

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Huyton, Liverpool

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104472

Headteacher: Mr L H Rooney

Reporting inspector: Mr P M Allen
17531

Dates of inspection: 18th - 19th March 2003

Inspection number: 246377

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Edenfield Crescent Huyton Liverpool
Postcode:	L36 6DS
Telephone number:	(0151) 4894072
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Mulcahey
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary is a broadly average sized primary school serving an area of mixed housing in Huyton near Liverpool. The school serves the Mosscroft Estate which is part of the parish of St Aidan's. Of the 215 pupils on roll, there are fewer girls than boys, with a gender imbalance in some year groups. All the pupils are of white UK heritage. There are eight classes, with one for Reception children and three which are small in number for Key Stage 1 pupils; at Key Stage 2 there is one class for each of the four year groups. Twenty-eight pupils are identified as having special educational needs (this proportion being below the national average), mainly with moderate learning difficulties; no pupil has a statement of special educational need. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is above the national average. Virtually all the children have had experience of pre-school education in one of a number of local school nursery classes. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is wide and varies from year to year, but overall it is slightly below what is expected nationally. Over the two years prior to the inspection the school has benefited from a number of improvements to the accommodation such as new windows and doors.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with a caring, Christian ethos. The very good relationships at all levels underpin the good quality of education provided. The high quality of the teaching ensures that pupils achieve well relative to their abilities. Standards are creditable, especially in reading and mathematics. The caring, experienced headteacher provides good leadership and management and is well supported by a very conscientious staff. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- High quality teaching, particularly in Year 6, helps the pupils to learn effectively and achieve well.
- Reading is given a high profile and standards are very good across the school.
- There is a tradition of pupils achieving very good standards in mathematics.
- The effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's caring Christian ethos.
- The very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils make a positive contribution to the quality of education.

What could be improved

- Standards in written work across the school.
- The assessment of attainment and progress.
- The roles of the curriculum co-ordinators.
- Plans to deal with the surplus income.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998. There has been a good improvement since that time. Most of the issues from the previous report have been addressed. As a consequence, there are better strategies in place to provide challenging work for all pupils. The curriculum for information and communication technology, design and technology and physical education at Key Stage 2 now meets statutory requirements. The school has formalised and improved its monitoring procedures, but the roles of the curriculum co-ordinators and the assessment procedures still require further development. Since the previous inspection very significant improvements have taken place in information and communication technology. The leadership and management of the school have improved, the quality of teaching is higher and, as a consequence, standards have risen. The staff are very committed to the school and its pupils and

are well placed to maintain and further build on these improvements.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	B	B	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A*
science	A	B	A	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Children make very good progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in the Reception year and virtually all of them are likely to achieve the nationally prescribed Early Learning Goals across the various areas of learning, with around half likely to exceed most of the goals. Standards vary from year to year even though pupils achieve well relative to their abilities and are very well taught. Standards at the end of the current Year 2 are expected to be in line with national averages in writing, mathematics and science, and above the national average in reading. These lower than usual results are because of the high proportion of lower attaining pupils in this particular year group. Standards at the end of Year 6 are in line with the national averages in English and science and above in mathematics. These are very creditable overall results, given the significant minority of pupils in Year 6 who have special educational needs. Overall standards are less high in writing across the school. Standards in reading and mathematics have been consistently high in recent years; in the Year 6 mathematics tests in 2002, the pupils' performance was in the top five per cent when compared with similar schools nationally. A strong feature of the national test results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is the performance of boys who, in recent years, have reversed the national trend by doing better than girls who themselves achieve well. Standards in information and communication technology are much improved and are now in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school is setting challenging but realistic targets to maintain its good level of pupil achievement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall, pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They work co-operatively, with boys and girls mixing well. Older pupils are protective and helpful towards younger ones.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is usually very good. Pupils are aware of the high expectations held of them. They play well together at playtimes in a harmonious atmosphere.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. There are very good relationships which are part of an ethos where every child is valued equally.
Attendance	Attendance is good, being above the national average. The pupils arrive in good time, eager to start the school day.

