

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JOHN FISHER AND ST THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Benchill, Wythenshawe

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105531

Headteacher: Mr D Mulcahy

Reporting inspector: Mrs C Field
9479

Dates of inspection: 8-11 October 2001

Inspection number: 230804

Full 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 with nursery

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Woodhouse Lane
Benchill
Wythenshawe
Manchester

Postcode: M22 9NW

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Father Peter Wright

Date of previous inspection: November 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9428	Mrs J Butler	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values and personal development Partnership with parents and carers Pupils' welfare, health and safety
15414	Mr D Carrington	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Equal opportunities	Leadership and management
6752	Mrs J Dickins	Team inspector	Provision for children in the Foundation Stage English History	
25771	Mr P Sandall		Science Music Physical education	The curricular and other opportunities provided
2818	Mr G Warner		Provision for pupils with special educational needs Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Art and design Design and technology Geography	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the Benchill ward of Wythenshawe to the south-west of Manchester. It falls within an Education Action Zone (EAZ) that has been set up to raise educational standards in the area. Pupils who attend the school come from the local community, which comprises mainly housing association-owned housing. There are 262 pupils on roll, aged between four and eleven years. The school currently provides for 41 children in its nursery; 14 part time and 29 full time. Children's attainment on entry into nursery is well below average. Over fifty per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is very high compared to the national average. Some four per cent of pupils come from homes where English is not the main spoken language, but these pupils currently do not need specific help in school to learn to speak English. Sixty-three pupils have special educational needs. Four of these pupils have a statement of special educational need in place. The proportion of pupils in school with special educational needs is broadly average. The majority of needs are concerning moderate learning difficulties. A significant proportion of pupils move on and off roll during the course of a year and this means that some have interrupted learning.

The school's mission reflects its Catholic Christian nature and concludes with the words...' we celebrate the children's achievements, strive to realise their hopes, encourage them to reach their goals, and dream of whom they may become.'

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is happy and well ordered, and places children at its heart. The headteacher provides inspirational and very determined leadership. He has turned this once failing school around to one that is effective and serves its community very well. Teaching is good overall despite a very high turnover of staff and serious recruitment difficulties. Senior managers are well focused on where improvement lies but have yet to embark on a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation. Many teachers are new to their management roles and have yet to fully assume new responsibilities. Standards are rising at a good pace but more slowly in the infants than in the juniors. Pupils receive a good education at the school. They make steady progress in their academic studies, very good progress in their personal and social development and are well equipped for the next stage of their education. The school is successful in its mission and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher sets a very clear educational direction and has excellent leadership skills that enthuse and motivate everyone in school to do the best they can.
- Teaching is good and enables pupils to make steady progress in learning.
- The standards achieved in the SATs at the end of Year 6 are improving rapidly and results compare well with those of similar schools. Standards in singing and dance are above the expected level at all ages.
- The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs is enabling them to make good progress.

- An excellent ethos permeates throughout the school and supports the mutually respectful relationships so evident in class and at lunch and playtimes.
- The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is turning out well-rounded young people ready to take their place in a multi-cultural and ethnically diverse society.
- Strong parish and community links enhance the quality of education significantly.
- Governors are well informed and active in their support for the life and development of the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, history and information and communication technology (ICT) should be higher.
- Teachers' planning, assessment and target-setting work are not sharp enough.
- The nursery and reception class have not yet set up a structure that establishes fully the Foundation Stage.
- The level of attendance is unsatisfactory; the irregular pattern of attendance of some pupils is limiting their achievements.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good progress has been made in tackling the serious issues that were identified by the 1998 inspection report that placed the school in special measures. The headteacher, who was appointed in 1999, promotes the school's many qualities far and wide and has been successful in attracting a range of additional resources that are assisting the school's rapid improvement across a broad front. Academic standards have shown significant improvement in mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, and music. There is still more work to do to improve pupils' knowledge and skills development, especially in English and history. The school has been hampered in making the planned improvement to literacy due to recruitment problems but has followed a sensible path in securing good support from a literacy consultant. Two further issues raised by Her Majesty's Inspectors in their 1999 report, concerning the undertaking of a secure audit of the whole school's performance and developing the role of coordinators, have been given satisfactory attention so far. In the light of significant staff changes, and to take account of the findings of this report, both still require attention. The school was given the 'School Achievement Award' earlier this year by the Department for Education and Skills in recognition of its good improvement. The school has sound capacity to sustain continuous improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests (SATs).

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	E	E	E	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
Mathematics	E*	E	D	B	
Science	E	E	D	B	

NB: Similar schools are those with over 50% of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The school's performance in the 2000 SATs as shown in the above table was well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science. The school's performance was average in English and above average in mathematics and

science when compared to similar schools. The school's rate of improvement in the standards achieved at the end of Year 6 is above average. The school's performance in the SATs taken by Year 6 pupils in May 2001 shows continuing good improvement. The school has set ambitious targets in English and mathematics that have been exceeded yearly. The school's results in the SATs taken at the end of Year 2 are not as positive as in Year 6. Here standards are well below average overall.

Inspection evidence shows that children start school with well below average skills; they make steady gains across the areas they experience so that most reach the level expected at the end of reception, except in literacy and creative areas where they are still behind others of the same age. Standards in Year 2 are well below average in English overall, below average in mathematics and science. Standards in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and history and average in science. This reflects the satisfactory progress, pupils make over time. At the end of both infants, and juniors standards are average in ICT, art and design, geography, music and physical education (PE). Too little evidence was available to make a reliable evaluation of standards in design and technology. Singing stands out as a particular strength; the choir with over 90 pupils is of immense value to the school community, though the other elements of music are not given such positive attention and the standards reflect this.

Pupils' work saved from last year, together with a sample of that completed so far this term, shows that very similar work is given to all pupils despite the different levels at which they work. It also shows uneven progress by a significant proportion of average and higher-attaining pupils. The boost given to pupils' learning in Year 6 has a positive impact on their performance in SATs but more could be done to enable learning to build up incrementally from the Foundation Stage onwards. Consistently good progress is being made by those pupils with special needs, who benefit from well-conceived individual education plans which include smart targets that are reviewed regularly. This good practice can usefully serve as a model to support improvement for other groups. The next challenge for the school is to ensure that all pupils learn at good rates in every year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils love coming to school and show real enthusiasm for all aspects of their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are thoughtful, considerate and self-controlled. One temporary exclusion was fully justified. The sanction was applied very much as a last resort.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Excellent relationships underpin the way pupils learn to become caring, confident young citizens.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Absences disrupt the academic progress of a significant minority of pupils. Punctuality is improving.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching is good overall. However, the qualities of the very best practice are not sufficiently shared. A high staff turnover in the last year has impeded the development of subject coordination and, to some extent, dissipated the drive to raise standards in English, especially in the infant stage. Skills of literacy are soundly taught; numeracy skills are well taught. Confidence is growing in both teaching and learning in ICT, and pupils' skills are developing well. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a steady start in learning. Particularly good attention is paid to their personal, social and emotional development; as a result, they are very confident to 'have a go' at most things. Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs who learn successfully as a result. The handful of pupils who speak English as an additional language are making the same progress as that of their classmates. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners. Their behaviour is generally very good and this contributes to the steady advancement in learning by Year 6. The pace at which pupils learn is sometimes adversely affected because, in some lessons teachers leave too little time for individual pupils to reflect on and record what they have learned and what they need to do next to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is rich, exciting and very relevant to the pupils' needs. It is a little out of balance. Insufficient time is given to promoting writing skills across the curriculum and to the practical and investigative aspects of mathematics and science. Some aspects of ICT are limited. History knowledge and skills are not sufficiently built up year on year. Mathematical and creative areas of work require more emphasis in the Foundation Stage.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Good teamwork is ensuring that these pupils achieve well at school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils' needs are assessed but currently none require additional provision. Pupils make similar rates of progress to their classmates.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Pupils are encouraged to bring the very good values they are taught into their lives.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Staff know pupils well and pay good attention to their health, welfare and safety. Staff need practice in assessing pupils' progress, and the use made of assessment to help plan suitable work for different pupils requires much sharper focus.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. The headteacher is the key to fostering and developing a good relationship with parents; he is meeting with growing success.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's leadership is excellent. He leads with vision and conviction. Staff join him wholeheartedly in the determination to be the best school locally by working hard for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors really understand the school. They ask key questions to find out how well the school is doing, and have strong influence in shaping the actions taken to move the school forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher has clear insights into how much improvement is taking place and where strengths and weaknesses lie, though the School Improvement Plan has too many priorities and they are not ranked clearly enough. Other staff have not yet been drawn fully into monitoring work.
The strategic use of resources	Good. All resources, whether staff, the accommodation or learning equipment, are used well. Financial control is good and additional funding, for example that used for special educational needs, is well spent. The school is benefiting from the effective support by being in an EAZ. The high carry forward in the budget reflects sensibly planned savings to cover the costs of the large-scale grounds' development. The principles of Best Value are applied successfully.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children are happy at school.• Teachers hold high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils make good progress as a result.• Behaviour is good.• Leadership and management are good and very much encourage parents to be partners in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nothing of significance.

The inspection team generally agrees with the above views expressed by parents, though there is still room for improvement in the rate at which some pupils learn over their time at school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below average.
- By the time that children have completed the Foundation Stage they have achieved well, even though their attainment is below average overall.
- The school's performance in SATs for eleven-year-olds is improving at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Improvement is not as rapid for seven-year-olds.
- Pupils, including those who learn English as an additional language, are making satisfactory progress in all of the subjects they learn, though standards could be higher in English, mathematics, science, ICT and in history.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their individual education plans.
- The work seen in pupils' books shows uneven progress, particularly in the amount completed and standards achieved by some average and higher-attaining pupils.
- Target setting is usefully supporting pupils' learning in Year 6 but its practice is not yet widespread enough to ensure that the maximum is expected from all pupils in every year. This is an area for improvement.

1. The school's first inspection, nearly three years ago, identified weaknesses in standards, teaching and management that resulted in its being placed in special measures. In 1999, the HMI's report judged that satisfactory progress had been made in improving four of these serious issues and good progress in the rest. Rapid improvement has continued to take place, and there has been significant improvement in standards in mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and elements of music. The school's work in raising standards in English has been slower as it has been hampered by the failure to recruit a good subject leader. The school has followed a sensible path as an interim solution in buying in literacy consultants to help in its drive to raise standards. Results in the National Curriculum tests (known by parents as the SATs) have been improving, and last year the school's vastly improved performance was recognised by the Department for Education and Skills. There is still more work to do in improving pupils' attainment generally, and especially in the infant phase. Pupils' knowledge and skills in English and history, and practical skills in mathematics, ICT and science are all areas that require boosting. The school has identified targets that reflect its ambitions to give pupils the best education possible and one that will enable them to attain as well as pupils in any school. The next challenge for the school is to ensure that all pupils, no matter what their starting point, learn at good rates in every year and build up their knowledge, understanding and skills incrementally. The school recognises that placing the raising of standards at the head of the action plan is its number one priority.

2. Pupils now learn successfully, and are making at least satisfactory progress in all subjects. The rate at which pupils learn tends to be quicker in the latter part of the junior phase, however. The impact of the headteacher's dynamic leadership, significantly improved teaching and a much better planned curriculum with appropriate schemes of work in place are key reasons why standards are lifting. The school prepares pupils well for SATs in Year 6 and this gives a significant boost to the standards they attain in the tests.
3. The school's results overall in the 2000 SATs for seven-year-olds were very low compared to other schools. The proportion of pupils achieving average or above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics was at its lowest level since 1996. Teachers' assessment of science shows below average results. English results show continuing weaknesses in reading, writing and spelling and it is clear that these are holding back pupils' performance in mathematics and science too. The standards achieved in the 2000 SATs for eleven-year-olds were well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. However, an average proportion of pupils reached the higher level 5 in mathematics and science. Compared to those schools with between 35 and 50 per cent free school meals, results were above average in all the tested subjects. Results are improving year on year for both boys and girls according to data supplied by OFSTED and the school. Value is certainly being added as the school's rate of improvement is above average. Results for 2001 are very similar at both key stages to those attained in 2000. By eleven years the pupils are attaining broadly average standards in the SATs. The school's performance in SATs in Year 6 in 2001 is three times better than it was in 1996.
4. Children in the nursery start school with well below average knowledge, understanding and skills and make steady progress during their time in the Foundation Stage; progress is good towards the latter half. Prior to admission to the nursery, children and their parents have the opportunity to benefit from the local Sure-Start programme. All connected with the school agree that this is very beneficial in helping children make a confident start to school without anxiety. Some good teaching enables the children to develop very good personal and social skills, increase the skills with which they move and control their bodies, build good reading habits and to grow in their awareness of the world about them. Currently, there are no children in the nursery or reception class who need help to learn English as an additional language. However, many children in both nursery and reception have limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation and general language delay. Sound strategies enable the children to make good gains in their communication, language and literacy skills in both nursery and reception. Some very good teamwork ensures that children with special educational needs make steady progress against the personal targets set for them. In the reception class, there is some good progress across all of the areas of learning, which results in the children starting in Year 1 being well equipped to take full advantage of the National Curriculum, even though the standards they achieve are generally below the level expected. Mathematics is not taught as well as it could be in the nursery and this dampens down the potential of some children to develop number skills. The creative experiences being provided offer children the chance to work with different media, for example paint. In the

lessons observed throughout the Foundation Stage, there was insufficient attention paid to enabling them to explore, investigate and develop their own ideas.

5. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 2 are well below average in English overall and below average in mathematics and science. Standards in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and history and average in science. The increase in standards by eleven years reflects a rate of progress in these subjects that shows improvement but one that could be brisker if more attention were paid to writing and recording skills, as these currently impede some pupils' achievements across the subjects they learn. At the end of both infants and juniors standards are average in ICT, art and design, geography, music and PE. Too little evidence was available to make a reliable evaluation of standards in design and technology. In art and design there is good progress in all years, largely because of the good attention that has been paid to implementing a coherent scheme of work, the use of sketchbooks to log pupils' skills development and good resourcing. Singing stands out as a particular strength – the choir with over 90 pupils is of immense value to the school community, though the other elements of music are not given such positive attention and the lower standards reflect this. Standards in science are too low by the end of Year 2, largely because pupils are not being provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their investigative and research skills, though in lessons observed their good knowledge and understanding were demonstrated effectively in oral responses. In ICT the standards being achieved by 9 to 11 year olds are too low. The school is working hard to enable older pupils to catch up on ICT work missed in the past and is well placed to be successful in attaining expected standards by the end of the year. Issues concerning resources to promote pupils' skills in monitoring, modelling and communication still remain, and these are limiting the full potential of ICT use in school, but are being sorted out swiftly. The appointment of a technical assistant to support lessons is boosting both staff and pupils' confidence, and is having a positive impact on the standards being achieved in ICT.
6. Pupils' work saved from last year, together with a sample of that completed so far this term, shows that too often very similar work is given to all pupils, despite the different levels at which they are capable of working. It also shows uneven progress by a significant proportion of average and higher-attaining pupils. The boost given to pupils' learning in Year 6 has a positive impact on their performance in SATs but more could be done to enable learning to build up incrementally from the Foundation Stage onwards. Consistently good progress is being made by those pupils with special needs, who benefit from well-conceived individual education plans which include smart targets that are regularly reviewed. This good practice can usefully serve as a model to support improvement for other groups. The next challenge for the school is to ensure that all pupils learn at good rates in every year.
7. The standards pupils' achieve in basic skills are mixed. Pupils have good listening skills. They listen attentively to the teacher and follow instructions well. In all classes the pupils speak with confidence and are willing to respond when asked a question, but few have a wide enough vocabulary to express themselves fully when putting across views and opinions. Reading skills are at a competent level and the pupils take immense pleasure in sharing books and enjoying stories and poems. Their

limited range of experiences impedes their ability to identify nuances in the text or to explore below the body of the text to gain understanding beyond the literal. Writing skills are the weakest link in the standards being achieved in English. Pupils sequence their ideas well enough but the choice of words to add interest and enliven writing is narrow. Pupils' spellings, though phonetically plausible, are too often inaccurate. Many older pupils still make basic errors in punctuation. Handwriting tends to be neat and well presented though the incidence of basic errors in punctuation is high and this problem is apparent in work in other subjects, for example in history. Pupils have a reasonable recall of number facts and an appropriate understanding of shape, space and measure. By the age of eleven most can work quickly and accurately when working with numbers. Pupils in the junior classes are generally more adept at problem-solving, largely because in infant classes there is a tendency for the teachers to not only set the problems but to give the solutions too readily.

8. It is clear that standards are not yet high enough, especially in speaking, writing and practical mathematics throughout the school. Not enough is being done to improve children's vocabulary across the subjects they learn. The school aims to meet the needs of different pupils through planning and organisation, and the allocation of additional resources to support some pupils in lower junior classes in developing their numeracy and literacy skills, for example. This works well for the significant group with special needs who are assisted well in their studies and make good progress. The groups of pupils who still require more attention in all years are those who could attain at average levels if work were targeted more precisely and their progress charted as carefully as low achievers, and the handful of higher-attaining pupils in infant classes who do not always have suitably demanding work set for them. The school has identified potentially higher-attaining pupils and alerted all teachers to provide extra challenge for them in all subjects. These pupils are doing well enough in junior classes in the main, and the SATs show an increasing proportion attaining at the higher level 5, though more consistent levels of challenge throughout school would enhance their achievements overall.
9. The school has set realistic targets for the 2002 Year 6 SATs and is currently on track to meet them. Targets are challenging and reflect the school's declared ambition to be the top of its benchmark group and the best school in the area. Target setting is usefully supporting pupils' learning in Year 6 but its practice is not yet widespread enough to ensure that the maximum is expected from all pupils in every year. This is an area for improvement. Notwithstanding the problems the school faces in recruitment, the drive and determination are apparent and the teachers give great commitment to providing a good education for the pupils. The school is judged to have sound capacity to sustain continuous improvement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- Pupils love school and are keen learners.
- Parents share their children's pride in their achievements.
- Behaviour is very good; pupils are self-controlled, mature and considerate.
- Exclusions are very rare.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships are excellent: all are fully embraced within the school family.• Pupils become caring, confident young citizens.• Attendance is unsatisfactory; too many pupils have their progress hampered by frequent absence. |
|---|

10. Overall, attitudes to learning are very good, show an improvement since the last inspection, and reflect the enhanced status of education in the local community. Pupils love school and are keen to take up the many opportunities offered to them. They are very proud of the school and act as good ambassadors when out on school trips or at public performances, for instance at the Lowry Centre. They are keen learners, interested in lessons and anxious to do their best. Parents echo the fact that their children are happy to attend school, sharing their children's pride in their achievements. The choir, with its membership of nearly one third of the school, is a good example of the pupils' willingness to become involved in extracurricular activities.
11. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. Parents' views strongly support this improvement since the last full inspection. Pupils show remarkable levels of self-control, maturity and consideration for their classmates. Even the youngest pupils share equipment well, take turns appropriately and treat people and property with respect. Playtimes are harmonious, and pupils spontaneously involve others who may be looking unhappy or temporarily left out. Pupils respond very well to the use of praise and visibly grow in self-esteem when their efforts are recognised. They appreciate the need for sanctions and are generally willing to apologise for their mistakes. Exclusions have fallen significantly. The one fixed-period exclusion last year was fully justified, and was effective in providing a 'breathing space' as well as a statement of the school's insistence on respect for all.
12. Relationships are excellent, both amongst pupils themselves, and with adults. The Christian ethos of love and caring for all permeates the school and supports the mutual respect shown by adults and children in class, at lunch and at playtimes. In lessons, pupils work well together in pairs or small groups, helping one another and giving encouragement. Pupils from ethnic minorities, and those who speak English as an additional language, are fully embraced within the school family, as are those with special educational needs. In many lessons pupils can be found helping less able classmates by sharing their own skills, for example when using computers.
13. The personal development of pupils is good, and they learn to become caring, confident young citizens. They respond well to the many chances they are given to demonstrate a sense of social responsibility, be it as classroom monitors or in support of national or international charities. In the recently introduced school council, pupils have shown a sensible and proactive approach to school improvements, taking part in the selection of new books for the library, and making suggestions about renovation of the toilet facilities. However, in class they are not always given enough opportunity to show initiative, or to take more responsibility for their own learning and progress towards personal targets.

14. Attendance remains poor, although there have been improvements since the last inspection and punctuality continues to improve. In the last reporting year, attendance rose to above 90 per cent but this is still well below the national average. Absences disrupt the academic progress of too many pupils and contribute to their low standards of attainment. The reasons for absence appear to be linked to personal and social problems at home for which the school tries to offer support where possible. Unauthorised absence is above the national average and not all parents fully support the school's attendance policy.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching is good overall with many more strengths than weaknesses, despite a significantly high turnover rate of staff and ongoing recruitment difficulties.• Teaching has retained the strengths flagged up by HMI two years ago and weaker aspects have been improved, though the teaching of writing is one area that has not moved forward quickly enough.• Effective teamwork ensures that the youngest children settle well into nursery and grow in confidence and maturity. Good attention is paid by all staff to helping pupils develop as responsible future citizens who have a good set of principles to live by.• All teachers have very good techniques for managing behaviour so that classrooms are positive and purposeful places. Excellent relationships at all levels are successfully underpinning pupils' effective learning.• Literacy and numeracy hours are effective in helping pupils to increase their basic skills, though occasionally there is too little time given for them to record their work, reflect on what they have learned and target where future improvement lies. This is particularly the case in infant classes. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning, though adequate, does not yet precisely identify the level of work at which different pupils are capable of working. Nor is assessment used regularly enough to assist the planning of lessons that provide good challenge for all.• There are pockets of very good teaching practice to build on and managers have now to find ways to make sure it is shared and exchanged within school. |

15. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is much improved since the time of the 1998 inspection and retains the strengths identified in the more recent HMI inspection in 1999. This is despite a high staff turnover and problems concerning recruitment. Seven out of eleven teachers have joined the school in the last two years. The induction arrangements largely carried out by headteacher have been successful and morale is high. Teachers feel well supported in school and are committed to raising standards. A positive feature that has supported improvement alongside the effective programme of staff development is the school's development of a teaching and learning policy that has raised expectations about what is to be taught and learnt. The next step is for the policy to be rigorously monitored and findings used to support improved performance. All teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and this results in good conditions for learning in all classes and is a strength. Managers have now to make time for teachers to share the best of their practice in planning, assessment and teaching, so that all pupils receive the very

best deal possible and everyone can play a full part in the next phase of improvement. Parents hold positive views about the quality of teaching.

16. Eighty lessons were observed during this inspection, of which 78 were of at least sound quality and two were unsatisfactory. During the inspection nearly two thirds of the lessons seen were of good or better quality. Teaching is satisfactory from the nursery to Year 2, though there are good aspects in the teaching of personal and social development, reading and music in the nursery and across all areas in the reception. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is effective, though the style tends to be very controlling, and there are missed opportunities for promoting pupils' independent research and enquiry skills. The majority of lessons are successful in helping pupils make satisfactory progress across the subjects they learn. However, one English lesson and one physical education lesson failed to challenge a significant proportion of pupils and so they did not make the progress they were capable of and this was unsatisfactory. Teaching is more often good than satisfactory in junior classes. It is very effective in Year 4 and Year 6. Here teaching has a much sharper focus on ensuring that work stretches and challenges different pupils and, this results in accelerated progress.
17. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is effective in helping these pupils make good progress, especially in literacy. The work of learning assistants is a very positive feature in assisting the pupils with statements of special educational needs to do well. The investment in staff training has given rise to a confident staff who between them have the necessary skills and expertise to provide a good quality of education for all pupils. The school is still without a lead manager for English and this is restricting the pace at which improvement can be made. The teaching of writing is one aspect that has yet to be given concerted attention to ensure that pupils' writing skills are developed fully. Pupils' limited writing skills are depressing their achievements in other subjects. In its quest to continue to take the school forward, senior managers are now charged with the task of identifying and sharing the features of the very best teaching and learning, as part of a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation.
18. The good teaching overall is enabling willing and enthusiastic learners. Pupils work hard, concentrate well and become mature and sensible learners. Pupils enjoy their lessons and demonstrate that they can work independently and responsibly when required. Because lessons are profitable, younger pupils are building skills, knowledge and understanding at steady rates and older ones are catching up well on their studies. This is having a positive effect on standards. Pupils have yet to play an effective role in assessing their own performance and this is an area for development.
19. Throughout the school there has been beneficial impact on the achievements of pupils from the successful implementation of both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies that enables pupils to become literate and numerate and for many older pupils to catch up on a slow start. Teachers make effective use of mental warm-up time to improve numeracy, though occasionally this goes on too long and eats up the time available for pupils to record their work. Literacy sessions typically begin with the sharing of text, and most teachers engage pupils' good working habits very early on by asking probing questions that seek to deepen pupils' thinking skills. Pupils' limited vocabulary was often seen to limit answers, however, to just one word responses. Seldom do teachers ask follow-on questions that seek to extend pupils' answers. It is usually the case that group activities are purposeful and productive times in which the majority of pupils get on well with their independent tasks. Plenary sessions were observed to be rather rushed in both numeracy and literacy sessions and seldom did teachers return to the objectives they had set to assess what learning gains had been made.

