

INSPECTION REPORT

St Thomas the Martyr VA C of E Primary School

Skelmersdale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119495

Head teacher: Mrs M Jordan

Reporting inspector: Mr C Smith
25211

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th January 2002

Inspection number: 243400

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mill Lane Upholland Lancashire
Postcode:	WN8 0DU
Telephone number:	01695 622970
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Peter Bradley
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25211	Mr C Smith	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
			Information and communication technology	The school results and pupils' achievements
			Design and technology	How well are pupils taught?
			Physical education	What should the school do to improve further?
14083	Mr A Anderson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23887	Mr P Nettleship	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
			Art and design	
			Music	
			Equal Opportunities	
			Special educational needs	
22452	Mrs M Farman	Team inspector	Foundation stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Science	
			Geography	
			History	

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse (Education) Limited
14 Enterprise House
Team Valley
Gateshead
NE11 0SR.

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE.

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
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?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	17
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas the Martyr C of E is an aided school with a strong Christian ethos and close links with the church. The school is average in size and serves families from the nearby local authority and the private housing areas of Upholland, near Skelmersdale, Lancashire. The school experiences fairly typical levels of families moving into and out of the area, apart from a large group of pupils who moved out when the area was redeveloped a few years ago. There are 166 pupils on roll; 80 boys and 86 girls. In addition there are 24 boys and 15 girls, part time in the new nursery. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and all pupils speak English. Thirty-five pupils (21 per cent) are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. Seventeen pupils have special educational needs (10 per cent), which is well below average, and four pupils have statements. Pupils enter school with broadly average attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its pupils and there are several good features. Standards in English and science are average and recent improvements are now producing average standards in mathematics. Pupils achieve well to reach high standards in four other subjects. Teaching is broadly satisfactory and almost half of the teaching in lessons seen during inspection was good. Pupils achieve steadily but pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good. Management is satisfactory overall. The head teacher and governors provide good leadership. However, a number of the subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating standards and teaching and learning across the school. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve above average standards in art and design, geography, history and physical education and in the presentation of their work.
- Teaching in the nursery, in Year 2 and in Year 6 is consistently good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour and personal development are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well catered for and they make good progress.
- The financial management of the school is of a high standard.
- There is a good relationship between parents and the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics could be further improved.
- Planning work specifically for the more able pupils would increase their learning.
- Not all subject leaders are influencing teaching, learning and standards sufficiently.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Satisfactory improvements have been made since the school was last inspected in October 1997. Teaching and learning have improved and there are now only isolated examples of unsatisfactory teaching. Standards in English and science have remained sufficiently high and recent efforts to improve standards in mathematics are paying dividends. The head teacher and staff have introduced effective measures to raise standards, such as testing pupils at the end of each school year, analysing the results and setting more ambitious targets. Subject leaders are more active in developing their

subjects but their role in monitoring teaching and learning needs to improve further in some subjects. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), geography and physical education have improved considerably and good standards in history have been maintained. The marking of pupils' work has improved and effective procedures have been implemented to assess the progress pupils are making. However, the information collected is still not used consistently to ensure that the work provided is precisely matched to their different learning needs, particularly for the more able pupils. In this area more development is needed. Effective training of learning support assistants now ensures that they make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Self-evaluation is now firmly in place and the school has the capacity to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	C	C	C	B	Well above average A Above average B
Mathematics	E	D	D	C	Average C Below average D
Science	D	C	C	A	Well below average E

Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have improved along with national trends since the school was last inspected. The standards achieved by pupils aged 11 in English and science are close to the national average and are higher than in schools with a similar intake of pupils. In these subjects, standards are satisfactory. However, standards in mathematics have been too low and were below the national average when pupils were last tested in 2001. Efforts made to improve teaching and learning are helping to raise standards and, as a result, in Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are now reaching average standards in mathematics. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment has led to the setting of more challenging targets. For example, the targets set for the current Year 2 and Year 6 children point to a higher proportion of pupils on course to reach the higher levels. Standards achieved by the time pupils reach the age of seven are at the levels expected in reading, mathematics and science but standards in writing are higher.

Pupils achieve steadily in the core subjects and make good progress in the skills of scientific enquiry. Pupils achieve well in art and design, geography, history and physical education to reach high standards in these subjects. Standards in information and communication technology have improved and are now at the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11. Pupils use their information and communication technology skills well in the learning of other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the very good levels of support they receive and this helps them to make good progress. In some classes, the more able pupils are not always so well provided for. They achieve steadily but could make quicker progress in mathematics, information and communication technology and design and technology.

Children enter school with broadly average levels of attainment. They make good progress in the nursery and steady progress in the reception class to reach the standards expected in most areas of

learning. However they achieve particularly well in their physical and in their personal and social development and exceed the levels expected in these areas.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils listen carefully, concentrate well and persevere when the task is difficult.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils are friendly, polite and helpful and they show respect and understanding towards others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils work and play together harmoniously. They enjoy finding out for themselves and carrying out their duties.
Attendance	Satisfactory; pupils are punctual and enjoy coming to school.

Pupils with special educational needs exhibit good attitudes and very good behaviour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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 and learning are satisfactory and almost half of the teaching is good. Teaching is consistently good in the nursery and Year 6 and often very good in Year 2. Teachers and pupils enjoy very good relationships and pupils are well managed. This ensures that pupils learn in a quiet and purposeful atmosphere. Teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory. In English, the skills of reading and handwriting are taught well and pupils are given good opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills. However, spelling and punctuation skills are often taught through exercises and pupils do not necessarily transfer these skills into their writing. Pupils are effectively taught to look for patterns in numbers to help their calculating in mathematics, although they have too few opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations, unlike science where this aspect of learning is strong. Teachers have good expertise in art and design, geography, history and physical education. Homework is used to good effect throughout the school and makes an important contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously, and although they occasionally omit to provide pointers for improvement, targets are agreed for pupils to aim for. Teaching in both literacy and numeracy is satisfactory with good features, such as the quality of teachers' explanations and questioning to assess how well pupils are learning. In mathematics, teachers do not always use the information available from marking and assessing pupils' work to provide an accurate match of tasks to their different learning needs.

Teaching in the nursery is good and is satisfactory in the reception class. In both classes, well-planned and carefully organised learning activities engage children's interests and help them to learn for themselves. In the nursery, the teacher and the nursery assistant are very skilled in involving children in talking about their experiences. This helps them to improve their spoken language and increases their vocabulary.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; teachers are guided well in knowing what and how to teach the different subjects. However, the needs of the more able pupils are not considered sufficiently in some subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; their learning needs are very quickly identified and converted into specific targets for learning. The very good levels of support enable these pupils to achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; pupils' moral and social development is very well catered for and this is reflected in the way that pupils behave and work together. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural awareness are satisfactory but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good; pupils are very well looked after and cared for. Their progress is assessed satisfactorily but the information is not used consistently to cater for the differences in their rates of learning.

The partnership between parents and the school is good. The school keeps parents very well informed and they play an important part in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Satisfactory; the head teacher provides clear direction for the work of the school and works effectively with senior staff and teachers in identifying priorities and agreeing how changes should be implemented. Evaluating the work of the school has improved with recent training and is satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good; governors are knowledgeable and skilled in several areas of school management and provide good support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; school results are carefully analysed to identify areas requiring improvement. Teaching is suitably monitored by the head teacher but subject leaders do not all check on teachers' planning and pupils' learning to help to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school uses all available information to inform the decision-making and seek best value. Financial and day to day management are particularly good.

There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers and accommodation is satisfactory. Resources are adequate and the computer suite is having a significant impact on learning. The displays of pupils' work are of good quality and add to the learning atmosphere.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers are very approachable.• Children like school, make good progress and behave well.• Teaching is good and children are given the right amount of homework.• The school expects children to give of their best and as a result they grow in maturity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents would like more extra curricular activities.• A small number of parents have concerns about pupils' behaviour.• A small number of parents would like to work more closely with the school and be kept better informed.

There was a very low return on the pre-inspection questionnaire of 20 per cent. Therefore, 15 per cent disagreement amounts to only five parents. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views but can find no evidence to support the small number of parents who have negative views. The range of out of school activities is typical of primary schools and particularly good in competitive sport. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Inspectors judge that parents are kept well informed and encouraged to become involved in the life and work of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Standards attained by pupils aged 11, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, have improved along with national trends since the time of the last inspection. Standards attained by the current Year 6 pupils are at the levels expected in English, mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics have remained lower than in English and science over recent years. For example, results obtained by 11 year olds in the 2001 national tests in both English and science were in line with the national average and higher than in similar schools, whereas results in mathematics were below the national average and only matched those in similar schools. A concerted effort has been made to improve the teaching and learning of mathematics and standards are now rising. As a result, pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes are attaining average standards in mathematics. The school is in a stronger position now to raise standards in all of the core subjects because pupils are assessed at the end of every school year, not just in Years 2 and 6. Teachers can see at a glance where pupils are learning successfully and where difficulties in understanding arise. This information is increasingly being used to inform teachers of what to concentrate on in lessons and in 'booster classes'. The information is also used effectively to gauge the proportion of pupils likely to reach the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11 and predict how many pupils could reach the higher levels. As a result, more accurate and challenging targets have been set and pupils are on course to achieve them by the summer of 2002.

2 Standards attained by pupils aged seven have fluctuated but have generally improved in line with national trends. They were high in 1999 but have been closer to the national average in other years. Current Year 2 pupils are on course to reach the standards expected in reading and mathematics and above average standards in writing. Standards in reading and mathematics are higher this year than the 2001 test results indicated. This reflects the initiatives taken by the school to improve mathematics, although the results last year were not typical because of the very small number of pupils, of whom many had special educational needs.

