

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ST MARTIN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Murdishaw, Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111380

Headteacher: Mr PD Hallman

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Alvy  
25376

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 October 2000

Inspection number: 225399

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St Martin's Lane  
Murdishaw  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
Postcode: WA7 6HZ

Telephone number: 01928 711207

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Fr B Forshaw

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Inspector's Number	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs L Alvy Registered inspector	25376	Foundation Stage Design and Technology	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Mr R Watts Lay inspector	9399		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr F Carruthers Team inspector	21285	Mathematics Information technology Music	How well is the school led and managed?
Mr D Earley Team inspector	18344	English Art Physical Education Special Educational Needs Equal Opportunities	
Mr D Walters Team Inspector	17857	Science History Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
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Alexandra House  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an average size Catholic Primary School for boys and girls aged 4-11 years. It is situated on the Murdishaw Estate that is designated by the local authority as an area of 'high family stress'. The area has suffered from decline over the past 25 years and ranks in the top ten per cent of authorities in levels of deprivation and unemployment. The building is shared with the church and consequently the school is central to the community it serves. Since the last inspection the school's roll has reduced by a third. This is a local feature affecting schools across the Halton Education Authority. Currently there are 203 pupils on roll. Thirty-one pupils are on the register of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, one pupil had a statement of special educational need. There is little pre-school provision locally although children now have the opportunity to attend the recently formed St. Martin's Pre-School. Children enter the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Their attainment when they enter the school varies widely but overall it is very low. Thirty five per cent of pupils have free school meals, which is above the national average, though a higher percentage than this are eligible.

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

This is a good school. Standards are rising after an unsettled period of staff absence and redundancy. This is due to the successful initiatives put in place by a strong management team led by the newly appointed headteacher. The quality of teaching is good and pupils are set challenging but realistic targets to improve their work. School self-evaluation is very effective and the headteacher, governors and staff work well together to provide a clear vision for the future development of the school. The school's expenditure is high, though in the context of its good teaching and improving standards it provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards are rising and pupils achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and the management of the pupils is very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are included fully in the life of the school and make good progress.
- Standards of behaviour are good throughout the school.
- The school has a very caring ethos and the pupils' spiritual development is very good.
- The school takes very effective action to meet its challenging targets.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors work together effectively to provide good leadership for the school.
- There are good links with parents and they have very positive views about the school.

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

- Further development of the recent improvements in pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' levels of competency in information technology.
- Opportunities for subject co-ordinators to monitor teaching and learning to identify what is working well and what is not successful.

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

The school has identified the improvements that are needed through its own evaluations.

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

The school has made sound improvements since the last inspection in 1996. There is now a senior management team in place and its members meet regularly to manage and organise the school. They consult with and report to the governing body and staff and are the key means by which plans for the school's development are drafted. School development planning is very good as a result. The development of the co-ordinators role is satisfactory. They carry out audits of their subject in respect of policies, planning and standards. They need to develop their expertise in monitoring teaching to identify what works and what is not so successful. Good opportunities are now provided for the pupils to develop their understanding and awareness of other cultures. Satisfactory systems for monitoring punctuality are now in place.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	C	C	E	D
Mathematics	D	C	D	B
Science	D	A	E	D

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

The results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 1999 indicated that when compared with those of all schools nationally, standards were:

- well below average in English and science;
- below average in mathematics.

When compared with those of similar schools, standards were:

- above the national average in mathematics;
- below the national average in English and science.

Inspection judgement is that by the age of eleven:

- standards are now in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science.

Performance data and a range of evidence shows that results of the tests and tasks at eleven have improved. The school's own analysis of the most recent tests (2000) show significant improvement in English, mathematics and science. Standards have risen because of the good quality of teaching, the assessment of pupils' work in order to set challenging but realistic targets for improvement and the effectiveness of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Standards in information technology, art and design, design and technology, geography and history are broadly in line with those typically expected of eleven-year-olds. Standards in physical education are above those typically expected. There was insufficient evidence to report on attainment in music. Religious education is inspected separately in another inspection.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Virtually all pupils enjoy coming to school. The majority participate well in the activities provided, are interested in their work and persevere with tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of	Good. Most pupils behave well or very well most of the time. There

classrooms	are few examples of unsatisfactory behaviour.
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Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils' relationships with all adults in the school and between pupils are good. A noticeable feature of many lessons is the strong rapport between adults and pupils. Pupils accept the responsibilities offered and speak very positively about the newly formed school council.
Attendance	Attendance is below the national average but has improved considerably from last year. A significant minority of pupils are a few minutes late each day.

## 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.*

In 25 per cent of the lessons the teaching was very good and sometimes excellent; in 80 per cent it was good or better. In 20 per cent it was satisfactory. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. The quality of teaching is good across the school and very good teaching is to be found at all stages. English and mathematics are taught particularly well through the daily lessons of literacy and numeracy. Teachers adjust their planning so that work is well matched to the pupils' needs. Some very good teaching in science, art and physical education was also seen. Consistent features of lessons throughout the school include effectively planned work and very well managed pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and they make good progress.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Good provision is made for the youngest children and literacy and numeracy. The curriculum for physical education is particularly effective as the sporting activities provided after school give pupils extra time to practise their skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, because the special educational needs co-ordinator, staff and learning support assistants work very hard to make sure that the pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision. The very clear expectations of the headteacher and the staff encourage pupils to develop good moral and social attitudes. Spiritual development is very good and is firmly based in the happy, caring Catholic community that is St. Martin's School. Cultural development is also good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Effectively. Strengths lie in the well-planned entry procedures for the youngest children, the very good procedures for the promotion of good behaviour and the use of assessment to effectively support pupils' learning.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents have a high opinion of the school. The school encourages parents to be partners in their children's learning and works increasingly hard to involve parents more, particularly when the children start school. Several parents give valuable assistance escorting children swimming, in the classroom and on trips. Annual reports give good information although they are inconsistent in providing written targets to aim for in the following year. Regular and attractive newsletters keep parents well informed about what is happening in school.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and the senior management together provide effective leadership of the school. They are committed to raising standards further through the very effective school development plan.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	To a good standard. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas to develop. They are committed to helping it to get even better and support the school well in a joint determination to raise standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school's analysis of its work and the standards it achieves is thorough. It has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes good use of the budget and specific grants to improve pupils' achievements. Funds are used effectively to provide equal opportunities for pupils with special educational needs.

The headteacher, staff and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Results are effectively evaluated and action taken to meet targets is good. The school improvement plan provides a very good tool for future development. The principles of best value are applied effectively. Levels of staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Good use is made of specific grants to achieve the school aims.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children like school.</li> <li>Teaching is good; children make good progress.</li> <li>Behaviour is good.</li> <li>The school works closely with parents; it is easy to approach with problems.</li> <li>The school is well managed and led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant issues were raised.</li> </ul>

The positive views of parents are fully supported by the judgements of the inspection.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds indicate the following:
  - The performance in English was well below the national average for all schools and below the national average of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.
  - The performance in mathematics was below the national average. Performance was above the national average of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.
  - The performance in science was well below the national average and below the average of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.

The findings of the inspection show that by the age of 11 the performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science is in line with the national average.

The results of the national tests in 1999 for seven-year-olds indicate the following:

- Standards were well below the national average for all schools in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Compared with those of similar schools, standards were in line with the national average in writing and mathematics and below it in reading.

Teacher assessments in 1999 in science showed that standards among seven-year-olds were below the national average.

Teacher assessments in 1999 in speaking and listening showed that the performance of the pupils was broadly in line with the national average.

Inspection judgement is that standards by the age of seven are:

- in line with the national average in speaking and listening, reading and writing;
- below average in mathematics;
- in line with the average in science.

2. The reason for the difference in the 1999 results and the inspection findings can be directly attributed to the school's analysis of test results and assessment data in order to set targets to improve the pupils' performance. The upward trend can also be attributed to improvements in the quality of teaching, raised expectations and the hard work of the school after extended periods of absence among the staff. The school's own analysis of the results of the tests for eleven-year-olds this year (2000) provides evidence that significant improvements have been made, for example in relation to similar types of schools in all three core subjects. Similarly in the test results for seven-year-olds standards have risen and show improvements in writing and in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level (Level 3).

3. Factors to take into account when judging standards are the very low attainment of the majority of children entering the school and the increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs. Very few children have experience in a pre-school setting and the children on entry to the reception class represent a very wide range of ability. Early assessments show that whilst the attainment of a few children is broadly representative of that expected of four-year-olds the majority of children entering the school are consistently well below the level expected for children of a similar age. The recent analysis of early assessments indicates some improvements particularly in personal, social and emotional development that the school feels may be attributed to

involvement in the recent extension of pre-school provision. Certainly the 1999 early assessments and the recent inspection findings corroborate this.

4. Consistently good teaching in the reception class means that children achieve well although they are unlikely to attain the level expected in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development, or in knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the foundation stage. In personal and social development, physical and creative development achievement for the majority of children is higher and they are on target to achieve the level typically expected.

5. By the time pupils reach the age of eleven their standards of performance in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and information and communications technology are satisfactory. In physical education standards are above those normally expected by the end of the key stage. This is because of the particularly good start they get in the reception class and the range of sporting activities offered other than during formal lessons. Insufficient evidence was available to make judgements in music in either key stage.

6. Teachers' good subject knowledge in English and their good teaching of basic skills, such as spelling, increase pupils' understanding among the seven-year-olds. This bears fruit later when pupils in Year 6, for example, write well-constructed letters. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively implemented and is helping to raise attainment. Pupils generally make good use of their literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. In Year 2 they carefully label the materials they need to make a puppet and older pupils record scientific experiments accurately although their use of more adventurous vocabulary is limited. Computer programs are used effectively to extend pupils' literacy skills. For example, younger pupils use language programs to support their work in reading and spelling and older pupils communicate by e-mail or interrogate a search engine for information via the Internet. There are sometimes missed opportunities to develop skill and independence in the use of the library and to further develop speaking and listening skills, through subjects such as history and geography for example.