20. Relationships in most classes are excellent; teachers want to do their best for the pupils and vice versa and this shows in the generally good outcomes. Most teachers are reflective about their practice and keen to make improvement. There is a very good team spirit amongst staff, who are positive about sharing ideas in the interest of giving the best to pupils. Classrooms at St Jon Fisher and St Thomas More Primary are exciting places to be because of the stimulating environment that includes high quality displays of pupils' work, and because the pupils are so receptive and keen to learn. These positive features lead to most pupils' acquiring knowledge, improving skills and secure understanding in all of the subjects they study. Both young and older pupils are rightly proud of their achievements and are well motivated by the positive reward systems operating in classes and recognised in the weekly 'golden assembly'. Most teachers have sound understanding of the needs of the range of pupils in their class but there is insufficient reference to the actual levels at which pupils are working in planning, however, that could usefully highlight what the next step should be to move up a level. This is especially relevant to average achieving pupils who need tightly focused work to ensure they progress rather than just miss the level expected of them. In some of the lessons observed, the written lesson plans confused *learning objectives* with *teaching activities*, and some were very sketchy in the detail covered. In the better lessons, skilful teaching compensated for these shortcomings but this is one aspect that requires improvement to ensure consistently good practice from the nursery to Year 6.
21. Teachers use mark books to record pupils' achievements at regular intervals and these are a good feature of practice. There is less recording of more immediate learning gains and this is one aspect that the school is aware it needs to develop. A useful start has been made to target setting aimed at helping pupils to improve on their personal best and, in so doing, achieve higher standards in academic work. When talking to inspectors, Year 6 pupils showed good levels of self-knowledge about what they were good at and where they needed to improve their work. The good practice in target setting and self-review has yet to be exploited to the full as part of ongoing assessment, for example in marking. There is limited use of the clear objectives being set to drive learning at the start and during the lesson or being returned to in the plenary session. Teachers' assessments of how well pupils are doing are inconsistently used to inform their planning, and this weakness shows up where teaching is less strong.
22. Parents are increasingly supportive and want to play their part in helping pupils make the very best rates of progress possible and to help realise the individual targets set. Teachers generally make good use of homework to extend learning, though less so for providing extension work for the high achievers.

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

- The curriculum is satisfactory, and in better shape than it was three years ago when the school received a full inspection; it now meets legal requirements and provides pupils with a good range of experiences

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ethos of the school is fully inclusive and one in which all pupils are encouraged to succeed, though the needs of higher attainers could be better met. • Good attention is paid to ensuring that children in the Foundation Stage build their personal, social and emotional skills very well and grow in confidence as effective learners. Less attention is paid to developing mathematical and creative skills and this requires attention. • Good attention has been paid to making learning relevant to the needs of most pupils; the range is broad with many extras built in that give enrichment. The curriculum lacks balance in parts, however, and this restricts pupils' research, enquiry and recording skills. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has introduced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively and both have had a positive impact on teaching and learning, though sharper focus is needed in the work set for the range of pupils in group sessions. • Pupils with special educational needs are provided for very effectively and this helps them achieve successfully. • The school provides a very good range of extracurricular opportunities. • Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, and a tremendous strength of the school. |

23. The curriculum for pupils aged five to eleven makes a satisfactory contribution to the standards achieved. The range of learning opportunities is broadly based and relevant, though a little out of balance. For example, a shortage of resources restricts the breadth of work in ICT as pupils cannot use the Internet for communication or monitor processes using sensors. This affects standards in ICT in the juniors, which are below the level expected. The school meets statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and adds extra opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and talents through participation in the choir or in football training sessions, for example. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is appropriate, and very good attention is paid to promoting personal and social skills which helps them grow in confidence and self-esteem and able to take full advantage of the full range of experiences provided. Less attention is paid to developing mathematical and creative skills and this requires attention. Governors have at present decided that sex education should not form part of the school's curriculum. There is a programme for education on the dangers of drug misuse that takes place in Year 6. Aspects of personal, social and health education, such as healthy eating, are covered by the science curriculum. 'Circle time' is planned to provide an opportunity for important social and moral aspects to be discussed and takes place in some classes, but it is not yet an integral part of the school's provision. It would however be difficult to overestimate the contribution made by the school's underlying ethos to the personal and social development of all its pupils.
24. The school has introduced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively and both have had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Refinement lies in the need to extend more opportunities, particularly in infants classes, to the practical and investigative aspects of mathematics and science. The

way in which the hour-long sessions are planned is effective, though more attention could be paid to setting challenging work for different groups of pupils. In some lessons the first part runs over the time set and this squeezes the amount of time left for pupils to record their work. The third part (plenary) is seldom used to reflect fully on what has been learned and what needs to be learned next. These areas are refinements that would help make the curriculum even better. Numeracy is promoted effectively across the curriculum, for example in science pupils draw graphs and bar charts to record some of their findings. Literacy is less well promoted across the curriculum. Too little attention is given in subjects such as history and geography for pupils to extend their writing skills. The school is not paying enough attention to developing pupils' vocabulary in most subjects and there are missed opportunities for speaking skills to be exploited fully.

25. The school now has policies for all subjects and schemes of work to support teachers' planning that are thoughtfully written and offer appropriate support and advice. The detail of medium-term planning ensures subject coverage and consistency through the school, although pupils in classes where there is more than one age group are not always given work at a suitable level.
26. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils have equal access to the curriculum, particularly for those with moderate learning difficulties. Girls and boys are given equal opportunities and teachers have similar expectations of both, one indication of which is the number of boys in the choir. The ethos of the school is one in which all pupils are encouraged to succeed and pursue personal aspirations wherever possible. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they are given every opportunity to become involved in the school's activities. It is a matter of pride to the school that all of its pupils feel part of its family. The all-inclusive nature of the school's provision for meeting needs ensures that pupils with special educational needs take part in everything that happens. They are members of the large school choir; they participate in day and residential visits and join in with extracurricular sporting activities and other extracurricular clubs. Within classes the needs of pupils with special educational needs are catered for expertly as the requirements in individual education plans are conscientiously covered in the different levels of work provided for them. No pupils with special educational needs are left out of any of the opportunities provided for other pupils whether academic or social.
27. Teachers and nursery nurses work well together and their different strengths are used to complement each other. The nursery and reception class are located some distance apart and this makes it difficult for provision to be structured as a unified whole, though reception-age children do use the facilities of the nursery from time to time. The good relationships between adults provide a very positive model for the children to follow. Good attention is paid to ensuring that children in the Foundation Stage build their personal, social and emotional skills very well and grow in confidence as effective learners. Less attention is paid to developing mathematical and creative skills and this requires attention.
28. The school provides a very good range of extracurricular opportunities. The choir, to which so many pupils belong, takes part in many high profile events, including an

Emmaus concert at Manchester Cathedral, 'Vivace' at Bridgewater Hall, BBC 'Music Live', the Lord Mayor's reception and a concert at the Royal Northern College of Music. There are also concerts and performances in school. Pupils have the chance of a residential visit in the Lake District, while others visit families in Bologna following their Italian lessons. The grounds are in the process of being developed for an 'outdoor curriculum', some of which is planned to take place after school. An ICT club is starting soon and science workshops supported by 'Shell' begin after Christmas. The school runs football teams for boys and girls, as well as training sessions taken by 'Nike' and Manchester United coaches. A group of pupils had the unforgettable experience of running out with the team at Old Trafford on a European Cup night.

29. The school works hard to forge very good links with the community and regards this as an important aspect of its support for the pupils. As a Catholic school there are naturally strong links with the church. The choir sings at services and the parish priest spends a lot of his time in the school, getting to know the pupils. Pupils make monthly visits to local homes for senior citizens, accompanied by helpers from the parish. Parents and other adults are encouraged to come into school and help, some of whom move on to being employed by the school. The headteacher is proud that on some weekends so many groups are using the school's facilities that it is hard to find somewhere to park!
30. Since his appointment the headteacher has worked hard to forge strong links with the high school. Pupils visit the high school in Year 5, as well as the usual pre-transfer visits in Year 6. Teachers from the high school visit to take lessons and talk to teachers. There is a good link between the special educational needs departments, ensuring a smooth transfer for these pupils. The high school values the work being done at St John Fisher and St Thomas More, and shows this by inviting the headteacher to present the awards at their annual prize giving.
31. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, and a tremendous strength of the school. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory. Within this picture, spiritual and moral provision is judged to be excellent, with social and cultural very good.
32. Spiritual values underpin everything the school does, and are the basis of its mission. The school not only respects pupils as individuals, it tells them they are wonderful and, with God's help, can achieve anything they want to. This is more than words, it is a genuine belief, and because of this the pupils believe it as well, and act accordingly. The whole ethos of the school is based on encouraging pupils to bring the values they are taught, both formally and informally, into their own lives.
33. Morality too is made an integral part of pupils' experiences in school. Classes set their own rules in discussion at the beginning of the year, and all teachers have similar and consistent expectations. In assemblies gospel stories such as the 'Good Samaritan' are told dramatically and related to the pupils' own lives and experiences. The atmosphere is positive, with an emphasis on celebrating what is good. The staff are very good role models, and pupils are aware that this is a place where everyone

is valued and important. Pupils are encouraged to think about the effects of their actions on others, not just the consequences to themselves.

34. School is a place where everyone is welcome, and pupils know this. They genuinely feel part of a family, and because of this they begin to flourish. Their self-esteem is raised and they grow in confidence. Some are given special responsibilities, such as serving on the 'school council' or being road safety 'officers'. Pupils are made aware of the value the school places on being a Christian community, where consideration for other people is a key factor. It finds expression in collecting money for charitable causes, and also in the way in which teachers treat pupils, and pupils act with each other.
35. Pupils have the opportunity to experience a wide range of cultural activities. Those available to the choir are outstanding and, as such, are open to all the pupils from Year 2 onwards. It is to the school's credit that so many take advantage of this. There is also tuition available for playing the violin and brass instruments. Poetry and drama are celebrated as part of literacy lessons, and there is good quality dance in physical education. Although emphasis is rightly placed on the Catholic faith, pupils are also taught about other religions and beliefs within their religious education, so that they can live with understanding in an ethnically diverse society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- The school provides a safe and caring environment for pupils.
- Attendance is monitored well but the promotion of good attendance does not yet include realistic, individual targets.
- Staff provide very good support and guidance for personal development.
- Pupils are encouraged to behave very well and do their best.
- Oppressive or anti-social behaviour is very successfully discouraged.
- Practice in assessing pupils' progress requires development and the use made of assessment to help plan suitable work for different pupils requires much sharper focus.

36. A quick response to the key issue in the last full inspection ensured that the school is a safe place for all its members, and the overall provision for health, safety and welfare is now good. All staff, whether teaching or ancillary, place the care and needs of the pupils at the heart of their work. The quality of the school environment, both inside and outside, reflects the ethos that the pupils deserve only the best. Procedures for child protection are fully in place and follow local area guidelines with enhanced status through the school's involvement as a full service member of the Education Action Zone (EAZ). The provision for first aid arrangements has been enhanced by training for most of the lunch-time supervisors who have also taken part in a scheme to improve the quality of behaviour and play in the lunch-hour.
37. The school pays close attention to the monitoring and promotion of good attendance, and procedures are now good. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. Pupils are contacted on the first day of absence, again through the EAZ,

and truancy is not a problem. Incentives to promote good attendance take various forms and are well displayed around school. They include class awards and personal certificates, but do not concentrate on small achievable targets for pupils whose attendance gives the most cause for concern. The headteacher and staff, with the education welfare service, place a high priority on the promotion of good attendance, and provide considerable support for pupils who have serious social problems, which affect their attendance records.