3 Children enter the school with broadly average attainment. They achieve well in the nursery and make steady progress in the reception class. By the time they are ready to enter Year 1, most children have reached the levels expected in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development. Children achieve particularly well in the nursery and the reception class in their personal and social development. Regular opportunities to work and play together, with adults guiding them, enable children to gain self-confidence and social skills. Similarly in their physical development, children achieve well in acquiring the skills of balance and co-ordination. In the nursery they show good control in riding wheeled vehicles and in the reception class they use tools such as paintbrushes and scissors safely and skilfully. In these areas of learning, they exceed the standards expected. In the nursery, children achieve particularly well in their spoken language and in their mathematical development. This is because teachers encourage them to talk about their work and explain their reasoning. However, in the reception class, although satisfactory, their learning slows because opportunities for children to talk and explain are sometimes missed.

4 Pupils achieve steadily in speaking and listening to reach the standards expected by the ages of seven and 11. They listen carefully to instructions and explain their ideas clearly. They speak articulately and are confident in speaking to the whole class. Pupils achieve steadily in reading. By the age of seven they have the skills to tackle difficult words by breaking them down into small pieces

and sounding out the letters. Pupils develop their reading skills effectively in literacy lessons and practise reading at home. These factors help them to read with enjoyment and understanding by the age of 11. Pupils achieve well in writing in Years 1 and 2 and by the age of seven most pupils write independently using full stops and capital letters correctly. Pupils achieve steadily in writing from Years 3 to 6 and by the age of 11 they write fluently and imaginatively in a good handwriting style. The presentation of their work is impressive. However, their spelling and use of punctuation is erratic and the skills practised using worksheets are not transferred into their everyday writing.

5 Following three years of underachievement in mathematics, the school has taken determined action to raise standards. The influence of the National Numeracy Strategy is evident in the way pupils now look for relationships between numbers to make calculating easier. Pupils are also improving their mental mathematical skills in response to the regular daily practice. However, the most influential factor in the drive for improvement has emerged from the tracking of pupils' progress. From the data collected, it was evident that too few pupils reached the higher levels. Much more challenging work is now being provided in Years 2 and 6. Other teachers are following this good example but as yet they do not use the results of assessment well enough to match the work provided to pupils' different learning needs. As a result, the progress made by pupils who find the subject difficult and those who are quick learners is sometimes hindered when the work is either too easy or too hard. The current Year 2 pupils are responding well to the new challenges and have already developed the confidence to add and subtract larger numbers up to and beyond 100. Similarly, in Year 6, pupils are achieving well. For example, they use strategies such as rounding numbers to the nearest 10 and doubling to find simpler and more effective ways to obtain the answer.

6 Pupils achieve steadily in science to reach the standards expected at the ages of seven and 11. Standards are much higher than in similar schools largely because pupils have acquired good skills of scientific inquiry. For example, they know how to carry out the scientific experiments ensuring that their tests are fair and are able to draw logical conclusions. This helps Year 2 pupils to understand scientific ideas such as how electricity travels around a circuit and enables 11 year olds to explain the causes of evaporation and condensation correctly.

7 Standards in information and communication technology have improved from being below average at the time of the last inspection to reach the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11, now. The computer suite, the additional training of teachers and the contribution made by the computer technician have all played an important part in raising standards. Regular weekly lessons ensure that pupils achieve steadily and are confident in handling numerical, graphic and literary information. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to promote pupils' learning in other subjects.

8 Despite the additional time devoted to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, in this school many of the foundation subjects are taught well and pupils achieve high standards. In art and design, for example, pupils produce good work using paint, charcoal and pastels in the style of famous artists. Pupils also achieve well in geography and history, and reach standards higher than expected at the ages of seven and 11. A good grounding in local history and geography provides a firm foundation for pupils to understand changes over time and differences between places. Pupils achieve well in physical education, particularly in games and swimming. The school has a good record of sporting success as evidence of the good skills acquired. In other subjects, standards are at the levels expected. However pupils no longer attain the high standards in music observed at the time of the last inspection because the additional instrumental tuition has been discontinued as costs have increased. In design and technology, pupils' completed work is often of good quality but their skills in designing and evaluating their work are not at this level. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are made good use of and further extended in other subjects.

9 The school seeks to ensure that all pupils have good opportunities to improve their learning. However, more work remains to ensure that the more able pupils fulfil their potential in all subjects and in all classes. This was also an issue at the time of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and make good progress. Teachers and learning support assistants ensure that the tasks they are given are within their reach and help is always on hand to ensure that they achieve success.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 Pupils' attitudes continue to be good and their behaviour is very good. These factors make an important contribution to their learning, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Children in the nursery and the reception class settle quickly into school routines. They behave very well and are curious and eager to explore the many activities. They soon develop independence and take responsibility for dressing themselves, tidying away the equipment and finding out for themselves.

11 Pupils enjoy coming to school and there is very little lateness. Many parents agree that their children like school. Pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are confident, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. They quickly settle down in registrations, assemblies and in class. Pupils are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. They sustain high levels of concentration and persevere with difficulties. Pupils present their work well throughout the school and take a pride in their work.

12 Standards of behaviour are consistently very good. The teaching and support staff, parents and the pupils themselves have very high expectations of standards of behaviour. Many parents agree that behaviour in the school is good. Only a very small number of parents disagreed and inspection evidence does not support their view. Pupils behave very well and act in a mature and responsible manner at all times. Their behaviour in classrooms, at breaks and at lunchtime is consistently very good, and they move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner. During the week of inspection, pupils' own views were confirmed that there were no signs of any bullying or isolation of individual pupils. As a result, pupils work and play in an environment that is free from oppressive behaviour. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

13 The relationships in the school are very good. The pupils relate very well to their teachers, to other adults and also to one another. Children with special educational needs are fully accepted and integrated into all activities. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Children of all ages work very well together in the classrooms. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. Examples observed include children sharing computers, playing mathematics games together and carrying out scientific investigations. All pupils consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies, they are respectful of the occasion, enthusiastically join in hymn singing and bow their heads reverently during prayers.

14 Pupils' personal development is very good. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Parents agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. These children are learning a very good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. In the classrooms, the majority of pupils take responsibility for their own work very well, and in lessons they work independently and take the initiative in their own learning. Older pupils carry out tasks around the school, for example, preparing the hall for assemblies, with maturity and enthusiasm. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to contribute to the smooth running of the school through the school council. Throughout the school, pupils discuss their progress

with their class teachers and agree their own targets for improvement. The school supports local and national charities and the pupils are learning to be aware of others less fortunate than themselves.

15 The attendance rate at the school is broadly in line with the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence has improved slightly and is also broadly in line with the national average. The reasons for absence are entirely outside the school's control, for example, minor illnesses and some parents withdrawing their children from school for annual holidays during term time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, however almost half of teaching is good of which a quarter is very good. This is very similar to the picture at the time of the last inspection. Unsatisfactory teaching is now extremely rare and occurred only once during the inspection. This happened when the class was taught by a supply teacher who found difficulty in gaining the pupils' attention. Teaching is consistently good in the nursery and Year 6 and often very good in Year 2.

17 In almost all lessons, pupils are well managed. Teachers and pupils benefit from good relationships and pupils are confident to ask questions when they do not fully understand what to do. Teachers frequently ask, 'Are there any questions?', and ensure that pupils work quietly and purposefully. This results in pupils taking pride in the presentation of their work. There are very few instances when teachers have to speak sharply to a pupil. Although they were interested and often excited in their learning, the noise levels were minimal and pupils worked with good concentration and application.

18 Teaching in the nursery is good. There is a buzz of excitement in the classroom as children become busily engaged in the well-prepared learning activities, such as making porridge. The planning of activities in the nursery is closely related to the assessments made of their learning needs. This ensures that children make good progress by building upon what they have learnt earlier. Both the class teacher and the nursery assistant have good knowledge of how children learn and take every opportunity to improve their spoken language. For example, in one lesson the nursery teacher joined a group of children exploring the difference between wet and dry sand. Her skilful questioning led to children making comments such as, 'The dry sand tickles and makes the wheel go round.' Teaching in the reception class is satisfactory. An interesting and worthwhile range of learning activities is provided. For example, children are encouraged to explore their understanding of friendship by painting, drawing, writing and making models of the people who are special to them. However, adults sometimes miss opportunities to talk to children about their work and to extend their understanding and their speaking and listening skills.

19 Teachers have sound knowledge of what they teach and particularly good expertise in art and design, geography and history, physical education and the investigational aspects of science. This is the main reason why pupils achieve well in these subjects. The computer technician has good expertise in information and communication technology which helps both teachers and pupils to understand how the subject can be used to improve pupils' learning in several areas. Having a sound understanding of how to teach the different subjects enables teachers to select the most effective teaching methods. For example, the Year 2 teacher uses mathematical games effectively to engage pupils' interest but, more importantly, to encourage them to calculate quickly. Pupils are often asked to work in pairs or in groups. This is successful because pupils, without copying from each other, are able to compare answers. If an answer is incorrect, it soon becomes apparent and pupils can consider where the mistake has been made. Sound subject knowledge also helps teachers to explain new work very clearly. To do this, they are imaginative in the use of resources, such as overhead projectors. The whiteboards on which pupils note their thoughts are wiped clean after use and this encourages

pupils to try out their ideas and learn from their mistakes. Once instructions have been given and pupils are ready to begin their group tasks, teachers make good use of questioning to check that they understand what to do and whether they have grasped the new ideas. Discussions at the end of lessons are very valuable. Teachers ask pupils to explain what they have learnt and whether they feel they have achieved the learning objectives. During these sessions, pupils have good opportunities to gain confidence in speaking to the whole class.

