

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Knowsley, Merseyside

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104474

Headteacher: Mrs G Price

Reporting inspector: Mr R Cheetham
2592

Dates of inspection: 2nd-6th October 2000

Inspection number: 225374

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:	5-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Waterpark Drive Stockbridge Village Knowsley Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Marray
Date of previous inspection:	13 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr R Cheetham	Registered inspector 2592	Mathematics, design and technology, physical education, equal opportunities.	What sort of a school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Mrs C Kalms	Lay inspector 9275		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs A Currie	Team inspector 25429	Science, information and communication technology, geography, history, under fives	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mrs E Randall	Team inspector 15360	English, art, music, special educational needs	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Brigid's Catholic Primary School is smaller than other primary schools and serves the parish of St Albert in an area of some social deprivation within the Borough of Knowsley. Pupils' attainment on entry is wide and most start in the reception class with attainment in English and mathematics below that generally found. There are 202 pupils on roll and this is slightly lower than at the last inspection when it was 216. Although a popular school with 30% of pupils coming from outside the catchment area, there are a few spaces in most classes. All of the pupils are of white UK heritage. Pupils are admitted to the school at the start of the school year in which they become five and most have attended nearby nurseries. Fifty per cent of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. This is well above the national average and has declined since the last inspection. Twenty five per cent are on the school's register of special educational needs. This is above the national average and is the same as the last inspection. The pupils' special educational needs include moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. Six pupils have a statement of special educational need and this has increased since the last inspection.

There have been a number of important changes since the school was last inspected. It has had additional funds to help raise pupils' attainment in mathematics. It is actively involved in several local and national initiatives including a link with industry (Ford Link) that has, among other things, increased the number of school computers. It gained the Basic Skills Association quality kitemark for its work in numeracy and literacy. It has been awarded Eco school status for its work on the environment. It was recognised last year, as one of England's most improved schools and this year became an Investor in People. It was awarded Beacon School status recently so that it can work with other local schools to spread its good practice and has just joined some of them in an Education Action Zone.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Brigid's is a very effective school and gives very good value for money. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management and is very well supported by a team of staff who carry management responsibilities. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school are generally below those normally found. They make good progress in English, mathematics and science so that by the time they leave, most pupils attain the level expected nationally and some attain more highly. The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of teaching of the highest quality. The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What the school does well

- Sustained high levels of pupils' attainment in English, mathematics, and science by the end of Key Stage 2
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and there are excellent relationships in the school
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress
- Good quality teaching
- Excellent leadership and management and a shared commitment to improve
- Very effective links with the community, parents and their high opinions of the school
- The range and use of pupil assessment information

What could be improved

- Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in mathematics
- Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in information and communication technology
- Levels of attendance

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. It has made very significant improvements since then. Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science have risen dramatically. Standards across the school in art have improved. Standards in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 1 have also improved but at the end of Key Stage 2 they have not risen enough. The percentage of satisfactory or better teaching has improved from 75% to 96% and most teaching is good. The school has improved subject planning guidance and the assessment of pupils' learning. It has broadened the curriculum to involve a wide range of educational visits and welcomes interesting visitors. It has taken a successful part in local and national curriculum initiatives and has won several awards including the Basic Skills Agency kitemark. It has most recently been awarded Beacon status so that it can share its practice with local schools.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	D	B	B	A*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	A	B	A	
science	B	A	B	A	

Pupils start school with standards of attainment in English and mathematics that are below those generally found. This table shows that in 2000, the school was in the top 5% of schools nationally for its English results in comparison with similar schools. The same was true of mathematics and science as well in the previous year. The results show a marked improvement over time and the school has exceeded its targets for the past two years. While standards are not quite as high in 2000 as in 1999, they remain above the national average and well above those of similar schools. Pupils' standards of attainment in the current Year 6 continue at this level. Pupils' standards and progress in the remaining subjects are satisfactory except in information and communication technology where they are not high enough at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress against the targets in their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well. They show respect for others and work very well together
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have very good personal development and excellent relationships. They take responsibility and help one another to learn
Attendance	Attendance has improved very slightly but is still below the national average

Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes to learning are important in helping them make good progress. They work well in groups and older pupils help younger ones with their reading. Parents taking their children on holiday in term time affect attendance figures.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

96% of teaching is satisfactory or better. Overall, 4% is unsatisfactory, 26% is satisfactory, 48% is good, 15% is very good and 7% is excellent. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good and literacy and numeracy skills are taught very well. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well. The main strengths of teaching are very good planning and very good assessments of what pupils have learned. The few weaknesses are to do with subject knowledge in physical education and information and communication technology and in classroom management in one lesson. Pupils concentrate very well and work well together in groups. They are keen to learn. A few boys in the Year 3 class behave unsatisfactorily at times and do not work as consistently as the others.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities. The curriculum is enriched by many visits to give the pupils first hand experiences. The school works very well with its local community
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good. The school assesses pupils' progress very well and is now acting earlier to provide very good support
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good overall. Poetry and literature make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development as well as assemblies and the Catholic school ethos. Staff have very high expectations of pupils' moral and social behaviour and act as a team to develop them. Outside visits and visitors to the school help to strengthen pupils' good cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils. There are very good systems to monitor all aspects of their development and the procedures for assessing their attainment and progress are excellent.

The school works very effectively with parents and they have the highest regard for it. The school has a very good range of activities it organises outside of school hours. These include a homework club and a full range of competition with other local schools. The provision for information and communication technology has improved but some elements to extend the learning of the oldest pupils are not fully in place. Provision for children under five is good but they do not have ready access to a suitably equipped outside play area. The school keeps very good records of pupils' progress and makes excellent use of them to improve support, set targets with the pupils and raise standards.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by staff with management responsibilities. They set a clear agenda for continuing improvement
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors do their job well. They complete nearly all of their statutory responsibilities, are well organised and know the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school and its governors keep a careful check on the school's performance. Governors have regular reports on progress and subject co-ordinators examine teachers' plans and in some subjects the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its resources and actively looks for additional sources of finance. It spends its money wisely and looks beyond the current year to buy major items or to pay for additional staff.

The school is well staffed, the accommodation is very good and learning resources are good. The headteacher gives a very clear lead and encourages full involvement of all staff. This builds up a very strong sense of teamwork and a pride in the school. Subject co-ordinators play an important role in developing their subjects. The school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel comfortable in coming to the school with concerns or suggestions • They believe that the school is well led • They think that the teaching is good • They think that the school has high expectations of their children • They think that pupils' behaviour is good 	The parents do not have any significant areas they want to be improved

Neither in the questionnaire nor at the meeting with the registered inspector nor during the inspection did parents raise any significant concerns about the school. They have a very high regard for what it does. The inspection team agree with parents' positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The overall picture is one of sustained higher than average attainment in English, mathematics and science (the core subjects) at the end of Key Stage 2 (Key Stage 2 means pupils in Years 3-6). After a period of lower than average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Key Stage 1 means pupils in Years 1 and 2), there has been some recent improvement. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. For the last two years, the school has exceeded its challenging English and mathematics targets for pupils in Year 6.

2 Since the last inspection, the school has made excellent progress in raising pupils' levels of attainment and rates of progress in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2. By 1999, standards were well above the national average and were very high when compared with similar schools. In 2000, standards were not quite as high but they remain above the national average. Pupils in the current Year 6 are continuing to reach levels broadly similar to this and standards of literacy and numeracy are good.

3 The school has not made a similar improvement in raising standards of attainment and rates of progress by the end of Key Stage 1. In 1999, standards in reading were well below the national average but were good when compared to similar schools. In writing, the school's results matched the national average and were very high when compared to similar schools. In mathematics, they were well below the national average but were average when compared to similar schools. In science, the results in 1999 matched the national average. In 2000, the English and mathematics results were generally below those of the previous year. This school year has seen a slight upturn with most pupils in Year 2 working within the expected level in English and science but in mathematics only the higher attaining pupils are doing so.

4 The reasons for the difference between the key stage results are as follows: pupils start school with levels of attainment in English and mathematics below those generally found. They make satisfactory progress in the reception class and Key Stage 1 but it does not fully show up in the standards they reach by the time they are seven. The school has rapidly improved the way it assesses and works with pupils who find mathematics and English difficult. The first priority was in Key Stage 2 where the problem was worse and because the older pupils had less time left at St Brigid's to catch up. The school has raised standards by improving teaching. Teachers use assessments of what pupils have learned in one lesson to improve the planning of the next and they expect much more of higher attaining pupils. The same system is now taking root in Key Stage 1. Another reason for the difference in results is that although the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1, it is slightly higher in Key Stage 2. Similar improvements in teaching have happened in science and teachers emphasise science investigations more.