38. Pupils with special educational needs are given every consideration by staff, who know the pupils very well. The school has clear tracking systems in place to ensure that needs are being met. They are reviewed regularly so that changing needs are equally successfully met. The whole basis of the school's work with its pupils is centred upon its mission statement. It celebrates their achievements with them, particularly in the weekly 'golden assemblies'. These assemblies also ensure that the pupils understand the need to celebrate everyone's achievements; the adults in school are also rewarded for their achievements. During the week of inspection the class assistants were given certificates in recognition of the work they do and the pupils they support were observed to clap very loudly.
39. The school has also improved its systems for assessing pupils' academic progress since the last inspection, and these are satisfactory. There is now has a common approach in core subjects, with the ability to chart pupils' coverage of the curriculum and their end-of-year performance. When assessing pupils' work, teachers are making better connections with National Curriculum levels, but it is clear that pupils are not always sure how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve. There is still a weakness in the way in which teachers use assessment information to plan the next step of learning for pupils. This is particularly apparent in the lack of challenging work for the average and higher-attaining pupils in some classes.
40. In fulfilling its mission statement, the school places a very high value on the personal development of pupils, and procedures to monitor and support this are very good. They include a range of incentives and awards to encourage the pupils to behave well, give of their best, and consider the way their actions affect other people. From the leaves on the 'tree of achievement' to the house points and 'worker of the week' certificates, the emphasis is consistently on the promotion of positive attitudes, and genuine use of praise. In a spirit of involvement and support for all pupils, sanctions are very low key, and often teachers need only to say that a particular misdemeanour saddens them for the culprit to behave well again. The headteacher is prepared to use exclusion only as a last resort, in the very rare instances when it is essential to underline the school's refusal to accept wilful acts of aggression or intimidation. Throughout the school, consistent teaching and opportunities for reflection on moral aspects are very successful in eliminating bullying or anti-social behaviour, such that pupils develop caring and thoughtful ways themselves.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- The school has forged strong links with parents and this reflects a significant improvement since the 1998 inspection.

- Parents appreciate the changes and the way they are now more involved.
- Communications with parents are satisfactory but still have room for improvement.
- More parents now support pupils in their learning at home, however a small minority are still not supporting fully the attendance policy.

41. The headteacher has been the key to fostering and developing a good relationship between parents and the school. There is now a mutually supportive partnership, which demonstrates a significant improvement since the last full inspection. Parents take an active interest in the education of their children and share their children's pride in the school. They are extremely appreciative of the opportunities offered to their children, and recognise the considerable achievements made in recent years. They particularly value the high expectations teachers have for the pupils, and they feel the school is very approachable should any problems arise.
42. One of the features which has contributed to the good, effective links with parents has been an improvement in the quality of communication. Not only is the headteacher very accessible when parents gather at the school gate, but also the nature of formal and informal written information has improved and is satisfactory. However, although there is now a school brochure, and pupils' annual reports meet legal requirements, there is still room for improvement in this area, as the school is well aware. Progress reports do not let parents know how well their children are doing compared with national expectations for their age. The recently introduced newsletter and the reader-friendly report from governors have started to recognise the importance of pupils' personal interests outside of school, and of celebrating the work of pupils in school communications. A measure of the effectiveness of links with parents is the considerable success the school has had in nurturing parent volunteers, such that several have become salaried classroom assistants.
43. Overall, the impact of parents on the work of the school is satisfactory with some notable strengths. Parents are enthusiastic in their support for informal events, like the fun day, and pupil progress meetings are well attended. Parents provide generous support for charities and school funds, but are less keen on more formal, structured meetings. Parents and children have supported family literacy and mathematics programmes, and most pupils receive sound support for their homework tasks. The school recognises the need to gain the support of more parents for its attendance policy, so that more pupils are able to enjoy continuous progress unhindered by frequent absences.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The headteacher is the prime agent for improvement in school and his leadership is outstanding.
- Other adults form a staff team that work most successfully for school improvement.
- The governors are full partners in taking the school forward and they are true critical friends.
- There is good understanding of the performance of the school and the principles

of best value are applied effectively.

- All types of resources are used well in the interests of the pupils.
- The school has a bright future because of the vision and determination shown.
- The school gives good value for money.
- The role of subject coordinators is not yet focused enough on checking and formally evaluating standards, teaching, learning and the curriculum.
- The appointment of a new coordinator for literacy has been delayed because of recruitment problems and this is hampering developments in English.
- The School Improvement Plan has too many priorities and they are not ranked clearly. It also does not reflect the drive for high standards.

44. The headteacher leads the school with devotion and determination. He has turned around this once failing school and has established it as the rising star in south Manchester. The head has also welded the staff team together as a group which joins him cheerfully on the ongoing task of consolidation and improvement. There is a unique sense of pride in school and this is extended most successfully to the pupils, who really are at the centre of the school. The head and governors give excellent educational direction to the work of the school and are drawing more people into the process as they assume new management responsibilities.
45. The headteacher has made several key appointments since he joined the school. New members of staff have joined longer-serving staff in a partnership for progress. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is committed, hard working and a successful agent of change. She works in effective tandem with the headteacher and has a very good overview and understanding of the school's performance. A key post remains for appointment: the English coordinator. In the interim, key managers know that, should an appointment continue to prove difficult, they must look to establish the necessary leadership to drive standards forward from within the school.
46. The school has had difficulty in making staff appointments in the past. In some cases, this has affected the quality of education and the systematic progress made by pupils. There is some evidence within last year's work of disjointed education and faltering learning. This occurred where a succession of supply or temporary teachers took charge who then proved less than adequate for the task. The headteacher did not let things slip and changes were made quickly in order to make teaching and learning effective again. Such moves were successful and the pupils regained their former momentum.
47. The coordinators in school work effectively to manage their subjects and other responsibilities. Some are relatively new to the school or to the subjects they manage. All have made a good start to the leadership of their areas of responsibility, though their knowledge and understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of their subjects is not as comprehensive as it might be. This is because coordinators do not have enough planned opportunities to monitor directly the standards, teaching, learning and curriculum. This affects the setting of specific targets for individuals and groups of pupils, as not all the necessary information is easily available. Leadership of the Foundation Stage lacks the confidence to try new things and this is hampering its full development, for example.

48. The whole system of meeting special educational needs is very effectively managed. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has very clear systems in place. The SENCO has one day a week release time from class teaching which makes it possible for her to carry out her role effectively. This enables her to arrange all meetings with outside agencies and support staff efficiently. It means that there is always enough time to deal with administration matters adequately. Individual education plans can be reviewed on a regular basis so that changing needs are met effectively. Resourcing is kept up to date appropriately.
49. The management of the provision for the few pupils who do not speak English at home is effective. School managers ensure that, whatever the pupils' backgrounds, opportunities for success are given to all. The very good levels of racial harmony in school are another reflection of the values and attitudes of the headteacher and the staff team. The headteacher knows full well that such qualities require careful and sensitive management and he takes the lead with confidence.
50. All staff work continually to ensure that the school meets its aims and reflects its values. They meet with success in this drive. The building of a united staff team is one of the school's greatest successes in the last two years.
51. Governors are included well in all aspects of the school. They are led most effectively by the Chair of Governors who has kept himself fully informed about the progress towards effectiveness that the school has made. The partnership between the Chair and the headteacher is another strength that stands the school in very good stead. The governing body itself is also well informed about the work and life of the school and is increasingly a critical friend. Governors ask the right questions at the right time to ensure that the school is performing well against other schools and they use statistical data well to evaluate standards and progress. In this way, they make sure that the school applies the principles of Best Value effectively to its work.
52. When the headteacher was appointed, ways to check that standards and progress were improving as needed were ad hoc and irregular. The headteacher began a more systematic gathering and evaluation of data soon after he arrived and some other members of staff were involved in this process. Today, the process of school self-evaluation is good, though it is recognised by the headteacher that improvement can still be made. In some instances, evaluation is intuitive rather than hard edged. The school has some good models of evaluation on which to base future developments.
53. Governors, key managers and the administrative staff jointly ensure that resources are managed effectively. In general, there are no shortages of staff, accommodation or learning equipment. The school has several priorities that focus on the enhancement of such resources. At present, it is not easy to disentangle these to identify which are the key priorities for the immediate future. The school development plan contains many other priorities and the rank of these is not stated clearly enough. In addition, the actual drive for improved standards is not written large in the School Improvement Plan. However, finance is carefully matched to priorities and the budget is monitored regularly. Additional funding, from the Wythenshawe Educational Action Zone amongst others, is used fully in the interests

of the pupils. The school has a sizeable carry-forward to its budget this year. This is earmarked to support enhancement of staffing and the outside environment in a bid to make the quality of education even better.

54. As charted in this report, the school has moved ahead well on most fronts. The priorities tackled to date have been the right ones. The school is settled and purposeful, with good stability in staffing and a united determination to build for the future from a secure platform. The school's performance in the SATs for eleven-year-olds is much improved since its time in special measures and provides a strong indicator of effectiveness in a relatively short period of time. Managers are clear about where development lies in order to increase performance in the infant stage to a similarly good level. The headteacher is ready to lead the school with confidence into the future and to show that St John Fisher and St Thomas More Primary School is becoming the best in the district. The school is already giving good value for money and this is most likely to continue as the school moves closer to its goal.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. The school was placed in special measures three years ago and the nine serious issues that were identified have been improved satisfactorily. Some of the issues facing the school are still current, for example attendance is stubbornly refusing to budge above 90 per cent, despite the school's hard work. Making improvement in English is being hampered by the failure to recruit a good leader in the face of an assertive advertising campaign. Standards are on an upward move and at the end of Key Stage 2 the rate of improvement is greater than primary schools overall, though there is catching up to do, and standards must be raised further across the curriculum. Good attention is being paid to developing pupils' basic skills as well as providing an appropriate range of curricular experiences. The curriculum has improved, and good subject guidance is now in place to support teachers in their planning for lessons, especially in English, mathematics and science. Closer monitoring by managers of what is working best in school has been influential in raising teaching quality and its impact on learning. The headteacher has given a strong lead in making improvement, though more people need to become involved in a systematic and critical review of the school's performance.

In order to improve the quality of education and the standards being achieved the headteacher, governors and staff should:

1. Continue to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT by:

- ensuring that lesson plans consistently identify precise learning objectives for the full range of pupils;
- assessing how well pupils are learning across their studies, and using the findings to assist in the planning of suitably challenging work, especially for average and higher-attaining pupils;
- ensuring that the content of lessons gives pupils time to record their learning, reflect on what they have learned and set targets for improving their work;
- developing the management role of subject coordinators so that they have direct experience of a range of monitoring activities that will enable them to have a firm grasp on the standards being achieved in all years;
- ensuring that the school's improvement plan places the raising of academic standards as the number one priority at all stages, and sets out a clear programme of action that will result in concerted and unified effort to achieve success.

(Paragraphs: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 19, 21, 39, 52, 53, 66, 68, 73)

And more specifically:

In English by:

- ensuring the development of rich and varied vocabulary;
- insisting that appropriate structures are in place to aid pupils in writing for a range of purposes and at length;
- promoting opportunities for writing across the curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 5, 7, 24, 68, 69, 70, 72, 89, 106)

In mathematics and science by:

- expanding the opportunities for investigative and experimental work and for pupils to show initiative in recording what they discover.

(Paragraphs: 24, 80, 87, 89)

In ICT by:

- enhancing resources for monitoring, modelling and communication.

(Paragraphs: 23, 111, 112, 116)

2. Establish a system of rigorous monitoring of the school's planning, assessment teaching and learning that will enable reliable information to be gathered to inform target setting work at all levels.

(Paragraphs: 15, 45, 47, 52, 74, 113, 128)

3. Continue the drive to raise the level of attendance so that it compares more favourably with the national average.

(Paragraphs: 14, 43)

The headteacher, staff and governors should also continue to:

- i) promote shared working across nursery and the reception class to ensure that the children in the Foundation Stage gain maximum benefits across the areas of learning they experience;
- ii) establish an action plan for improving history which ensures that pupils' achievements are built consistently and systematically year on year;
- iii) widen the opportunities for pupils to compose, record and perform their own music.