20 Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good teaching and from the additional support they receive from well-trained learning assistants. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, the learning assistant supported two pupils very effectively when the teacher was working with the whole class. To do this, she used a smaller version of the teacher's big book to enable the pupils to read the passage and answer the teacher's questions correctly. These approaches help pupils with special educational needs to gain in confidence and feel pleased to be right. During whole class teaching times, teachers often ask these pupils specially framed questions to ensure that they will be able to offer an answer. They are often taught in small groups, sometimes alongside pupils who do not find learning easy but do not have special educational needs themselves. This works well because they learn from classroom assistants and other children and are fully integrated into their classes.

21 The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory and there are many examples of good teaching in these subjects. In both literacy and numeracy lessons, the pace of lessons is good and there is no time for pupils to lose concentration. The time is effectively broken up into smaller parts to ensure that pupils undertake work in all aspects of each subject. For example, in English, pupils' reading, writing and speaking and listening skills are all targeted and in mathematics pupils have good opportunities to improve their mental skills and consider different methods to calculate numbers. In literacy, the basic skills of handwriting and reading are taught well. For example in Year 1, pupils have to reorder the words in jumbled sentences to ensure that they learn to understand what they read. When worksheets are used too often, pupils show less interest in learning and they do not transfer the spelling and punctuation skills they have practised into their writing. The basic skills in mathematics are soundly taught. Recent training in the teaching of mathematics is already evident in the way that teachers focus on understanding and improving pupils' mental skills. For example, pupils are guided well to understand how looking for patterns and relationships between numbers can significantly improve the speed and the accuracy of the calculation. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations, which holds back their learning. The skills learnt in literacy and numeracy are extended well through homework which is set at regular intervals and in increasing the quantities as pupils move through the school.

22 Some elements of teaching could be improved. For example, when teachers plan their lessons, not enough consideration is given to the learning of more able pupils. In ICT, for example, pupils who have already developed good skills through using computers at home are given similar work to pupils who are learning the skills for the first time. In mathematics, although when planning lessons teachers do take account pupils' different learning needs, pupils are all given the same work to complete before moving on to the more challenging tasks. However, not all pupils work quickly enough to reach the more demanding tasks and some pupils find the core tasks too difficult and make too many mistakes. Where the match of work is closest to pupils' different learning needs, as it is in Years 2 and 6, teachers use the assessments of pupils' learning to guide them more successfully in setting future tasks. Despite these weaknesses, the marking of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously. They offer praise when it is deserved and insist that pupils correct their work. Teachers help pupils to understand the targets for future learning, although these are not written into pupils' books as a reminder.

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

23 The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all its pupils. Subject leaders work closely with colleagues to plan work that ensures full coverage of all elements of the National Curriculum and religious education. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The school has a well-resourced information and communication technology suite and this has been instrumental in raising standards.

24 There is clear and detailed whole school planning. This ensures that the pupils build steadily on their previous learning. The school has devised its own programmes of work and carefully tailors them to meet the needs of its pupils. They give an effective overview of what areas of work each year group will cover. This makes sure that there are no gaps or needless repetition of work. The programme of work for information and communication technology is of particularly high quality and it is having a positive impact on standards. The school provides a satisfactory range of out of school activities to enrich the curriculum, although not all parents agree. They are typical of many schools. However, the sports element is very strong and the school achieves much success in competitions.

25 The school is implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies satisfactorily. There are improvements to the pupils' reading and writing skills but they do not make consistent use of their learning in spelling in other subjects. The recent emphasis on developing strategies for understanding numbers is an improvement to the numeracy strategy. There are significant improved opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of investigation and enquiry in science. This is leading to improvements in history and geography as well as science. Pupils use their skills in information and communication technology effectively in all subjects. However, in design and technology, pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan and evaluate their work.

26 Sound provision is made for children in the nursery and reception classes. All members of staff work together to plan the curriculum and they ensure it meets the children's individual needs. They use the early learning goals from the Foundation Stage of learning as the basis for their planning. This ensures that the children's work builds on their previous knowledge.

27 Involving all pupils in all activities underpins the school's inclusive ethos. In lessons, teachers are selective in their questioning and they ensure that all pupils have good opportunities to offer their views. In the planning of programmes of work, careful consideration is given to pupils' interests and aptitudes. This is largely why boys and girls enjoy learning and achieve equally well. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good. Their personal and learning needs are well understood and taken full account of in the drafting of their individual education programmes. Good levels of adult support ensure that they reach their targets. However, not enough consideration is given to the learning needs of the more able and gifted pupils in some subjects, such as ICT, design and technology and mathematics. In these subjects, the activities provided do not make sufficient demands on their learning, as noted at the time of the last inspection.

28 Pupils' personal, social and health education is very well provided for. A programme of work has been devised which is very effective in meeting pupils' needs from the nursery through to Year 6. This increases the pupils' understanding of responsibility and citizenship. The teaching programme for sex education and substance abuse is sensitively set within a framework of Christian morality. For example, parents are invited to join in these sessions. This increases the already strong sense of family within the school. The school has strong links with the local community. Sporting events are very efficiently organised for the community of schools and a wide range of local charities are supported. This makes pupils aware of the wider community and its needs.

29 The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good and there have been improvements since the last inspection. Pupils' personal development is strongly promoted by the head teacher and staff. As a result, the good ethos provided is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes and very good behaviour.

30 Pupils' spiritual development is well provided for. The music in assemblies creates a quiet atmosphere in which pupils are given time to reflect on their own and others' experiences. Pupils are aware of the sense of occasion and respond well by entering quietly and listening attentively. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on spiritual matters in some lessons, for example, in personal and social education sessions. There are very good links with the church through which pupils can learn to appreciate the needs of others.

31 The provision for moral development is very good. Teachers encourage pupils to consider the rights and wrongs of life in the school and at home. They use stories in assemblies to illustrate a range of situations and discuss them in an everyday setting with the pupils. In lessons, pupils consider how their behaviour impacts on others, for example, in their relationships with friends. Pupils are made aware of what is expected of them and why. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are helped to understand themselves and how to control their feelings. Teachers and support staff set a very good example and have a major influence on the high standards of behaviour consistently achieved throughout the school.

32 Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for children to work and play together. The school's personal and social education programme is firmly based on the idea of citizenship. Teamwork is strongly promoted in a very good range of sporting activities. Older children are offered a wide range of responsibilities around the school, for example, older pupils looking after the younger children in the 'Buddy System'. The School Council encourages pupils to put forward suggestions to the staff. Charity fund raising helps develop an awareness of the needs of others.

33 Provision for cultural development is satisfactory; it has improved since the last inspection. Through worthwhile educational visits in history and geography, pupils have good opportunities to understand the influence of the culture on the way of life. Pupils' understanding of the local culture and the Christian way of life are enhanced through strong links with the local church and visiting clergy of different denominations. The curriculum makes adequate provision to extend pupils' multicultural development; for example, pupils visit a synagogue and take part in Afro-Caribbean dance workshops. This helps pupils to appreciate cultural differences. Although multicultural education has improved, the school is aware that there is still more that could be done, through subjects such as music and art and design, to make children fully aware of cultural diversity in their own society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34 The school has maintained its very good provision for the health, safety and welfare of its pupils since the last inspection. The head teacher provides very good leadership in this aspect of school life. Children's personal and social development is central to the school's positive ethos. All members of staff place a very high priority on pastoral care, and are very approachable and totally supportive. The members of the support staff are caring, committed and offer pupils very good guidance and help. All members of staff have a very good understanding of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures, and implement them consistently. Well-understood child protection procedures are in place. The governors and the head teacher take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously and regularly inspect the school. All the required health and safety inspections, checks and

risk assessments are systematically carried out and formally recorded. Teachers and learning assistants are alert and vigilant and supervise pupils very well at breaks. The standard of care is high.

35 The school has very effective procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour, based on a positive behaviour management policy. This starts in the nursery and goes right through the school. All members of staff have very high expectations of what constitutes acceptable behaviour, and discipline is administered consistently and well. This has an extremely positive effect on the very high standards of behaviour that are maintained throughout the school. The school is very effective in discouraging bullying. Good attendance is actively encouraged and absence is carefully monitored and followed up rigorously. This has led to a reduction in the rate of unauthorised absence.

36 Class teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. Pupils' personal development is planned for, very apparent in lessons, and carefully monitored. Procedures for assessing pupils with special educational needs are very good and support is focused on the individual pupils' specific needs. This has a positive effect on pupils' progress.

37 The school has dealt satisfactorily with the key issue concerning the assessment of pupils' learning and the quality of marking of pupils' work has improved. Teachers use the results of assessment to plan what the pupils are to learn next. This ensures the pupils know what they have to do to improve. The school has recently implemented procedures to track pupils' progress and achievements from entry to the reception class through to Year 6. This ensures that teachers and support staff can now measure the progress that individual pupils make and identify any areas which requiring strengthening. However, these procedures are only just beginning to be used to monitor the performance of more able pupils so that their particular needs can be met. Because this form of assessment is in the early stages of development, it is not yet having a marked effect on standards. Another recent initiative is the increasing use of assessment to set accurate academic targets. Pupils take an active part in discussing what they need to improve and how they will achieve the necessary improvements. This is making pupils aware of their learning but again it is too recent to have had a significant effect on standards. The school uses a suitably wide range of assessments in English, mathematics and science throughout the school. Results are analysed to give teachers a clear picture of pupils' progress and to predict likely performance in the national tests at seven and 11. The procedures for assessing pupils' achievement in information and communication technology are as yet not adequate but they are being developed.

38 Teachers are not consistent in their use of day to day assessment of pupils' learning and do not always take pupils' different rates of learning into account when planning lessons. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics where in some classes the work provided does not always match pupils' learning needs accurately. This results in some work being too easy and some too hard.