5 Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening in Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with national expectations and progress is satisfactory. Teachers encourage clear and confident speaking and pupils feel able to express their views. When reading literature together, they ask questions that show they have listened well. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and higher attaining pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs in both key stages make good progress because of good teaching in small groups. Most pupils in Year 2 are working within expected attainment levels. Some lower attaining pupils are not using a wide enough range of ways to help them with unfamiliar words. Higher attaining pupils can discuss the plot and talk about characters. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop their reading skills and are mostly competent readers by Year 6. In Years 4, 5 and 6, the rate of progress increases significantly because the teaching is particularly challenging.

Teachers encourage pupils to think about what they have read and analyse it to understand, for instance how authors keep readers' interest. The introduction of a reading scheme has aroused pupils' interest and is encouraging them to read. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making satisfactory progress in most aspects of writing and are working within expected levels. Although they write satisfactorily, producing short stories, simple poems and descriptions, they do not write well enough in other ways such as instructions and lists. This is because there are fewer opportunities for them to practise. In Key Stage 2, teachers provide a wide range of writing opportunities in English and in other subjects. Pupils make good progress and many attain above the level expected in Year 6. Pupils have a good grasp of grammar and punctuation and handwriting standards are good.

6 In mathematics, pupils' standards of attainment in Year 2 are below average although a minority are reaching the level expected. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs are making good progress in number work but often need some support in recognising and continuing number patterns beyond 10. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand that the value of coins and the number of them are not necessarily the same. Most have some knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and a few are beginning to use mathematical terms. The standards of most pupils' attainment in Year 6 are average and a significant minority are working at the higher level. They are all using their skills and understanding well in all aspects of mathematics. They are quick in recalling number facts and using them mentally to work out solutions. They are not as fast at seeing and explaining different ways of working sums out. They present their work very clearly and make good progress in solving problems such as designing a board game or conducting a pop music survey. Most can use mathematical terms such as factors and multiples confidently and accurately.

7 In science, the work of pupils in Year 6 reflects the continuing high standards achieved by the school. Pupils in Year 2 are working within the level expected nationally. Pupils' investigative skills have also improved. Pupils make good gains in their learning as they progress through the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in expressing their ideas because they are well supported. Teachers give pupils the opportunity to explore scientific ideas for themselves. Pupils respond well to this and are keen to find out for themselves. Pupils learn how to carry out a fair test and put some mathematics skills to good use. In Key Stage 2, pupils record their work in a variety of ways, such as graphs, tables and charts, and describe the methods they use. They have good presentation skills but do not often give clear explanations for the results they obtain.

8 In information and communication technology, pupils in all year groups are now making good progress during lessons and over time. Pupils in Year 2 are attaining standards that match those expected for their age. The resources and staff training have improved since the last inspection but this improvement is recent and older pupils have not had the opportunity to extend their skills sufficiently over a long enough period. As a result, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are below those expected nationally. Pupils are increasingly using word processing and Year 3 pupils are beginning to change the font in different ways to give the required effect in their writing. The Internet is now used to retrieve information in Key Stage 2, but the school does not yet have access to e-mail. CD ROMs are used to supply information, for example about the human body, but the range of software is limited.

9 In art, pupils make satisfactory progress through a range of skills using different media and materials. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are working within expected levels overall. Pupils in Year 6 are working within expected levels in drawing and they learn to evaluate their work and appreciate the work of others. In design and technology, not enough work was seen to report on standards at the end of key stages. However, pupils' attainment in the lessons seen was above that expected for their age and they all made good progress. By Year 4, higher attaining pupils understand why seams are necessary both to provide a neat finish and also to strengthen the structure of the purse or wallet they

were designing. In geography and history, pupils' standards of attainment match those expected nationally and they make satisfactory progress. Pupils steadily increase their geographical skills, for example in mapping. Fieldwork allows them to practise their skills in practical ways. In history, pupils gain a clear sense of the past and how things change, beginning with changes that have taken place in their own lives. Pupils make satisfactory progress in music and attain within nationally expected levels at the end of both key stages. Pupils in Key Stage 1 respond well to a conductor and are learning to control instruments well. In Key Stage 2, pupils have good opportunities to build on skills and experiences in playing and listening. Only some aspects of physical education were seen during the inspection although all are taught. Pupils in Year 2 attain highly in dance and those in Year 6 reach the expected level in swimming. Other evidence shows that a minority of Year 5 and 6 pupils make good progress and attain well in competitive games. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing games' skills and in swimming.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 Pupils enjoy learning and almost all have very good attitudes to school. They behave very well in lessons and around the school; their personal development is very good and there are excellent relationships between pupils and staff. These factors all help pupils learn well.

11 Pupils are willing to learn and respond well to good teaching. They are interested and fully involved in their lessons. Pupils eagerly ask and answer questions. For example, pupils in Year 6 had a lively discussion in a lesson about Britain in the 1940's. They talked about differences in the daily lives of people then and now and gave reasons for them. Most pupils work hard and are keen to improve. These attitudes were summed up well by a six year old when he was discussing his reading. "I don't like skinny books. Not enough goes on and they don't have enough people in them. I like thick books. I want to read the chapters. If I work hard, I'll get a chapter book when I'm seven."

12 Pupils behave very well in lessons and this makes for a calm learning atmosphere. Pupils behave very well in the dining hall and playground. Most know what standard of behaviour is expected and respond well. They follow the school rules but occasionally a small minority of boys in Year 3 behave unsatisfactorily and slow the pace of learning. There is very little bullying and it is promptly dealt with. Pupils are friendly and very polite. They use equipment carefully and an example of this was in a Year 1 history lesson when they examined fragile items. No pupils have been excluded in recent years and this is a major improvement since the previous inspection.

13 The school works hard to develop excellent relationships among all who work and learn there and this is a major factor in pupils' learning progress. They respect one another's views and co-operate and share ideas very well in groups. A good example of this was in a Year 5 science lesson when pupils sensibly took one another's pulses and carefully noted the number of beats. They share resources sensibly.

14 Pupils' personal development is very good. They grow in confidence in response to the praise and encouragement they receive. They settle to group work quickly and work well with little direct supervision. The Year 6 monitors help very responsibly in the school's daily routines. For instance, they are on telephone duty in the office at lunchtime and help to supervise younger pupils at wet playtimes. Pupils learn how others feel, for instance during class discussions about school rules and know the effect they can have on others. Another example of this is when older pupils work very effectively with pupils in Key Stage 1 when hearing them read. They listen carefully and prompt improvements gently as when a Year 6 pupil said to a younger one, "That was very good. Now just let's go over the words you weren't sure about." Pupils gain confidence by taking a full part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities (those the school organises outside of lessons) including sporting competitions and residential visits.

15 Levels of attendance are below the national average. Although there has been a slight improvement since the last inspection, they remain unsatisfactory. Unauthorised absences are below the national average. A small number of pupils arrive late in the morning. The school is doing what it reasonably can to improve matters.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 96% of lessons. This is a 21% increase since the last inspection and is a major factor in raising attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Four percent of teaching is unsatisfactory, 26% is satisfactory, 48% is good, 15% is very good and 7% is excellent. There are examples of high quality teaching throughout the school. The major improvements have been: the detail of lesson planning, subject knowledge and accurate assessments of pupils' progress that teachers use to plan their next lessons. Pupils respond very well. They like to know what they are to learn and how to improve. They work very well together and the teachers foster excellent relationships. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well and they make very good progress towards their targets in their individual education plans. They are very keen to do well and respond well to enthusiastic and skilful teaching from the specialist teacher, the learning support assistants and class teachers.

17 In the reception class, teaching is good and a particular strength is how effectively the teacher and the nursery nurse complement one another. This helps the children settle into schoolwork with growing confidence. The teacher plans varied practical activities to engage their interest and to encourage independence. She has a good understanding of the foundation stage curriculum (the curriculum for children in the reception class) and is putting it into practice well. At the end of each day, the teacher and nursery nurse assess the work pupils have done and use this information to guide the next day's plans. They also work out the best way to help all the children make progress and they share this information with parents.