7. In mathematics, pupils achieve well, particularly given their low mathematical attainment when they start school. In 2000 standards rose significantly as a result of good teaching and the effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Detailed target setting after careful analysis of assessments resulted in successful achievement of the school targets for 2000. Continued improvement is also reflected in the current Year 6. In the 1999 tests for seven-year-olds the girls' performance was better than that of the boys. This is not evident in the current work or in the latest test results. Numeracy is used satisfactorily in other subjects, for example in history and geography it is used effectively to record information.

8. In science, standards have improved since the last inspection and teacher assessments show that more pupils reach the expected level for their age. This can be directly attributed to the good use of assessment information and consistently good standards in teaching, particularly in experimental and investigative science.

9. Information technology is used effectively in lessons and teachers plan to use software programs to support teaching in other subjects. Pupils' achievements across the school are generally good and by Year 6 they use a range of applications successfully. Attainment at the end of both key stages is of the levels expected of pupils aged seven and eleven. The school is aware that in order to reach greater levels of competency the detailed action plan needs to be swiftly put in place.

10. Although pupils with special educational needs achieve standards below those generally expected for their age, they make good progress during lessons and over time in all subjects of the curriculum. Assessments are used effectively to identify and provide suitable work for pupils. Where individual education plans are needed, these are very clearly aimed at specific areas of learning so that pupils' progress is good. Clear and detailed records are kept of pupils' progress to enable work to be based on what has gone before. Currently the number of pupils with special

educational needs does not adversely affect overall achievement. This has not been the case in the past. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants as their work is effectively matched to their ability.

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

11. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. In the questionnaire conducted before the inspection, a large majority of parents agreed strongly that their children enjoyed school; none disagreed. Pupils start the day in an orderly way although some are a few minutes late. This is because of heavy traffic that often delays those coming by car or bus.

12. Children in the reception class have made a good start and are showing excitement at the new experiences offered to them. Routines are effectively established in the reception class thanks to the very good teamwork between the class teacher and the well-qualified support assistant. Teachers have a very good rapport with the children based on good humour, positive behaviour management and effective organisation, which mean the children are happy and successful in their learning. With sensitive support and adult guidance children try hard to succeed and work alongside each other harmoniously.

13. In lessons in the rest of the school, particularly when pupils are stimulated by good or better teaching, pupils show that they want to benefit from and contribute to their learning. The teachers can start the lessons promptly because all pupils are keen to 'get on with it'. Most pupils work hard when asked and strive to solve problems for themselves. Sometimes, however, teachers need to work very hard to raise the level of interest of a minority who sometimes have difficulty in concentrating. Some pupils are too ready to seek help rather than persist. A large number of pupils participate in extra-curricular activities offered and pupils are generally willing to do jobs when asked.

14. Pupils' behaviour is generally good, though the school accepts that this is not as good as at the time of the previous inspection. However, the staff as a whole work hard to maintain good behaviour, and the orderly nature of school life is a tribute to their success with some pupils who have known difficulties. In most lessons a quiet word is all that is necessary to keep pupils focused on their activity; teachers need to spend little time on this and can concentrate fully on their teaching. This has a positive impact resulting in the good rate of learning seen in the majority of lessons. In a few classes, some pupils exhibit minor misbehaviour, such as talking at the same time as the teacher, although this is swiftly dealt with. One pupil was excluded for two short periods last year.

15. Pupils behave well as they move around the school, as they eat their lunch and in assemblies. Pupils generally play well together in the playgrounds, the vast majority showing consideration for others. Pupils have the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind school rules and accept their validity. Whilst vandalism of the site can be a problem, this is external and pupils treat the things they work with and the property of others with care.

16. The personal development of pupils and the relationships within the school are good. Pupils with special educational needs co-operate well with teachers and other pupils and have the same opportunities for personal development as others. Pupils accept responsibilities offered and speak very positively about the school council established last term. The strong rapport between adults and pupils is a noticeable feature of many lessons. Pupils' relationships with all adults in the school and between pupils are good. Within lessons, pupils generally show respect for the views of others although in a few cases teachers have to remind pupils about calling out. In general though, pupils' develop good habits such as putting their hands up when they want to speak.

17. During playtime and lunchtime pupils of all ages show respect for each other. Capable and unobtrusive midday supervisory assistants encourage and support the pupils so that there are few

minor incidents of conflict, either deliberate or accidental. Within lessons pupils work to support each other in pairs, discussing problems. Working as a team is less common but very good examples were seen in physical education and sports. Pupils recognise that different ways of life and beliefs exist and accept the equality of all and the right to choose their own way of life, within the constraints of consideration to others. No incidents of racism, bullying or social exclusion were observed during the inspection. Pupils confirmed that serious bullying is rare, although petty name-calling and teasing happens sometimes. They were satisfied that incidents are handled with sensitivity and rigour by the school.

18. The overall attendance last year was below the national average for primary schools. However, this represented a good improvement on the previous year, reflecting the school's efforts to encourage pupils to attend. There was little unauthorised absence, although the figure is understated because long holidays taken in term time are incorrectly authorised. Although around ten per cent of pupils arrive after the official start time, most are in class by the time work begins. At the time of the previous inspection, serious lateness of a small number of families was affecting their education. This was a key issue for the school to improve. They have done so satisfactorily.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

19. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and is never less than satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection and a tribute to the teachers' hard work. Standards in teaching have been maintained throughout a very difficult period of senior staff absence and redundancy since the last inspection. Improvements have also taken place because the school has introduced a systematic programme to identify and develop effective teaching. This has helped to support the rising standards and pupils' learning opportunities.

20. In 25 per cent of the lessons the teaching was very good and sometimes excellent; in 80 percent it was good or better; in 20 per cent it was satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The teaching was good in both key stages in English, mathematics, science, information technology and physical education. It was satisfactory in design and technology, geography and history. It was not possible to assess the quality of teaching in art and music as not enough lessons were seen in these subjects.

21. A consistent feature of the best teaching seen is the creation of an excellent working atmosphere. Lessons clearly set the standards expected from all the pupils, so that learning is productive through each stage. A quietly spiritual but efficient and effective start to the day is supported by an excellent rapport with the children. There is a no-nonsense but sensitive approach to the management of behaviour. Time is not wasted and confident teaching means that pupils of all abilities make progress. The main features of the good teaching are the very effective use of praise and encouragement coupled with humour. The lesson is presented in a lively and interesting way and pupils are effectively motivated to give of their very best. The consistent use of assessment gives the teacher a clear diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' work. Within the satisfactory teaching strengths lie in the lesson planning and management of pupils, although learning objectives are not shared as clearly sometimes leaving pupils unsure of the tasks they are to carry out.

22. The quality of teaching for the youngest children is good overall. This has been maintained since the last inspection, although planning for independent learning has improved. For example, some very good teaching was seen in a physical education lesson where the teacher's secure subject knowledge, very good management and skilful intervention during challenging tasks gave the pupils a very good start. Lessons are thoroughly planned for groups and individuals, resulting in work that is well matched to their needs. The teacher and assistant work effectively together so that the children feel secure and interested in their tasks. The children's work is carefully assessed and supported by useful marking of work. Both are used effectively to plan what to teach next.

23. Teachers' knowledge across most subjects is secure. In science, for example teaching has improved since the last inspection as a result of improved subject knowledge, although marking does not always indicate what pupils need to do to next. In history and geography, however progress towards higher attainment is restricted. This is due to the lack of planned opportunities for pupils to develop reasoned opinions through independent research and discussion. When this did occur it was successful. For example in a history lesson planning included younger pupils interviewing their grandparents. In a Year 6 geography lesson pupils developed their ability to use specific vocabulary associated with river features and reasoned answers to develop knowledge and understanding about economic activity along the River Mersey.

24. The introduction of the national frameworks for both literacy and numeracy supports the successful teaching of basic skills. Throughout the school consistent features of good lessons include well-organised, effectively planned work and very good management of pupils. This means that teachers create the right atmosphere in which to share the objectives of the lesson; there are clear expectations from the outset and a good amount of learning takes place as a result. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities and because most teachers recap on work previously completed pupils make good progress from week to week. In English particularly work is marked regularly and used to encourage pupils to identify and set targets for their own learning. On-going assessment is also used effectively to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and is often used to revise planning. Teachers follow a similar structure to that used in planning for the literacy and numeracy lessons in other subjects. This has proved particularly effective when teachers share lesson objectives in the whole-class introductions to lessons. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to recap and discuss work at the end. Where this is done regularly it makes a very positive contribution to developing speaking and listening skills.

25. The school is very careful to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are met. Teachers prepare work that is carefully planned to suit the abilities of all pupils so that they are challenged to extend their learning. All pupils have their full entitlement to the curriculum. All staff involved in supporting pupils with special educational needs co-operate well in ensuring that individual education plans are closely related to pupils' needs. Planning is good and work is prepared which is suitable for pupils' abilities as a result. This enhances their learning and ensures that work is closely built on what has gone before. There is good liaison between teachers and classroom assistants and their work is generally good. The school is aware of the need to provide further professional development to enhance the work. Occasionally during whole-class sessions classroom assistants are underused. The school has good links with appropriate support agencies and their advice is used effectively to plan pupils' learning.

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

26. The school has a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes good provision for the literacy and numeracy initiatives, although not as much emphasis has been placed on subjects such as music as a result. As reported at the last inspection, provision for physical education and extra-curricular sport is good with strong support from teachers and volunteers who give their time willingly for the benefit of the pupils.