39 The nursery and reception classes have clear and effective systems in place for assessing the achievements of children from the time they begin school. Both classes use the collected information very carefully to plan work for the children. They share the information with parents and use it to plan work that builds on children's previous learning. The procedures for assessing pupils with special educational needs are very good. The school identifies possible needs early and gives a good level of support through well-constructed individual education plans and learning support assistants. This ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their learning targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40 Relationships between the school and parents are good and have improved since the last inspection. The school enjoys the active support of the vast majority of parents. A good number of parents regularly help in the classrooms and accompany the children on school visits. Most parents are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. They support homework and home reading. There is a very active Parent Teacher Association, 'The Friends of St Thomas the Martyr', that organises social and fund raising events for the school. A considerable amount of money has been raised for the school in this way and this has helped to provide additional resources. The school makes parents welcome and the head teacher and her staff are very approachable. Effective links start in the Foundation Stage with home visits. The majority of parents appear to hold the school in high regard, although the extent of parents' feelings was difficult to judge due to the low return on the pre-inspection questionnaire.

41 Communication between the school and home is good. The school publishes a comprehensive, informative prospectus. Parents at the meeting and from the returned questionnaires feel that they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. The school sends out frequent letters about specific events and activities but not all teachers send out information about what the children are expected to learn. This makes it harder for parents to know what is being taught and so help their children at home. Parents are given an informative annual progress report and offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. The reports clearly indicate what the pupils can do, the progress they are making and set targets for improvement. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed and fully involved in their children's education.

42 A small number of parents feel that pupils' behaviour is not as good as it should be and refer to incidents of bullying. The inspection team could not find any evidence to support this. After talking to pupils, it became apparent that occasionally incidents take place during evening and weekends in the local community. Resulting disagreements are sometimes brought into school. Pupils explained that when this happens, teachers act promptly and the matter is quickly resolved. Pupils explain that they feel safe and secure in school and that there is no bullying. Although few questionnaires were returned, one-third of the respondents felt that there should be more out of school activities. A smaller number also commented that they did not feel well informed or that they could work closely with the school. In the inspection team's view these concerns are not justified. Strenuous efforts are made to inform and involve parents and the school has a good reputation for its extra curricular work in the community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43 There are a number of strengths in this aspect of the school as was the case at the time of the last inspection. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and direction towards making the school's stated aims a reality. The care that is felt for each individual starts at the top and permeates every level within the school, including the pupils themselves. The governors' role in shaping the direction of the school is particularly effective. Good action has been taken to meet its targets.

44 The head teacher and key staff provide sound leadership and management. The head teacher is very well organised and efficient. She has a strong influence on the pupils' personal and social development. She is keen to raise standards and responds very positively to advice. She systematically observes the staff teaching and agrees targets for improvement with them. She is dedicated to supporting the staff in their work and deploys them well to maximise their strengths in promoting pupils' achievement.

45 Since the last inspection, the head teacher has delegated powers creatively amongst the three teachers in the senior management team. They hold key positions from which to influence change and have accepted new responsibilities enthusiastically. The special educational needs co-ordinator now controls the budget for these children, liaises with all the support agencies and leads her strong team of learning support assistants very capably. She is well organised, with good communication skills. The other two senior teachers have responsibility for the key subjects of English, mathematics and ICT. They are well placed to evaluate the effectiveness of pupils' learning because they teach the Year 2 and 6 classes. They track pupils' progress carefully, analysing assessment results and feeding information back to teachers and governors. They also observe and monitor the quality of the teaching in their subjects. This deployment of responsibility, though only recently introduced, is proving to be efficient in analysing and raising standards of teaching and of learning.

46 Developing the role of the subject leaders was a key issue at the time of the last inspection. There has been satisfactorily progress in this area. For example, subject leaders now carry out an annual check on their subject to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum. They also manage their subject budgets based on assessments of what needs to be done following discussions with other staff. However, they do not check teachers' planning or examine samples of pupils' work sufficiently to enable them to identify those areas requiring attention, such as the accuracy of the match of work provided for pupils' different learning needs in mathematics. Although they have increased responsibilities, subject leaders are not yet sufficiently accountable for shaping the direction of their particular area of the curriculum. Currently, there is no permanent subject leader for music or design and technology. As a result, music does not have a high profile in the daily life of the school and pupils' design skills are not developed strongly enough.

47 The governing body is centrally involved in the work of the school. They work very closely with the head teacher and have a strong influence over the school's direction. Governors have a particularly good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they are kept so well informed about standards and teaching and learning. Governors are strongly committed to ensuring that the school's aims are clearly reflected in the everyday life of the school. In particular they feel strongly that pupils' personal and social development is extremely important. The different committees are purposefully led and governors provide very clear guidance to the school in areas such as finance and building maintenance. Governors visit the school regularly to monitor how their decisions are being implemented.

48 The school's financial planning is of a high order. This proved vital in helping the school to overcome a sizeable financial deficit that arose two years ago from circumstances beyond its control. Trimming the budget by reducing staffing resulted in a budget surplus of eight per cent in 2001. However, this figure includes items already bought but not paid for until the project is complete, on the information and communication technology suite for example. Currently, there is only a three per cent budget surplus. The school uses its financial resources very well, targeting funds to its educational priorities. For example, the development of the computer suite is supporting pupils' learning in ICT. The use of the support staff has improved considerably since the previous inspection and their contribution now has a profound effect on the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Day to day administration and budgetary control are efficient and governors monitor spending very thoroughly. All of the recommendations of the most recent auditor's report have been fully implemented. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. The school compares its performance against other schools and seeks advice from outside agencies, such as the local educational authority. However, parents are only just beginning to be consulted before changes are made.

49 The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils receive very good help and make good progress overall. The management of children entering school and the links between the nursery and the reception class are good. This enables children to make a positive start in their education.

50 The arrangements for the support and induction of new staff are satisfactory. The newly qualified teacher has been supported well by both the head teacher and her mentor. New teachers at the school note the friendly welcome that they receive on their arrival. Teachers and support staff undertake a good range of additional training. This strikes a sensible balance between the school's needs and each teacher's professional needs. The benefits of further training are clearly seen in literacy and numeracy lessons and in the extra responsibilities being taken by the learning support assistants. The computer technician also provides good support to the teachers.

51 The accommodation is satisfactory and allows an appropriate curriculum to be taught effectively. The hall is spacious and is a good facility for physical education and music tuition. The computer suite enables groups to receive regular instruction; this is helping to raise standards. The library is well stocked and very well organised but there is nowhere for pupils to undertake research using reference books. Consequently, it tends to be underused.

52 The school has sufficient resources to teach the required curriculum. The resources for English are good. This is particularly advantageous in enabling all pupils to benefit from the full range of reading and writing activities, both at school and at home. Resources for science and physical education are also good. The resources for teaching and learning music are unsatisfactory. Many of the instruments produce sounds of a poor quality and need to be replaced. There are not enough tuned instruments to enable pupils to compose their own melodies or accompany the singing. As a result, few pupils are reaching above average standards by the age of 11.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53 The head teacher, governors and staff should now:

A. Build on recent improvements in mathematics by:

- using the information that is gathered from assessing pupils' learning to match the work provided more closely to pupils' different learning needs;
- ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to plan and carry out their own mathematical investigations.

(Paragraphs 5, 22, 38 and 79)

B. Improve the learning of the more able pupils by:

- planning work specifically for them in all subjects;
- ensuring that the work they are given is sufficiently challenging.

(Paragraphs 5, 9, 22, 27, 38, 94, 103 and 111)

C. Improve the contribution made by subject leaders in monitoring and influencing standards by:

- arranging for subject leaders to evaluate teachers' lesson plans and pupils' learning and using this information to eliminate weaknesses and guide future developments.

(Paragraphs 46, 75, 91 and 112)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	9	17	28	1	0	0
Percentage	0	16	31	51	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents two percentage points.

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)	19.5	166
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	35

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	17

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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
	2001	9	6	15

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	-	-	-
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87% (86%)	87% (86%)	87% (82%)
	National	84% (83%)	86% (84%)	91% (90%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	-	-	-
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80% (86%)	87% (89%)	100% (93%)
	National	85% (84%)	89% (88%)	89% (88%)

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

Where the cohort of boys or girls is 10 or less figures are omitted.

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
	2001	13	13	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	11	13
	Girls	12	11	13
	Total	21	22	26
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	81% (72%)	85% (72%)	100% (82%)
	National	75% (75%)	71% (72%)	87% (85%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	9	12
	Girls	10	10	13
	Total	19	19	25
Percentage of pupils	School	73% (77%)	73% (69%)	96% (77%)

at NC level 4 or above	National	72% (70%)	74% (72%)	82% (79%)
------------------------	----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	144
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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)	8.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	23.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	108

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	416,287
Total expenditure	382,330
Expenditure per pupil	1,839
Balance brought forward from previous year	2,381
Balance carried forward to next year	36,338

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	169
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	31	0	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	60	14	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	65	3	0	3
The teaching is good.	44	53	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	57	9	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	37	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	49	0	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	54	17	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	51	9	6	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	60	6	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	31	34	3	16

The low return rate of 20 per cent means that fifteen per cent of parents expressing concerns amounts to only five parents.

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

54 There has been a marked improvement to the provision for children in the Foundation Stage of learning since the previous inspection. The school now has a nursery unit which children attend before entering the reception class. This gives the youngest children a good start to school life. The quality of teaching in the nursery is consistently good. Teaching in a third of the lessons seen was very good. The nursery teacher and nursery nurse work very closely together to reinforce and develop the children's social, listening and speaking skills. They intervene sensitively when children talk, for example, when acting out the story of the three bears in the role-play area. This has a positive effect on the children's personal and social development as well as increasing their ability to listen and talk to each other. The nursery and reception classes work together to provide work that builds effectively on the children's previous learning. This ensures that there is a smooth transition from the nursery to the reception class and that the children do not repeat their work.