18 In Key Stage 1, most teaching is good. The teachers have high expectations of their pupils and in Year 2 particularly, the class teacher sets a brisk pace to the learning. There is a good balance of activities throughout the lessons so that pupils who may not do well in a whole class discussion, for instance, have the chance to work well in smaller groups. Learning support assistants work well with both teachers. This partnership is very strong in Year 1 where the nursery nurse makes complementary lesson plans and works very effectively with small groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics and English. They benefit from this close attention and make good progress. Both teachers have good subject knowledge in different subjects. In Year 2, this results in good pupil progress and high attainment in physical education, for example. In Year 1, pupils work imaginatively on design and technology projects. A weakness is in subject knowledge in physical education in Year 1 and pupils made slow progress in one lesson. The school is planning additional training. Both teachers are implementing the literacy hours and daily mathematics lessons well and again, additional training is underway to improve subject knowledge further.

19 In Key Stage 2, most teaching is good and there are examples of excellent teaching in Years 4 and 5. Well-organised lesson plans mean that skills, knowledge and understanding are taught progressively throughout the key stage. Because a minority of pupils in Year 3 are not behaving as well as the others, this slows their learning. To some extent this distracts others. It sometimes slows their learning and, in one lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory. At this early stage in the school year, the teachers are working hard to put things right and the school is taking effective action, for example by providing additional classroom support. The best teaching is confident and challenging. It is based on good subject knowledge and clear planning that sets out what pupils are to learn and then helps teachers to note the rates of progress. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well. Most

mental and oral sessions in mathematics are fast moving and encourage swift and accurate recall of number facts. However, the endings of few lessons do not reinforce well enough what pupils have learned. In English, pupils discuss confidently fine points of grammar or their response to poetry. In science, teachers encourage pupils to work together to make their own investigations and to record their findings. Some teachers do not have enough subject knowledge of information and communication technology. Although what is taught is done well, the school is aware that the range is not wide enough and plans improvements this year.

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

20 The school provides a very good range of high quality learning opportunities. They are relevant to pupils' needs and meet national requirements. It is implementing the foundation stage curriculum well. All pupils have very good access to the whole curriculum.

21 The school has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's schemes of work for all subjects and integrated them into its good overall curriculum plan. The amount of time allocated to some subjects is below the recommended levels, for example in history and geography. This is mainly because of the extra time spent on literacy and numeracy. This is in line with the school's priorities and staff will assess the effectiveness of its subject plans as part of its review of curriculum 2000.

22 The quality of the curriculum is not simply judged by the amount of time for individual subjects. The school has been awarded the British Standards Association's Quality mark for its improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It is putting the national literacy and numeracy strategies into practice very well and this is improving standards in Key Stage 2 and progress in Key Stage 1. In addition, the school has Eco school status because of its work in caring for the environment. The opportunities for enrichment of pupils' learning are many and varied. Pupils learn vividly and memorably on frequent visits such as to Wigan Pier, the theatre, Tatton Park and the Eureka exhibition in Halifax, as well as three residential visits that are open to all pupils in Years 4 to 6. There are many visitors who expand pupils' horizons: the police and their horses and dogs, Indian dancers, a local performing arts group and a lady who was an evacuee during the second world war. There are further extra learning opportunities through a good range of clubs that take place after school. There is also a homework club that offers pupils a quiet work area and additional support.

23 The school uses community resources very effectively and plays an important part in local activities. For example, the school has links with Sefton Business Partnership and Ford and it is now part of an Education Action Zone. It has recently been awarded Beacon status and will share its expertise with other schools in the area. Initial Teacher Training students and trainee nursery nurses work well in school bringing pupils fresh ideas and additional support. The school plays a strong role in the parish and provides a meeting ground for clergy and parishioners. It is a valuable learning resource for the community. For example, adults are learning computer skills and gain certification for their increasing skills in working with pupils. The parish priest feels that the school is, "Helping the community raise expectations of itself".

24 The school provides very well for pupils with special educational needs and this helps them make very good progress towards their targets in their individual education plans. The class teachers set work, which is well matched to ability in all subjects. In Years 1 and 2, a visiting specialist teacher and two learning support assistants work very skillfully with groups of pupils for English. In Key Stage 2, the specialist works with groups of pupils who are withdrawn from English lessons and links effectively with class teachers. Learning support assistants work in class with pupils for mathematics and English and give good support. In addition, a few pupils visit the Central Primary Support School

for more specialist help. This provision, especially in English make sure that pupils can make very good progress across the curriculum because they understand more and are more confident.

25 Overall, the school has improved its curriculum well since the last inspection. Most of the weaknesses have been very successfully addressed. Pupils do more science investigations and use their literacy skills across the whole curriculum. The art curriculum now meets national requirements. Information and communication technology skills are developed more effectively, although standards of attainment in Key Stage 2 are not yet high enough. There are appropriate plans for developing the subject and staff have a strong commitment to improvement. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (including sex education and drugs awareness education) is good. Further improvements are planned to be fully in place by the end of the year.

26 The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' spiritual development is supported very well through the school's firm foundation in the Catholic religion. In particular, assemblies make a strong contribution. There are other opportunities within the school's curriculum. Teachers use poetry very effectively to develop pupils' feelings, for example when they write about friendship. In science, pupils wonder at the beauty of nature, for example how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. The display in the hall, 'Oh What A Wonderful World' also reinforces this. In their dance lesson, Year 2 pupils giggled at first and then fell silent, wondering as the parachute they were using settled gently around the whole class.

27 Teachers have high expectations for pupils' moral development and consistently make them very clear. Adults are excellent role models. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and this is well linked to their social development. There is strong emphasis on each pupil doing his or her best. Individual and group achievement is recognised and shared in a weekly, whole school assembly. The school community values good work, politeness, helpfulness and effort. During the week, pupils are awarded house points so that they are working not only for themselves but also for their house. Some of the school's initiatives to broaden its curriculum have a very valuable influence on pupils' social development. For example, pupils on the environmental committee make others aware of the need to protect the environment. The work to develop a healthy school helps pupils understand the need for exercise and healthy food. Pupils are also very aware of people less fortunate than themselves and they regularly raise money for charities. There are close links with a local school for the blind and Year 1 pupils are currently designing tactile books retelling nursery rhymes for the pupils there. The three annual residential trips have a very positive impact on pupils' moral and social development. They become more independent and aware of the needs of others. Older pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility when acting as monitors or as reading 'buddies' with younger pupils.

28 There are good opportunities for pupils' cultural development. These are mainly through the visits out of school and the variety of visitors to school. Staff are making a clear attempt to introduce pupils to other cultures, for example through the visit of Indian dancers, a Punjabi art and culture display and a visit to a local synagogue. The display of welcome in the entrance area uses a variety of languages and books in the library portray various cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29 The school has maintained the high levels of support and guidance for pupils since the last inspection. The staff know the pupils and their families very well and provide a caring atmosphere that contributes greatly towards pupils' learning. The school has excellent procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and meets statutory requirements. This is a first-rate improvement since the last inspection and is a significant factor in raising pupils' standards of attainment.

30 There are very good arrangements for child protection and staff make sure that pupils learn safely. The school is complying with statutory requirements for health and safety by updating its policy statement. The school regularly checks the safety of the premises and acts on them if necessary. There is good first aid coverage and staff know pupils with medical conditions. The headteacher and governors plan to use new funds to improve the safety of pupils in the car park at the beginning and end of the school day.

31 The school monitors pupils' personal development very well through its care systems, clear communications, excellent relationships and links with parents. These help staff note developments and identify concerns. There are very effective measures to monitor and promote good behaviour. Pupils have a say in classroom rules and so have a stake in keeping them. Staff share high expectations of pupils and work well together by emphasising any improvements and being firm when they need to. A good example of this was when a teacher commented, "You have behaved better than yesterday. It's still not good enough but things are getting better." The behaviour policy emphasises a positive approach and gives good guidance for staff. There are very good systems for recording unsatisfactory behaviour. Any bullying is very effectively dealt with by involving parents, but such incidents are rare.

32 The school has very good procedures to monitor and improve attendance. Registers are checked daily and the school works very closely with the Education Welfare Officer on follow up home visits. The school rewards pupils who attend regularly and the class with the best weekly attendance gets an extra playtime. Newsletters regularly tell parents of the need for good attendance and punctuality and the display of classes' weekly attendance in the entrance area reinforces the message. These measures are having a slow effect and the school will be working with others that share low attendance problems as part of an Education Action Zone initiative.