27. The provision for the youngest pupils at the foundation stage is good and follows the nationally recommended areas for learning. The curriculum is effective in providing an appropriate balance between the more formal activities associated with teaching the basic skills and opportunities for talk, enquiry and play. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when there was an over-emphasis on the formal aspects of the curriculum. The children are well prepared to meet the demands of the National Curriculum, particularly in personal, social and emotional education.

28. The school is very careful to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal opportunity to take part in all aspects of its life and work. It makes appropriate provision for talented and more able pupils as well as for those with learning difficulties. For example, by linking with the High School the school provided extension activities and by increasing the number of non-fiction books encouraged boys' reading. There is an appropriate balance between support requiring withdrawal of pupils from class and work within classes. Statements of special educational need are clearly targeted and up to date; they fulfil the requirements of the Code of Practice.

29. There is satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education and its development is clearly identified in the school's curriculum planning. It is well promoted through a variety of curricular areas, for example the importance of a healthy diet and the unhealthy aspects of cigarette smoking are dealt with in science. Work on self-esteem and understanding how individual behaviour affects other people is dealt with effectively in the 'Here I Am' scheme. There are missed opportunities, for example in science and geography, to research social issues such as air pollution and new industrial sites and too few planned occasions for pupils to develop speaking skills on topical issues as part of their preparation to play an active role as citizens. The governing body has approved an appropriate policy on sex education and the harmful effect of misusing drugs, as part of the science scheme. Links with the next phase of education are good. The local high school has effectively supported work in mathematics for a gifted pupil and provided in-service science training for primary schools. Links with the church and the local Catholic community are very strong. Pupils and parents attend mass regularly at the church that is based in the school.

30. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy throughout the school. Lessons follow the recommended frameworks effectively, which is a significant reason for improvements in national test results. In mathematics lessons, teachers use the initial session to develop pupils' speed in making accurate calculations in mental arithmetic, emphasise the importance of using mathematical vocabulary and use the plenary session well at the conclusion of each lesson. These opportunities make an important contribution to the pupils' progress. Evidence during the inspection shows that the structure of literacy and numeracy lessons is being adopted in other subjects, such as science, with positive effects on pupils' attainment and attitude.

31. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are good. Boys and girls have opportunities to be involved in a variety of sports, such as netball and soccer, often competing in tournaments with other schools. Provision in music is less strong than it has been in other years, but there are opportunities for pupils to widen their musical experiences, in guitar lessons for example. Older pupils have the opportunity for adventurous activities through a residential visit to Fairbourne and to take part in other visits such as the Millennium Dome.

32. Teachers have worked hard to improve their long, medium and short term planning, which covers the provision for ability groups in most classes based on the analysis of assessment information. This is having a positive impact on improving pupils' attainment and progress. There is a clear picture of what has to be taught in each year group, although the setting of challenging tasks for the more able pupils is inconsistent. Where these pupils are given some independence to use their skills and knowledge they make good progress, as in a Year 2 science lesson, where pupils reported back to the class using a high level of vocabulary for their age. The school curriculum caters well for pupils with special educational needs, who are taught the full range of subjects. There is regular and effective support from classroom assistants, who work with the teachers to ensure that such pupils work towards the targets identified in the individual education plans.

33. Provision for spiritual development is very good. From entry into school the youngest children are encouraged sensitively to develop a respect for their own beliefs as well as the needs and feelings of others. The development of good relationships, confidence, independence and enjoyment is very effectively planned. During a music lesson, for example, the staff's painstaking encouragement meant that the very new pupils co-operated with each other well and showed enjoyment and perseverance with their work.

34. Class and school assemblies provide an appropriate time for reflection; for example younger pupils learned about the importance of a name, and in a class assembly a boy was delighted to talk about his birthday. The class assemblies have a suitably personal approach and are successful in helping to create a sense of class togetherness and responsibility. The school provides a strong Christian environment, which promotes spiritual development very effectively.

35. Poetry and music are used well as means of expressing feelings and thoughts, helping to present a wider dimension to spirituality. Singing together in assembly is good and pupils unselfconsciously sing their hearts out. During these moments the adults, through appropriate choice of hymns or songs, provide an effective lead so that pupils demonstrate much pleasure. The influence of the 'Here I Am' scheme and the quiet act of prayer are providing good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the world around them and the part they can play. Expressing thoughts as prayers has resulted in the school producing a published book of 'Prayers for the Millennium'.

36. Provision for promoting pupils' moral development is good. The school gives a good lead in developing a sense of right and wrong. Members of staff promote this well and deal with pupils in a reasoned and thoughtful manner. Consistent guidelines for behaviour are prominently displayed in classrooms throughout the school, the rewards system and 'Star of the Week' awards clearly indicating the values the school stands for. Stories in assemblies are used effectively to promote moral education.

37. Provision for social development is good. The caring atmosphere throughout the school supports the pupils' social development well. Some teachers promote pupils' self-esteem effectively in lessons in the way they receive and deal with pupils' questions and answers at the introduction or feedback part of the lesson. In Year 6 during a geography lesson, where many pupils wanted to show their local knowledge the teacher insisted on everyone showing respect for the speaker by listening without interrupting. Through church appeals and local fund raising the school successfully teaches and celebrates the importance of how individual effort within a large group can help other people. Pupils participate in celebrating the main festivals of the Christian calendar, such as Easter, Christmas and harvest. Too few opportunities are provided, however, for pupils to develop an appropriate degree of independence in their learning or to use their initiative. Good practice was observed in science lessons in Year 4 and Year 2 where pupils shared their ideas and talked about their research on healthy eating. This had a good effect on pupils' development during the lesson. The recent introduction of a school council has been instrumental in developing pupils' ideas about behaviour in the school. A number of pupils compete individually for awards and the school encourages this independence by celebrating their success.

38. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils' own cultural traditions are well promoted through visits, visitors and activities such as singing together and looking at the work of famous artists. Pupils have an above average repertoire of songs and hymns. In history, the pupils find out about past events, such as comparing the life of the rich and poor in Victorian times. Studies of the local area in geography give pupils an insight into their own culture and in contrast topic work on India provides an insight into cultures other than their own. As part of its response to the previous inspection the school has improved its curriculum to raise the awareness of other cultures and faiths through topic work on China, Italy and a multi-faith week featuring the Hindu faith. This was organised with sensitivity because part of the school is a consecrated Christian Church. Awareness of other faiths is also part of the school's work in religious education.

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

39. The school has sound procedures for ensuring that its pupils are well cared for. Some staff are trained in first aid and if pupils are ill or have accidents at school they are well looked after.



Systematic health and safety risk assessments and equipment checks are carried out and the school is a safe environment. However, procedures for recording risk assessment and monitoring action are not sufficiently rigorous. Child protection procedures, which meet local guidelines, are in place and the designated teacher has been trained in their use, although this training requires updating and is planned in the very near future. In the few cases encountered, the school has received satisfactory support from welfare agencies. The school also makes good use of the Catholic welfare organisation to support families with problems.

40. Effective entry procedures to the reception class provide both children and parents with a positive start to school life. Formal assessment is undertaken and this provides the basis of planning for teaching and to measure progress towards the achievement of the early learning goals in language and communication, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development and personal, social and emotional development.

41. The school provides good support and guidance in raising pupils' achievement. Information gained from the good assessment procedures is used to plan lessons and set targets in English, mathematics and science. Senior teachers evaluate information from the annual tests and use it effectively when deploying staff. A good example of this in practice occurs in Year 2, where a classroom support assistant is directed to work with a group of pupils aiming for the higher levels of attainment in science. Test results have also been used effectively to highlight weaknesses in curricular provision and to form ability groups in classes. Where teachers plan their lessons based on what pupils already can do or focused on what pupils need, the rate of learning improves. In a Year 4 science lesson, more able pupils made good progress working in pairs because a challenging task was set and in a Year 4 mathematics lesson a plan was modified during the lesson to accommodate good progress. The school has started the tracking of pupils' performance throughout their time in school and, particularly in Years 2 and 6, uses this to predict results. This information is then used well to target those pupils who might just fail to reach the expected level. Groups of pupils are set targets to raise their attainment

42. There are good procedures for assessing pupils with special educational needs. The school is very careful in the initial assessment of pupils and parents and other personnel are appropriately involved. Teachers make accurate and regular assessments in order to raise the pupils' attainment, and their individual education plans and the statements of special educational need are well focused and meet statutory requirements. Caring staff support pupils with special educational need effectively and ensure that they are fully integrated within the life and work of the school.

43. The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is good. In the rest of the school, progress in English, mathematics and science is well monitored and recorded. Other subjects are also monitored, but less formally, although an assessment is made at the end of each year. Marking is particularly good in English, and helps pupils improve and learn from their mistakes. The staff use their good knowledge and relationships with their pupils to monitor their personal development, which is then recorded in the pupils' report. This information is maintained in a pupil's personal record. Effective and consistent procedures for rewarding good behaviour are used by the staff and well-understood sanctions are employed when behaviour falters. Registers are completed appropriately at the start of each session. The attendance and lateness of classes and individuals are carefully monitored and the information gained is used as the basis for rewarding those who do well or investigating those with apparent problems. The education welfare service and the Catholic Social Worker are used effectively where necessary.

44. Marking practices have improved in English, for example pupils are shown how to improve their work and this is effective in improving their achievement. However, this good practice is not used consistently in other subjects. Though it is done conscientiously, most marking simply praises effort. Some of the non-core subject policies prepared for the new curriculum initiative show an intention to assess pupils' work at the end of each year using national levels, but these are under-used as a method of checking pupils' progress during the year. Despite good systems, these are insufficiently used to fully influence learning and to involve pupils in understanding how

much progress they are making. For example, there are no individual reading diaries that include targets and in information technology, at the present time only use of a software program is recorded, rather than pupils' competence in particular skills.