55 There are thorough and detailed assessment procedures that give a clear picture of what the children know. Staff use the findings of these assessments carefully to provide work that meets individual children's needs and increases their learning. This ensures that all children in the nursery and reception classes have full access to the nationally recommended curriculum for the Foundation Stage. Teaching in the reception class is satisfactory and teaching in one-third of the lessons seen was good or better. However, the work is, at times, too tightly structured to allow children to explore and explain their learning. They have a sound start to their full time education. There is effective support for children who are likely to have special educational needs. This enables them to learn alongside their classmates and take part in all activities. Early assessments of their attainment show that most children begin school with skills that are typical for their age. The majority of children are likely to exceed the expectations of the early learning goals in their physical, personal and social skills by the time they begin work in Year 1. They are on target to achieve standards that are similar to most children in the other areas of learning when they leave the reception class. This represents satisfactory achievement.

Personal, social and emotional development

56 The provision and teaching for this area of the children's development is good in the nursery and reception class. All the members of staff treat each other, parents and the children with respect. This helps the children settle quickly into school routines as they see the value the school gives to their parents and home life. The teachers and nursery-nurses in both classes deal with the children calmly and patiently. This ensures the children feel secure and learn to relate well to each other. Both classes have stimulating work areas and the children quickly become independent and sensible learners. They work contentedly together and understand the need to take turns. For example, the teacher asked, 'What if we all want the wheels?'. The children replied, 'We share them'. The children reinforce their understanding of friendship by describing their friends on the paper friendship chain. All adults take every opportunity to develop children's personal, social and emotional skills. This makes a positive contribution to children's development. Most children are on target to exceed the expectations of the early learning goals in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

57 The nursery makes good provision for this area of learning. The consistently good teaching meets the needs of individual children effectively. It ensures they continue to increase their ability to listen to others and to speak clearly. All members of staff ask carefully worded questions that encourage children to express their ideas. For example, children making porridge described what happened following the addition of liquid, 'It's sticky', 'It's getting harder', as the child added more oats. This constant language reinforcement increases the children's vocabulary and confidence in holding conversations. All members of staff work closely with parents to improve children's reading skills. This develops an enjoyment of books and increases the children's awareness of the importance of reading. Teachers and nursery assistants give children ample opportunities to recognise letters and words and to use pencils correctly. This develops their reading and writing skills effectively. The school uses suitable elements of the National Literacy Strategy when children move into the reception class. Children learn to share books and understand that an author writes the stories. They increase their early writing skills in the post-office writing area. Many children write their names and simple words, such as 'cat', from memory. Most children form their letters correctly but do not write simple sentences unaided. Teaching in the reception class in this area of learning is satisfactory and children achieve steadily. However, opportunities are missed to extend their learning. For example, the teacher does not always give children opportunities to share and talk about their work. Most children are on target to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Mathematical development

58 The teaching of mathematics in the nursery is good. Children constantly count and order objects as they work. Many children recognise and order numbers to five and they know a suitably wide range of number rhymes and songs. They recite these with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Staff make effective use of the role-play area to increase children's understanding of number, for example, as they set out plates and cutlery. This increases children's understanding of relationships between numbers. Children in the reception class have a numeracy lesson each day. This increases the children's ability to listen and concentrate and reinforces their skills in counting accurately. Most children follow instructions accurately and many find different ways of making ten. Teaching in the reception class is satisfactory and children make steady progress in learning how to use numbers and in developing their ability to explain their reasoning. However, opportunities are missed for children to explain what they have learnt in their own words and this limits their understanding of mathematics. Most children are at the expected levels for their age and are on target to meet the requirements of the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59 The school makes sound provision for children's development in this area of learning. All members of the early years staff provide interesting and relevant activities that increase the children's experiences. Teaching in this area of learning in the nursery is good. For example, children remarked confidently on the feel of dry sand, 'It tickles'. They exclaimed in amazement as the sand made a wheel turn, 'Look, wheel's going round'. The teacher encourages them to comment on the difference between dry and wet sand and constantly reinforces their language. The children work confidently on computers in the nursery and reception classes. Teaching in the reception class is satisfactory. Children use the mouse carefully to control movement on the screen. They sequence and order objects accurately and know how to 'click' and 'drag'. Children in both classes learn how to care for plants and living creatures. This increases their understanding of dependence and of the need for water and food. They are on course to achieve the levels expected for children of this age.

Physical development

60 The provision for the development of children's physical skills is good. Opportunities for outdoor learning are restricted whilst the nursery is being refurbished but children still have access to an enclosed outdoor area and the teaching is good. The on-site church hall is used very well for balancing activities and the use of wheeled vehicles. This increases the children's awareness of how to use a large space effectively and carefully. Both classes use the school hall for gymnastic and dance activities. Teachers promote independence by encouraging and expecting the children to change and fold their clothes themselves. They plan the work carefully to give the children good opportunities to control movement and work together. All members of staff encourage the children to develop and increase their skills in using and controlling tools such as pencils, scissors and brushes. Most children are competent in their use of these tools; for example they cut paper carefully. They control paint satisfactorily and hold brushes correctly. Most children are on course to exceed the level expected in this area of learning.

Creative development

61 Children draw and paint with confidence throughout the foundation stage of learning. Teaching is good in the nursery. Children are encouraged to experiment with shape and colour and they benefit from being taught how to use paintbrushes correctly. This increases their confidence and skill and they take pride in their achievements. By the time they are in the reception class the children mix white with other colours to achieve effects in the style of Monet. This increases their skills and awareness of the work of famous artists. Children have plenty of opportunities for imaginative role-play. Members of staff join in and talk with the children. This helps the children to develop their imagination and increase their speaking skills. For example, in the hospital area children take turns to be the doctor and use their own experiences to develop story lines. Throughout the Foundation Stage children have access to percussion instruments and learn simple songs and rhymes from memory. They develop their learning well and, in the reception class, choose instruments to make specific weather sounds. Most children are likely to meet the expectations of the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception class.

ENGLISH

62 Standards are broadly average in both the infants and the juniors. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented effectively so, since the last inspection, standards have kept up with the national rate of improvement. Most pupils are achieving steadily. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in view of their learning difficulties.

63 The main strengths in English are:

- the high quality of the handwriting, which enables pupils to express their thoughts fluently and neatly in many areas of the curriculum; and
- the good links between work in class and homework.

64 There are weaknesses in spelling which become more evident as pupils progress through the school.

65 Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory at the ages of seven and 11. Literacy lessons begin and end with discussions. Pupils of all abilities answer questions that challenge their thinking skills. 'Big book' stories are discussed in depth and most pupils are keen to contribute. Those with less confidence to speak to the class engage in quiet discussions with the learning support

assistants. Year 2 pupils enjoy sharing their stories. They read aloud with clarity and good expression. More able pupils express themselves with great confidence, for example when explaining that, 'Rembrandt liked to dress in his best clothes because he often wanted to paint himself'. Year 5 and 6 pupils use drama well in the 'literacy hour' to stimulate group activities. As a result of such varied experiences, most pupils speak articulately and with confidence, to a group or to a larger audience. Throughout the school, pupils listen well in lessons.

66 Standards in reading are satisfactory throughout the school. Younger pupils are taught a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. They sound out letters well, or break the word into smaller parts that they can more easily identify. Pupils also use clues in the sentence to enable them to guess a word by its context. These techniques give pupils confidence to practise and to improve. The reading programme is tightly structured to ensure that pupils read books that are well matched to their ability levels. Year 2 pupils speak with enthusiasm about books that they have read. In Year 6, the vast majority of pupils have reached the level expected for their age, though relatively few have reached an above average standard. Independent reading skills are well developed and most pupils select their own books for their daily reading. They have a good understanding of the books they read and enjoy discussing characters and possible developments in their stories. They justify their choice of favourite author or book with obvious passion. In addition to reading in lessons, pupils also take books home daily for extra practice. Many parents work, in partnership with the school, to raise the standards of their children's reading (as well as their writing and spelling). They make a significant contribution to the progress made by their children. Most pupils achieve steadily, with the best achievement being made by the lower attaining pupils. Good adult support, on reading tasks pitched at just the right level, enables these pupils to develop their skills daily. Consequently, there are very few weak readers in Year 6.

67 Standards of writing are above average in Year 2. Much emphasis has been given to improving writing skills, both in the presentation and in the content of the work. By the age of seven, most pupils write independently and clearly. Sentence construction is good, spelling is accurate and the writing captures and sustains the readers' interest. A feature of the high quality of work produced in Year 2 is that writing often arises from work in other subjects. For example, pupils produced extended and interesting accounts of childhood in the village of Upholland, following a talk given by one of the teachers. By the end of Year 2, pupils have had good experience of writing for a wide range of purposes. Standards of writing are satisfactory in Year 6. Most pupils reach the level expected for their age but relatively few are working at the higher levels. They write fluently and imaginatively, for example on themes inspired by the plays of William Shakespeare. However, the standards of spelling and punctuation of many pupils is erratic and lower than it should be. Pupils practise spelling and punctuation through frequent exercises but they do not use this knowledge in their independent writing. Planning sheets are used well to give added structure to the creative writing. Pupils achieve particularly well in Year 2. Here pupils are set varied and stimulating challenges and, as a consequence, their work is lively and imaginative. Good use is made of computers throughout the school, especially in Year 3, where pupils often draft out and then improve their writing.

68 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and implement the National Literacy Strategy confidently. Good features of the teaching are:

- teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work; and
- the good management and routines that allow lessons to flow without interruptions.