33 Pupils' attainment and stage of development are accurately assessed on entry to school and the system of continuing assessments is very effective. Teachers make notes on their lesson planning sheets on how well pupils have achieved, or if they have had difficulties. They then organise tasks accordingly for the next lesson. They keep careful records to show when pupils have achieved what they wanted them to learn. Teachers use a range of standardised tests each year and carefully analyse the results. This helps the teachers know precisely what pupils can do and areas where they need help. They then give extra support at a very early stage with tasks that are closely matched to what pupils have not grasped. The results also help teachers give higher attaining pupils more demanding work.

34 Pupils with special educational needs get very good support both in class and when working in small groups away from the classroom. The targets in their individual education plans encourage them to make very good progress. For instance, last year seven out of ten pupils in Year 6 assessed as having special educational needs achieved nationally expected levels or higher in the end of Key Stage tests. The headteacher and senior staff closely track each pupil's progress as they move through the school. This enables them to make sure staff deal with any difficulties and helps the headteacher and governors decide where to put the school's resources. Teachers also analyse all test papers to see where standards are not high enough and then make improvements to teaching. This was particularly successful in most recent tests when the school exceeded its challenging targets for pupils' attainment in Year 6. Teachers regularly discuss pupils' progress with parents and involve pupils in setting their own targets to encourage them further. Because of these procedures, the school is maintaining high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35 Parents think very highly of the school and have no significant concerns about it. They think that teaching is good and that the school is well led. Almost all are happy with the levels of homework and feel that the school encourages pupils to become responsible. They are pleased with the pupils' behaviour. The inspection team supports these positive views.

36 The school has very good links with parents and they feel welcome. The school tries various successful ways to help parents work with the school to support their children's education. These include an evening computer course, a mathematics course and a psychology course. Parents become involved in all aspects of school life such as discussions on pupils' progress and going to class assemblies and school concerts. The school involves parents in its decision-making and consults them on the school development plan. Committed parents regularly help in school. They make toast for pupils at break and work with pupils during lessons. The parents', teachers' and friends' association is very supportive and organises a range of social and fund raising events. Most recently this enabled the school to purchase stage blocks. All classes set regular homework and pupils are encouraged to take reading books home. Many parents share reading with their children and some regularly comment in their reading diaries. The links with parents are helping to improve pupils' progress and positive attitudes to learning.

37 The school gives very good information to parents especially about pupils' progress. The information helps parents become involved in their children's learning and to understand the school's work. Notice boards and regular newsletters keep parents up to date and the prospectus provides useful information on school procedures. The most recent governor's annual report to parents reviews the school's work although there is one omission. Teachers talk to parents at the start of the year about the work their children will cover. At a second meeting they discuss progress and at a third they consider the annual, written reports. These give detailed information on pupils' attainments and improvements and set clear learning targets.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38 The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Staff with management responsibilities support her very well and the governors give good support. The process of becoming an Investor in People has helped the school develop its management structures and decision-making. The school has a clear and confident sense of direction. This is based on knowing its strengths and weaknesses very well and carrying out practical solutions to make improvements. It has raised pupils' attainment in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2. Through its policy of early intervention, the school is tackling the relative weaknesses in attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. It has made recent improvements in information and technology resources and teaching that are having an increasing effect on pupils' progress. Further improvements are planned this year. Leadership has also made significant improvements in other aspects of school life such as widening the curriculum and increasing parental and community involvement.

39 The school's aims and values are noticeable throughout its work. Pupils are encouraged to try hard in all they do. As one parent put it, "They know that trying is better than sitting there and doing nothing." Effort is praised and rewarded. Pupils think better of themselves and grow in confidence. They also learn to think about others. They are very helpful to one another and are concerned for others who are not as fortunate. They are respectful towards adults and polite with one another.

40 Subject co-ordinators carry out their leadership responsibilities very well. Some responsibilities have recently changed and co-ordinators have quickly got to grips with their new work. There are too many subjects, too few staff and not enough time to make improvements in all subjects for all pupils at the same time. Consequently the school chooses its main priorities wisely in its very good development plan. Subject co-ordinators play a full part in deciding these priorities and support the headteacher

very well. They often set high personal standards. They help teachers to plan lessons and lead training to improve teaching skills. This is most noticeable in how successfully the school is developing the literacy hour and the daily mathematics lessons.

41 The school monitors and evaluates its performance very well and uses the information to make improvements. Co-ordinators monitor the quality of teaching and offer advice on improvements to spread good practice. They examine pupils' work and analyse test results. Where the school can improve, the co-ordinators work with staff to develop their practice. The assessment co-ordinator carefully tracks the progress of individual pupils and arranges additional support through its target groups to bring about improvements. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps a very good record of pupils on the special educational needs register and keeps a close eye on the effects of their extra support. She ensures that special educational needs funding is spent well. Similarly, the headteacher monitors the additional spending from the Single Regeneration Budget that is very successfully supporting parents working with their children to develop their mathematics. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' progress. It has also helped parents gain educational accreditation and is helping them onto further training.

42 The school's monitoring of its performance is very well linked to its appraisal and performance management system. Through this, the headteacher works out job descriptions with staff, targets for improvement and any support they need. The school is making very good arrangements for introducing the new national performance management measures. The school has a good record of exceeding its targets in English and mathematics in 1999 and 2000 and was recognised, last year as the third most improved school in England. Overall, school leadership has developed an excellent spirit of teamwork. Staff are very modest about the improvements they have made and are keen to develop further.

43 The governors fulfil their responsibilities well except for an omission in their annual report to parents. They have a well-organised system of committees and are well informed of the schools' progress and of its strengths and weaknesses. This information comes principally through the very clear headteacher's reports and through link governors visits for instance to do with literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. They also receive reports from subject co-ordinators on the development of their work. Governors play a satisfactory part in school development planning and in school target setting. They decide with the headteacher, the school's key priorities and link these to their responsibilities for setting and monitoring the budget. They are strong supporters of the school and enjoy going to presentations and celebrations.

44 The school makes very good use of its resources. It has very good systems for long-term development that set out its major priorities and then reviews and resets them annually. All staff and governors are involved in this. The slightly larger than recommended carry forward figure in last year's budget financed a new reading scheme, developments in the reception class and maintained staffing levels to smooth out the effects of wide variations in class sizes. New staff are very well supported. The staff handbook provides very useful background information. Mentoring arrangements, appraisal interviews and training opportunities give newly qualified staff a firm basis for development. The school works very well in partnership with a local university to train new teachers and the headteacher takes a close interest in their development. The school has a good blend of staff to help pupils make good progress. Staff have a good programme of training to keep up to date and their part in it is decided with them as part of the appraisal/review process. The accommodation is very good and staff ensure pupils benefit, for instance from the well-equipped hall and well-organised library. However, the school's arrangements for outdoor play for the reception class are not good enough. With the exception of some additional information and communication technology equipment,

the school has very good resources that have been built up carefully using the subject co-ordinators' annual audits.

45 The school applies the principles of best value well. Governors and staff regularly review the school's test results with those of other schools to gauge how well the school is doing. As part of its curriculum review this year, it will analyse how well the current schemes of work are being used within the times that are allocated. It will then make changes if necessary. The school goes to some lengths to find out what parents think about the school. Through the parents', teachers' and friends' association, they seek parents' views on priorities for the development plan. The school makes very good use of its finance. It has responded well to the latest auditor's report and has moved to a more economical chequebook system. Governors are taking a cautious approach to the new fair funding arrangements. They are not automatically buying into local authority provided service for payroll before they have looked at the experiences of other schools using different arrangements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Raise pupils' standards of attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 by further improving the quality of teaching. *

Paragraphs: 59,60 and 61

- Raise pupils' standards of attainment in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 2 by providing further staff training and increasing resources. *

Paragraphs: 88, 90 and 92

- Raise levels of attendance by working closely with outside agencies and schools with a similar problem to develop innovative solutions. *

Paragraphs: 15, 32

*The school is planning to make improvements in these areas as part of its development plan.