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

45. Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. About a quarter of parents returned the questionnaire and the views expressed there were very positive. There were no significant concerns. The comparatively small number of parents who attended the meeting before the inspection also had few, if any, concerns. They appreciated that the school had been through a difficult period but were full of praise for the current staff, who they felt had made real improvements.

46. The school's links with parents are effective. Before starting in the reception class each child is visited at home and parents are told about the school and how they can help their child's learning. A well-planned programme of visits ensures that the pupils and their parents have a positive start to formal schooling. Entry procedures to the reception class are staggered so that staff can give their full attention to the children's needs in small groups. This enables the children to have a calm start to the session and means they settle in very well. Helpful learning packs are provided for parents and there is a useful educational toy library, which is well used by parents to support and extend their children's interest at home. The school has been very encouraging towards the formation of a pre-school facility on the premises and already hosts a 'Breakfast Club', provides warm snacks at playtime and plans to assist the formation of an after-school care club. A useful recent innovation was an open day when parents could visit the school and see the full range of what goes on, including displays and activities by pupils in all classes.

47. Parents are kept well informed of what is happening in school with regular, attractive newsletters. Pupils' annual reports meet statutory requirements and give good information about what has been achieved that year in the main subjects. There are brief comments about the other subjects as well as a good insight into pupils' personal development. They do not give a clear view of attainment against expectations except at the end of each key stage and there are often no written targets to aim for in the following year. However, parents are able to obtain further information during extensive formal discussion with the class teacher in which privacy is ensured. They also feel happy to raise their worries at any time. Parents are appropriately involved in statements of special educational need, including reviews. They are kept appropriately informed of individual education plans.

48. Parents have a satisfactory impact on the progress of their children at school and at home. Many parents support their children's learning by hearing them read at home, or helping with spelling or mathematical problems, although as their children get older some parents become less involved. The school has issued a good home-school agreement after extensive consultation. This, together with the formation of a 'Friends' association, which organises social and fund-raising events, is increasing the awareness of parents to the needs of the school. As yet few parents help in school regularly but those who do so give much valued support. Parents also help with swimming supervision and on educational visits. Parents are extensively involved with their children's preparation for taking Catholic sacraments.

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

49. Since his appointment last year, the headteacher has quickly established the confidence of governors, staff, pupils and parents. With a senior management team consisting of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and Key Stage 1 co-ordinator, he is providing effective leadership for the school. There is a good working relationship with the governing body. At the time of the last inspection, the previous headteacher was absent through illness and the current deputy

headteacher was providing strong leadership. Having addressed the key issues from that inspection and come through an unsettled period, which included a falling pupil roll and staff redundancy, the school has made satisfactory progress and has the capacity to move forward.

50. Three key issues at the last inspection related to the management of the school. There was a need to establish a senior management team and this has been resolved well. The team meets regularly to manage and organise the school's routines, consults with and reports to governors and staff and is the key means by which plans for the school's development are drafted. The headteacher has received training in school self-evaluation and there are plans for the remaining members of the team to complete the same training. The headteacher has compiled a detailed report for staff and governors on an initial evaluation of the school. Already this has had a significant impact on how the school sets about raising the levels of pupils' attainment. For example, the headteacher has introduced detailed target setting for individual pupils in English and mathematics, the effect of which is evident in the improvement in pupils' test results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000. He regularly monitors standards in school with the help of subject co-ordinators.

51. A further key issue was to establish a system for monitoring and evaluating classroom practice. This has begun and progress has been satisfactory. The headteacher observes teaching and provides feedback to teachers on a formal and informal basis. There have been few examples of subject co-ordinators monitoring lessons and providing feedback to staff or individual teachers. This is an area for further development.

52. The third key issue was to develop the role of subject co-ordinators. Progress has been satisfactory. Co-ordinators have responsibility for their subjects and handle budgets for purchasing resources. A number have led staff in training and co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science analyse test results well and use the information to ensure teaching covers all elements in National Curriculum programmes of study. Co-ordinators sample pupils' work across classes in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses and monitor teachers' planning to confirm that knowledge and skills are being taught in a manner that builds on prior learning.

53. The co-ordination of special educational needs is good as the co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and works very hard to organise the work of staff and to provide support. She is appropriately involved in the establishment of individual education plans and statements of special educational need and in her oversight of the needs of pupils throughout the school. She is not involved in the close monitoring of learning and teaching, however. The school is aware that this is an area to be developed.

54. The governing body has a good overview of policy and the quality of provision and is helping to shape the overall direction of the school well. The chair of governors has a good working knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the nature of the local district. As parish priest, he is a regular visitor to the school and the adjoining church. Governors fulfil their statutory requirements well and, although there are current vacancies for positions of responsibility for literacy and for special educational needs, they have a good understanding of provision and standards as a result of reports by the headteacher and specialists from the local education authority. Governors value greatly the contribution of the school's link adviser at their full meetings. Individual governors have also attended training sessions with staff, for instance in relation to the introduction of the numeracy strategy. However, there have been few instances of subject co-ordinators addressing the governing body about developments in their subjects to take further the existing shared commitment.

55. The structure of committees established by the governors is effective in implementing policy and procedures. The school has developed good written procedures to guide its governance. Reports and minutes of meetings are kept well. The curriculum and finance committees meet frequently to discuss and to receive detailed reports on developments in their respective areas. They are developing a good overview of provision. The finance committee is well involved in budget setting and has a good awareness of principles of best value. The headteacher and governors

were careful, for example, to compare quotations and levels of cover in their insurance contract. They make good use of specialist advice from the local education authority when making purchases. As a result of these good procedures, the governors provide effective support for the further development of the school.

56. The school improvement plan is a very thorough and useful tool for school development. It is comprehensive in its coverage of management, staffing, the curriculum and premises-related issues and includes detailed individual plans for subjects such as information and communication technology. The plan is underpinned by sound financial planning and the school carries forward an appropriate amount of money each year, usually less than five per cent of the total, for purposes of contingency. The school makes good use of specific grants, for example to promote provision for pupils with special educational needs and to develop teachers' expertise to teach the curriculum. The school's targets for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics are challenging and the school is successful in achieving them.

57. Levels of staffing are appropriate and a consistently good feature in lessons is the teachers' subject knowledge. All have a responsibility for managing and developing an aspect of the curriculum, but many are comparatively new to the role. They have completed audits and policies for their subjects in response to the demands of the new curriculum and made contributions to the school development plan. Many feel that they do not have the experience to monitor teaching in their subject. Currently, the headteacher takes the lead in this aspect of management, sharing the results of observations with teachers. This has been successful in improving confidence and improving the effects of teaching on pupils' rate of learning. There are clear procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers and the school has two qualified mentors to assist in this process.

58. Well-qualified and experienced support staff support pupils with specific needs. They are efficiently deployed and support pupils' achievements well. They are effective in helping pupils to make progress. There are fewer parent helpers than at the previous inspection, but their work with pupils is appreciated and welcomed by the school. Lunchtime supervisors contribute effectively to the maintenance of good behaviour. Senior staff guide them in their use of the rewards and sanctions procedures.

59. The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils and enables an appropriate curriculum to be taught effectively, although at present there is no separate outdoor play area for the youngest pupils. Plans for re-furbishing the exterior and parts of the interior of the school are in place but the funding for the proposals has been rejected. The caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to maintain the building in a clean and good condition.

60. Resources are satisfactory in all subjects overall although the ratio of computers to pupils is low, even for the current size of the school. A detailed action plan has been drawn up to address these issues. At present the library is an underused resource that does not support sufficiently the development of pupils' research skills or independent work. A good range of external resources, such as a wide variety of visits and visitors to the school is used effectively to broaden the curriculum.

61. Day-to-day administration of the school office and financial transactions by the secretary are good. She provides a welcoming point of contact for parents and visitors and has good expertise to support the work of the headteacher and governors. She uses her skills of information and communication technology well in the school office. Overall, the school's use of new technology is satisfactory.

62. The school's mission statement, supported by a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, both of which clearly include the precepts of the Roman Catholic faith, help to ensure the development of each child spiritually, morally, socially and academically and to ensure that each pupil experiences success. The headteacher and staff are very careful to ensure that these aspirations are met in practice. Pupils and staff are clearly valued and show a pride in their work

and in the school. The school council and individual interviews with pupils help to ensure that the views of pupils are represented.

63. In summary, the effectiveness of the school is good. The school is managed effectively and efficiently. It helps the pupils to achieve well through the good quality of provision and teaching in particular, so that standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with the national average. Pupils have good attitudes to school and behave well. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is high but the school provides satisfactory value for money. At the last inspection, the school was judged to provide good value for money. This was because unit costs were lower as the school roll was 25 per cent higher.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The school should now:

(i) Pursue the existing strategies to secure further the rising standards in English, mathematics and science. This should include:

- a) providing more opportunities for pupils to explore their use of a wide-ranging and imaginative vocabulary in their writing (paragraphs 77, 97, 116);
- b) providing more opportunities for pupils' independent research and investigation (paragraphs 6, 23, 29, 32, 37, 81, 89, 118).

(ii) implementing the detailed action plan for information technology (paragraphs 9, 60, 102-103, 105).

(iii) Improve the skills of the co-ordinators by monitoring teaching and learning in their subjects and in reporting to the governing body (paragraphs 51, 53, 54, 57, 82, 92, 100, 105, 112).

The school has identified the improvements that are needed through its own evaluations.