The very good attitudes and behaviour reflect the school's caring, Christian ethos.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 - 2	Years 3 - 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good/Very good

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

The quality of teaching observed during this short inspection was at least satisfactory, very often good and often very good, with some excellent teaching. Excellent teaching was observed in Year 4 and in Year 6. English is generally taught well, although the school recognises the need to more closely target raising standards in writing. Mathematics is taught very well. Teachers use effective methods to teach the skills of literacy and numeracy. The relatively small number of support staff make very positive contributions to the teaching and learning. The teaching usually meets the needs of the pupils. It successfully meets the needs of the lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs. There are times when more could be expected of the higher attaining pupils in their writing. The vast majority of pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, with a will to achieve. This is a strong feature with the Year 6 pupils which reflects well on the teaching they receive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, the curriculum is broad, balanced and inclusive. The school has very significantly developed its information and communication technology provision, with firm plans to further develop its use in supporting all curricular areas.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is good and enables them to make good and sometimes very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good and the provision for their cultural development is good. The pupils respond well in all aspects of personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The level of pastoral care is very high. Each child is valued and supported. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is inconsistent and needs further development in some subjects such as science and information and communication technology.

The school benefits from a good partnership with parents. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. A whole school plan for assessment is needed. The school is socially inclusive for all pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The well respected headteacher provides good leadership and management and is well supported by the experienced deputy head. There is a need to further develop the role of curriculum co-ordinators to better monitor teaching, learning and standards in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very loyal and supportive of the school and its headteacher. There is recognition of the need to further develop the role of governors in monitoring the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has made a positive start to its self-evaluation processes. There are firm plans to improve and extend the monitoring and evaluation of its performance.
The strategic use of resources	The school links its decisions on spending to its educational priorities. Although the school budgets systematically for all expenditure and is clear about the cost of its development, insufficient consideration has been given to the budget surplus which has been accruing since a time prior to the

	previous inspection. The school needs to review the use of surplus income when setting its budget for future years.
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There is an adequate number of teaching staff but a relatively low number of classroom support assistants. The school is clean and well maintained with reasonable classroom sizes. It benefits from the recent improvements, including those in the playgrounds. There is a large field which is underused because of significant drainage problems. The school is well resourced across all curriculum areas. Good use is generally made of time except that teaching time at Key Stage 2 is below national recommendations. Good consideration is given to the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children like school and are making good progress. • Their behaviour is good. • The teaching is good and parents are kept well informed about progress. • The school is very approachable, expects the children to work hard and is helping them to become responsible. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are unclear about the school's expectations on homework. • Although the vast majority feel that the school is approachable, a significant minority indicated that they did not feel the school works closely enough with parents. • Over a third of respondents feel that there should be more extra-curricular activities. • Some parents expressed a wish for confidentiality in discussions held at open evenings.

The school's expectations on homework could be clearer and there are plans to review homework to make clearer the school's policy and expectations. The view of the inspection team is that the school is very approachable as part of its practice of working closely with parents. The number of extra-curricular activities, including those at lunchtimes, is good and compares favourably with schools of a similar size. The view of the inspection team is that the school could usefully review its open evening arrangements in the light of confidentiality. The support of the parents for this school was reflected in the way that every single child was wearing school uniform over the days of the inspection. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school which is deservedly held in high regard by the parents, the church and the local community.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

High quality teaching, particularly in Year 6, helps the pupils to learn effectively and achieve well.