(Paragraphs: 4, 23, 27, 47, 58, 106, 110, 119)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	6	45	27	2	0	0
Percentage	0	8	56	34	3	0	0

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

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)	41	262
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	6	138

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	63

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	21	18	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	10	16
	Girls	9	7	10
	Total	20	17	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	51 (66)	44 (59)	67 (78)
	National	84(82)	85 (83)	90(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	15	15
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	24	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	62 (66)	69 (71)	69 (78)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	12	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	13	18
	Girls	11	10	12
	Total	25	23	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (45)	64 (45)	83 (61)
	National	75(70)	72(69)	85(78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	11	10	11
	Total	23	23	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (48)	64 (48)	79 (64)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	6
Indian	5
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	247
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5
Average class size	26.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	160

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	37

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	106

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	65,8419
Total expenditure	59,6695
Expenditure per pupil	1932
Balance brought forward from previous year	51,312
Balance carried forward to next year	113,036

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	274
Number of questionnaires returned	154

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	33	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	37	1	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	38	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	40	9	4	8
The teaching is good.	64	30	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	34	9	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	23	1	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	20	0	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	56	36	5	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	75	20	0	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	32	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	40	9	5	14

NB Totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

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

- The quality of provision for children in the nursery and reception class is satisfactory overall and much the same as identified in 1998 and 1999.
- Staff foster children's personal, social and emotional development very well.
- Children make a good start to learning to read and write.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall but good in personal, social and emotional development and in the teaching of early reading and writing.
- The quality of teamwork is very good and this increases opportunities for children to learn.
- The pre-nursery support and careful induction of children ensure that children come to school with the confidence to learn.
- Not enough is being done to improve children's vocabulary.
- Record keeping and assessment are not good enough to identify the next steps in teaching and learning.
- Leadership lacks the confidence to try new things and this is hampering the full development of the Foundation Stage.

Provision

56. The nursery is spacious and well equipped. During the inspection there were 29 children with full-time places and 14 children who attended in the morning only. Entry to the reception class takes place in September and January each year. There were 18 children in one reception class during the inspection but a second reception class will be established in January 2002 when 20 children move up from the nursery. Discussions with staff and analysis of baseline evidence indicates that children's skills overall are well below average on entry to the nursery and below average at the entry to Key Stage 1. One child in the Foundation Stage is supported by a statement of special educational need. His needs are well known and understood by staff. He is well supported by them and is making good progress. Currently, there are no children in the nursery or reception class who need help to learn English as an additional language. However, many children, in both nursery and reception, have limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation and general language delay.
57. Prior to admission to the nursery, children and their parents have the opportunity to benefit from the local Sure-Start programme. All connected with the school agree that this is very beneficial and ensures a positive start to the nursery.

Teaching

58. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with some good features, particularly in reception where enthusiastic and confident teaching has a positive impact on the children's learning. What staff are passionate about they do well. The best and most consistent teaching is seen in personal, social and emotional development, music and the

teaching of reading. The variation in the quality and effectiveness of teaching owes much to teachers' knowledge and understanding. The steps and stages in raising standards in mathematics are not as well understood as they should be and insufficient priority is given to creative development. Opportunities are provided for the children but they are too directed and pay insufficient attention to letting children experiment and explore ideas themselves. Teachers and nursery nurses work well together and their different strengths are used to complement each other. The good relationships between adults provide a very positive model for the children to follow.

Personal, social and emotional development

59. The school places the development of the whole child at the heart of its mission and this aim is well realised in the Foundation Stage. Staff believe and live this mission and it permeates all their work. They are very successful in promoting the personal, social and emotional growth of children. From the simplest beginnings, such as self-registration in the nursery, independence, self-help and responsibility are fostered systematically. Children behave very well indeed and often show maturity to an unusual degree. For example, in music they do not fiddle with their instruments but attend very closely to leadership from nursery nurses and teachers. In the nursery and reception class they share the bikes and other equipment amicably. Staff are very quick to intervene if anyone does not play appropriately and they make their expectations for good behaviour very clear. Reception children operate confidently in the classroom, hall and playground. They are interested in their work and the world around them. They listen attentively to their teachers and are keen to join in and ask and answer questions. They show care and concern for others, and relationships are very good at all levels. Many children make very good progress and exceed the national expectations for their age and, as a result, are very well prepared for the next stage in their education in this area.

Communication, language and literacy

60. Children like reading and writing and make steady progress, though standards are below the level expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. When they have free choice many, especially girls, will choose to sit in the book corner and enjoy a book or work at the writing table. They are clearly confident to 'have a go'. The older and more-able children in the nursery recognise most letters and can write their names, make passports and provide labels for the shop or their luggage. Other children write letters randomly although many are recognisable as letter shapes. Children in reception begin to write their news, label science pictures and retell stories. All children enjoy having stories read to them and early book skills are developing well. In the nursery, children know the front and back of the book and turn the pages carefully as they retell favourite stories to each other. Children in reception learn to blend letter sounds together to read simple words and begin to remember many words they see frequently. They are heard to read regularly and progress in reading skills is good. They know what 'title', 'author' and 'illustrator' mean and the most able know which writers they like. The teaching of reading and writing is effective because staff are enthusiastic, confident and secure in this area. The least well-developed area is that of vocabulary. There is not enough direct modelling of specific vocabulary to help children extend the range of words they understand and

use. Most children will achieve the expected levels in reading and the majority will be starting to write appropriately for their age by the time they reach the end of the reception year. However, many weaknesses in vocabulary and early writing remain and these will become increasingly problematic as children progress through the school.

Mathematical development

61. Provision for mathematics and the standards achieved by children are not as good as they should be. This is because the staff are not clear enough about the specific skills, knowledge and understanding which should be achieved by the end of the reception year. There are weaknesses in planning, expectations and the use of time. These are particularly apparent in the nursery, but work in mathematics overall needs to be more sharply focused. This has an effect on the starting points for Key Stage 1 as significant numbers of children enter Year 1 at levels well below those expected. Children are introduced to numbers and to counting in the nursery. They have opportunities to sort small items and experiment with sand and water to learn about 'full' and 'empty' and 'heavy' and 'light'. In taught sessions a good range of activities are used to provide useful experiences but there is not enough direct teaching or reinforcement of basic number skills. Children are not always well grouped; sometimes the attainment range is so wide that it results in unmet needs at both ends of the ability range. Supported by the early stage of the National Numeracy Strategy, work in the reception class is better focused but is not challenging enough and more pace is required to ensure that children achieve higher levels.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. Teaching and learning in this area are satisfactory and successful in widening the children's horizons. Children are provided with good opportunities to learn about the world around them. Nursery children draw maps of the route from home to school and are confident users of new technology. They explore the environment around the nursery and observe the changing seasons. They look at pictures of themselves as babies and begin to understand something about the past. Children look at materials and explore their different properties by finding out which are waterproof. Children in the reception class listen carefully to sounds and identify different ways to create sound. They select materials and different fillings to create shakers. They know that putting sand instead of dried peas in their shaker will result in a different sound. Children enjoy the opportunity to work in the computer suite and show maturity in helping each other. Many are beginning to remember the sequence of actions they need to use to open a program. During the inspection it was evident that many children were already well on the way to achieving the expected level for the end of the year.

Physical development

63. Children have very good access to large, small and wheeled equipment to develop their physical skills. Children make steady progress and are on track to achieve the expected levels by the end of the Foundation Stage in controlling their bodies and

the use of space, because they have ample opportunity to refine large physical movements. Although only the nursery children have direct access to an exclusive outside play area this space is also used by the children in the reception class. There is ample equipment to exercise all parts of the body and staff plan carefully for outside play to ensure that all aspects of physical play are covered. Children move confidently, over, under and through the climbing equipment and show good understanding of health and safety issues. Children in both nursery and reception have opportunities to develop control of their small physical movements through drawing, tracing, writing and cutting. Most children in the reception class show a clear preference to use their right or left hand. Children have plenty of opportunities to pick up small objects, arrange them in order, rotate them or thread them. In reception most children can dress themselves and deal with buttons and zips correctly. Staff have high expectations that children will succeed and are careful to strike the right balance between letting children try things for themselves and helping them when necessary.

Creative development

64. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is not as well balanced as it should be because, apart from music, creative development does not receive enough attention. Music is a strength and children in both nursery and reception benefit from good teaching which results in high standards of singing and rhythm work. They enjoy making music, know the names of all the percussion instruments they work with and keep time well. Currently they have no opportunity to compose, invent and write notation or to record their music. Children, particularly in the nursery, have regular opportunities to paint and make models from both waste material and clay. The attractive and often well-proportioned results are displayed for all to see. Children in the reception class have fewer opportunities to be creative generally. There are no drawing tables where an object or flowers are displayed and children encouraged to observe closely and draw carefully. There are frequent opportunities for children to play imaginatively and creatively with each other. Home corners are well equipped and the 'travel agency' supports reading and writing well; but more items such as puppets, rich and interesting fabrics and dressing up clothes are required to stimulate imagination and fantasy play. The children make steady progress but overall their achievements are below that expected.
65. Parents value highly the records of achievement produced at the end of the nursery year but these are intended as a record and not an assessment tool. Written reports are prepared for parents at the end of the reception year. However, staff in both the nursery and reception class need to rethink how they use baseline assessment, collect evidence on day-to-day progress and use it to plan new work. They achieve much by their hard work and dedication to the children in their care, most notably in the area of personal, social and emotional development. To achieve the same high level of success across all areas of learning requires much better use of assessment to plan new work.

ENGLISH

- Pupils make sound progress and by the age of eleven achieve standards in English much the same as pupils at similar schools but below the national average.
- Teaching overall is good but is most effective in Key Stage 2.
- Not enough is being done to improve pupils' vocabulary in speaking and writing and standards, particularly in writing, are not high enough.
- Both boys and girls have very positive attitudes towards English lessons; they enjoy the opportunities for reading, especially when challenging text is chosen.
- Other than word processing, too little use is currently made of ICT to support work in English.
- The lack of a post-holder to lead English is hampering improvement and the overall picture in standards is much the same as identified in 1998 and 1999.
- School managers have yet to establish a system of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievements in English at all ages to assist in their target-setting work at all levels.

66. Pupils begin in Year 1 with below average standards and make steady advancement overall in English. The standards achieved in lessons and in pupils' work are below average in Year 6. The school is very committed to raising standards and has introduced the literacy hour with confidence. There are additional lessons planned for extending opportunities for writing but these are not sufficiently focused on how work needs to be structured, or on what the level of quality as well as quantity should be for different pupils. The school is doing reasonably well to maintain standards in English whilst there is no post-holder to lead improvement. The school currently places too much reliance on boosting performance at the end of Key Stage 2 and needs to target improved achievement in literacy by all pupils from the nursery onwards in its quest to give the best deal possible to everyone.
67. Inspection evidence indicates that at the age of seven standards in reading are broadly average but they are well below average in speaking and in writing. There are considerable discrepancies between these findings, which are close to the results of SATs in 2000 and 2001, and teacher assessment. In particular, teachers appear to have made optimistic judgements as to the number of pupils who were working at level 3. Standards at eleven years are below average in reading, speaking and listening, and writing. There is no significant variation in the standards being achieved between boys and girls.
68. Overall there are a number of reasons for the results at seven and eleven. Reading is well taught and teachers are very successful at conveying a love of books. However, many pupils lack a rich and varied vocabulary and few have the skills to talk about literature or to explore below the body of the text to gain wider appreciation. Speaking skills are well below average. The pupils have a very narrow vocabulary to draw on and although confident to answer questions they have limited skills in putting forward arguments or personal opinions. This lack of fluency depresses research skills and written work generally in other areas of the curriculum.

Writing skills are not well taught or learned. Not enough is being done to equip pupils with a rich and varied vocabulary and to widen experiences of writing for different purposes. The best-written work examined by inspectors in Year 6 barely meets the expectations of a secure Level 4 in structure or content. Writing skills are not being systematically taught and practiced particularly at Key Stage 1 and too little assessment is taking place to check up on the level at which pupils are working. Other than word processing, too little use is currently made of ICT to support work in English.