In addition to the three Key Issues, the governing body should include the following in their post inspection action plan:

- Ensure that the governors' annual report to parents contains all the relevant information

Paragraphs: 37, 43

- Make suitable outdoor play provision for the children in the reception class

Paragraphs: 44, 51

• **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

46

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	15	48	26	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

202

Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals

103

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

6

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

62

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

4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7
National comparative data	6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	14	12	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	17	17	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (69)	65 (81)	69 (81)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	9
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	17	17	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (56)	65 (78)	77 (78)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	10	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	13	15
	Girls	9	8	9
	Total	24	21	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (83)	78 (97)	89 (97)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	12	15
	Girls	7	8	8
	Total	18	20	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (77)	74 (97)	85 (87)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	202
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)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	141

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	392884
Total expenditure	365869
Expenditure per pupil	1811
Balance brought forward from previous year	7004
Balance carried forward to next year	34019

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	200
Number of questionnaires returned	69

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	28	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	25	6	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	22	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	41	11	1	1
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	27	7	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	13	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	15	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	78	20	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	28	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	29	4	0	0

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents think very highly of the school, they recognise its improvement and have no significant concerns.

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

46 Children in the reception class make steady progress from a wide variety of starting points. This is the result of good teaching. Children take part in varied well-planned practical activities that are clearly focused on their learning needs. At the end of each day, the teacher and nursery nurse assess the children's work and use this information to guide the next day's plans. In this way they meet the needs of individuals and groups of children throughout the week and across the range of activities. Staff assess what children can do soon after they start school and use the information to work out the best way to help the children make progress. They also share this information with parents. Children who may have special educational needs are given the right activities for them. Throughout the year, the staff build up a full set of records for each child to give a clear picture of what they can do and what they have to do to improve. By the time they transfer to Year 1, most have made good progress and reach the standards expected in physical and creative development and personal, social and emotional development. In knowledge and understanding of the world, they make satisfactory progress and reach standards close to those expected. By contrast, in mathematical development and communication, language and literacy skills, most make slower progress and do not reach the levels required, although a minority exceed them. This reflects the fact that just over half of the children start in the reception class with starting points in English and mathematics below those generally found. Some have very limited vocabularies, poor hand control and little idea of letters and numbers.

Personal, social and emotional development

47 The school rightly places a lot of emphasis on this area of learning, especially at the start of the school year. Most children have had experience of a nursery before they come to school. However, they come from several different nurseries and they need time to learn new routines and make friends. The teacher and nursery nurse work very well together to create a calm, supportive atmosphere and develop very good relationships with the children. They manage the classroom in a similar way and have the same expectations of children's behaviour. As a result, children feel secure and quickly learn what to do. There are good links with parents so that children are prepared for starting school. Most parents bring their children into the classroom in the morning and help them settle to their first activity. The classroom is bright and attractive. Resources are neatly stored and clearly labelled so that children can use them independently and tidy up at the end of the session. Staff encourage children to share, take turns and work in a group, for example during dice games. Most children respond well to instructions and are keen to take part in activities.

Communication, language and literacy

48 The teacher and nursery nurse are well aware of the need to develop children's vocabularies and sentence structure. They model good speech patterns and encourage all children to talk about their ideas. For example, they join in activities in the home corner and help children tell others what they are doing. There is a good range of books available for children to share and they listen to stories from adults and story tapes. Children are encouraged to see themselves as writers through practical activities, such as sending party invitations to their friends. The writing area has a variety of paper and writing equipment, as well as a list of the names of children in the class. The teacher uses games well to develop children's understanding of initial letter sounds in words.

Mathematical development

49 The teacher plans a good range of practical activities to develop children's mathematical understanding. For example, she helps children to understand counting up to six in several ways.

Some children play a dice game and others roll out dough to make 'birthday cakes' with different numbers of candles. Staff use lively number songs, such as 'Five Little Speckled Frogs', with children acting them out. Whenever the chance comes up the nursery nurse and the teacher encourage children to count, for example by checking the number of children in the group. They use resources well in activities to develop children's understanding of capacity and size. For example, they use a variety of containers in the water tray, and staff emphasise the correct vocabulary, such as big and biggest and full and empty.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

50 Children have very varied understanding of the world about them when they start school and the teacher plans to build on what children already know. She provides activities to stimulate children's interest and develop their ideas by letting them explore for themselves. They take a lively interest in the weather and note its changes. Children investigate a range of materials using their senses. For instance, they use magnifying glasses to explore a variety of different textures. They develop their vocabularies by using words such as 'squidgy' and 'smooth'. Staff talk about baby photographs with the children to show how they have grown and how they can do different things now compared with when they were babies. Children gain confidence in using the computer and they use the mouse to choose programs and operate them.

Physical development

51 There is no outside area set aside to give the children continuous access to large play equipment to help them develop confidence, for example in climbing and balancing. They have outdoor physical education lessons when convenient. They join with the rest of the school at play and lunch times. They use the apparatus in the hall, but some is too heavy for them to move on their own. The space available in the classroom is limited and children learn to move around it showing a good awareness of space and of others. The school has recognised the need to improve provision and is doing what it reasonably can in the meantime. This lack of suitable provision is not noticeably slowing pupils' progress.

Creative development

52 The well-developed home corner, the doll's house and the road map carpet with cars give children good opportunities to develop their imaginations. They also learn to use a wide range of materials. For example, in addition to painting, they make and decorate facemasks and they draw and paint on fabric to make a wall display.

ENGLISH

53 Pupils' recent end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment compare very well with national results. In 1999, they were well above average and very high when compared with similar schools. The school's rate of improvement over 4 years was much faster than the national rate. The results for 2000 are not as high as 1999 but they are still above the national average and are very high when compared to similar schools. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' standards of attainment have not compared as well against national averages partly because their level of attainment when starting school is below that generally found. The results in 1999 were below the national average but above those of similar schools. The results in 2000 are below this. The trend of improvement is below the national trend.

54 Teachers offer a range of opportunities for pupils to listen and talk in English and other lessons and their attainment is in line with national expectations and their progress is satisfactory. Teachers encourage clear and confident speaking and pupils feel able to express views. When reading literature together, they ask questions which shows that they have listened well. One Year 5 pupil listened very carefully to the teacher's explanation and then very politely commented "but to me that doesn't make sense Miss because there is no adverb there which says how he's doing it." Opportunities to go to the

theatre and take part in school performances add to the curriculum so that pupils develop their speaking and listening skills further.

55 Most pupils make satisfactory progress in reading, with higher attaining pupils making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of very good teaching in small groups. Most pupils in Key Stage 1 are working within expected levels. Some lower attaining pupils are not using a wide enough range of ways to help read unfamiliar words. However, teachers are stressing the use of the sounds letters make to piece together what a word says. In literacy lessons, pupils are taught to think about sounds and beginnings and endings of words. This is helping them to read on without help and they are beginning to read more accurately and with more understanding. Higher attaining pupils can discuss the plot and talk about characters. In Key Stage 2, pupils read a range of texts and understand characters and events. Lower attaining pupils are very well supported in class and when taken out of class to work in small groups. They are quickly learning to recognise clues in the passage and sounds in words. In Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils' rate of progress increases noticeably because the teachers expect a lot of their pupils. Teachers encourage them to think about what they have read and work out how authors keep readers' interest. This was very clear in one lesson where pupils discussed the poem "Silver" by Walter de la Mare. Pupils enjoy their learning because the tasks are interesting and challenging. One pupil summed this up by saying, "Miss, I love reading now. I can't get enough of it. I go to the library to read because it's quiet there." Other pupils agreed and most of them have also joined the library. Pupils know how to use the library and can find information for their work in subjects such as history and geography.

56 Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making satisfactory progress in most aspects of writing and are working within expected levels. Teachers give good opportunities for writing short stories, simple poems and descriptions. Pupils do not write well enough in other ways such as instructions, records, messages, notes and lists because there are fewer opportunities for them to practise. In Key Stage 2, teachers provide a wider range of opportunities for writing both in English and in other subjects such as history, geography and science, and pupils make good progress. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. In Year 4, pupils use writing prompts very well to compare poetry and to write a poem together. The teacher prepared them well for this challenging task and the result was an excellent class poem entitled "The Storm". In both key stages the good use of texts to provide models for writing helps pupils with structure and vocabulary. The range of writing increases in Years 5 and 6 and includes accounts, explanations, opinions and poems as well as newspaper reports and curriculum vitae. Teachers throughout the school systematically teach grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and handwriting. This has been a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Pupils develop their skills well and learn how to write accurately. In Year 6, very detailed teaching of active and passive verbs helps the pupils to make their writing more direct. Handwriting is well taught through the school and older pupils can write a legible, joined script. Pupils make satisfactory progress with their spelling because teachers show them how to learn new words and they practise regularly.