1. Even though during a short inspection it is only possible to observe a relatively small number of lessons, all the inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is now higher than it was at the time of the previous inspection. During this inspection, most lesson observations were of literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching was good overall, with some very good teaching. It was excellent in two of the lessons, very good in just under a quarter, good in just under a half and satisfactory in the small number of remaining lessons. The excellent teaching was observed in an information and communication technology lesson in Year 4 and in a mathematics lesson at Year 6. The teaching at Year 6 was particularly effective, which is the main reason why standards at the end of Year 6 are as high as they are.
2. The previous report was critical of teaching in information and communication technology. The school now ensures full access to the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. As a consequence of this, information and communication technology is increasingly being used as a valuable means of supporting the teaching and learning. Two classrooms are fitted with interactive whiteboards and this is having a very positive effect on teaching. The two classes benefit from this effective teaching aid and, at particular times of the week, other classes move into the two classrooms concerned. Very good use is made of the whiteboards to teach numeracy skills and to develop reading skills, such as word building. The school has plans to consider extending the provision of interactive whiteboards, together with plans to further develop the range of software to support teaching and learning across all curricular areas.
3. The quality of the pupils' learning is good because of the high quality of teaching. Pupils respond to the challenge of the work set and show a willingness to concentrate, thus making good progress in most lessons. The teaching enables the pupils to have a good knowledge of their own learning. They are confident and ask questions and persevere with their work. Pupils readily help one another and there is an ethos of co-operation. These features were very apparent in a very well-organised Year 4 lesson on information and communication technology and mathematics. The teacher showed very secure subject knowledge and great skill in enabling the pupils to understand that different graphs are used for different purposes. The pupils were taught how to create bar charts and then interpreted and analysed the information in the graphs. The teaching built upon the pupils' previous knowledge, enabling them to learn effectively and realise that they were in charge of the computer and that they needed to give it instructions. The pupils were very well managed, well engaged in the activity and listened attentively to the teacher's clear instructions and explanations. The teacher made very good use of the interactive whiteboard. The relationships in the classroom provided a positive culture in which achievement flourished. Overall, the excellent teaching brought about excellent learning. In a well structured discussion at the end of the lesson, virtually all the pupils were putting their hands up to answer the questions, giving very positive indications of the very good understanding that most pupils had gained.
4. The most effective teaching observed enabled all pupils to achieve well relative to their abilities. It involved very high expectations of the level and quality of work where pupils responded very positively to the demands made upon them. This was very much the case in the Year 6 lessons observed, such as in an excellent mathematics lesson. The lesson started very positively with a very pacy mental session, with pupils enthusiastically answering questions about three digit numbers. Pupils very willingly explained their strategies. Then followed very clear teaching about angles; the pupils' answers showed that they were very familiar with terms such as scalene, equilateral and isosceles. The pupils settled quickly to their mathematical tasks. The lower attainers were given extra support from the teacher and the higher attainers were given challenging extension work to extend their learning. The pupils responded to the high expectations of the teacher, producing as much work as they were able in the time given. This sort of high calibre teaching impacts on the pupils' learning; they are able to consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, the

teacher inspired the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils which meant that the pupils stayed on task and all were enabled to achieve well. The very good teaching and very good learning are interlinked and underpinned by the very good relationships.

5. Members of the support staff assist pupils' learning very effectively and contribute very positively to pupils' progress, although the school could gain from increasing the level of classroom support, especially at Key Stage 2 where the classes are larger. All staff are committed to the school and its pupils. Across the school, the close knowledge of individual pupils and their needs and the praise, encouragement and support they receive all have an impact on the quality of learning. Homework is well used to enable pupils to follow up class work and practise skills. The quality of education provided by the school involves the quality of teaching and pupils' response to that teaching. The effectiveness of the teaching impacts very significantly on the rate, breadth, depth and consolidation of all pupils' learning, regardless of ability. It helps pupils to gain appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding in a progressive and effective way. In this way, the quality of teaching observed leads to the creditable standards being achieved. The teaching, learning and achievement are interlinked. The quality of teaching, notably at Year 6, is one of the school's main strengths, enabling, as it does, the pupils to learn effectively and achieve well.

Reading is given a high profile and standards are very good across the school.

6. The previous report identified that standards in reading were good at both key stages. Standards in reading have improved so that they are now very good across the school. This is reflected in the schools National Curriculum results. An analysis of the results at the end of Year 2 from 2000 to 2002 shows that the performance of pupils in reading exceeded the national average by a significant margin. In 2001 the reading results were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally, and in 2002 the results were in the top five per cent when compared with similar schools. At Key Stage 2, pupils achieve well in the reading element of the National Curriculum English tests at the end of Year 6. Over the last three years virtually all pupils have reached Level 4, the expected standard for most eleven year olds. In 2000 and 2001 over 40 per cent of the pupils reached the higher Level 5, and in 2002 over 50 per cent reached this level. The current Year 2 pupils are expected to reach above average standards. The vast majority of the current Year 6 pupils are expected to reach high standards and the significant minority of pupils with special educational needs are expected to achieve well.
7. Reading is very well taught in the youngest classes, with the teachers having a good technical competence in teaching phonics and other basic skills; this enables pupils to have a good start in this aspect of their learning. In Reception and Years 1 and 2, pupils avidly read books and show great enjoyment of them. They enter the school with below average levels of attainment and make very good progress because of the good teaching and the rich curriculum provided. Reception children can confidently go through the text of a big book with their teacher and some read out the title and the authors name. A love of books is promoted by all teachers, who enthusiastically share stories with pupils, encouraging them to join in discussions about favourite characters and plots. The school is very effective in ensuring a good balance between pupils moving systematically through a structured reading scheme, and gaining breadth of experience at each level of difficulty. The pupils benefit from a very good range of books, including big and picture books.
8. In Years 1 and 2, the order of choosing books from the reading scheme is displayed and pupils know how to use it, following colour codes and titles. Parents are encouraged to support their children by listening to them reading regularly at home, and the majority of parents are keen to do this, making a very positive contribution to the standards achieved. One Year 2 pupil enjoys reading Beatrix Potter books at home which belonged to her mother as a child. She retells the story of Peter Rabbit and enjoys the humour of the story, laughing as she recounts how Peter Rabbit fools Mr McGregor.
9. Pupils have regular reading practice in school, both individually and through the shared and guided reading sessions that are features of the literacy hour. The highest attaining pupils read fluently and with expression, varying the tone of their voices to reflect changes in the text. Pupils know how to break complex words down into more manageable parts, and this gives them the confidence and skill to tackle unfamiliar words. Additional support for pupils who have difficulties with reading helps to raise their self-esteem and confidence and has a positive impact on the progress they make. By the