69. This is a school where all pupils enjoy books and reading. The inspection team was very impressed by the very positive attitudes to books displayed by pupils throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs, many of whom are boys, have been 'turned on to reading' by the school's positive approach to inculcating in pupils the value of reading to aid life-long learning. Reading skills are well taught from the earliest age. Young pupils learn letter sounds and names and use this knowledge to help them read new and unfamiliar words. This skill gives them the confidence to tackle new books. Pupils read with expression. Even pupils in Years 1 and 2 know how important it is to convey the meaning of what they read by the use of different voice, pace or volume. They pay good attention to punctuation and talk about the books they enjoy confidently. Across the school pupils know the names of many writers, can list the titles of their books and express opinions about what they enjoy. Story books, poetry and non-fiction are all referred to by pupils with enthusiasm. Although a number of Year 6 pupils found 'Macbeth' a difficult text, they were nevertheless all very enthusiastic and enjoyed the challenge of archaic vocabulary. Work at this level is an important contribution to raising standards because many older pupils who spoke to inspectors tended to select books for personal reading at an insufficiently challenging level. The application of reading skill is not so well fostered. The attractive library is new and is not yet fully in use. Currently many pupils lack library and research skills and their efforts are often inhibited by their limited vocabulary. However, there are very good signs that the school is committed to building upon the good start made to reading. The new library is a great asset and the pupils are very eager to use it. Many pupils now belong to the local public library as a result of the initiative of the school in taking pupils to the library and ensuring that they all become borrowers.
70. Writing is not such a success story. Some aspects, such as handwriting, are systematically taught and most pupils write letters correctly and neatly by the age of seven. Generally, they write confidently using a joined hand by Year 3. But many at this age use upper and lower case letters in an almost random fashion and make many simple grammatical and spelling errors. These weaknesses are still apparent in the work of too many Year 6 pupils. The school is seeking to address these weaknesses through regular handwriting and spelling practice. The major area of weakness in written work is the inability of pupils to plan, write, edit and produce a completed piece of written work at an appropriate standard. The school has identified additional time for extended writing but inspection findings indicate that not all teachers have planned how to use this time to best effect. Some teachers place too much emphasis on providing stimulus for writing and not enough on skill development. This was seen to be more a problem in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2 but is an issue for the whole school to address. For example, pupils in Years

1 and 2 who had access on a daily basis to very stimulating books in literacy lessons were introduced to a completely new book at the start of the extended writing session. This led to the inefficient use of time. The teachers had to spend time going over the new story instead of discussing and modelling writing itself. Young writers are too often expected to write in response to stimuli when what they need is structure and a rich and varied vocabulary. Teachers meet these needs more effectively in Key Stage 2 and this was seen to work well when pupils in Years 4 and 5 prepared their newspaper reports using a specific writing frame to help them. The overall weakness in written work is evident across the curriculum and is depressing standards, for example in history.

71. Pupils across the school talk with enthusiasm and confidence about their interests and topics within their everyday experience but they lack the necessary vocabulary to:
- understand and interpret difficult texts;
 - write vividly;
 - undertake research, understand complex questions and answer them;
 - write empathetically and with insight into feelings and events;
 - respond orally with appropriate language to challenging questions and situations.
72. The school has just begun to understand the significant impact these areas of weakness are having on the achievement of pupils across the school. Staff have yet to address this problem systematically. Pupils are keen and capable of asking questions. In Year 1/2, for example, they asked many questions about the Victorians as they explored similarities and differences between their lives and our own. The teacher dealt with their questions well because she reflected the questions back to the class and this led to discussion. In too many lessons teachers spend too much time talking without giving pupils the opportunity to respond other than very briefly. Pupils are not taught the specific meaning of new and unusual words systematically enough. The exception was in the lesson in Year 6 based on the witches' speech from 'Macbeth' which exposed pupils to some very unusual language. They relished the challenge. Opportunities to learn specific subject vocabulary and for drama, debate, choral speaking, poetry and play reading have not been identified across all subjects and these are a missed opportunity in improving pupils' oral skills.
73. The National Literacy Strategy has helped the school improve teachers' planning and the teaching of basic skills, particularly in reading. Overall, the teaching of basic skills in literacy is satisfactory. Teaching has been monitored by the headteacher and literacy consultant and this has ensured that the National Literacy Strategy is in place throughout both key stages. The additional literacy strategy is used effectively to improve skills in Years 3 and 4, but there is more work to be done to achieve the best results. Objectives are shared with the class but seldom revisited at the end of lesson to assess learning. Target setting is at an early stage and does not influence lesson planning or marking enough. In many lessons good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Support staff play a vital role in ensuring that they make good progress in lessons. Most teachers provide an appropriate degree of challenge for the more-able pupils. The group most likely to have unmet needs are the pupils of average ability - those pupils who, with more precise teaching and learning, could achieve national expectations but currently just fail to do so.

74. The school has experienced great difficulty in recruiting someone to provide effective leadership for English. In the interim it has taken sensible steps to obtain good quality advice through the use of consultants. Some useful work has been undertaken to identify some of the specific areas of weakness and to develop a system of target setting. The need for staff training has been identified and will continue to be a priority for the foreseeable future. However, much of this effort is being lost because there is currently no one in post to drive the initiatives forward in a coherent and systematic way. In the light of serious recruitment difficulties it is essential that the senior management team and the governors find an acceptable interim solution so that pupils' literacy skills can grow with them. Monitoring and evaluation work has yet to ensure that strengths and weaknesses are assessed systematically to inform the school's setting of targets aimed at raising standards.

MATHEMATICS

- There has been good improvement in mathematics since 1998.
- Standards have risen very well for eleven-year-old pupils.
- Standards are still just below average at the ages of seven and eleven.
- Although satisfactory overall, the rate of progress is not as uniform across the school as it could be, though the boost in Year 6 is demonstrably effective as the SATs show.
- The curriculum has been enhanced successfully and the National Numeracy Strategy is having good impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Management of the subject, including aspects of the monitoring of performance, is a considerable success and should serve as a model for other subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, although four aspects of teaching, identified below, require enhancement. In particular, more work is necessary to enhance teaching in infant classes.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and are enthusiastic and very well behaved. There has been insufficient attention paid to expanding the opportunities for investigative and experimental work and for pupils to show initiative in recording what they find out, especially in infant classes.

75. Mathematics has been improved well since the previous inspection. Standards, particularly in Year 6, have improved year on year and have come much closer to the national average than was the case up to 1998. At present, standards are just below the level expected for seven and eleven-year-old pupils and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress through the school.
76. When children start school both boys and girls have well below the expected level of mathematical knowledge and understanding. This is still the case when they start Year 1. Basic knowledge and skills are established here though there is still much ground to make up in infant and junior classes. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in infant classes and pupils progress soundly. There is some variability in progress in the different infant classes that school monitoring has not identified quickly enough. By the age of seven, standards are higher than at the start

of the infants with no significant variation between the achievements of boys and girls, but school managers know that with more consistent progress they will match those in most other schools.

77. Progress is more consistently steady in junior classes and there is indication amongst the younger pupils in this part of school that standards are not far off the expected level. However, standards of the oldest pupils are still below average because those in Years 5 and 6 have not experienced as much improved teaching and learning as the younger pupils. Staffing difficulties in the past have left their mark. Last year, for example, the Year 6 class suffered a change in staff mid-year. At first, little progress was made, but once the headteacher rectified the situation, progress was bolstered and the final standards achieved, judging from the evidence of work completed in the autumn term, were not as low as could have been the case.
78. The headteacher and the mathematics coordinator have been the joint agents of improvement to the subject. They are resolute in their work to raise standards and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Some of the monitoring of lessons is of very good quality and serves as a model for the school's work to improve the overall quality of checking and evaluating its work as it extends the role of other subject coordinators. In all, mathematics is managed well.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in infant classes and good in the juniors. In general, the basic skills and knowledge of mathematics are taught well. The school's numeracy strategy has made a substantial contribution to rising standards and most pupils develop the necessary basic competence in number and arithmetic. Other strengths of teaching include the very good management of pupils in lessons, the level of staff knowledge and confidence and the use of support staff to assist the progress made by particular pupils, especially those with special educational needs.
80. There are a few remaining aspects of teaching and learning that would stand improvement. Whilst none of these things are of unsatisfactory quality, attention to them has the potential to ensure far more consistency in progress, particularly in infant classes. The aspects for development are:
 - more emphasis on problem solving and investigation skills so that pupils use mathematics skilfully, with initiative and more speed;
 - improved planning to show what specific groups of pupils are expected to learn. This is particularly the case for the middle ability group;
 - more consistent setting, sharing and review of targets for learning with pupils in lessons;
 - more focus on the middle of some lessons is squeezed because teachers talk too long in the opening and closing phases and this needs review.
81. Inspectors observed lessons in mathematics in every class and sometimes went back a second time. The productive and positive working atmosphere in classes is the most noticeable feature of mathematics, along with the enjoyment of the pupils and very good quality of behaviour. The staff put the interests of the pupils to the fore and it is evident that mathematics education is now much more beneficial for the

pupils. A very good Year 4 lesson where pupils were working to improve their skills of handling money is a strong example of such improvement. There was a spirited start to the lesson, pupils rose to the teacher's high expectations and were very keen to answer questions and complete the written work. When these pupils were seven, their standards in the SATs were very low; today they are not far short of average. Such committed and demanding teaching as seen in this lesson is contributing to boosted standards very successfully.

82. The curriculum for mathematics is well planned to focus on the development of skills and knowledge. It forms a firm basis for the work and helps to ensure the systematic development of mathematics. There are a number of good cross-curricular links, especially to science and ICT. These links serve the pupils' developing knowledge and skills in both mathematics and the other subjects well.
83. It is evident that mathematics, like other things in school, has been turned from a weakness to a strength. There are still a number of things to do for improvement, but the commitment and drive are present to assist in future success.

SCIENCE

- There has been good improvement in science since the previous inspection.
- Pupils make good progress and by the age of eleven achieve standards in science which are in line with the national average.
- Teaching overall is good but is most effective in upper Key Stage 2.
- Both boys and girls have very positive attitudes towards science lessons; they are confident to 'have a go' when provided with practical and investigative opportunities, though these are limited.
- The balance of some science lessons weighs heavily in favour of direct teaching and there is too little time made available for pupils to record and reflect on what they have learned.
- Too little use is currently made of ICT to support science work.
- School managers have yet to establish a system of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievements in science at all ages to assist in making whole-school improvements.
- The school does not set targets in science as part of its annual assessment, and this is a missed opportunity to assist in the raising of standards.

84. There has been good improvement in science since the previous inspection. Standards are still below what is expected nationally of seven-year-olds, but pupils make sound progress, especially in view of the limited language skills with which they enter Year 1. This progress becomes good in the junior stage, and by the time pupils are eleven, they are attaining the standards expected nationally. This is a considerable improvement, and it has taken place consistently over the past five years. Pupils overall make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of scientific knowledge, and good progress at the upper end of the Key Stage 2. However, there is insufficient focus on the development of enquiry skills throughout the school and progress here is steady at best. Teachers' planning is based on government guidelines and supported by recently purchased published material. While this ensures that scientific knowledge is covered thoroughly, too much of the work is teacher directed, and pupils have insufficient opportunity to plan and design their own experiments.
85. Results of the 2000 teacher assessments of seven-year-olds show pupils to be well below nationally expected standards, and well below those for similar schools. However, these results were worse than the previous year, and talking to pupils and looking at their books indicates that current standards are better than this. Pupils taking the SATs at the age of eleven in 2000 produced results below national expectations, although above those found in similar schools. This year's test results, which have yet to be moderated, show standards rising rapidly, with 94 per cent of older pupils reaching the expected level. Last year's tests show a good percentage of pupils achieving the higher level 5 when compared to similar schools. Talking to pupils in Year 6, and looking at their books, indicates that much of this is due to the programme of revision and support offered to pupils in preparation for the SATs.
86. Science is allocated a generous amount of time on the timetable: approximately fifty per cent more than that found nationally. Despite this, pupils do not produce a large

quantity of written work, nor do they spend time designing and carrying out experiments. Science sessions commonly last for two hours, without a break for older pupils, which at times leads to a lack of pace, particularly when the activities provided are completing worksheets or copying information. While lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported, and as a result make good progress, average and higher-attaining pupils are not challenged to think and write independently with sufficient frequency. The style of lessons is enabling pupils to make gains in their knowledge and understanding in science and this is serving them well in test situations.