69 There are weaknesses in the monitoring of pupils' work in their books and, in some lessons, there is not the balance to ensure that the group activities and final discussions are given sufficient

priority. As a result, inconsistencies in learning of punctuation and spelling are not identified and remedied.

70 Teachers plan their lessons well and make sure pupils know, at the start of each lesson, what they are to learn. They then check up on what the pupils have learned at the end of the session. This gives teachers an opportunity to assess where further help is needed. It also gives pupils a clear understanding of their own improvement and helps to motivate them. For example, pupils in Year 3 identified adjectives during the group activities and at the end of the lesson their work was thoroughly discussed. A homework sheet was then given to extend the pupils' familiarity with adjectives still further. Teachers provide a good range of opportunities to develop and consolidate pupils' literacy skills in other subjects. For example, they write accurate accounts and reports in history and science. They develop skills in speaking and listening that enable them to discuss moral and social matters and this has a positive effect on their personal development.

71 The quality of the teaching is much enhanced by the contribution of the learning support assistants. In all parts of the literacy hour, they work closely with individual pupils or with a group. They encourage pupils to participate in discussions, provide quiet explanations, prompt during reading and writing tasks and use questions skilfully to extend understanding. They help all the pupils who find learning difficult and, consequently, this group makes very good progress in the English lessons. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans with clear targets. The learning support assistants provide regular lessons, based on these targets to ensure their particular needs are being fully addressed. They also have responsibility for groups of children whose standards need to be boosted to a higher level. Since the last inspection, the role of these assistants has been greatly developed. The standards of reading and writing achieved by individuals and groups have been much improved as a result of their dedicated work in supporting the teachers.

72 Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is good. Annual tests are well used to identify areas of weakness, either of individuals or of groups. These areas are then examined and programmes are introduced to help raise standards. For example, the school has identified the need to improve standards in spelling and have good plans to improve teaching in this area. Individual targets for improvement are set with each pupil. This enables pupils to have responsibility for their own learning. Some teachers use marking well to assess pupils' learning and to aid their understanding with constructive comments. This is best seen in Year 6 where pupils regularly learn from their mistakes and, consequently, make better progress. However, marking in a minority of classes does little to indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve their written work.

73 The subject is well led and managed. The effects of the National Literacy Strategy have been analysed and carefully adapted, in the light of experience, to suit the particular needs of the school. Resources have been built up to better levels than those seen in most schools. This enables all classes to work on the full range of reading and writing tasks. The school library is well stocked and organised. However, pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the classification system to enable them to locate books precisely. The subject leader has a very good grasp of teaching standards and of the pupils' ability levels. She is less aware of the standards of work produced in classes across the school. There is insufficient scrutiny of the work completed, for example in pupils' books. Consequently, certain inconsistencies in provision are not identified. For example, worksheets and comprehension exercises are used too often in some classes. Consequently, in these classes the work in literacy lessons is divorced from the work in other subjects and so it does not have the same relevance or interest to the pupils.

MATHEMATICS

74 Standards in mathematics are at the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11. Standards have improved along with national trends since the last inspection, but pupils' attainment has been lower than in English or science. This has been of concern to the school and much effort has been put into improving standards during the last two years. For example, pupils' test papers are now analysed carefully to identify the areas which present barriers to pupils' understanding. The weaker areas are specifically targeted in future lessons and in special classes to boost pupils' attainment. In addition, the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the use of information and communication technology have improved the quality of teaching. These measures, along with observing lessons and feeding back information to help teachers to teach more effectively, have made a difference. Standards are beginning to rise. The current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are on course to reach the standards expected in all areas of mathematics and more pupils than ever before are working at the higher levels.

75 Despite these improvements, the school has not yet remedied all of the weaknesses. One reason why standards have proved difficult to improve arises from not looking closely enough at the work produced in pupils' mathematics books. Although the subject has been soundly led, the monitoring of pupils' learning, through the work they produce in their books, has not featured strongly enough. As a result, weaknesses in the progress made by different pupils in some classes go undetected.

76 Pupils achieve steadily in Year 1. The mental mathematics sessions are effective because the teacher discourages pupils from counting on their fingers and asks them to use 'the magic number line in your heads'. They are helped to understand that counting a sequence of numbers, such as $5+6+4$ is made easier if they are rearranged into $6+4+5$ because $6+4=10$. At this early stage, thinking strategies are introduced well. However, the monitoring of each group's work could be better to prevent pupils who struggle to understand from making too many mistakes. Pupils achieve well in Year 2. Through good teaching they tackle larger numbers with enthusiasm and develop a good understanding of tens and units. For example, one pupil said, 'There are four more units in 28 than in 24 but the tens are the same'. Standards by the age of seven are also improving. All but a small number of pupils in the current Year 2 class are on course to reach standards expected by the age of seven, and a quarter of them are working at the higher level.

77 Pupils achieve steadily in Years 3, 4 and 5. Pupils' attainment in Year 3 is still below average but this is mainly because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In this class, and all others, pupils with special educational needs are well supported. The work provided for them is always pitched at the correct level in almost all lessons and they are provided with additional adult support from well-trained learning assistants. In Year 3, the teacher is very selective in her questioning and asks the pupils with special needs specific questions so that they can make a contribution to the class lesson as a whole. Such approaches enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress throughout the school. The pace of learning in Year 3 is accelerating, partly because of sound teaching but also because additional tasks are set for homework which enable pupils to practise and improve their knowledge and skills. Homework is a strong feature of all classes and makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. In Years 3 and 4, pupils build suitably on earlier learning. For example, they learn to round numbers up and down to the nearest 10 and understand that changing round the numbers when adding does not affect the answer. Pupils continue to achieve steadily in Year 5. They gain valuable insights into the advantages of using different methods of calculation and decide which one is the most effective. For example, they speculated that subtracting by counting on from the small number to the larger one is more useful to shopkeepers because it can be done mentally more easily. Pupils achieve well in Year 6. Through good teaching, pupils develop competence and confidence in calculating with large numbers. They understand how to multiply

numbers such as 49 by 38 by rounding the numbers to the nearest 10, multiplying and then adjusting the outcome to obtain the correct answer.

78 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in most classes but is good in Years 2 and 6. In these classes the challenge is greater, the pace of learning is quicker and the match of work to pupils' different learning needs is more accurate. In all classes, pupils are well managed and lessons are well organised to enable pupils to learn in a quiet, purposeful learning atmosphere. All teachers explain new ideas and instructions clearly. Teachers ask searching questions to find out what pupils understand and to involve them in the lesson. The teaching methods used are largely successful. For example, pupils are often asked to write their answers on small white boards which are then held up for the teacher and other pupils to see. This helps the teacher to assess how well pupils are learning. It is also beneficial for the pupils. The boards can be wiped clean, therefore pupils are more ready to take a chance and are not afraid of making mistakes. Discussion sessions at the end of the lesson are particularly valuable. Teachers ask pupils to explain their work and to explain how they have arrived at their answers. This not only improves their mathematical reasoning but also their speaking and listening skills. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems. These are filtered through lessons. However, there are not enough occasions when pupils have to take responsibility for planning and organising their own investigation, for example where they are required to gather information and choose the best methods to find the answers.

79 A weakness in teaching and learning, in some classes, arises from the way that teachers plan the group activities. Teachers ask pupils to complete the same work before moving on to more challenging or simplified examples. This approach is not always helpful because some pupils find the core work too difficult and make too many errors in their learning. On other occasions, more able pupils find the work too easy and not enough demands are made on their reasoning skills. Some of the more able pupils work at a quick pace and reach the more difficult work specially prepared for them, but this is by no means true in all cases. In Years 2 and 6, the work provided is more often based on the teachers' judgements of pupils' readiness to learn new skills. In these classes, the results of short tests and the marking of pupils' work are used more effectively to set the level of work to match the learning needs of different pupils in the next lesson. This is why pupils make quicker progress and reach higher standards in these classes.

SCIENCE

80 Standards are at the level expected for pupils aged seven and 11. Results attained by 11 year old pupils have improved at a slightly quicker rate than the national trend. Pupils' skills in scientific enquiry have improved since the last inspection because of the recent focus on this area of science following analysis of national test results. Teachers benefit from a good level of support in the form of written information about how and what to teach. The subject leader is enthusiastic and well informed. He has a clear over-view of work in the subject and monitors pupils' work systematically. The school makes very effective use of the subject leader's skills and expertise in the teaching of Years 5 and 6. This ensures that new work builds on previous knowledge. The school measures pupils' achievements each half term. It is analysing and using the results of these tests and the national tests to plan work that tackles the weaknesses in pupils' achievement. An example of this is the improvement in pupils' enquiry skills.

81 Year 2 pupils of all abilities have a good understanding of how to explain and record observations. For example, a pupil said that, 'It can be skipped with, climbed on and you can pull things with it', when describing the uses of a piece of rope. Pupils record their findings carefully and predict, for example, whether pushing, pulling or squeezing will change the materials. The teacher gives clear and precise instructions and ensures all pupils know exactly what they are to do. This

helps all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, to work with a clear sense of purpose. Learning support assistants pose questions carefully to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are able to join in class discussions. Pupils' work shows that all elements of the science curriculum are covered well, including the development of enquiry skills. As a result, most Year 2 pupils acquire a sound understanding of scientific ideas such as light and shadows and electric circuits.