end of Year 2, the pupils overall attainment in reading is above national expectations.

10. As they move through Years 3, 4 and 5, pupils continue to make good progress in their reading. The pupils progress is accelerated in the upper part of Key Stage 2 where they are really challenged in their reading by tasks which require them to carry out research and which develop the more advanced reading skills such as skimming and scanning. Many pupils read regularly at home and have a broad reading experience. They confidently and willingly discuss their favourite books and authors, and the higher attaining pupils give well considered reasons for their reading preferences. One Year 6 pupil who was reading *The Magicians Nephew* by C. S. Lewis said she chose it because she enjoyed reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. She said she enjoyed 'adventure stories and going into the realms of fantasy'.
11. Teachers monitor pupils reading progress as they move through the school, enabling any temporary difficulties to be resolved. Effective use is made of shared reading sessions in literacy lessons where pupils jointly consider the merits and impact of different texts. By the end of Year 6, pupils attainment in reading is well above national expectations.
12. The school has done well to sustain the high standards found in reading at the previous inspection. It is to the credit of the school that boys show the same enthusiasm as girls for reading. This is reflected in the National Curriculum results which indicate that girls achieve well in reading, and boys achieve even better. Taking the performance of boys at the end of Year 2 over the three years from 2000 to 2002 together, national data show that, as in writing and mathematics, their performance exceeded the national average for boys in their age group by a significant margin. A similar positive picture for boys is apparent in the results in the reading element of the English tests at the end of Year 6.

There is a tradition of pupils achieving very good standards in mathematics.

13. The previous report identified the good standards in mathematics across the school; this creditable performance has been maintained and built upon. The results in mathematics over the past three years have been consistently well above the national averages at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Levels 3 and 5 at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 respectively indicates that mathematics is a strength of the school. Virtually all pupils met the appropriate levels for their age group in 2002, with a high percentage achieving the higher levels. At the end of Year 6, the pupils' performance in mathematics was in the top five per cent when compared with similar schools nationally. Inspection judgements are that the school is continuing to maintain high standards in teaching and learning. Standards at the end of the current Year 2 are expected to be in line with national averages because of the high proportion of lower attaining pupils in the particular year group. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above national averages, in spite of the significant minority of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 group.
14. The National Numeracy Strategy is effectively established, with the teaching making good use of commercial schemes of work to support the programme. From the moment they enter Reception, the children make very good progress in their learning and achieve the expected levels by the end of the year, with many exceeding them. They can match numerals to names and order numbers to 10. They can find one more or one less than a number from 1 to 10; for example, when they go to the hall to sing and act the song 'Ten in a Bed'. A number of children know which numbers are odd and which are even.
15. Year 1 pupils receive very good teaching in basic numeracy skills through practical activities, making mathematics fun and encouraging them to be confident and interested in the subject; for example, they learn how to follow instructions to move in a particular direction (left, right, forwards, backwards) using instructional playmats. Very good training ensues for these young pupils in sharing ideas and learning to take turns. Year 2 pupils have a good range of opportunities for using and practising their number skills across the mathematics curriculum. In a lesson observed, these pupils began by counting money donated by the pupils for a chosen charity. This teaches the pupils the relevance of money in an everyday situation. Key Stage 1 pupils enjoy their lessons and almost all pupils have a very secure grasp of number and very good mental agility skills.