57 The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers make effective links between reading, writing and speaking and listening during the literacy hour to help pupils practise related skills in different ways. Lesson planning is detailed and because the aims are clear, pupils learn well. Teachers make good use of assessments of pupils' work to plan their next pieces of work. Good examples of this are when teachers alter the make up of groups to cater for pupils who have not achieved as expected. Pupils make regular gains in the knowledge and use of language because assessment of pupils' work is used very well. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well and make very good progress towards their targets in their individual education plans. Teachers in Key Stage 1 are now giving pupils a wider range of reading approaches including using the sounds letters make and this is helping to improve progress. In Key Stage 2, teachers extend this to encourage a well thought-out response to text as well as encouraging accuracy and fluency. A good example of this was a teacher successfully helping pupils to compare two poems with different

approaches to the same theme of darkness. Teachers work with learning support assistants very well to help lower attaining pupils and this has a direct impact on their learning. The school is giving extra support in the Year 3 class because a few boys behave immaturely and in one unsatisfactory lesson, slowed the pace of learning. All teachers expect pupils to achieve highly and they encourage them to succeed. Because of this, pupils in Key Stage 1 are making steady progress in reading and writing. In Key Stage 2, the challenging activities in reading and writing mean that pupils are making good progress overall.

58 The subject co-ordinator supports teachers very well and has very successfully helped to introduce the literacy strategy. She monitors the subject very well and has a very clear view of how well it is taught and how well the pupils learn. She uses her good subject knowledge to help teachers set challenging tasks for pupils. This has a very good effect on pupils' learning and particularly raises teachers' expectations of what higher attaining pupils can achieve. The school has bought many new books including a reading scheme. The pupils enjoy these and because they are enthusiastic, their learning is better.

MATHEMATICS

59 Since the last inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen dramatically but Key Stage 1 has not seen a similar improvement. Pupils' standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 compare very well with national results. In 1999, they were well above average and very high when compared with similar schools. The school's rate of improvement over 4 years was much faster than the national rate. The results for 2000 are not as high as 1999 but they remain above the national average and well above those of similar schools. In contrast, the 1999 end of Key Stage 1 results were well below the national average although they matched those of similar schools. The trend of improvement in Key Stage 1 has not kept pace with the national trend over the previous 4 years. The results for 2000 are below those of 1999.

60 The reasons for the difference between the key stage results are as follows: pupils start school with levels of attainment below those generally found. They make good progress in reception and Key Stage 1 but it does not fully show up in the standards they reach by the time they are seven. However, this is not the full story. The school has rapidly improved the way it assesses and works with pupils who find mathematics difficult. The first priority was in Key Stage 2 where the problem was worse and because the older pupils had less time left at St Brigid's to catch up. The school has improved pupils' attainment here by improving teaching. They use assessments of what pupils have learned in one lesson to improve the planning of the next and expect much more of higher attaining pupils. The same system is now taking root in Key Stage 1. Another reason for the difference in results is that although the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1, it is generally higher in Key Stage 2. Finally, the school explains that the dip in the 1998/99 Key Stage 1 results was due to an increase in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

61 The standards of attainment of pupils in the current Year 2 are below average although a minority are reaching the level expected. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs are making good progress in number work but often need some support in recognising and continuing number patterns beyond 10. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand that the value of coins and the number of them are not necessarily the same. Most have some knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and a few are beginning to talk about what they are doing using mathematical terms, for example, when they make estimates of length and use words like shorter and longer.

62 The standards of pupils' attainment in the current Year 6 are average and a significant minority are working at the higher level. All are using their skills and understanding well in all aspects of mathematics. They make sound progress in Year 3 and make very good progress in Years 4 to 6.

They are quick in recalling number facts and using them mentally to work out solutions. They are not as fast at seeing and explaining different ways of working sums out. They present their work very clearly and make very good progress in solving problems. In Year 6 these include designing a board game or conducting a pop music survey. Most can use mathematical terms such as factors and multiples confidently and accurately.

63 All teaching is at least satisfactory and almost all is better than this. In Years 2, 4, 5 and 6 it is very good or excellent. Teaching has been greatly influenced by implementing the daily mathematics lesson as part of the national numeracy strategy. Teachers use planning documents very well but do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology. Teachers plan to emphasise key points in each lesson, fit them into what pupils already know and assess how much they have understood. Teachers start lessons confidently by listing the lesson aims to the class. The most effective teaching makes sure that pupils know these by using simple words. This gets lessons off to a very good start and helps all pupils to pay attention and work hard. They answer confidently knowing that the school encourages everyone to try, even if sometimes they get things wrong. Learning support assistants play an important part in helping pupils keep in touch with the lesson by facing towards the teacher and listening closely. They also give another explanation quietly of what the teacher has said to a small group. This helps pupils who learn more slowly to make very good progress, to keep up with the pace of the lesson and gives them confidence to answer questions with the others.

64 When they work in groups, pupils work together very well. However, a few pupils in Year 3 find it difficult to concentrate and do not achieve as much as they could. Pupils usually share resources and discuss ideas with little fuss. During this time, the teachers skilfully work with each group and ask questions to find out how well they are learning. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and this gives them confidence to make learning fun and to ask more of higher attaining pupils. Teachers are well organised. If they have a learning support assistant, they plan together to support all the pupils. They use good resources to make sure pupils understand, as in a Year 5 lesson when the teacher, prompted by pupils' answers, pegged out decimal numbers in sequence on a "washing line". In the best lessons, pupils work quickly and accurately as in a Year 4 lesson when pupils of all abilities answered questions promptly and completed their individual work in good time. Throughout the lessons, pupils concentrate and have some fun with their "discoveries". For instance in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were comparing piles of coins and their different values. In surprise, one exclaimed "He's got well more".

65 Nearly all lessons finish well. In the best lessons, teachers carefully review with the pupils what they have learned by asking the key questions in their planning. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not allow enough time to go over the main points of the work thoroughly. Instead, pupils simply repeat the lesson aims and confirm they have understood.

66 The subject has been well managed for some years. This has improved the quality of teaching and learning. Staff have been well trained and their work is helped by a good policy and guidance on planning. The school monitors planning and teaching routinely and ways of making further improvements are agreed. All pupils' progress is scrutinised and those who need it are given additional support. Teachers agree targets for improvement with pupils and discuss these with their parents so that they can support them.

SCIENCE

67 The work of pupils in the current Year 6 continues the school's high standards of attainment. They are a big improvement since the last inspection when attainment was below average. Pupils' investigative skills have also improved. In 1999, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests were

well above the national average. The results were very high compared to those of similar schools. In 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level fell back slightly, but the percentage reaching the higher level rose. The results were still above the national average and well above those of similar schools. The work of the current Year 2 has also improved since the last inspection and pupils' standards of attainment now match the level expected. In 1999, the results of teacher assessment of pupils' attainment showed a similar picture.

68 Pupils make good gains in their learning as they progress through Key Stage 2. This is the result of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. Teachers evaluate pupils' work and alter their teaching plans to meet pupils' needs. They ensure that new work builds on what pupils already know and they gradually build up pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers now have good subject knowledge and they introduce pupils to specific subject vocabulary. Assessment procedures have been improved so that teachers have a clearer picture of what pupils have understood. They plan a variety of work and carefully target the support they give so that all pupils make good progress. In this way, the requirements of pupils with special educational needs, and those capable of higher attainment, are properly met. In the previous inspection, the progress of higher attaining pupils was unsatisfactory. This has improved and a steadily rising number of pupils attain the higher level in the national tests at the end of Year 6.

69 Teachers give pupils the opportunity to explore scientific ideas for themselves. For example, Year 6 pupils work in groups to find out how to separate sand, stones and salt that have been mixed in water. Pupils in Year 4 investigate whether boys or girls have the longer arms. Pupils respond well to the activities, are very well behaved and are keen to find out for themselves. Pupils develop their spiritual awareness through an appreciation of the wonder of the natural world. For example, Year 1 pupils have a class guinea pig that recently had a baby. Pupils work well together in groups and in pairs. They co-operate well with each other such as when Year 5 pupils carried out a fair test while taking one another's pulse rates. They put their mathematics skills to good use by taking the pulse rates three times to get a fair result. Then they used calculators to work out the average. In Key Stage 2, pupils are taught to record their work in a variety of ways, such as graphs and charts, and describe the methods they use. They have good presentation skills. Pupils use their good literacy skills well to record their work, but do not give clear explanations of the results.