In addition, the following minor issue should also be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- The school should work with parents in order to improve the levels of attendance and extend the incentive systems (paragraph 18).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	23	55	20	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	203
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	71

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	31

#### 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	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	19	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	11
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	27	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79	82	85
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	11
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	28	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82	85	85
	National	82	86	87

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	19	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	13	12
	Girls	10	11	10
	Total	18	24	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	49	63	58
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	12	13
	Girls	7	9	13
	Total	16	21	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	43	57	70
	National	68	69	75

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	203
Any other minority ethnic group	

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	2	
Other minority ethnic groups		

*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
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.4
Average class size	29

#### Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	4.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80

### Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	436,056
Total expenditure	423,922
Expenditure per pupil	1,927
Balance brought forward from previous year	5,332
Balance carried forward to next year	17,466

### Results of the survey of parents and carers

#### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	224
Number of questionnaires returned	55

#### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	25	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	78	16	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	33	4	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	60	33	7	0	0
The teaching is good.	82	18	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	27	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	93	7	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	20	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	73	27	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	80	20	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	25	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	38	4	0	4



## **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**

65. There is little pre-school provision in the local area and so the school has recently encouraged the introduction of a pre-school group on its own premises. Twenty-six children were admitted to the reception class, initially on a part-time basis, in the term after their fourth birthday. At the time of the inspection it was only the children's second full week in school. Not many children have pre-school experience, some have none at all and those that have come from a wide variety of pre-school settings. The school therefore provides an effective induction procedure. This includes a visit to the children's homes, where the teacher offers parents packs of work to help them to support their children's learning. Although children's levels of attainment vary over a wide range when they join the school, their attainment on average is very low, particularly in literacy, numeracy and personal, social and emotional development. This is reflected in the early assessments and confirmed by other data analysed by the school. Although children make good progress during the first year in school, the attainment of many is still below that typically expected in communication, language and literature, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the foundation stage. In personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development most children are on target to attain the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1.

66. In personal, social and emotional development the children achieve rapidly because of the consistently good teaching by the reception staff. Children quickly settle to their tasks and begin to persevere with their work as a result of very effective management of the children by the teachers, who use praise and humour coupled with firm but fair guidance. School routines are taught effectively with patience and sensitivity so that the children begin to take turns, share equipment and move around the classroom and the school sensibly. The partnership between the staff in the reception class ably assisted by voluntary support is crucial to the children's developing understanding of perseverance, concentration and doing their very best whether they are supported by an adult or choosing an activity. For example, during a colour matching game the children listen carefully, guided effectively by the adults' instructions whilst others concentrate well on writing patterns in the sand. Most children can fetch a hoop sensibly during a game because they are helped by the teacher to think about the results of their actions towards others. During well-planned sessions at the end of lessons the children are given every opportunity to gain praise and rewards for good behaviour, attitudes and work. Careful assessments of the children's achievements are recorded and used to plan their work. These are shared with parents at regular intervals and as a result trusting relationships between the children, their families and the staff effectively support the children's development and learning.

67. Teaching and learning in communication language and literature are good although standards are likely to be below those typically expected by the end of the foundation stage. Planning is detailed, thorough and used effectively to teach speaking and listening, reading and writing. At the time of the inspection the children were only two weeks into their school life and the staff worked very hard to engage interest, encourage concentration and participation. Many of the children have short concentration spans and their conversations are limited to single word answers or simple phrases. A few children who have wider pre-school experiences ask and answer questions more readily. The children joined in the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' well because the teacher had sensibly planned the activities so that the children were in small groups. Despite their immature speech patterns they tried hard to imitate the teacher's voice. She read the story imaginatively and with stimulating resources engaged their eager participation and interest. As a result learning, behaviour and attitudes were very good. Planning identifies the specific language to be introduced or reinforced in each activity with each group so that children receive the same teaching and learning experiences. Writing is developed through a range of interesting activities and by the end of the reception year many of the children can form letters correctly although only a few attempt a simple sentence independently. Only a few children at the moment

sit in the cosy reading corner to look at books independently or talk about the illustrations. By the end of the foundation stage a number can read simple sentences with support and a few can read reasonably fluently at their own level. Carefully planned groups for speaking and listening, reading and writing are balanced well with the opportunity to develop communication skills through independent and imaginative play. The last inspection found the opposite was the case. Both the teacher and the nursery nurse effectively plan together to teach and write letter sounds so that the children make good gains in their learning. Parents are encouraged to help the children at home with their reading and to learn new words. A few more able children spell simple words accurately and with support make a good attempt at more complex ones.

68. In their mathematical development the children are taught through many practical activities as well as recording their work at the appropriate stage in their development. The teaching is good, as the staff plan carefully for the development of mathematical language through both formal and informal teaching situations. An exciting lesson linked to the current topic of the 'Three Bears' produced a very productive session. Small groups of children gasped in wonder as the teacher produced gaily-coloured boxes of different sizes to stimulate children's understanding of the vocabulary of size. Although they tried hard very few children knew the correct vocabulary to describe the size of the boxes, although they repeated the teachers' prompts with enthusiasm before their concentration wavered. The teaching is good as the teacher, supported by the nursery nurse, uses a range of questions effectively to encourage mathematical understanding. The staff work hard to engage children's interest and as a result the children behave well and concentrate on the lesson. A range of matching and counting games is used to teach number order and recognition as well as songs and rhymes. A few children can count to five and beyond, a few copy numerals already but the majority of children have limited mathematical understanding when they first join the reception class. The teacher has a good understanding of the subject, and careful planning with clear learning objectives linked to the children's assessed level of attainment contributes to good teaching and learning. Whilst this effectively supports the development of early numeracy skills many children find it difficult to achieve the expected level by the end of the reception year.

69. Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are below those typically expected overall by the end of the foundation stage. However, the quality of teaching is good and the children learn at a good rate. This is due to the effectively planned activities with interesting resources that stimulate the children's interest and make learning fun. For example, the teacher used 'Kim's Game' at the beginning of a lesson to begin to explore the physical properties of soap. This stimulated curiosity very effectively and good teaching led the children through the planned vocabulary. A few children know that the soap feels soft or slimy and use the correct words to describe this. The teacher has to work hard to elicit a response from the majority of the children who cannot provide the correct words without support. Children are introduced to the early concept of time as the teacher encourages the children to think about 'old and new' bears. Again good teaching means the children are encouraged to make a contribution however limited and to understand the importance of listening to others. A few more able pupils describe three features of a new bear but most children imitate the teacher or copy the child next to them. Effectively planned activities provide opportunities for children to select their own resources, for example during role play in the 'Three Bears House' the children dress up and try to act out the story or in using a construction toy make a house for Goldilocks. Most of the children need support in these activities and informed adults are on hand to encourage communication and discussion so that the children achieve tasks well.

70. Teaching to support physical development is consistently good, particularly in formal lessons. Clear, concise instructions linked carefully to the learning objectives are given supported by very good management of the children. As a result many of the children find a space quickly and fetch equipment sensibly. A few children can jump with feet together and many are learning the importance of safety and to develop an awareness of space, confidence and control. Other effectively planned activities mean that the children are learning to hold, for example, paint brush and pencil correctly, cut and stick and pour carefully in the sand and water. As a result of detailed

planning and opportunities to practise taught skills independently the children gain in confidence quickly and move around the classroom and school sensibly.

71. In their creative development, children's learning is also good as a result of good teaching. Again staff plan effectively together to support this area of development and a few children's pictures already show developing detail. For example, informed adult intervention and good quality materials mean the children have to think carefully about their choice of colour and the details needed to draw their favourite bears. The results are very pleasing and children are eager to persevere and concentrate on the task. Similarly in an enjoyable singing activity the children tried hard to tap rhythms and vary the pitch of their voices, supported and encouraged by the patient and enthusiastic adults. Challenging but enjoyable experiences are planned well and teaching and learning are often very good as a result. Children develop their thoughts and feelings through imaginative play, for example enthusiastically dressing up in 'The Three Bears House'.

72. The quality of provision for the youngest children has improved since the last inspection. Planning provides effectively for a balanced programme of structured activities and independent enquiry and investigation. The quality of teaching and learning is good due to the carefully planned activities linked to clear learning objectives that the teacher shares with the children both at the beginning of the lesson and as written instructions with their tasks. This provides a firm foundation for the development of positive attitudes, perseverance and concentration particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments are used effectively to plan future targets for learning and regular marking gives a clear picture of the children's achievements.

## ENGLISH

73. By the end of Key Stage 1 attainment in reading, writing and speaking and listening is in line with national averages for pupils aged seven. This matches the findings of the previous inspection.

- It is an improvement on the results of the national tests in English in 1999 in which results, based on the average National Curriculum points achieved by pupils, were well below the national average for all schools in reading and writing. When compared with pupils from comparable schools with similar backgrounds they achieved below national averages in reading and in line with national averages in writing.
- During the years 1996 to 1999 trends in performance have fluctuated considerably when compared with national trends. The 1999 results were depressed because the cohort in question included a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
- The national test results for 2000 show improvements in writing compared with those of 1999 and improvements in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in both reading and writing.

74. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment in reading, writing and speaking and listening is in line with national averages for pupils aged eleven. This matches the findings of the previous inspection.

- It is an improvement on the results of the 1999 national tests in English, in which pupils achieved well below national averages for all schools and below the national averages of similar schools.
- The national tests in English in 2000 show overall improvements when compared with those of 1999, including the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5.
- During the years 1996 to 1999 trends in performance were broadly in line with national trends except in 1999 when it fell. This was due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group, high rates of pupil mobility and staff absences.

75. Inspection findings indicate that most pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. The improvements shown by the inspection evidence and by the 2000 national test results in both key stages are part of an improving

trend. They are a consequence of the school's hard work in such areas as the use of its analysis of assessment data in order to plan suitable work for pupils, and by improvements in the quality of teaching.

76. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and there are examples of both very good and good teaching and learning. This is a significant feature in the raising of attainment at both key stages. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. For example, in Year 6 they know about authors, parts of speech and different styles of poetry. In Year 2 teachers have a thorough understanding of how to teach letter sounds and spelling. They explain this knowledge carefully and clearly so that pupils' understanding is increased. Teachers plan their work carefully and share their planning objectives with the pupils. This is very important in giving pupils a clear understanding of what is expected of them so that their learning improves. For example, in Year 1 pupils know that they are going to look for rhyming patterns in text so that they clearly understand their tasks and work productively. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, who are challenged to deepen their understanding. For example, in Year 2 the teacher uses an extended vocabulary in her work on text and expects pupils to sustain their concentration. Pupils generally respond positively and make good progress; by the end of the lesson they have acquired new words and have applied considerable intellectual effort. Only a minority of pupils know and use such words as 'scrumptious' or 'delicious' in their writing however.

77. Teachers make good use of the National Literacy Strategy. This has been well implemented and is helping to raise attainment. The more able pupils in Year 1 know the words 'title' or 'author' for example and by Year 2 most pupils clearly explain the plot of a simple story. During Year 4 pupils extend their knowledge, for example more pupils demonstrate their understanding of a story setting by describing the main characters well. In Year 5 shared reading helps pupils to build firmly on previous work and more pupils begin to ask relevant questions to reveal the character in a story. In Year 6 most pupils begin to use inference and deduction when explaining significant ideas in texts. They increase their knowledge and skill in the use of adverbs, adjectives and verbs. Throughout the school the teachers ensure that pupils produce a wide range of writing for different purposes. For example, they write for book covers in Year 1, write thoughtful stories in Year 2 and produce imaginative poetry in Year 3. In Year 6 pupils write well-constructed letters to complain about extensions to Manchester airport and Year 4 pupils write accurately punctuated dialogue. Although teachers encourage pupils to use a thesaurus, for example, in order to find alternative words in their writing, the use by older, and particularly more able pupils, of apt and imaginative words in order to enrich their writing, is weak.

78. Teachers plan work that is carefully suited to pupils' abilities to ensure that they are challenged to extend their learning. For example, in Year 2 more able pupils are expected to make alphabetical lists whereas less able pupils concentrate on making lists without any particular order. In Year 3 less able pupils use a computer programme in order to better understand a text whilst more able pupils interpret the text for themselves. Teachers make good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with statements of educational need. Pupils' activities are suited to their abilities and are clearly based on individual educational plans where necessary. These plans are closely linked to pupils' work in class and help them to acquire basic skills, such as the use of letter sounds in Year 1 or the understanding of characters from text in Year 5. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom support assistants, who work closely with class teachers and help pupils to make good progress. However, during whole class sessions they are occasionally underused.

79. Relationships are good and pupils are managed well. For example, in Year 6 the teacher values pupils' opinions in their work on different parts of speech and praises their efforts. This gives them the confidence to offer suggestions and, through encouragement, to increase their speaking and listening skills. Teachers have good control and organise pupils and materials efficiently. This ensures that pupils work hard and behave well, and that lessons run smoothly. In Year 4, for example during work on narrative order, pupils worked well when not under the immediate supervision of the teacher and increased their understanding of setting and characters. Teachers use on-going assessment well in order to explain to pupils what they need to do in order to improve

as in Year 6 where the teacher uses questions effectively in order to identify pupils' knowledge of parts of speech and to clarify misunderstanding. In Year 1 the teacher uses a very efficient system of assessing and recording pupils' progress in reading so that she is able to identify strengths and weaknesses and focus on where help is needed so that pupils' reading improves.

80. Teachers mark pupils work regularly and make very useful comments on pupils' writing. These comments praise and encourage pupils and identify and set targets for improvement, indicating very clearly what pupils need to do in order to improve. For example in Year 4 writing, in which pupils discussed the advantages and disadvantages of school uniform the teacher advised the pupil in a helpful way that the arguments used needed to be developed. Throughout the school homework, such as reading and spelling, is used effectively in order to support the work in class. Pupils generally make effective use of their literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in Year 5 they write accurate accounts of scientific experiments on materials and describe life styles in India in their work in geography. However, throughout the school there are some inconsistencies in teachers' development of English in other subjects. In a history lesson, for example opportunities were missed to further develop speaking and listening skills in discussions on Victorian toys.

81. The school has successfully addressed a criticism from the previous inspection by ensuring that pupils use non-fiction books regularly. Most pupils at both key stages know how to use index and contents and some older pupils use glossaries in order to extend their understanding of a wider vocabulary. However, pupils' use of the library for research is limited. This leads to weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to use the library system. The school is aware of the need to develop pupils' skills and independence in this area of their work.

82. The subject is well co-ordinated. The co-ordinator and staff have worked hard to implement the literacy strategy and this is helping to improve standards. The co-ordinator provides very good support for staff such as evaluating planning and monitoring pupils' work. She helps the school to make good use of information from assessments in order to set targets for improvement and has organised a useful portfolio of work in order to assist staff in raising attainment. The school is aware of the need to extend the work of the co-ordinator so that she monitors teaching and learning.

## **MATHEMATICS**

83. Since the previous inspection, standards have steadily risen in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, so that in 1999, the latest year in which national comparisons are available, standards were below the average for all schools but above average compared to those in similar schools. In 2000, pupils' performance rose significantly and this continued improvement is reflected in standards in the current Year 6. During the past four years, there has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. This improvement in standards is the result of good teaching and, in the last year, the effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and detailed target setting for pupils. The school successfully achieved its target in 2000 for 72 per cent of pupils to achieve the expected level or better. It has set challenging targets for 81 per cent of pupils in 2001 to achieve the expected level or better.

84. Test results at the end of Key Stage 1 have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 1999 standards, based on the average National Curriculum points achieved by pupils, were well below the national average but in line with those in similar schools. In 2000, more pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in the tests and their performance was a slight improvement on the previous year although insufficient to raise standards overall. In the current Year 2, whilst many pupils are working within expected levels for their age a significant minority are working below the levels expected. In the 1999 tests, girls' performance was better than that of the boys. However, in the latest test results and from a scrutiny of work in the current Year 2, this difference is not evident.

85. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards for pupils in Year 6 are currently about average while in Key Stage 1 pupils at the age of seven are attaining standards that are below the national average. Given the low mathematical attainment of pupils on entry to school, the pupils including those with special educational needs achieve well over the two key stages and their progress is good.

86. By the end of Year 6, most pupils have fully mastered the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They can use them in calculations involving fractions, decimal numbers, percentages, measurement of shape, distance and time. More able pupils can calculate the average from data and have a good grasp of concepts such as median and mode. They use negative numbers with confidence and understand the terms of probability well. Pupils of average attainment work at the levels expected for their age and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. For example, though there are some inaccuracies in their work, they handle large numbers and interpret graphic information satisfactorily. Below average pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress with support from the class teacher. They can successfully multiply three digit numbers by a single number, for example. Their understanding of place value up to one thousand is secure but they are less confident with larger numbers. Presentation of work is never less than satisfactory and for the majority of pupils it is good.

87. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils are working at the expected levels but with a variable degree of accuracy that affects their performance in end of key stage tests. For instance, more able pupils confidently add together two digit numbers, give change from 50p and have a good awareness of division. They use numbers up to 100 well. Pupils of average attainment are generally accurate at adding and subtracting numbers to 20. However, some write numbers reversed and need much consolidation of concepts before they are certain. Pupils of below average ability are not yet working at expected levels and are still mastering how to add and subtract numbers to 20. They recognise larger numbers, however, and can round them up and down to the nearest ten. In the current Year 2, many pupils are beginning to acquire a sound grasp of place value and can tell, for example, which is the larger, when presented with cards depicting 32 and 23. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with support. For instance, one pupil working individually with a classroom support assistant enjoyed practising adding two numbers up to five by playing a game with a toy spider. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well in relation to prior attainment, which is below average at the start of Year 1.

88. Throughout both key stages, pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and this is because teachers match their lesson planning carefully to the needs of pupils. From a scrutiny of pupils' work, it is evident that pupils develop at a good rate the necessary skills with number. They begin to measure using standard units and recognise the properties of different shapes well. In lessons, pupils work at a good pace and level of challenge. For instance, pupils in Year 4 were successfully measuring objects and converting lengths into metres and centimetres.

89. The quality of teaching is good and has been maintained since the previous inspection. In Key Stage 1, teaching was good in all lessons. In Key Stage 2, 29 per cent of lessons were very good or better, 43 per cent were good and the remainder were satisfactory. All teachers use the strategies of the numeracy strategy to good effect. They share learning objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and plan lessons well. Teachers adjust their planning to cater for the different needs of the pupils, taking note of how well they are doing or where they find difficulties. The management of behaviour is very good and as a result lessons have pace and pupils complete a good amount of work. Teachers introduce and finish off the lessons with whole-class sessions, which they conduct briskly, emphasising the focus of lessons well. They make good use of resources, such as flipcharts and whiteboards and pupils' resources such as number 'fans'. There are few weaknesses in the teaching and consequently, pupils enjoy the subject and concentrate well and the quality of learning is good. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to carry out more open-ended tasks to solve problems and to work independently. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and assignments, such as learning multiplication tables and completing number activities, are given for homework. These make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' attainment.



90. Particularly significant in helping to push up standards by the end of Key Stage 2 has been the recent focus on using assessments to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils. As a result, teachers are aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and focus their teaching more accurately. Last year, very good provision was made for one talented pupil in Year 6, involving the support of staff at the associated High School. This resulted in the pupil achieving Level 6 in the national tests.

91. Teachers use skills of numeracy in other subjects satisfactorily. There are good examples of teachers promoting skills of data handling in science in both key stages. Pupils learn to use diagrams to sort materials, they use symbols and tables to record their judgements and a variety of bar charts to illustrate findings. In geography, pupils have drawn graphs to illustrate how pupils come to school and can use simple grid references to locate position on maps and plans.