16. Pupils make very good progress in Years 3 to 6 and by the age of eleven they attain very high standards. The standard of recording work is very good. Pupils in Year 3 become skilful at using large numbers and calculating with all four number operations. Effective questioning by the teacher ensures that pupils communicate using precise mathematical language. They develop their understanding of recording information and understanding of frequency tables through the good teaching. In response to questioning one pupil said, 'I need accurate information before I can complete the frequency table about favourite fruit'. Year 4 pupils made excellent use of the interactive whiteboard in their work on partitioning. They engaged in their work with enthusiasm and worked independently.
17. Pupils progress accelerates in Year 6, where pupils are encouraged to explore mathematical concepts in more detail and where their mathematical skills are often rigorously challenged by open-ended problem solving tasks. The coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study is very thorough and this means that pupils have a good breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding by the end of the key stage. In a lesson observed in Year 6, pupils achieved particularly high standards in their geometry work and were confident about estimating angles of triangles and constructing triangles with given angles and lengths of side. They greatly enjoyed the challenge of solving problems; for example, they knew that if they are given the measurement of one angle of an isosceles triangle, they can work out the other two. Pupils progress and attainment across both key stages are enhanced by their very good attitudes to mathematics and by good, very good and sometimes excellent teaching.
18. A strong feature of the numeracy lessons across both key stages is the introductory part; teachers take every opportunity to start each numeracy lesson with an effective mental warm up activity, which stimulates thinking and consolidates previously learned strategies. Pupils are encouraged to explain to the rest of the class the thinking or written methods they have used to find an answer. Pupils realise that clear mathematical thinking is very important, just as important as getting the right answer. They also quickly become aware that there are usually many different ways of approaching a mathematics problem. This makes numeracy lessons enjoyable and stimulating and pupils are enthusiastic about learning new ways.
19. Teachers are skilled in ensuring that activities appeal equally to both boys and girls and to all ability groups. A strong feature of the school's work in mathematics is the performance of boys who in recent years have reversed the national trend by doing better than girls who themselves achieve well. Taking the three years together, from 2000 to 2002, the performance of boys at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 exceeded the national average for boys in these age groups by significant margins. At the same time, the performance of girls exceeded the national averages for girls but by a smaller margin.
20. Since the previous inspection the school has successfully maintained high standards in relation to the national picture in mathematics at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. This school provides an excellent foundation for the pupils future mathematical learning.

The effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's caring, Christian ethos.

21. The school provides a pleasant environment for its pupils. The staff know their pupils well, giving a high standard of care. There are good policies and procedures, which enable suitable pastoral support to be given. The bright, attractive displays throughout the school enhance the atmosphere and contribute to the educational ambience. The parents confirmed that the school is a welcoming establishment, where all pupils, starting with the Reception children, are very well cared for. There are very good relationships and the level of supervision is good.
22. The provision for pupils spiritual development is very good. There are many points of spiritual focus, such as the religious statues and the vase of fresh flowers in the main entrance hall. The teachers regularly take prayers and the pupils show proper reverence. The pupils are given time for reflection; for example, during the acts of collective worship observed. Pupils are given the opportunity to celebrate mass in the local church. There are opportunities in their curricular work for the pupils to reflect on life, such as the Year 2 work looking at the celebration of the changing seasons.

23. Provision for pupils moral and social development is very good. The school ensures an appropriate emphasis is placed on discipline and it successfully teaches its pupils to know right from wrong. The staff act as appropriate role models to lead the pupils in the development of honesty, tolerance and respect for others. The Year 6 pupils have displayed the results of their work on 'How to...'; several pupils' work relates to caring, such as care for pets. The school has recently adopted a personal, social and health education policy and a teacher has been appointed to a co-ordinator role in order to review current provision and raise awareness. Although the school generally promotes a healthy lifestyle, it still allows crisps and biscuits to be eaten as snacks.
24. Citizenship is becoming a more important aspect within the school. A special award is made to a pupil who has made an outstanding contribution to the society of the school; for example, winners include pupils who have helped in an elderly care home and worked with the mentally handicapped. Two Year 6 pupils have been nominated to attend the local Childrens Parliament, where issues affecting education are debated. Other pupils have attended a meeting with Russian cosmonauts. There are plans for a School Council, in order to further involve the pupils in the life of the school. The social life in the schools playground has been enhanced by the provision of a Greek styled amphitheatre area, where pupils sometimes sit to discuss their topics.
25. Celebration forms an important part of school life. The Year 3 pupils have a display of their computer work entitled 'Lets Celebrate'; each pupil has produced an illustrated sheet, focusing on events like birthdays, religious festivals and personal landmarks. 'Pupil of the week' is awarded in each class to celebrate achievement, such as special effort, and is presented in the Monday assembly. Six pupils attended the 'Celebration of Achievement' held at Liverpools Philharmonic Hall. The pupils benefit from their involvement in a good range of charity work, including the Blue Peter Water Works appeal, aid to Namibia and the Good Shepherd Collection.
26. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Cultural experiences include many educational visits; for example the Victorian lifestyle was studied at Croxteth Hall. Pupils study a variety of faiths and cultures through their work in history, art and religious education, although more emphasis could be placed on the multi-cultural nature of today's society. The pupils own culture is well promoted, with a very strong family environment. Pupils from across the school have worked with a local writer, who has helped them develop their own written work, including poetry.
27. Provision for pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was judged to be a strength of the school in the previous report; this continues to be the case. It makes a valuable contribution to the quality of education and underpins the schools caring, Christian ethos. The school is successful in meeting its mission statement, which aims 'to help each child realise his/her full spiritual, moral, academic and social potential in a happy, caring, Catholic community in which every member feels valued'.

