such as Florence Nightingale. Older pupils are making an in-depth study of the Victorians especially work on houses, homes, schools, customs and key events. During the inspection one teacher gave her class the opportunity to be in a Victorian classroom by playing the part of a Victorian teacher complete with cane, chanting tables and writing on slates. By the end of Year 6 pupils know about life in Ancient Greece, the city states, gods, festivals, slavery and the lives of the ordinary people in that period. In the samples of work, studies have been made of the Tudors, the Aztecs, the Great Fire of London, toys, houses and homes.

176. Pupils have positive attitudes to history and generally behave well in lessons. Teachers successfully capture pupils' attention and this helps them to concentrate on the topic being studied. They are involved with their tasks, clear in what they are to do, sustain their concentration, persevere and work with application. Pupils use a range of resources to develop and extend their learning, especially using texts and information sources for further information. Unfortunately, pupils' presentation skills are weak and they do not do full justice to what they know, understand and can do, being let down by work that is untidy and unfinished. This is having an effect on the progress they make as they move through the school.
177. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are clear about the specific curriculum for pupils. The way in which they provide activities that help pupils to develop historical skills makes an important contribution to the good quality of learning, particularly in developing understanding of past times. Resources for history are appropriate and well used to promote pupils' successful learning.

#### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

178. The attainment of older pupils, especially those in Year 6, is still below that expected of pupils of this age; that of pupils in Year 2 equates with national standards. Both groups of pupils are making good progress in their learning of basic skills. Pupils' attainment and progress in using other items of information and communication technology such as tape recorders, cameras, video cameras and recorders and overhead projectors is satisfactory and, for the youngest children, good.
179. The school's provision for information technology was a key issue for improvement at the time of the previous inspection, with pupils attaining levels below that normally expected for their ages and abilities. Pupils' progress in learning was less than satisfactory.
180. Since that time the school has worked hard to successfully improve provision and raise standards and the rate of progress. A new computer suite has been established, computers purchased and a scheme of work linked to the requirements of the National Curriculum has been developed. Members of the teaching and support staff are continuing to receive training in the use of the new equipment. Skills have been shared and programs have been brought in to support the wider National Curriculum. Unfortunately, the school has been let down by operational problems with some of the hardware supplied. The network of computers in classes will not run many of the new, exciting and supportive programs at present while programs used previously cannot run on the new equipment. This limits the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum. A solution to this problem, beyond the school's control, seems to be rather slow.
181. By the end of Year 6, pupils can log on to the computers using their specific passwords, enter programs such as 'Word', change fonts and text sizes and styles, "drag and drop" using the mouse and identify and use the various tools on the basic toolbars using the mouse and cursor. Pupils highlight, enter and alter text using the keyboard and use program elements such as 'Word Art' to make their work more exciting and aesthetically pleasing to view. They particularly enjoy going onto the 'Web' and using a search engine to locate information appropriate for the wider curriculum.
182. Younger pupils are making good progress in learning the layout of the keyboard. By the end of Year 2 they can identify the backspace and the space bar and use them correctly when typing text, especially when recording work from other areas of the curriculum such as story writing or history. At present these younger pupils are not able to benefit from

the use of the wider range of the school's mathematical and language-based programs which cannot run due to unresolved technical problems.

183. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work in information and communication technology, especially in the use of computers. The majority of pupils are sensible in their approach, take turns and treat their partners fairly. They help each other to perform tasks and remind one another of the contents of previous lessons, especially when their partner has missed a previous session. When not actually working on a computer the majority of pupils settle quickly to the support tasks they have been allocated and do not interfere with those actually working on the machines. In the majority of lessons the quality of learning is good. However, when teachers are not able to call on the support of other adults or, exceptionally, have not planned precisely what the non-computer users will do, both attitudes and behaviour slip and the pace of learning for all pupils is correspondingly slower.
184. The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons is good. In the better lessons teachers are confident, enthusiastic and well prepared for every eventuality. They manage pupils' enthusiasm for computer use with skill. They plan worthwhile activities for those pupils not able to have computer access during a particular lesson that support learning and develop skills that can be practised on a keyboard or with a mouse on a later occasion. Teachers support well pupils who are working at a computer screen by structuring sessions, circulating to solve problems and planning activities that leave each pupil sure that by the end of each lesson they know more or have developed further a control skill. This is having a positive effect on the quality of learning and the progress made by pupils.
185. In other areas of the subject teaching, teachers give clear explanations of using equipment and then plenty of opportunities to do so. They encourage pupils to take photographs of their models and displays, video their performances and record their stories and songs. Pupils also play professionally produced music and story tapes for themselves.