82 By the age of 11, the majority of the pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of scientific vocabulary and the specific scientific meaning of words such as 'fair test'. They make good progress in developing an increasingly wide knowledge base. For example, in Year 6 they use their knowledge of solutions to predict what is likely to happen when different materials are added to water. Pupils have a sound grasp of scientific ideas. For example, they understand the functions of plant and human organs and the importance of healthy lifestyles. More able pupils know that bacteria can be helpful as well as harmful and that food chains usually begin with a green plant. By Year 5 most pupils know and understand the cause and effect of condensation and evaporation. All pupils are aware of the necessity to measure accurately and to put the same amount of water in each test tube. Careful teaching ensures that pupils know care needs to be taken to ensure accurate results. Teachers make effective use of mathematics in enabling pupils to gather and interpret data. For example, Year 5 pupils had to calculate and measure accurately to make sense of their work on the strength of bridges. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 quickly develop a clear understanding of how to plan experiments and to predict results. They know that 'scientists test things to see if they're true'. There is no noticeable difference between the achievements of boys and girls.

83 All teachers link work in science very closely with the pupils' work in English. This ensures that the pupils develop a good understanding of scientific vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs receive skilled and carefully structured support in lessons. This enables them to work alongside their classmates at a similar rate of learning. It increases their self-esteem and develops their social skills effectively. Pupils take great care over the presentation of their work. This improves the quality and accuracy of their recorded findings. All teachers use questions skilfully to enable pupils to explain and answer questions about their experiments. This develops the pupils' learning effectively. The increasing use of information and communication technology in science is an improvement since the last inspection.

84 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Half of teaching in lessons seen was good and the quality of work in pupils' books points to good teaching over time. This results in pupils learning well and achieving sound standards. The majority of teachers are confident in their teaching. They use their subject knowledge carefully to develop the pupils' thinking. This leads to mature thought and logical reasoning. An example of this is when the pupils work out why the ends of a bridge need to be flat. Teachers' planning is thorough and consistently places a clear focus on practising and improving enquiry skills. The pupils use these skills to build on what they already know. They enjoy their work and are enthusiastic about the interesting investigations. All pupils behave well in class and are eager to learn. They listen carefully and follow instructions accurately. Pupils respond well to the planned opportunities for collaborative work.

85 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in increasing their scientific skills and understanding. This results from the quality of the learning support assistants. They ensure that the work extends pupils' knowledge and understanding and meets the pupils' identified needs. More able pupils have good opportunities through practical science to investigate and extend their learning.

ART AND DESIGN

86 Pupils achieve well and standards are above average at the ages of seven and 11. All pupils have equal access to the opportunities offered. Consequently, they make equally good progress in learning. This represents an improvement on the findings of the last inspection.

87 The strengths that account for this rise in standards include:

- the rich curriculum provided by the programme of work built up over past years;
- the use of teachers' subject expertise in Years 5 and 6; and
- the work produced by pupils based on their studies of famous artists of the past.

88 Year 2 pupils benefit from experiencing work in a wide range of media, such as charcoal, pastels, wax and paint. They develop a good appreciation of tones and how to mix paints to produce different colours and shades. Pupils gain important insights into the work of artists, such as Rembrandt, by mixing colours typical of those used by the artist on a drawn palette. As one pupil explained, 'I smudged the (pastel) colours together so it looked as if Rembrandt just smudged them with his brush to mix some paint'. Year 6 pupils make good use of sketchbooks to develop their ideas. For example, based on their studies of the Ancient Egyptians, pupils practised drawing modern-day figures, such as children on skateboards, in a similar profile perspective. These were later developed into paintings, using the same tones as those found in the ancient tombs. The best achievement is seen in Year 4, in a wide range of imaginative and creative work. As in other classes, the work of 'Impressionist' painters provides a rich stimulus for the pupils' own work. An improvement since the last inspection is the strong development of three-dimensional work throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons. Learning assistants talk to them to ensure that they understand the task and to draw out their ideas. This enables them to work purposefully and make good progress.

89 The quality of teaching and learning is good. There is a high success rate because pupils find the work stimulating. Teachers build effectively on what pupils have learnt in previous lessons. The expertise of one teacher is exploited well between the top two classes. Demanding work is set, such as in Year 5 where pupils reproduce intricate prints in the style of William Morris.

90 Leadership in the subject is good. Displays around the school provide opportunities to assess how effectively the subject is taught and which aspects need further development. Pupils have limited experience of clay modelling or pen-and-ink work. Opportunities are also missed to promote multicultural awareness through art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91 Standards are at the level expected at the ages of seven and 11 as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils often produce work of good quality but their design skills and their understanding of how to evaluate and improve their work are not at the same high level. This is because pupils are not given enough opportunities to plan ahead and are not always encouraged to review their work to try to improve it. The head teacher is temporarily overseeing developments in the subject and provides satisfactory leadership. This ensures that the subject continues to have an important place in the school's curriculum. However, monitoring standards and teaching and learning in the different classes is not good enough to identify and remedy the weaker areas. Pupils in most classes do not record their work in books or folders. This makes monitoring of the subject more difficult and prevents teachers and pupils from reflecting on the progress made.

92 Pupils achieve steadily through Years 1 and 2. In Year 1, they gain valuable insights into how products are manufactured by disassembling packaging and remaking it into gift boxes, bearing

their own designed and printed wrapping paper. In Year 2, the quality of the peg dolls and musical instruments made is good but there is less evidence of pupils' design skills being extended.

93 Pupils achieve steadily in Years 4, 5 and 6 but they achieve particularly well in Year 3. In this class, the quality of the work produced is of a high standard. This reflects the care in planning and preparation of the work. When making Christmas tree decorations, for example, pupils examined commercial decorations and investigated the best shapes before designing their own. Then they practised their cutting and sewing skills. During the making, the teacher and classroom helper encouraged them to seek ways to improve their work. This process yielded very satisfying results and the decorations made matched the quality of commercial products. In Year 4, pupils have good opportunities to measure and cut harder materials, such as wood, to make wheeled vehicles. In Year 5, this work is extended well when information and communication technology techniques are used to transmit signals to drive the electric motors so the vehicles can be controlled. Effective links are made with other subjects. In Year 6 for example, pupils design and make board games based on entering an Egyptian pyramid.

94 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are always well managed and well organised. Practical activities such as sawing wood are carefully supervised. The skills of making such as cutting, joining and painting are taught well. This is why pupils' finished work is often of good quality. In Year 5, for example, the teacher very deliberately guided pupils in using triangular corners to join straws at right angles in preparation for making three-dimensional models at a later date. However, the teaching of design skills is less systematic. Occasionally, this stage is omitted altogether. Construction kits are very seldom used to enable pupils to experiment with movement, such as lifting or turning. As a result, they are less imaginative in the way they try to incorporate movement into their work. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the help they receive from learning support assistants. In one lesson for example, a model vehicle, much larger than the ones given to other pupils, was selected to help with sketching the details. However, the needs of the more able pupils are seldom highlighted in the planning and they are not always challenged enough.

GEOGRAPHY

95 Standards exceed the level expected for pupils aged seven and 11. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a strong emphasis on local geography. This gives pupils a well-developed awareness and understanding of the geographical features of the local area. The subject leader works effectively with colleagues to plan pupils' work. This ensures that there are no gaps or unnecessary repetition in the work covered. Although teachers' weekly lesson plans are not monitored to ensure that the work meets pupils' different learning needs, the subject leader checks the work in pupils' books to ensure coverage of all strands of the geography curriculum. Year 2 pupils are taught very well and this increases their achievements and raises standards. The school enhances work in geography through a range of visits and field trips. Good links are made with other curriculum areas. For example, Year 6 pupils use their knowledge of evaporation and condensation in science to explain the water cycle.

96 By the age of seven most pupils have a good knowledge of local places. Younger pupils make effective maps of landmarks on their journey to school. They are eager to investigate the different ways they come to school and use their knowledge of mathematics well to chart the different methods. The seven year old pupils make effective use of photographs to illustrate different local features. They speak knowledgeably about the area and have a good sense of direction. The teacher provides a careful match of task to ability when pupils use books to investigate life in the Australian Outback. This enables the pupils to work independently and increases their research skills. For example, there is a rapid increase in pupils' ability to extract pertinent information. 'Uluru (Ayers

Rock) is fenced off. That's so people won't spoil it. It glows red in the sunrise'. Pupils who have special educational needs receive effective support that ensures they achieve success alongside their classmates. This increases their self-esteem and includes them in the classroom activities. The teacher ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to talk about and explain their learning. All pupils take care over their work and present it neatly.

97 By Year 6 pupils have a good level of understanding of the differences in world climates. They make effective use of information and communication technology to study printouts of weather reports from different capital cities. This gives them opportunities to use spreadsheets. Pupils know that weather conditions are affected by factors such as cloud cover and wind force. One pupil explained how a weather front moves across the country and changes the conditions. All pupils know this is a natural process. Careful teaching ensures that the pupils understand how climate and geographical location affect the way people live and work. Discussion with Year 6 pupils shows they have a strong awareness of ecological and some complex moral issues. For example, they discuss the rights and wrongs of destroying the rain forests and compare this with the industrialisation of Britain. Their written work provides evidence of increasing skills in note taking and the use of secondary information sources such as reference books. This work provides strong links with work in English.

98 The quality of teaching is good in Year 6 and very good in Year 2. This reflects the standards pupils achieve. These lessons move along quickly and pupils are engrossed in their work. They concentrate hard, work purposefully and are eager to learn because of the interesting teaching and careful match of work to pupils' ability. There is an element of unsatisfactory teaching where pupils lose interest because the activities are either too easy or too hard. Their behaviour deteriorates and they do not learn effectively. This happens when their usual class teacher does not teach them.

HISTORY

99 Standards are above the level expected for pupils aged seven and 11. The good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The teaching of Year 2 pupils has improved and this is having a positive effect on pupils' ability to reason and to ask about social change. The use of information about pupils' achievement has also improved the planning of their work. This ensures that pupils tackle interesting work that meets their different learning needs. The subject leader makes effective use of the local education authority's loan scheme to boost the school's collection of historical artefacts. An example of this is the collection of clothes similar to ones that Romans would have worn. The enthusiasm of the subject leader is infectious and stimulating. This results in a relevant, interesting and lively curriculum. The school enriches and enhances the curriculum by the use of the rich local history, talks about change from local people and visits to places of interest such as the Roman Experience in Chester.