87. By the time pupils are seven they have a good understanding of plant and animal life. They are able to name the main parts of a plant and know that it needs water and food to survive. They understand that different plants and animals live in different habitats, and discuss the reasons for this. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils made accurate observations of seeds germinating. The teacher helped them with their vocabulary; many were unfamiliar with words such as 'root' and 'shoot'. Pupils made sensible predictions about what might happen next, and were amazed by the growth of a seed kept in the dark. Pupils of this age are also confident in their descriptions of an electrical circuit. They are less certain of the properties of different materials, or the difference between natural and man-made objects. They understand that water when frozen turns to ice, and that this change is reversible, although they are less sure of changes caused by heating materials. They recognise the word 'experiment' but cannot explain what it means, nor why experiments are carried out. While they talk about sorting things such as food into 'healthy' and 'unhealthy', or materials by touch, their initial response to the question 'How do you find things out?' is 'By answering questions the teacher writes on the board!' This demonstrates a lack of awareness about the practical aspects of the subject and a limited understanding of scientific processes.
88. Older pupils in the junior phase demonstrate appropriate knowledge of plants and animals, for example that plants take in carbon dioxide and give out oxygen; they also understand why this is important. They know that changes in materials may or may not be reversible, giving suitable examples. They talk with confidence about electrical circuits, and can explain the cause of night and day. However their vocabulary is limited, for example being unable to explain 'insulator', 'translucent' or 'opaque'. They remember lots of experiments they have undertaken, and know what they tried to find out and the predictions they made. They are less secure when trying to explain why things happened as they did, and have no experience of setting up their own investigations. They show real confidence to 'have a go' at finding things out for themselves but are not given sufficient opportunities to build enquiry and research skills. While familiar with the phrase 'fair test', explaining it as 'keeping everything the same', they do not know what 'variable' means and the concept of making only one change. They are not sure why you might want to repeat an experiment more than once to check your results.
89. Teaching overall is good in lessons as it is successful in moving pupils' knowledge and understanding in science forward. Teachers are well prepared and plan suitable activities for pupils to follow which underpin the understanding required. They know what they want pupils to learn and communicate this clearly to them. There are

excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, which ensure a good atmosphere for learning. Questions are used well to encourage pupils to explain their thinking, and there is a strong focus on using appropriate scientific vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to make predictions and to explain why they turn out right or wrong. However talking to pupils and looking at their books suggest that the teaching of science on balance is only satisfactory because there is no evidence of pupils planning investigations or carrying out their own research, and what they write tends to be a record of knowledge gained rather than an explanation of how it was discovered. Teachers' plans do not refer to the development of scientific skills, and there is insufficient detail of how higher-attaining pupils might be extended. The development of literacy skills is compromised by the amount of work that is copied or worksheet based. The use of ICT is not a feature of science teaching, and is not referred to in teachers' planning. There is some evidence of pupils using mathematical skills, such as bar, tally charts and graphs, however.

90. Pupils have good attitudes towards science. They are attentive and interested, behaving well in practical situations and working cooperatively in small groups. They try hard to answer questions, at times with some insight, but their poor speaking skills and lack of scientific vocabulary handicap many pupils. They are keen to talk about the work they have done in the past.
91. The coordination of science is satisfactory. The two coordinators have been responsible for the subject for only a year, and both teach younger pupils. They have only a partial view of standards in the junior phase. No time has been allocated to formally assess teaching and standards of learning, and there is no overview of standards and progress throughout the school. Some useful in-service training has been attended, and more is planned. A consultant has worked with the coordinators to produce an action plan to improve the quality of pupils' investigations. The plan is well conceived and is now moving into its implementation phase. The issue of planning successfully for classes with more than one age group is recognised as an additional challenge, and one that not all teachers overcome consistently for the wide range of ability in their class. The assessment for SATs tells teachers where pupils are at the end of the year, but as yet this has little influence on feeding forward into the planning of the curriculum or further lessons. The school does not set targets in science as part of its annual assessment, and this is a missed opportunity to assist in the raising of standards.

ART AND DESIGN

- There has been good improvement in art and design since the 1998 inspection.
- Pupils make good progress and by the age of eleven achieve standards in art and design that are at the expected level.
- Teaching overall is good.
- Pupils, including those with particular talents in art, learn successfully because of the interesting range of experiences that stimulate the development of individual creativity.
- Leadership is effective in building up good resources and in sustaining the subject's steady improvement.

92. Standards in art and design are at the level expected for both seven and eleven-year-olds. This shows good improvements to the standards reported in the last inspection. Good progress is made in both infant and junior classes as a result of consistently good teaching. Interesting activities are now chosen by teachers as a result of the time and energy that the school has invested in making improvements in the subject since the 1998 inspection. The techniques and skills of the subject are now clearly at the forefront of the school's scheme of work, which supports good developments.
93. In infant classes, appropriate emphasis is given to observational work. The pupils consider the work of artists such as Henri Matisse in Year 2 before they make initial pencil designs generated by his painting of 'The Snail'. They are able to make effective revisions to their design before translating pencil work skilfully into collages made with tissue paper. The techniques and skills shown at this stage have been successfully built upon previous experiences in Year 1 classes. The pupils have carefully practised the skills of exploring line, depth and texture when they have made colourful examples of weaving with materials. These techniques are then built upon as materials are woven to represent fruit such as the pineapple after accurate observational drawings have been made.
94. In junior classes, pupils build upon these skills with imagination. In Year 3 they begin to understand the importance of shape in their art and design work. They use basic shapes considered in one lesson and then make the shapes into effective human figures in the following lesson. The method of accruing understanding of the use of skills over a number of lessons continues throughout junior classes. In Year 5, pupils explore the use of paint and the differences that the size of brushes can make to end products. The techniques learnt are then used to enhance the detail in observational work completed earlier. In the same year group, pupils combine visual and tactile qualities of materials delightfully. They use sketches made on a local area visit as the basis for printing after using an art window to hone in on a specific area of their sketch. This has the benefit of making pupils look closely and concentrate hard upon accuracy whilst still learning a new skill in their printing. Skills learnt are brought together successfully in Year 6. Pupils make images of faces to show emotions. These are then revealed through mounting them on card before peeling away layers of card to show depth as an important artistic element. The degree that this gives to highlighting pupils' emotional and spiritual development is matched by the practical skills learned in art.
95. This level of personal development is a reflection of the impact that artwork has upon pupils' development. They are enthusiastic about creating effective work. In consequence all pupils, including those with special educational needs, work with interest.
96. The good teaching and learning taking place is supported through imaginative activities and teachers' thorough planning. Teachers are being well supported by a useful scheme of work and improved resources. This means that a wider variety of experiences can be planned. A broader and more-balanced curriculum is now in place as a consequence. The use of sketchbooks in junior classes has given clear impetus to teachers' understanding of the need to ensure ongoing development of skills in making art. Similar sketchbooks are not yet used in infant classes to make this part of a continuous process throughout the school.

97. The recently appointed coordinator has already formed a clear view of what needs to be done in order to sustain continuous improvement. A clear action plan has been recently drawn up in draft form that rightly emphasises the need to devise the methods and means of assuring continuity and progression throughout the school by establishing a portfolio of work. The importance of agreed criteria for the inclusion of work in the portfolio is also justifiably seen as important to the subject's development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. There was little opportunity to observe lessons in design and technology and only a very limited range of work was available for inspectors to examine. It is not possible to judge current standards or make reliable judgements on the improvement achieved since the last inspection. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 are enthusiastic about design and technology work, very aware of the skills required and secure in the knowledge gained from work that they have carried out throughout their time in school.
99. However, on the basis of the one lesson observed in Year 3, taught by the recently appointed coordinator, together with discussions with the coordinator and some Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, it is clear that the school is well prepared to develop the curriculum positively when it recommences its work in the subject in the next half term. This is largely because of the clear programme of study in place to assist both teaching and learning that has been introduced since the time of the 1998 inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

- Pupils make sound progress and by the age of eleven achieve standards in geography that are much the same as pupils at other schools.
- Teaching overall is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards geography and are building knowledge well, though there are too few opportunities for them to develop personal enquiry and research skills.
- Leadership is effective in sustaining the subject's steady improvement.

100. The standards achieved by seven and eleven-year-olds are at the levels expected for their ages. This shows satisfactory improvement being sustained since the 1998 inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school in their geographical studies. Both day and residential visits outside the immediate school area supplement the use of the local area effectively. Teachers gladly support these activities, which both enrich and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of their world. Teaching is good throughout the school for pupils of all abilities, and an interesting range of geographical topics captures pupils' interests and develops their skills successfully.
101. In infant classes, there is an on going use of the local area that makes learning meaningful for pupils. A walk around the locality has a clear focus for Year 1 pupils. They look closely at physical and human features. Their knowledge and understanding is reinforced through their teacher's taking photographs, which are then used successfully to aid mapping work when they return to the school. Pupils are able to accurately describe some of the key features in the locality and work well in recording them accurately on their own maps. They use the photographic evidence successfully to plan a route that involves giving simple directions. Pupils work with much enjoyment and sustain their concentration well in geography because the choice of topics is relevant and interesting. They talk

animatedly about some of the things they have observed though recorded work is hampered by their limited writing skills.

102. In junior classes, a much wider perspective is presented to pupils. At the same time they build upon the skills gathered successfully in infant classes. In Year 4, A to Z maps are used to track routes from school to home and vice versa. Pupils cooperate well in pairs to discover comparisons about the differences in distances, directions and routes. Pupils work with care and enthusiasm as well as accuracy in carrying out this task. Knowledge of differences in weather around the world is imaginatively presented to pupils in Year 3 as their teacher presents them with a suitcase containing a variety of items. Pupils accurately identify where the person might be going and why some articles will help if weather is humid, tropical or snowy. The pupils in Year 5/6 effectively contrast their own lives with those of a child in India as they study the differences and similarities in a country's use of water.
103. The experiences gained from day visits such as that to York reinforce learning successfully. Pupils' knowledge of the wider world is enhanced by the residential visits made to Gilhead in the Lake District by pupils from Years 4 to 6. Visits such as these arise from teachers' wishes to widen and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Secure planning by teachers helps to focus learning opportunities that grow gradually over pupils' time in school. Teachers are well supported in this respect by a useful scheme of work.
104. The subject is effectively led. Resources are satisfactory overall, however there is a lack of resources to support the development of research skills that would help to increase pupils' independence in learning. Discussions with pupils confirmed that they are ready to spend more time in independent learning, particularly in junior classes. There is no systematic assessment practice in place that would help teachers to identify how knowledge, understanding and skills development is shaping up from one year to the next and this is a missed opportunity.

HISTORY

- There has been limited improvement in the provision, teaching and learning in history since 1998.
- Standards are at the expected level at the age of seven years but are below the level expected at eleven years.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but more effective in the infant stage where more time has been given to covering the full curriculum.
- The two-year rolling programme for history is not secure; repetition and gaps occur that impede pupils' acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to make assured progress.
- Record keeping and assessment is not good enough to identify the next steps in teaching and learning.
- There has been virtually no monitoring and evaluation of the work being done in history to identify where improvement lies, and this is unsatisfactory.
- The school has yet to establish an action plan for improving history and this is a missed opportunity.

105. The quality of provision and teaching and learning in history is much the same as identified in 1998 and 1999. Inspection findings indicate that standards meet expectations at the age of seven but are below expectations by the age of eleven years.

106. Standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are not high enough. Pupils enjoy an interesting range of experiences in history but learning and progress over time is not secure. Discussions with pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, revealed that there are many gaps in their knowledge and understanding of different periods of history and they have little understanding of how we know about the past. The picture is somewhat brighter at the end of Key Stage 1 where pupils have studied toys, homes and changes in how people live. Perhaps because these topics have resonance in their own lives, pupils in Years 1 and 2 absorb the information and show a curiosity about the past that is appropriate for their age. At both key stages pupils lack of specific vocabulary and generally poor recording skills mean little written work of quality is produced.
107. Pupils in the mixed-age Year 1/2 class were very interested in how the Victorians lived and asked many pertinent questions to find out more. They had a very hazy idea of how long ago this period of history occurred. Some suggested only a few years ago. They did however make good use of their knowledge about modern sources of power and most knew that these were not available to the Victorians. Pupils in Year 2 looked at a collection of old and new toys. They identified the materials used in manufacture and recognised that appearance can be a sign of age.
108. Pupils in Key Stage 2 study the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, the Tudors, Victorians and World War II. They also study the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians. In a well-structured lesson when pupils looked at evidence which informs us about life in Ancient Greece, they understood how important pottery is as a source of information. They also know that we have learned much about the Greeks from their legends and stories. During the inspection, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 were all learning about the Ancient Greeks and, although they were concentrating on different aspects, this overlap needs to be avoided in planning to ensure progression. Year 3 were captivated by the detail of the death rituals of the Ancient Egyptians and had good recall of some of the different gods such as *Anubis*.
109. In discussion with pupils from Years 5 and 6 no-one mentioned the current topics being studied in history and, although they remembered a number of other periods of history they had studied, they were quite unable to sequence them in order. When asked how we know what we learn about the past is true, the first responses were to do with the honesty of their teachers who would not tell them something which was untrue. Although someone eventually suggested archaeologists, pupils had no real understanding of sources of historical evidence. Pupils had very little experience of using books to find out things for themselves but some did remember that they had looked on the Internet when in Year 4 for information about the Vikings. Indeed the most vivid experience that had remained with all the pupils was of a visit to The Jorvik Centre in York.
110. Teaching in the lessons seen during the inspection was satisfactory. There was only very limited written work available to assess progress over time. The range and quality was inadequate at Key Stage 2. Improving teaching and learning in history has not been a priority for the school and as a result it remains in much the same condition as in 1998 and 1999. The school has adopted the revised national

guidelines for the subject but the organisation of topics across the school needs review. This will ensure that learning is more continuous across the school. Planning and assessment also require improvement. There has been some slight improvement in resources, the library is much improved and several CD ROM are on order. There has however been no recent inset in the subject and the many potentially good links with literacy have not been identified. The first priority for the school must be to improve standards in pupils' vocabulary and written work in English. Doing this will also help raise standards in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- There has been good improvement since 1999 when the headteacher joined the school.
- The accommodation and resources are much improved.
- Teachers have greater subject knowledge and teach the subject regularly and with confidence.
- Teaching and learning is good for junior pupils and is satisfactory for those in the infants.
- Pupils enjoy ICT and are enthusiastic learners.
- Standards are at the expected level by the age of seven.
- Standards are not uniformly at the expected level at the age of eleven.
- There are some resource shortages that affect overall standards by the age of eleven.
- Some aspects of planning and target setting require enhancement.
- The coordinator is new to the subject and has not yet had the opportunity to monitor teaching, learning and standards.

111. Information and communication technology (ICT) is one of the school's success stories in the last three years. The 1998 inspection report flagged weak provision and low standards that rested on poor resourcing and teachers' lack of subject knowledge. In contrast, the school now has a fully fitted ICT suite that is in constant use as teachers introduce the pupils to ever more demanding skills and knowledge in ICT and in the use of ICT to boost attainment in other subjects. The transformation is not yet complete as resources are still in need of enhancement in modelling, monitoring and control elements of ICT. The school acknowledges this and has a planned schedule for action; a positive feature introduced very recently is the appointment of a technician to support both teaching and learning. There is every chance of forthcoming success in raising standards in ICT.

112. Standards are now at the expected level by the age of seven. They are not yet at this level by the age of eleven. In the careful analysis of lessons and past work, it is clear that in those aspects of ICT that the school is fully resourced to teach, standards are at least at the expected level by the age of eleven, and in some instances good standards are evident. However, in the communication, modelling, monitoring and control elements, the school does not have all the necessary resources to provide effective experiences and so standards lag behind those in most other primary schools. Thus, overall standards are not at the expected level by the end of Year 6.

113. School managers are working determinedly to resolve the resourcing issues. The headteacher has been the chief instrument of improvement since he joined the school in 1999. The coordinator is new to the role and it is too early to judge her effectiveness as subject manager. However, she has made a promising start and is an enthusiastic, hard-working member of staff. She is not yet involved enough personally in the monitoring of work in ICT outside her own class, or experienced in the overall management of the subject. This is an aspect of enhancement that the headteacher is concerned to remedy.
114. ICT lessons are shown to be sessions when all pupils, including those with special educational needs, work hard, enjoy the tasks and behave very well. The quality of relationships between pupils and with the staff is excellent. The ICT suite is a settled place and the will of pupils to learn and succeed is everywhere evident. Pupils are taught well overall, though teaching is stronger in junior classes than in infant ones as the teachers are more confident in the use and application of ICT. In some lessons the technique of modelling the use of various functions through the use of the overhead interactive white board, for example how to use the thesaurus to increase vocabulary in a comprehension exercise, was very effective in setting a brisk pace to the learning. There is good focus on basic skills and teachers use a good range of effective teaching methods; there is very good management of pupils, and support staff, including specialist technical support, make a valuable contribution to the advancement of standards and progress. Accordingly, pupils build skills and knowledge steadily and this accelerates in the junior years.
115. These characteristics were very evident in a good Year 6 ICT lesson during the inspection. The inspector commented that learning was *pleasant and productive* as the pupils speedily entered the data on the cooling rate of water into a spreadsheet. The teacher intervened well to consolidate and extend learning: *Click on 'time', drag to highlight the data only...* and she coped well with pupils who found this awkward. The pupils were developing, organising and presenting their data effectively and the resultant line graphs were printed out with glee. 'Yeahh...' was a common response as the printer churned out their graph.
116. There are three main aspects of ICT for sustained development.
- The enhancement of resources so that every strand can be covered effectively.
 - The planning of work for different ability groups requires overhaul so that each group is set appropriately different work at times to improve knowledge, skill and understanding.
 - Targets for learning are not always set in accordance with the plans for different ability groups and, although the targets are shared with pupils, they are not always evaluated with them at the end of lessons.
117. School managers have identified these priorities and have already begun work to bring the necessary movement. They can point to several substantial improvements that counter-balance the situation. Amongst these are the good cross-curricular links that have been established, particularly to literacy, art and design and mathematics. These links enable pupils to learn more about both ICT and the other subjects served.

118. The improved resources and accommodation for ICT are clearly having a good impact on progress and standards. As such, the funds devoted to ICT have been spent wisely and the return is good. With continuing improvement, ICT is set fair to become a strength of the school.

MUSIC

- There has been satisfactory improvement in music since the 1998 inspection.
- Standards are around the expected level at the age of seven and are above the level expected at 11 years in singing. There are too few opportunities for pupils to compose, record and perform their own music and standards in the junior phase are below the expected level.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and this leads to pupils making steady progress, though in some lessons the learning is moving forward at a brisk pace.
- Music is led very effectively by an enthusiastic coordinator who gives a lot of her time to promoting a successful programme of extracurricular activities for pupils in the choir, who have performed at many prestigious events throughout the city.

119. The school has made satisfactory improvement in music since the last inspection. Standards for younger pupils, which were below expectations, are now in line. By the age of eleven, pupils reach very good standards in singing, which are well above those found nationally, though less attention is paid to standards reaching the same high level in other elements of the music curriculum and this requires attention. In assemblies all pupils join in, from the youngest to the oldest, singing naturally with a depth of feeling and real spirituality. About half the pupils in the juniors are members of the school choir, as well as some pupils in Year 2. This makes an exceptionally strong contribution to their social and cultural development. The quality of their singing, and the wide range of opportunities they have to perform in public, makes this a real strength of the school. However, pupils throughout the school have insufficient opportunities to compose, record and perform their own music.
120. Both younger and older pupils have a good understanding of 'pulse' and 'rhythm', which forms a regular part of their music lessons. There is clear progress, with older pupils showing increasing skill; for example, keeping a steady beat going while other pupils clap the rhythm of the words. All the pupils are fully involved, and those with special educational needs make good progress, often being supported by classroom assistants. There is lots of activity, and pupils all use musical instruments in lessons. However, this is only to keep the beat, even when using tuned percussion such as glockenspiels, and there is no encouragement to choose certain notes to make the accompaniment more tuneful. In some lessons pupils listen to excerpts from classical music, either relating it to the rhythms they have been working on or trying to understand the composer's intentions. However talking to pupils indicates that they have little knowledge of different types of music and few opportunities to listen to recorded music. Older pupils, when asked why music is played as they came into assembly, could think of only limited reasons, for example to keep the younger pupils quiet. One area in which recorded music is used very well is in dance lessons, and pupils respond very expressively.
121. Teachers follow a thorough and well-organised scheme of work. It has been recently introduced, and at present pupils in Years 5 and 6 are following the Year 4 programme, as they have insufficient knowledge to tackle more advanced work.

Clearly this restricts their progress. Teachers have had demonstration lessons, provided by the coordinator, a nursery nurse with music expertise and the local authority's music service. Despite this, teachers' subject knowledge is still an issue, and not all are confident to teach all aspects of music. The quality of teaching seen ranges from sound to good, and is satisfactory overall. Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and hold high expectations. Lessons are full of pace and activity and pupils make good progress towards the targets set. However there are no music books, either to record pupils' compositions or their response to music and this is a missed opportunity.

122. The pupils' attitude to music in lessons is always good, and sometimes very good. They join in with enthusiasm, listening well and following instructions. They choose instruments sensibly and handle them with care. They are confident, as shown when Year 4 pupils take turns to lead the whole class in keeping a steady beat.

123. The coordinator manages the subject well and with infectious enthusiasm. She is rightly concerned about the confidence of some teachers to teach the full music curriculum, but at present has limited opportunity to influence this due to her full-time teaching commitment. She devotes much time and energy to the choir, as does the nursery nurse who provides piano accompaniment and additional expertise. They are well rewarded, both by the quality of the singing and the contribution to the pupils' self esteem.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- There has been satisfactory improvement overall in the provision, teaching and learning in physical education (PE) since the 1998 inspection.
- Standards are at the expected level at the age of seven and eleven years in most respects, though better than expected in dance at age eleven.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and this leads to pupils making steady progress.
- To date there has been little opportunity for monitoring teaching and learning across the school to assist with making improvements.

124. Improvement in PE since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards remain sound in relation to gymnastics for both younger and older pupils. Standards in dance for older pupils, due to the quality of teaching they receive, are above what is expected. Insufficient lessons were seen to judge standards in games. Pupils are taken swimming in Years 3 and 4 and the great majority of pupils reach national expectations for eleven-year-olds. Pupils have the opportunity of a residential visit to a centre in the Lake District which provides outdoor and adventurous activities. All pupils are fully involved in lessons and those with special educational needs make the same steady progress as their classmates, sometimes with additional support from classroom assistants.
125. Pupils in Year 2 explored basic skills of jumping and rolling in a gymnastics lesson. Good attention was paid to safety issues and pupils moved the apparatus very sensibly. While some lacked control and many found it difficult to link actions together, they made steady progress through repeated practice and the teacher's encouragement. Improvement would be accelerated if there were a clearer focus on specific skills in both planning and teaching. Expectations are neither high enough nor made clear to pupils; for example, there is little emphasis on control or on holding a starting or finishing position. This is also the case in lessons with older pupils. In the one infants games lesson seen, too much attention was paid by the teacher to controlling activities at the expense of skills development and this was unsatisfactory.
126. Dance lessons with older pupils provide a distinct contrast. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them, and teachers intervene with positive and helpful ideas. Good use is made of quality work, with other pupils being encouraged to say what makes it better. By the age of eleven many pupils move to music with great expression, showing good control. They cooperate well in pairs, discussing their individual ideas and incorporating them into a polished performance.

126. The quality of teaching is sound overall, although very good in dance. Where teaching is weaker it relates to teachers not being clear about the specific improvement in skills that they intend to develop, and the consequent lack of focus on these during the lesson. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, making lessons productive as little time is spent on behaviour management. The use of warm-ups is inconsistent: while some are very thorough and inventive, as in dance, in other lessons they are ignored and this is unsatisfactory.
127. Pupils respond well to physical activity, although most lessons had at least one pupil not taking part due to lack of kit. They generally use equipment sensibly and safely, having been well taught about this. They find and use space well in what is a fairly cramped hall. When working with partners they help and support each other, showing good ideas and initiative.

128. The coordinator is very recently appointed and has had little opportunity to influence the subject through rigorous monitoring activities. Extracurricular sport is largely soccer, which is not altogether surprising in Manchester! Both boys and girls are involved, and the school uses both Nike and Manchester United to provide coaching after school. There is also considerable development under way in the school grounds to provide physical challenges for pupils. Resources are satisfactory overall, although the quantity and quality of small apparatus needs improving.