The very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils make a positive contribution to the quality of education.

28. Throughout the school, pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to participate in all the schools activities, including the lunchtime and after school clubs. They arrive punctually for the start of the school day and settle quickly into the schools routines. Pupils listen carefully to information and respond enthusiastically when answering the teachers questions. The very good attitudes are shared by both boys and girls.
29. In the Reception class, the children were observed working very well on their activities and they shared resources appropriately; even at this young age they are able to sustain prolonged concentration in response to the high expectations made of them. In an excellent Year 4 information and communication technology lesson, all the pupils remained clearly focused and they demonstrated a very good understanding of their work. Similarly, all the pupils in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on the angles of a triangle showed impeccable attitudes. Such lessons provide an atmosphere where achievement flourishes. Whilst the attitudes overall are very good, the responses of the pupils in the larger classes are sometimes better when extra support is provided by one of the capable classroom assistants; where support was observed, such as in a Year 3 literacy

lesson, it enabled pupils of differing abilities to make better progress.

30. The behaviour of pupils is very good. There have been no exclusions at the school. In the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire the parents were virtually unanimous in their agreement that behaviour is good. The midday supervisors also said that the pupils were very well behaved. No instances of serious misbehaviour were observed during the inspection and discussions with the pupils themselves confirmed that aggressive or oppressive behaviour is very rare. The pupils know the schools high expectations and they behave appropriately.
31. The pupils movement in and around the school is very orderly and this allows the school to function efficiently. In the playground, the school organises football for each year group in turn, with other pupils often watching from the touchline; this is very well organised and the pupils show their respect for others. The mixing of age groups and genders is generally very good, although the football game does create a separation of gender groups in the playground, with the exception of Year 5, when some girls currently join in with the game. Relationships are very good between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves. The older ones are caring and considerate towards their friends; for example, pupils from Years 5 and 6 sit with the Year 1 and 2 pupils at lunchtime, whilst Years 3 and 4 help with the youngest groups.
32. The pupils are friendly, trustworthy and courteous. They are confident when talking about themselves and they show a high degree of self-esteem. They talk proudly when discussing their work which is displayed on the classroom walls, particularly the many computer generated sheets, where 'clip-art' has been effectively used to embellish the written text. Pupils take responsibility for tasks, such as helping maintain tidiness of the equipment storage. The community links, especially with the local church, the charity work and the educational visits, help to promote the pupils personal development. The pupils show suitable respect for the school; its buildings, furniture and resources are maintained in a neat and tidy fashion.
33. This is a school where every child is valued equally. The harmonious atmosphere of the school creates a purposeful environment. The very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, together with their very good personal development, combine to make a positive contribution to the quality of education provided by the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in written work across the school.