70 In Years 1 and 2, pupils make steady gains in learning, but often cannot express their ideas clearly and their recording skills are limited. Teachers help pupils extend their vocabularies and give them a variety of ways of showing what they know. For example, Year 2 pupils make 'change wheels' to show the stages in a human's life. They also sequence pictures to show the changes that take place. One pupil showed his understanding of the life cycle of a butterfly by saying that the caterpillar "got painted" whilst in the cocoon.

71 The co-ordinator has worked with staff from other schools to produce a useful booklet of ideas for experiments. The subject is well co-ordinated with careful monitoring of lesson plans and pupils' work. There are good links with other subjects to extend pupils' personal, social and health education, for example through work on healthy diets and how to keep their bodies healthy through exercise. Teachers take pupils on visits to stimulate their interest and extend their experiences. They include trips to Jodrell Bank, the Eureka exhibition in Halifax and the Year 5 residential trip. Currently the school makes some use of computers to extend pupils' skills. CD ROMs are used to help pupils carry out their own research, for example into how the heart works. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use programs to display the results of experiments in graph form. There is scope for further development.

ART

72 Although very little teaching of art was seen during the inspection, other evidence shows that pupils make satisfactory progress through a range of skills using different media and materials. Key Stage 1 pupils are working within expected levels. Year 6 pupils are working within expected levels in drawing. Pupils systematically improve their skills by using different media, styles and techniques and teachers offer them opportunities to develop and practise. The current levels of attainment and rates of progress are an improvement since the last inspection.

73 In Key Stage 1, there are good examples of drawing, painting, collage, printing, textile work and modelling with various materials. In some very good work, Year 2 pupils skilfully used inks and paint on fabric. When making a Chinese dragon and a large colourful butterfly they used good collage techniques with fabric, card and paper.

74 In Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress with similar media. Year 4 pupils created a mask on fabric with a very striking use of shape, colour and line. Painting on clear plastic by Year 3 pupils highlighted brush strokes and use of colour to show texture and pattern well. Teachers give opportunities to paint and draw in the style of different artists and pupils learn to express ideas in different ways and try different techniques. A good example of this is the “Our Town” mural that pupils produced in the style of Lowry. This collaborative artwork successfully depicts St Brigid’s School and St Albert’s Church. Despite being in Lowry style, the pupils’ ideas show through because the teacher encouraged them to link the work to their experiences. In Year 6, the development of drawing skills is satisfactory. The teacher encourages the pupils to look carefully at figures and concentrate on how people move. Pupils then reconsidered their work and improved it without a feeling of failure.

75 Teaching is satisfactory. Lesson plans show systematic progression in art skills and opportunities for pupils to work with a range of media. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to evaluate and improve their work or to use information and communication technology. However, the use of the national planning guidance is beginning to help teachers to include this more often. Teachers make notes so that they know what pupils can do and how well they have achieved. Teachers encourage pupils to work together and they display pupils’ work well. This raises expectations and is helping to raise standards. A good example is the tile picture produced by Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils working together. Colour, line and texture of Van Gogh’s “Starry Night” have been used well to reproduce the scene. Other pupils have had their work exhibited in the Gallery in Huyton Library. These opportunities give a real incentive for pupils to achieve well.

76 The co-ordinator has attended numerous courses and this helps her to give good advice to colleagues. She has a good overview of the subject from monitoring displays and talking to teachers and knows what needs to be done to improve further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

77 The school has made very good progress in this subject since the last inspection. Teachers now have good guidance for their lessons and a good range of equipment for the pupils to use. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and teachers have been confident enough to enter the pupils in several national and local initiatives. They have been successful in these and they enrich the curriculum. It was not possible to see the work of Year 2 or Year 6 during the inspection and so no judgement can be made about their attainment and progress. Other pupils’ attainment is above that expected for their age, they all made good progress and relationships are excellent. In Year 1, pupils can use words and pictures to plan how to make model houses and they are beginning to choose the right tools for the job. In Year 3, they know about everyday objects that use air pressure and understand the importance of good seals to maintain pressure. In Year 4, higher attaining pupils

understand why seams are necessary both to provide a neat finish but also to strengthen the structure of the purses or wallets they were designing.

78 The quality of teaching is good and based on clear planning. The key learning points listed for several lessons help pupils build up a chain of skills linked to designing, making and evaluating. It also helps them see what the end product will be and how they will complete it. In this way, their interest is stirred and maintained. For instance, Year 1 pupils talked with growing confidence to the whole class about the strength of their fixed hinges and how they would link them to support the walls of their model houses. Teachers encourage pupils to work very well together to solve problems. This happened in Year 3 when they made improvements to their pneumatic systems. Similarly, teachers have high expectations of pupils' attention to detail and an example of this was in Year 4's careful design drawings of purses and wallets. The teachers' lesson planning sheets have spaces to record pupils' progress and they use these assessments to alter other lesson plans to match the pace of pupils' learning.

79 The school has a widely based and outward looking design and technology curriculum. There are very good links with St Helens College on a building structures and materials project. Pupils are involved in projects with industry and their work is linked to other subjects such as science and art. Year 1 pupils completed a project about an alien in a box. They designed and tried out ways of moving the box over different surfaces including the sand of Ainsdale beach and the tarmac of the playground. They modelled aliens and visited a local college to have them vacuum formed. Older pupils took part in a construction toy competition. They are continuing work begun with younger pupils with their current involvement with Ford to develop a community project sensory garden in the school grounds. This range of activities enlivens the curriculum and makes sure that design and technology skills have practical applications. The school is using a mixture of subject planning guidance well. It plans to review its effectiveness and the reduced amount of time allocated to the subject during this year. The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator has built up a good level of resources through involvement in development planning. She has provided good lesson planning guidance and monitors lesson plans. She sets a good personal example and has encouraged the development of a wide range of links with other organisations. These have led to awards and publications.

GEOGRAPHY

80 Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of both key stages have been maintained since the last inspection and are similar to those expected nationally. Pupils steadily increase their geographical skills, such as in mapping, as they progress through the school. Fieldwork allows them to practise their skills in practical ways. They enjoy first hand experiences and these stimulate their interest. Pupils respond well to the range of opportunities and have a lively interest in the world around them. This is fostered well with younger pupils when they take the school teddy bear on their holidays. He sends back postcards and pupils plot the locations on a world map. Teaching is well planned and teachers effectively use assessment information gained during lessons to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

81 The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and moral education, for example, through the work on protecting the environment. The school has been awarded Eco School status in recognition of its work. Pupils make sure that lights and dripping taps are turned off to ensure that valuable resources are not wasted. Pupils also consider ways of improving the local area. In Year 5, pupils are carrying out a traffic survey. They are using their evidence to decide whether or not a local road should be closed to traffic. Pupils in Year 4 have very clear ideas about how to improve their playground with additional facilities.

82 The amount of time allowed for the subject is below the minimum recommended because of the time devoted to literacy and numeracy. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they use the

lesson time they have well and the quality of teaching is good. They block it together so that they cover a variety of well-planned topics in depth and they include trips and visitors to school to reinforce learning well. For example, pupils study the local River Alt and wardens visit the school. This river was very polluted and pupils have worked to improve it. On the Year 5 residential trip they study a contrasting area in Wales. The co-ordinator monitors planning and work covered, so that she has a good overview. She plans a review to modify the newly adopted scheme of work to ensure that an appropriate range of work is covered.

83 There are growing links with other subjects to make good use of time and extend pupils' learning. For example, in Year 5, pupils use their mathematical skills to make graphs to illustrate the findings of their traffic surveys. Last year, Year 6 pupils used the Internet and CD ROMs to find out information about the River Nile during their work on Egypt.

HISTORY

84 Pupils' standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection. They are similar to those expected nationally. Teaching and the quality of learning are both good and the subject is well led. History makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of their own culture, especially through the wide range of visits. These give them a very clear understanding of what life was like in the past. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they convey their obvious interest in the subject well.

85 The amount of time devoted to history is below the national recommended figure. As a result, pupils' progress is satisfactory and the range of knowledge that they gain is limited, although they cover the aspects that are studied very thoroughly. Visitors to the school share their experiences and visits to places of interest improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Pupils respond well to these opportunities and are keen to find out for themselves and talk about their discoveries. Lessons are well organised and teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn. Teachers use their marking of work to adjust their lesson plans so that their teaching is better matched to what pupils need to go over again. Teachers use books, posters and items from the past to enliven their lessons. In addition, staff are beginning to introduce the Internet and CD ROMs as sources of additional information. As a result, pupils understand the wide range of sources of evidence available.