92. The subject co-ordinator is making a good contribution to the overall provision. For instance, the introduction and implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy have been effective. Good in-service training, led by the co-ordinator with the support of a local authority consultant, has helped staff to take on the necessary changes. The co-ordinator checks test results carefully, samples pupils' work and monitors teachers' planning regularly. Teachers regularly consult with the co-ordinator and are aware of the quality of provision and the needs of pupils across the whole school. Although some monitoring of teaching has taken place, this has been informal and has not been used to raise the awareness of staff to areas for improvement, such as the need for open-ended questioning and tasks. Recent developments in record keeping of pupils' progress have led to the introduction of an assessment booklet, which reflects the curriculum recommended in the numeracy strategy as well as levels of the National Curriculum. Resources are sufficient in quantity and recent purchases have included useful aids for pupils, such as number cards and 'fans'.

## SCIENCE

93. Pupils' standards of work at the ages of seven and eleven are in line with national expectations. This matches the findings of the previous inspection. It is an improvement on the results of the previous year where teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 2 in 1999 showed that standards were below the national average. In 1999 standards in the national tests for pupils aged eleven were well below the national average and below the average of schools with pupils from a similar background. During the years 1996 to 1999 trends in performance were broadly in line with national trends except in 1999 when they fell. This was due to a number of factors associated with the particular group of pupils and staff absences.

94. Action taken to improve standards has been successful. In the latest national tests (2000) at the age of eleven, most pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Improvement has also been made in tests for pupils aged seven. Teachers' Assessment shows that more pupils reach the expected level (Level 2). The reasons for improvement are:

- the effect of the 'booster classes';
- good use of assessment information to set targets for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils to reach the higher level;
- higher profile for experimental and investigative science;
- consistently good standards of teaching.

95. Progress in knowing and using scientific vocabulary is good. As a result of increased opportunities to investigate and experiment for themselves, pupils are more secure with terms such as "fair test" and "prediction". For example, the majority of pupils in Year 1 made a prediction about whether plants needed water to grow but had difficulty in describing that the leaves on a plant had turned brown through lack of water. By Year 2 pupils make good progress in relating science to everyday life in their work about healthy diets and the importance of basic principles of hygiene when preparing food. For example, most pupils group healthy and unhealthy foods correctly whilst

more able pupils use terms such as carbohydrate and protein to describe them. The social and moral questions raised by science, for example in relation to the environment and food, need to be developed however. In Year 4, pupils know that some materials are conductors and others insulators because they begin to draw conclusions from the data they had collected. By Year 6, most pupils recognise the need for fair tests, predict change and use the correct vocabulary to record their results and conclusions.

96. Teaching is consistently good throughout the school, with some very good practice in Year 2. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is the result of teachers having a good understanding of what they have to teach. They have been helped in this by training organised through the local secondary school and an improved scheme of work, which covers all aspect of the National Curriculum in an orderly and systematic way. Assessment information to form groups according to ability is used effectively. A good example of this is in Year 2, where pupils make good progress because the activities have clear objectives based on what they already know. The class teacher works closely with the classroom support assistant and a parent helper.

97. Scrutiny of earlier work shows inconsistency in the standards of presentation expected, usually related to marking which checks that work is completed rather than giving information about presentation or how to improve. Some teachers are aware of this and their marking is beginning to have a good impact on presentation and results. There is no up-to-date file of assessed work to show teachers the standards of presentation needed in recording investigations for example, or to illustrate the detail and vocabulary characteristic of performance at the higher levels.

98. Planning is good. Teachers start the lesson with effective recapping of earlier work and make clear to the class the purpose of the current lesson. Consequently, pupils are well motivated and ready to participate in lessons. Although few actual time limits or expectations for amount of work are set, lessons move along at a good pace. The structure of the literacy session is having a good impact here, because all science lessons have a plenary session to summarise what has been achieved and in the best lessons, give pupils opportunities to tell the class what they have been doing. This and other activities have a good impact on promoting independence and self-confidence. In Year 4, the more able pupils worked on an investigative activity, testing which materials conduct electricity. With minimum supervision, they completed the task in pairs, recording their results as they made their observations. Conversation was related to the task and specific vocabulary was used correctly. This occurred because the teacher had high expectations for those pupils and had prepared a further task relating their findings to a practical situation. In the same lesson, special educational needs pupils made good progress because of the good planning with their support assistant.

99. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and most behave well and try to do their best. Some respond well to being directed by their teacher and others enjoy the independence when they have the opportunity. In this situation they make good progress. They handle equipment carefully and respond well to praise. Pupils usually begin their activity quickly, having understood what is expected of them, and they are secure in the skills they need. On occasions, the teachers' introduction was either rushed or too long and the pupils had become distracted or not sure what to do. As a result, some pupils did not make the expected progress. Some of the older pupils do not always try their best and distract other pupils by not carrying out the activity properly. Although there is a school strategy to deal with this sometimes it is not applied quickly enough in order that the lesson can proceed properly for the majority of the pupils.

100. A new, well-qualified co-ordinator has been appointed since the last inspection. This has already had a good effect on implementing the full curriculum and using assessment to improve test results and plan lessons. The role has yet to expand into monitoring teaching and learning, in order to establish a clear picture of science throughout the school, including the development of pupils' independence and the use of research. Local environmental parks are used effectively for practical activities, such as pond-dipping and observational walks. Science is also promoted well through visitors to the school and visits to places such as the Manchester Science Museum and the Catalyst Museum at Widnes.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

101. Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with expected levels at the end of both key stages. This finding is similar to that at the previous inspection.

102. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate skills in line with expectations. Most can start up and run programs on desktop publishing, art, data handling and word processing. They use the mouse well to select from the menu and tool bar. Pupils know how to change the type, size, shape and colour of fonts. They can add and remove captions to pictures, introduce images into text, save and print their work. They know how to find information from CD-ROMs to support work in history and geography and they can use simulation games successfully. Attainment is broadly in line with expected levels across a range of applications, including control and monitoring. However, some older pupils who did not benefit from the increased range of resources early enough have further to go in developing their skills. For example, pupils in the current Year 6 have not had full access to machines that are linked to the Internet and capable of sending and receiving electronic mail. Arrangements are in place to cover this gap during the year.

103. Pupils' achievement across the school is generally good and evidence from collections of pupils' work and displays around school shows that there is variety to the work. Pupils in Year 1 create pictures of the Gingerbread Man to support work in literacy. They can draw, use the spray facility and infill. Pupils in Year 2 use language and mathematics programs to support their work in reading, spelling, shape and number. In a science lesson, they successfully used the mouse to explore a program on the function of parts of the body such as the ear. Pupils in Year 3 create dazzling door signs using clipart and text. Pupils in Year 4 are able to use a simulation program on rain forests. They can use a search engine to find web sites on the Internet and they have successfully sent e-mail to a local shop. Pupils in Year 5 use their skills of word processing to create captions for work in history. They write short accounts of Greek legends. The pupils have carried out class surveys on pet ownership and pupils' favourite sports and colours and used data-handling programs to present their results. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress with word processing software designed to support the less able pupil. However pupils' level of skills overall develop more slowly due to the current problem of providing access for all pupils to a computer.

104. In examples of direct teaching by staff during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Direct teaching was observed in both key stages and teachers demonstrated good knowledge of the programs in use. They managed the whole-class sessions well, allowing pupils the opportunity to try new procedures individually or in pairs in later lessons. This routine made for efficient use of time. All teachers plan for the effective use of computers in lessons and seek to use programs to support teaching in other subjects. There are few weaknesses in the teaching. On one occasion, however, the program required a level of reading difficulty beyond the skills of the pupils. The quality of learning is good and pupils listen well to demonstrations. When they are working in pairs at machines, they take turns well and help each other.

105. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Resources have been updated, as finances have been made available. The ratio of machines to pupils is low but machines are regularly added to the total available, whether by specific grants or commercial offers to schools. There is a good range of software to teach skills and to support other subjects. The co-ordinator has maintained her expertise and supports the staff well, although she has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning. She has introduced a skills checklist on a pilot basis, designed to assist staff with assessing and recording pupils' skills. There is a very detailed action plan for the subject in the current school improvement plan, which covers upgrading hardware and software and offering more training for staff. This is essential if pupils are to achieve greater levels of competency.

## **ART**

106. During the inspection it was possible to see only a limited number of lessons so it is not possible to give an overall judgement on the quality of teaching. However, evidence from scrutiny of the pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils indicates that attainment is broadly in line with what would be expected for pupils aged seven and eleven with some examples of attainment above this level. Standards have been maintained overall since the last inspection.

107. Good use is made of information communication technology in work in art. For example, Year 1 pupils produce attractive pieces after the style of Kandinsky and Year 3 pupils produce well designed wrapping paper using a computer programme. Pupils' work around the school is inspired by the work of famous artists, whose work is attractively displayed. For example Year 6 pupils produce work of a high standard after the style of Warhol and Picasso and in Year 2 pupils produce sensitively finished collages of water lilies inspired by Monet.

108. Teachers ensure that pupils use a range of materials such as oil and pastel in drawing animals in Year 1 and that they use a variety of textiles to design and complete a panel based on the theme of water in Year 6. Pupils, for example in the lessons seen in Year 2 and Year 6 were very well organised and behaved sensibly when selecting materials. Both younger and older pupils concentrated and persevered with the tasks set by the teacher and were eager to produce well-finished work. Teachers and classroom support assistants effectively support pupils with special educational needs in order to guide their developing skills. Pupils link work with other cultures, seen in work based on Indian designs and in Year 3 drawings on Daedalus and Icarus. Work throughout the school is linked with other subjects such as history and geography and, for example, pupils illustrate work in English when telling the story of the willow pattern. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 opportunities for three-dimensional work and printing are limited and work with clay is below the standard expected for pupils of this age.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

109. By the time the pupils leave the school at the age of age eleven, standards in design and technology are in line with the levels expected of pupils of their age. Standards since the last inspection have been maintained overall. There is evidence from a small number of lessons seen and through discussions with pupils that through effective teaching, for example focusing on practical tasks pupils, including those with special educational needs, build satisfactorily on their prior knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school.