## MUSIC

186. Standards are in line with those expected for pupils aged seven and 11 years. Younger pupils enthusiastically join in songs they are familiar with. They are able to respond to instructions to vary their voices and they are starting to follow the lead given by their teacher. Although they listen attentively, some children have poor auditory discrimination and find it difficult to pitch their singing correctly. At the present time the reception classes join with classes from Years 1 and 2 for singing sessions. This arrangement is not helping older pupils to develop their auditory skills. Overall, progress in class music lessons is satisfactory.
187. Much of the school's music curriculum is delivered by a specialist from the Knowsley Performing Arts Service. The present provision includes whole class lessons and group sessions where smaller numbers of pupils work with the specialist teacher on a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments.
188. It was not possible to see lessons in Year 6 during the inspection. However, in one lesson seen, Year 5 pupils enjoyed working with instruments. They are enthusiastic performers. They make good progress in these small groups. They know the names of the instruments and understand the correct way to play them. They are able to compose short pieces, which they perform willingly. They try hard to sing tunefully although there are a number of pupils who have difficulty with pitch and more subtle elements of voice control.

189. Pupils have positive attitudes to music. They enjoy the opportunity to participate as members of a group in music making. Whilst some older pupils are willing to share their work on their own, many feel safer playing together.
190. The quality of teaching is good. The specialist knowledge and skill of the teacher makes a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning and to the progress they make. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and the differing needs of pupils are well addressed by capturing pupils' interest and helping them focus their creative efforts in performance. The presence of class teachers in music lessons provides helpful support for pupils.
191. The school also benefits from visiting instrumental teachers. The school's policy of giving every pupil the opportunity to experience a keyboard instrument, however brief, ensures full equality of opportunity. The quality of this teaching is very good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their work and make good progress.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

192. Pupils achieve nationally expected standards at the ages of seven and 11 in physical education. Progress is satisfactory and in swimming in Year 3, it is good. Issues identified in the last inspection report relating to equality of opportunity in physical education have been successfully addressed.
193. One group of younger pupils move confidently and safely in a large space. They can follow instructions and stop and start on cue. They experiment with moving in different ways and make good progress with their running, jumping and hopping skills. Good focus is placed on improving landing techniques. Another group of a similar age make less progress, because they do not concentrate well on the tasks set and are slow to respond to instructions. This affects the progress they make.
194. In Year 2 pupils understand the need to 'warm up' before a physical activity and are mindful of health and safety issues related to the use of large and small apparatus. They are beginning to evaluate their own performance as well as that of others. For instance, they recognise the importance of having hands and feet on the same side of apparatus when moving backwards and forwards across it.
195. Pupils in Year 6 make good progress in work in gymnastics. They show initiative as they put out apparatus and plan for their own combination of gymnastic sequences. Groups are able to draw from their previous experience and improve and modify their performance. They can make their sequences more fluent and controlled.
196. The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory. Pupils have appropriate opportunities for physical effort and the vast majority work productively on the tasks they are set. During lessons the pupils' behaviour is generally good and this is because the teachers manage the classes well. All pupils are appropriately dressed for physical education and are keen to rise to a challenge.
197. Teaching is sound. The teachers plan the lessons well with the learning points clearly identified. They make good use of photographic evidence of older pupils' work to develop and improve performance skills. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, pupils were not successfully managed; they did not listen carefully to instructions and this reduced both the quality of their learning and the progress they made.