86 Pupils gain a clear sense of the past and how things change, beginning with changes that have taken place in their own lives. They confidently talk about what they can do now, compared with when they were younger. In Year 1, pupils visit Wigan Pier and discover what a Victorian school was like by experiencing a "washday". In Year 3, pupils have a very good idea of what life was like for evacuees during the Second World War. This is developed well through the visit from a lady who was evacuated. In addition, the Year 5 class visited Tatton Park where they took part in role-play including blacking fire grates. They were shown where evacuees slept and they helped to prepare the type of food they ate. These first hand experiences make a very vivid impression on pupils and contribute well to their understanding of the past.

87 The school has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work and the co-ordinator is monitoring teachers' planning to keep track of the work covered. The school will review the coverage and make changes as necessary. Pupils' research skills are steadily developed and reinforced during each topic. The time available is blocked together so that the subject is studied in depth. The work is very carefully planned and it captures pupils' interest well. Teachers also put together history with other subjects, such as in a Year 3 literacy lesson when the text was an eyewitness account of a Second World War bombing raid. Pupils in Year 6 are researching major

events in the decades since 1948. They are planning to make a booklet for each decade, to be used by other pupils. Currently, they are practising their note taking skills as they carry out their research. They are beginning to think about how to present their information to others and express themselves well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

88 There has been considerable improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. Now, pupils in all year groups are making good progress during lessons and over time. Pupils in Year 2 are attaining standards that match those expected for their age. However, it takes time to strengthen all the skills necessary for pupils to reach the standards expected by the end of Year 6. The resources have improved since the last inspection, but some computers have only been set up very recently. Staff are still becoming familiar with them and older pupils have not had the opportunity to extend their skills sufficiently over a long enough period. As a result, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are below those expected nationally.

89 The main reason for the good progress in lessons is increased teacher confidence. Considerable training has been provided and more is planned to meet individual teachers' needs. All teachers support each other well and share skills with colleagues. This was noticeable during the inspection when staff helped each other use the newly networked computers for whole-class lessons. All classes now include information and communication technology lessons on their weekly timetables. Teachers use the time well to train the pupils in new skills one week and practise them in different situations the next. Lessons are well organised and teachers give clear explanations and instructions. They manage pupils well when giving demonstrations to the whole class. Teachers use assessments made during lessons to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

90 The school is using the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work well to introduce new learning and build on what pupils already know and understand. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are currently covering work that is planned for younger pupils. This is sensible because they have not had enough previous opportunities to gain the skills necessary to tackle more complex work. This is why standards are not at the level expected. Also many pupils do not have a computer at home and are very dependent on what the school provides.

91 Pupils are extremely keen to use computers, calculators, spell checkers and the digital camera. They work very well together in pairs and co-operate with a minimum of fuss when they group round computers whilst class teachers and other pupils demonstrate what to do. The distribution of computers across the school is now satisfactory. However, the school lacks the equipment to teach control technology in Years 5 and 6. The school has made suitable alternative arrangements by covering this element during the Year 6 residential trip.

92 Although the use of information and communication technology has improved considerably since the last inspection, there is room for further improvement. The school is making increasing use of word processing. Year 3 pupils are learning to change the font in different ways to give the required effect in their writing. Year 5 pupils are writing letters and imaginative diaries in history. Key Stage 2 pupils are now starting to retrieve information from the Internet, but the school does not yet have access to e-mail. CD ROMs are used to supply information, for example about the human body, but the range of software is limited. The school is waiting for developments within the local education authority to give them access to more software through their network. Pupils do not use computers enough to process and display data in science, mathematics and geography. .

93 The subject is well co-ordinated by the headteacher. She has a very good overview and is well placed to manage the various funds for staff training and resources. The school development plan clearly identifies appropriate priorities for the development of the subject.

MUSIC

94 Pupils make satisfactory progress in music and attain within nationally expected levels at the end of both key stages. This is because teachers offer a range of opportunities for them to play, sing, make music and talk about it. The school is using national planning guidance now and there are more opportunities for pupils to make their own music and listen to a wider range. This provision has improved since the last inspection.

95 Pupils in Key Stage 1 respond well to a conductor and are learning to control instruments well. For instance, one class could play selected instruments loudly and quietly, quickly and slowly following another pupil's signals. They understand and enjoy the fact that music can be made to suit different moods. One pupil summed up the feeling by saying, "It's great Miss, you can make a noise but it's a good noise to listen to."

96 Key Stage 2 pupils build on skills and experiences in playing and listening. They learn to play instruments with greater control and develop their ideas. Teachers use a variety of resources to make sure that pupils continue to learn how to sing, play and listen through interesting activities. In Year 6, the teacher challenged pupils to listen to "Carnival of the Animals" by Saint Saens, talk about how it made them feel and recognise how a composer uses melody and tempo to convey feelings and meaning. Many pupils can explain that the way the sound is organised gives them a picture the composer meant. Several pupils commented that excerpts could be different animals but one summed the task up by saying, "It's what music does, it makes you feel your own feelings." The teacher encourages careful listening and response and values pupils' ideas and they feel confident in discussing their reactions.

97 Teaching in both key stages is satisfactory. Teachers plan very well and assess what pupils have learned at the end of each unit of work. This helps them to track progress and to know what pupils have achieved. Teachers use resources well to develop understanding and skills, for instance when they teach control and dynamics. In Key Stage 2, teachers use questions very well to make pupils think more carefully about different kinds of music, recognise elements and express their feelings. This involves pupils and encourages them to learn more about music. Teachers enable pupils to take part in events outside school such as the "Celebration of Singing." This lets pupils to come together with other schools to take part in musical activities. They develop confidence and become more enthusiastic to achieve well.

98 The subject is well led. The co-ordinator has used the national planning guidance well to link with the school's own planning. This has made it easier for teachers to plan their lessons and widen the range of musical activities. She provides good support. She helps staff to plan, organises training and arranges for visiting specialists in guitar and keyboard from Knowsley Performing Arts to work with pupils. She has a plan for developing the subject that shows she has a very clear idea of what needs to be done.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

99 Developing physical education has not been a major school priority recently but it has made steady progress since the last inspection. Only some aspects of physical education were seen during the inspection, although all are taught. Pupils in Year 2 attain highly in dance and those in Year 6 reach the expected level in swimming. Other evidence shows that a minority of Year 5 and 6 pupils attain well in competitive games. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing games' skills and in swimming. All pupils make good progress in developing social skills such as sharing equipment, playing

fairly and appreciating the efforts of others. They do not make enough progress in judging their work and making improvements. They make good progress in understanding the effects of exercise on their bodies. The rates of progress are different because teachers stress some aspects of the subject and not others.

100 Although there are significant differences in the quality of teaching, it is satisfactory overall in the lessons seen. One was very good, most were at least satisfactory and one lesson was unsatisfactory. The variation comes from teachers' subject knowledge. The better teaching is confident and asks a lot of all the pupils. They are kept active and involved throughout the lesson and are encouraged to improve because the teacher gives very good coaching points. There were good examples of this in Year 2 and Year 5 lessons. In response to music, Year 2 pupils progressed very well developing control over their balances and sequences of movement while interpreting different moods. They then went on to use the parachute to link different movements as a whole class. In Year 5 they made good progress in the ball skills of passing and close control. Where there were some weaknesses in other lessons, pupils did not have enough to do, coaching instructions were too complicated and occasionally, pupils were not encouraged enough. In these lessons, progress was slower than it should have been. All teachers have good class control and make sure that pupils worked safely. Their plans are very detailed and thorough. Pupils are generally keen on physical education and respond well to good teaching and encouragement. They share equipment sensibly and work very well together in groups. They compete enthusiastically but fairly. They do not make fun of their friends' mistakes and appreciate that everyone is trying to get better.

101 The physical education co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and sets a very good example to other teachers. She has prepared thorough lesson plans to guide teachers with less subject knowledge. She has overseen the development of the subject that includes national initiatives such as Top Sport. She has worked well with enthusiastic colleagues to develop competitive games against local schools and has helped coach teams to success. During the inspection week, older pupils competed in an indoor athletics competition and finished a creditable second against some much larger schools. Parents support their children for instance when they represent the school and one parent coaches football with the younger pupils. The co-ordinator is planning to provide further staff training when time permits. The school makes full use of its good facilities and equipment and of the nearby sports centre.