34. In looking at the school's documentation and in discussions with the headteacher and staff before the inspection took place, it became very clear that improving pupils' written work is considered a priority for the school. Improving standards in written work has become a national issue and all the indications are that this is an appropriate issue for this school.
35. In the end of Year 2 writing tests of 2002, whilst virtually all pupils reached Level 2, the expected level for most seven year olds, no pupil reached the higher Level 3. This has been the pattern over recent years. National performance data show that, whilst the overall performance of pupils over the three years from 2000 to 2002 exceeded the national average, this was more marked in reading and mathematics than it was in writing. Results over recent years at the end of Year 6 have been higher in science, and most notably in mathematics, than they have been in English. Standards have been consistently high in reading, but not in writing. The majority have achieved Level 4, the expected level for eleven year olds, but in 2002 over twice as many pupils reached the higher Level 5 in the reading element of the tests than in the writing element. This continues the trend of recent years.
36. The school's analysis of available data informs its target to raise standards in writing so that the gap between standards in reading and writing is less significant. Strategies are being put in place, most clearly at Key Stage 2, with higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. There are early signs of improvement, but much remains to be done. Additionally, there is a need to review handwriting, including the unclear arrangements concerning when pupils move from print to joined writing. During the inspection, pupils were observed writing in pencil and various types of pen and this also needs

consistency in practice.

37. A scrutiny of work done by the pupils across the school throughout the year shows that, whilst many opportunities are given to formal activities and written exercises, there are fewer opportunities for creative, personal and narrative writing. At Key Stage 1 most of the writing tasks are based on writing a personal diary, with a significant emphasis on completing exercises. Occasionally there are imaginative writing tasks such as 'A Halloween Tale' and 'The Story of Pocahontas'. In subjects such as history, geography and science, there is an emphasis on pupils filling in worksheets, sequencing and colouring illustrations, rather than pupils being able to make a personal response in writing. In these subjects, exactly the same work is often set for pupils of all abilities, when much more could be expected of the higher attainers. Across the school, although more notably at Key Stage 1, writing was underrepresented in display at the time of the inspection and there were few, if any, class books of writing. Usefully, the school has introduced portfolios of writing with collections of work to show progress over time. A recent project which involved a visit from a local writer to inspire writing produced an imaginative response from pupils. However, there is a need to further raise the profile of writing.
38. At Key Stage 2, strategies are beginning to be put into place to enhance the pupils' skills and increase the opportunities for writing, with higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. In Years 3 and 4, there are some interesting ideas for stimulating pupils' writing; for example, in opportunities to write about 'A Familiar Place', 'Dreams and Memories', 'Please Mrs Parry', poems in the style of Alan Ahlberg and imaginative word-processed poems based on Rudyard Kipling's 'If'. Nevertheless, much of the work is concerned with exercises to practise skills, sometimes with the same results and outcomes for pupils of differing abilities.
39. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are given more scope for developing their writing skills through better opportunities for personal writing. In Year 5, pupils write book reviews, predict what will happen in the story of 'The Iron Man' and create 'The Real Story of the Three Little Piglets'. The oldest pupils in the school write about 'A Letter to Grandad', 'A Ride to Narnia', descriptive writing about Long John Silver and exciting ghost stories (based on Millhouse'). They write brochures, poems and letters of complaint. With the older pupils there are examples of the imaginative use of writing in other subjects; for example, in design and technology in evaluations of biscuits the pupils have made, and in history when writing an application for a fictitious job with Lady Sefton at Croxteth Hall.
40. A further review of the way literacy time is used could create more opportunities for pupils to make responses in writing. More writing tasks need to be built into work across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' writing skills will benefit from more opportunities to write for a wider variety of purposes and audiences with higher expectations and clearer targets. A positive start has been made, but the school needs to continue to raise the profile of writing, including the promotion of extended writing and the development of detail. More of the school's higher attainers can achieve better results and improvement in written work can impact to make standards even higher across the school. The further development of the role of the English co-ordinator can help to promote the extension of this work to enable pupils to achieve the high standards reached in the other basic skills areas.

The assessment of attainment and progress.

41. The school has a clear and strong commitment to raising standards, but has insufficiently developed its assessment and recording procedures to monitor improvement. Although assessment procedures have improved since the previous inspection, when there was judged to be a need for better structured assessment guidance and procedures, more remains to be done. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics is recorded but the approach varies from class to class; there are still no formal whole school procedures for assessing in these subjects. Assessment in science and information and communication technology is underdeveloped and most of the assessing in the other subjects is done on an informal basis.
42. Assessments are made on entry and at the end of the Reception year using baseline assessment materials. These provide useful information and are used to ensure that pupils receive any necessary extra support at an early stage. Very good procedures are in place for monitoring children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals through their time in the Reception class. These provide clear

information to monitor improvement.

43. Formal assessments are made in English and mathematics annually using the optional national tests in Years 3, 4 and 5. In addition, tests are set regularly in spelling and mental mathematics, with some formal assessments of pieces of writing. Overall, there is a great deal of informal and some formal assessing within each class, which enables teachers to have good insights into the strengths and areas for development for individual pupils. The assessment co-ordinator is now mindful of the need for a clear policy to include a structured, manageable whole school system for assessing and monitoring the pupils' attainment and progress, starting with English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.