100 By the age of seven most pupils have well-developed skills of suggesting consequences of actions. This is promoted by careful and skilful questioning, for example, about why people might dig holes during the Great Fire of London. In response to this questioning, pupils put forward the idea that people might want to hide valuables for safety or remove the grass 'to stop the fire'. The teacher makes effective use of personal artefacts such as her diary. This provokes much discussion about why people keep diaries, 'They are for our secrets' and, 'You write about people you love'. This links very effectively with learning about Samuel Pepys and the impact of the great fire. The teacher has a good understanding of the subject and makes it interesting for the pupils. In turn, the pupils think hard, work productively and begin to appreciate the possible feelings of people when the fire struck.

101 By the age of 11 most pupils have a well-developed ability to interpret historical events and consider the effect of change over time. They discuss sensibly and confidently and know that there

are different views about the rights and wrongs of past events. For example, some Year 6 pupils explain that although life was hard in Victorian times for most people it eventually brought benefits in health and living conditions. This shows a high level of mature thought and reasoning.

102 The quality of teaching and learning is effective throughout the school. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm to the pupils. They ensure that pupils with special educational needs have effective support that enables them to take a full part in lessons. This leads to good progress in learning and increases self-esteem. Lessons are brisk and purposeful and pupils respond very well to the interesting and lively teaching. They have a good level of motivation, concentrate hard and achieve well. The use of writing skills is good and pupils' work is neat and tidy. There is not enough attention to accurate spelling by all pupils. This reduces the quality of written work. Pupils make effective use of information and communication technology to support research in history. Work in history makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' moral, social and cultural awareness.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103 Standards in information and communication technology are at the level expected at the ages of seven and 11. A computer suite has been provided, teachers have been trained to use it and the school employs a technician who works effectively with groups of children on a daily basis. These measures have proved effective in raising standards significantly since the time of the last inspection. Pupils' rate of learning is increasing further as new technologies are being developed in the school, such as connection to the Internet and the provision of control technology equipment. The subject is soundly led. The information provided to guide teachers in their work is of a very good quality and technical help is always available. The timetable ensures that pupils receive regular information and communication technology lessons during which they learn important skills, such as editing, saving and retrieving their work. In almost all subjects, information and communication technology makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, for example in improving their basic skills of reading, writing and number work and in using computers as a source of information. Although major strides have been taken since the last inspection, there is room for further improvement. For example, not enough consideration is given to pupils who already have good information and communication technology skills gained from using computers at home and they are given similar tasks to pupils without this background knowledge. The learning of more able pupils could progress more quickly if teachers took this into account when planning new work. These weaknesses go unnoticed because planning, teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently.

104 Pupils make a quick start in learning mouse skills in Year 1. They use the mouse proficiently, for example, to click on items of clothing and drag them across the screen to dress Teddy. They make a fair attempt to type their own words to describe a picture on the screen. However, their knowledge of capital letters is limited and this causes some confusion when using the keyboard. Pupils understand well enough that their work on screen can be saved and eagerly await copies of their pictures as they appear in the printing tray. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of communicating information is extended well in Year 2 when they experiment with graphics packages to create pictures and repeating patterns. In Year 2, pupils develop a good understanding of how to enter information into a database and re-sort it to produce graphs, for example of pupils in the class with different colour of hair.

105 Pupils achieve steadily in Years 3 to 5. In Year 3, pupils' understanding of how to search for specific information held on a database is extended effectively when they formulate questions to find specific answers, for example 'boys with brown hair'. Their editing skills develop well and this improves the quality of their story writing. In Year 4, pupils have good opportunities to investigate different types of presentation. By cutting and pasting and rearranging different font styles, pupils

produced effective posters for the school disco. Year 5 pupils were equally busy designing and searching their databases and redrafting their stories using word processing and publishing packages. Good teaching in Year 6 enables pupils to achieve well in understanding and using multimedia presentations. For example, they use a digital camera to take photographs and incorporate the images into presentation sequences about themselves. Pupils' learning is only held back by not having access to specific equipment, such as sensing devices and, until recently, control technology equipment. To alleviate the problem the technician has made effective use of programmable toys. Pupils have learnt to write simple programs to move an electronic buggy in different directions.

106 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Although the potential of specially prepared software to help pupils with learning difficulties has not yet been fully explored, these pupils benefit from adult support whenever they use computers. They have valuable opportunities to talk about their work and learn in small but clear steps, which helps their understanding and increases their confidence.

107 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are good communications between class teachers and the technician. For example, lesson plans prepared by teachers are passed on for the technician to use. Small numbers of pupils in the suite ensures that they have plenty of adult support. The technician has good technical knowledge and ensures that the machines function well and pupils learn the correct routines, for example in opening and closing programs. The technician is very observant and judges when to intervene in pupils' learning without telling them too much. When teachers are involved in the lesson, pupils' learning accelerates. In particular, this is noticeable at the end of the lesson when pupils are asked to explain what they have learnt and how they think information and communication technology can make organisation easier. In Year 6, for example, after learning to use spreadsheets, one pupil commented that the calculations were almost certain to be accurate and another referred to their potential in recording and tracking weather statistics.

MUSIC

108 Pupils in Year 6 attain broadly average standards but standards were higher at the time of last inspection when many pupils had instrumental tuition. There are strengths in:

- the programme of work, which ensures good links are made between lessons and which provides practical support for the non-specialist teachers; and
- the preparation of items for large-scale concerts or church festivals and services.

109 There is room for improvement in:

- the pace and balance of lessons; and
- the range and quality of the resources for teaching and learning.

110 By Year 6, pupils have had useful experiences in all aspects of music including listening, composing and performing, to work at levels close to those expected for their age. They have a clear understanding of the basic elements of musical structure, such as the 'rondo' form in a baroque melody. They work well together to devise group compositions, based on impressions of sounds heard in nature and they use a suitable range of musical instruments to perform their compositions. However, they are not as familiar with the names of musical instruments, nor of the names of many composers, as most pupils of their age. Since the last inspection, charges have been introduced for instrumental tuition. As a result, this activity has ceased and few pupils are now reaching above average standards in the subject. Pupils achieve steadily in Years 4 to 6. The best achievement is seen in Year 3. Here, pupils used claps, stamps and voices to represent factory sounds, as they

composed, in groups, rhythmic patterns based on a poem. The pupils greatly enjoyed this experience, especially listening to the recording of their final ensemble performance.

111 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A teacher with specialist knowledge takes most lessons. Her use of correct musical terms enables pupils to develop their musical vocabulary well. They become sufficiently familiar with 'staff notation' to follow a simple melody line; piano accompaniments enhance the singing. However, in lessons observed, too much time was given to discussion, limiting the time that pupils spent on performing and improving their skills or developing their compositions. Pupils with special educational needs receive the support they need to make satisfactory progress but there are fewer opportunities than at the time of the last inspection for gifted and more able pupils to become proficient in playing instruments.

112 Although temporary, leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. No procedures currently exist for anyone to gain an accurate picture of the standards of teaching or learning across the school. Consequently, areas of weakness have not been sufficiently identified. For example, there is little development of multicultural appreciation in the subject; many instruments are in need of repair or replacement; more tuned instruments are required to promote elements of composition and to raise performance levels. Opportunities are missed, for example in school assemblies, to promote the pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The school acknowledges that music has not been given a high priority in recent times and that the time has now come for a review of the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113 Standards in physical education are higher than the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and teachers' dedication in organising inter-school matches across a good range of sports in which many pupils take part. The subject is well led and pupils' learning, in each aspect of the subject, is carefully sequenced to ensure that they build well on what they have learnt earlier. Pupils not only acquire good skills, particularly in swimming and games, they also develop an understanding of teamwork. This is an improved picture since the time of the last inspection.

114 Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. In Year 1, for example, they learn effectively to run, skip and jump in time with the music. They interpret the mood of the music sensitively, for example in adding facial expressions to create the impression of an angry or a self-important person. Very good teaching in Year 2 enables pupils to achieve particularly well in developing co-ordination and fine judgements in the skills of throwing and catching.

115 Pupils continue to achieve well in the Years 3 to 6. In Year 3, there are good opportunities for pupils to plan and perform their own interpretations of traditional dances. For example, pupils suggest adding turns and varying the length and frequency of their dance steps to make the best use of the space available. In Year 5, pupils acquire and advance skills in gymnastics. Through very good teaching, they learn to execute expertly co-ordinated vaults and rolls and are proud of their achievements. By Year 6 the standards in swimming are high. Almost all pupils reach the 25 metre standard and many go on to achieve advanced awards. In both games and swimming, the school has an impressive record of victories in sporting competitions.

116 The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of very good teaching. Lessons are carefully planned, well organised and very well managed. Pupils benefit from frequent reminders to consider their own safety and that of others. For example, lessons always begin with a warm up and cool down. The reasons for this are fully explained and pupils understand about

increasing heart rates and the need to warm up their muscles. Teachers have good subject knowledge and new skills are effectively coached. For example, the Year 2 teacher insisted that pupils 'watch the ball rather than look at their partner'. As a result, almost every throw was accurate and very few catches were spilled. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of practising because teachers often make comments such as, 'Keep trying and suddenly you will get it right'. Teachers often use phrases such as, 'Now try to make your movement better and see if you can find a different way to perform that skill'. This enables pupils to improve the quality of their work and to extend their creativity. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and they make good progress. In one lesson, for example, a pupil with physical difficulties was very closely observed and frequently encouraged, but he was expected to perform independently and demonstrate his achievements for others to watch.