110. Pupils in infant classes, build on their sound start in design and technology in the foundation stage by producing well-finished models such as musical instruments and four-wheeled toys, using a variety of materials. In Year 1 pupils practise the skills of joining and combining construction kits to construct shelters for animals. This is cleverly linked to both literacy and social development using the text 'Who's in the Shed' to encourage the skills of imagination and co-operation. Very good relationships and firm control in this lesson ensured that most pupils used considerable creative and intellectual effort and had to think hard about their work. In Year 2 they continue to develop these skills of reviewing their work and proposing modifications.

111. Effective learning in both key stages is a consequence of the pupils' good attitudes and the overall good quality of teaching in the few lessons seen during the inspection. This has yet to impact fully on the overall standards, however. Very good aspects in one lesson included the teachers very effective planning with well thought out use of resources and additional adults well deployed to support the teaching of skills in small groups. For example, pupils carefully labelled their designs to make a puppet before cutting and sticking their choice of materials. Very good quality materials and informed adult support ensured that pupils were engrossed, persevered and

make a product of good quality. In Year 5 the teacher extended learning to help the pupils to think about product design and the reasons for consumer choice. Effective questioning to support ideas for designing packaging ensured that pupils were really engrossed in the task, offered sensible, well-thought out opinions and respected other pupils' ideas. This meant that pupils had every chance to build on their prior knowledge, skills and understanding and as a consequence learning was productive and satisfying for pupils and teachers alike. By the time pupils reach Year 6 it is clear from discussions with them that they have a sound grasp of the elements of design, making and the selection of materials. They understand the importance of precision in planning, labelling and measuring in an initial design, choosing materials suitable for the task and identifying features that work and others that require improvement. They sensibly discussed how they evaluated the finished product.

112. The well-organised, knowledgeable co-ordinators provide effective support for the teachers on an informal basis. They are determined to restore the subject's previous high profile with the advent of Curriculum 2000 and the rolling programme intended to support the development of good quality. Planning is clearly linked to learning objectives, detailed for each year group as part of the development of progress across the school, and supports other subjects such as literacy and history for example. Plans for the future include subject monitoring although training is needed to support skills in classroom observation. The subject now has a high priority in the school development plan.

## **GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY**

113. At the last inspection neither subject had a clearly defined place in the curriculum. Since then, the school has made good efforts to identify the requirements of each subject and now teaches them regularly.

114. In history, most pupils by the age of seven and eleven attain the levels typical for their age. By the age of eleven pupils make satisfactory progress in understanding time before living memory. However, lack of regular practice in describing events, selecting information from different sources or giving reasons for why things happened is preventing pupils from achieving higher levels.

115. Attainment in geography is also broadly in line with the level expected for pupils aged eleven. Pupils have a sound general knowledge and make satisfactory progress on work comparing the features of different places, for example. Progress towards higher attainment is restricted by low expectations in mapping skills, such as only using two figure coordinates, combined with insecurity in teaching the subject. At the present time geography is below the level expected for seven year olds. However it is in the early stages of recovery and is now on course to enable pupils to achieve the expected level by the age of seven.

116. When pupils are given a history activity that captures their interest and allows them to make contributions to the lesson, they respond well. For example, in a history lesson on the Victorians older pupils handled replica toys carefully and talked to a visitor willingly about their work, showing good knowledge of the subject and the task they had been asked to do. Their knowledge of a specific period improved and they enjoyed the subject. Scrutiny of the previous years' work shows that opportunities to talk and discuss were not frequent and most activities required pictures to be labelled, with little evidence of re-telling stories or writing an event from a particular point of view. Infant pupils have gained a satisfactory sense of change over time through an activity in which they interviewed parents and grandparent about their toys and compared then with their own.

117. Year 6 pupils show enthusiasm for geography when it is locally based and they have information and ideas to contribute. Their level of vocabulary associated with the topic on river features and economic activity along the estuary of the River Mersey is good. They make good attempts at giving reasons for their answers. This constitutes good progress because scrutiny of earlier work in the school shows that they had little experience of justifying their work or of using

factual information in their answers. Infants' work from previous years contains little evidence of geographical activities. More recent work is improving, with pupils taking a traffic survey, using tallying and a bar graph, and drawing a plan of their route to school. In this activity, their level of attainment is at least in line with expectations for their age and they are making good progress, applying different methods of presenting information, such as pictograms. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively, for example in a Year 1 lesson on understanding features of the local area the teacher and classroom support assistant work closely together to ensure that pupils achieve well.

118. In the small number of lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory, and had good features. In history, teachers' subject knowledge is good and consequently they are confident about the material they have to teach. Sometimes the effectiveness of a lesson was reduced because the teacher controlled the activity closely and pupils were given little opportunity to discuss and develop their own ideas. In a good geography lesson, this was avoided because the teacher made clear the rules for pupils who wanted to make a contribution. As a result of this good management, pupils successfully collected a lot of information, which they used in their activity. Lessons and scrutiny of work showed examples of effective use of mathematics, such as tallying and bar graphs. However, there were few planned occasions for pupils to write at length, take part in debates or research, or use books or information technology. The use of history and geography to discuss moral and social issues and promote basic skills is underdeveloped. The newly appointed co-ordinator for both subjects is aware of this and the revised curriculum plans address the issue, as well as assessment.

## **MUSIC**

119. Insufficient evidence was available to judge pupils' attainment at the end of either key stage. Only one lesson was observed, owing to timetable arrangements. Inspectors attended key stage assemblies and song practices, in which the pupils sang tunefully and enthusiastically. Discussions with the subject co-ordinator, staff and pupils and a scrutiny of teachers' planning indicate that all aspects of the subject are covered in lessons and there is a good balance between making, performing and appreciating music. For example, in the Year 3 lesson observed, there was a good opportunity to listen to an operatic extract and to discuss it in depth. The lesson also contained the singing of a known song and learning of a new one.

120. No judgement is possible about the overall quality of teaching and learning. Pupils enjoy lessons and song practices and this was evident in the lesson observed. The pupils in Year 3 showed a real interest in the operatic singing they listened to and made interesting observations. One pupil said the singer's voice was powerful and he 'held' the notes. Another compared the song's tempo to a recording heard in the previous lesson. Pupils recognised the song was in a different language and guessed it might be Latin, Welsh or Italian.

121. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The specialist co-ordinator has left the school and the current co-ordinator has been in the post only a short time. There is an appropriate scheme of work, which makes use of published and broadcast materials. Resources are satisfactory and there is a good range of instruments from other cultures. The subject is included in the whole-school review of the curriculum in the light of national changes this year. Plans include working with associated schools to develop provision. There are extra-curricular activities such as recorder and guitar groups. Currently there is no other provision for individual pupils to learn an instrument. The school regularly raises the profile of the subject with events and visitors, for example an Arts Week last term, as well as performances and productions put on by staff and pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

122. By the end of both key stages attainment is above national expectations for pupils of seven and eleven. Overall the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. The impact of this teaching is that learning is correspondingly good and sometimes very good. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well.

123. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. They ensure that pupils warm up and cool down effectively and that pupils are aware of the need for sporting behaviour. For example, Year 4 pupils make good use of initial warming up sessions so that they are well prepared for the main part of the lesson and Year 2 pupils work fairly and considerately when developing their use of tactics in simple games activities. Teachers are very skilled at observing and analysing pupils' performance. They use this to identify and explain areas for development so that pupils know what they have to do in order to improve. For example, in Year 3 the teacher recognised how pupils might improve their skills in dance. This enabled her to guide them in refining and improving the patterns of their movement. In swimming in Year 6 the pupils improved their leg strokes because the teacher analysed their performance carefully and explained it clearly in order to share good practice.

124. Teachers control their pupils well so that pupils behave very sensibly and perform safely. For example, in very windy conditions during an outdoor games lesson Year 4 pupils sustained their concentration and used equipment carefully. Pupils in Key Stage 2 behaved well on their walk to the swimming pool and in and around the pool. Relationships are good. Teachers use praise and encouragement well and welcome pupils' enthusiastic response to their tasks. This gave pupils the confidence to improve the speed and endurance of their swimming in Year 6 and to move with increasing co-ordination and control in Year 3.

125. Teachers use questions well in order to encourage pupils to evaluate their performance. For example, in Year 4 pupils' sending and receiving skills were improved when the teacher asked them to demonstrate how to link the sub skills involved in passing and jumping. Lessons generally move at an appropriately brisk pace and pupils and equipment are well organised. This ensures that pupils exercise vigorously as they respond to music in Year 3 and that lessons run smoothly in outdoor games lessons in Year 2 and Year 4. Teachers plan their work carefully. They share their planning with pupils at the beginning of lessons and revise previous work. For example, Year 1 pupils know clearly how their work on linking sequences of movements is to develop and this enhances their performance. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance so that Year 2 pupils work well in groups when not under the immediate supervision of the teacher and Year 3 pupils remember and perform intricate patterns of dance.

126. The subject is well co-ordinated. The knowledgeable co-ordinator organises the subject efficiently and ensures that detailed planning and comprehensive schemes of work are helpful in raising attainment. The school ensures that equipment is suitable for pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs. By the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are proficient at swimming and many reach a high standard. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities and pupils participate in inter-school competitions. These include football, netball, swimming, athletics, cricket and cross-country.