The roles of the curriculum co-ordinators.

44. The previous report judged that co-ordinator roles were at an early stage of development and that there were very limited opportunities to monitor teaching, planning and the curriculum. This informed part of the main issue which was to develop a mechanism for subject co-ordinators to monitor their subject areas in all classes and especially to enable them to view standards, continuity and progress.
45. This issue has only been partly addressed. The co-ordinators' roles have been developed in terms of training, policymaking, resourcing and adoption of schemes of work. In literacy and numeracy there has been some informal monitoring of teaching and learning and some checking of planning, but more remains to be done. There needs to be a structured, timetabled programme, with priority in English and mathematics and then science and information and communication technology, for the monitoring of teaching and learning, together with the scrutiny of planning and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Through these, clearer insights into pupils' standards and areas for improvement will be given. This can give co-ordinators a clearer picture of performance in their subjects, including the quality of teaching and learning and the extent to which all pupils are able to achieve. Co-ordinators could benefit from some time out of class to allow them better opportunities to manage their subjects.

Plans to deal with the surplus income.

46. The school has been carrying forward an inappropriately high budget surplus over recent years. At the time of the previous inspection, four years ago, there was a surplus of £30,000 plus carried forward from the previous year's budget. Since then there has been money kept back to maintain the staffing levels, which has been achieved within the budget. This position of carrying forward income has continued since that time. In the financial year prior to the inspection, the surplus income was around £53,000, with a current carry forward of around £63,000, which amounts to 13 per cent of the budget.
47. The school has an adequate number of teaching staff. Although the number was increased from two to three at the start of the school year, there is still a relatively low number of classroom support assistants when compared with other schools of a similar size. When the school sets its budget for the next financial year there is a need to review the carry forward situation and link it to the school's improvement planning. The large surplus is not being used to benefit the pupils currently in the school, especially given the value that would be provided through extra classroom support. This is an appropriate consideration at Key Stage 2 where some classes are large and given the national concern regarding teacher workload. The school has been overly prudent.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. The governors' action plan will set out how the areas for improvement identified during the inspection are to be addressed. In order to further raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

i. further develop and improve written work across the school by:

- raising the profile of writing in the school;
- raising expectations of what the higher attainers can achieve;
- creating more opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- giving pupils more opportunities to write and make a personal response in the foundation subjects;
- developing detailed target setting based on National Curriculum level descriptors;
- maximising opportunities for extended writing, including the development of detail;
- further developing classroom support; and
- developing a consistent policy about the introduction of joined script.

(Paragraphs: 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40)

ii. further develop the assessment of attainment and progress by:

- developing a plan for the assessment co-ordinator to lead the work;
- describing the agreed arrangements for assessment in a new whole school policy;
- ensuring that clear assessment strategies are identified in subject policies; and
- strengthening the link between assessment and planning.

(Paragraphs: 41, 42 and 43)

iii. further develop the role of the curriculum co-ordinators through:

- introducing regular subject audits and development plans;
- giving co-ordinators time to manage their subjects;
- checking teachers' planning;
- improving the use of the school's data and assessments;
- the scrutiny of pupils' work across the school, especially the written responses; and
- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

(Paragraphs: 44 and 45)

iv. develop a plan to review spending in light of the surplus income.

(Paragraphs: 46 and 47)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	4	8	3	0	0	0
Percentage	12	23	47	18	0	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 more than five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	217
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	50

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	28

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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
	2002	18	10	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	27	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (100)	96 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	26	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (100)	100 (100)	93 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

In accordance with statutory requirements, the results of National Curriculum assessments at Key Stage 1 are reported in total and not by gender, as the number of girls in Year 2 was less than 11.

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
	2002	18	13	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	17
	Girls	11	13	13
	Total	27	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (89)	97 (92)	97 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	25	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (81)	87 (89)	87 (94)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
186	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27:1
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
	£
Total income	475,009
Total expenditure	464,665
Expenditure per pupil	2,103
Balance brought forward from previous year	52,957
Balance carried forward to next year	63,301

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	217
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	18	3	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	77	22	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	38	8	2	3
The teaching is good.	89	11	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	29	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	20	2	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	20	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	46	32	18	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	77	20	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	25	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	25	35	3	12