

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOHN'S C of E JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Failsworth, Manchester

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105712

Headteacher: Mrs P Hagan

Reporting inspector: Mr A Margerison  
21666

Dates of inspection: 6 – 8 May 2003

Inspection number: 246519

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	James Street Failsworth Manchester
Postcode:	M35 9PY
Telephone number:	0161 681 5713
Fax number:	0161 681 5713
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Shenton
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21666	A Margerison	Registered inspector	English Geography History Educational inclusion Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What the school should do to improve further?
9843	S Drake	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?
23453	C Cressey	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical education English as an additional language	How well the school is led and managed?
17685	L Spooner	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
Strathblane House  
Ashfield Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport  
SK8 1BB

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St John's C of E Junior School is situated in the Failsworth area of Oldham. Most of the pupils come from the immediate area which is a mixed neighbourhood of privately owned housing with some terraced and local authority property. There are currently 136 pupils at the school aged 7 to 11 years. Most of the pupils transfer from the infant school nearby. 12 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. A similar proportion are on the register of special educational needs, mainly for general learning difficulties which is also below average. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Very few pupils leave or join the school outside of normal transfer from the infant school. When children start in Year 3, their attainment varies, but overall it is broadly typical for children of their age.

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

The school is a good school that provides pupils with a good standard of education. Due to good teaching pupils achieve well as they move through the school to attain at least satisfactory standards in all subjects, except mathematics by the end of Year 6. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils basic literacy and numeracy skills. The school is very well led by the headteacher who is well supported by all the other staff in the school on a daily basis. They all share a very clear vision for the school focused on raising standards and improving the quality of education provided for pupils. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well as they move through the school due to good teaching.
- The school is led very effectively by the headteacher, who is well supported in day-to-day management by the deputy headteacher and staff with responsibilities.
- Procedures for assessing the attainment and progress of pupils are very good.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is very good so they behave very well, form excellent relationships and develop very positive attitudes to school.
- The curriculum provided for pupils is good. The school is highly committed to ensuring all pupils have equal access to all activities.
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching are very good.

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

- Standards in aspects of mathematics.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work.

*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 October 1997 and since then has improved well. The curriculum has developed well. A good, systematic programme has been introduced for pupils' personal, health and social education and a scheme of work has been implemented for design and technology so pupils now make satisfactory progress and attain sound standards in the subject by the end of Year 6. Governors now play a greater role in the school. Most have undertaken training and a committee structure has been set up that enables them to oversee the work of the school satisfactorily. Due to the very good leadership by the headteacher, the school has implemented very effective procedures to identify appropriate and realistic priorities for the school improvement plan. A health and safety policy is in place and risk assessments are carried out routinely.

## 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	C	C	C	C
Mathematics	D	E	C	B
Science	C	D	C	C

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

The school's results have improved at a rate broadly in line with the national trend. In the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, the school's results in English, mathematics and science were in line with the national average. Taking the three years 2000-2002 together results have exceeded the national average in English, but fell below average in mathematics and science. When compared to similar schools, the results in 2002 were above average in mathematics and average in English and science. However, this group of pupils' attainment when they entered school was below average so this group of pupils made good progress as they moved through the school. The school achieved its targets in 2002. By the end of Year 6, standards are now at least in line with expectations in all subjects except in mathematics in which they are below average due to pupils' under-developed ability to use their number skills to solve practical problems. Pupils with special educational needs and those the school has identified as being gifted and talented make good progress as they move through the school. There is no significant difference in the attainment and progress of girls and boys.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are well motivated and try hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and during other activities in school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are excellent and pupils willingly take responsibility for various tasks around school. They work together very well and respect each others' feelings, values and beliefs.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils are punctual to school and the rate of unauthorised absence is average.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good. Throughout the school, teachers manage pupils very effectively so pupils are fully involved in lessons, behave very well and are highly interested and enthusiastic. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils so they acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding well. Consequently, they plan a very good range of activities that effectively challenge pupils of all abilities. Lessons are generally brisk with a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics. Teachers use questions well to challenge pupils and to check their understanding of what they are learning about. Teachers and support staff respond well to pupils in lessons, but teachers' marking of pupils' work does not consistently follow the school's policy or identify what they have done well and how they can improve their work. Teachers use homework well to support activities in lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Pupils have good opportunities to develop and use their literacy skills making the curriculum broad and relevant to their needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Targets in individual education plans are clear and used consistently by teachers to plan work. Pupils are well supported in lessons and in small groups so they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. It is very good for pupils' moral development and good for their spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Procedures for promoting pupils' behaviour and for assessing their attainment and progress are very good.

The school has established good links with parents and they have positive views of the school. Overall the information provided for parents is satisfactory, but some is in need of improvement. The school has established good links with other schools. The range of activities provided for pupils out of lessons is very good. Assessment information is used well to set targets for teaching and to monitor the progress pupils make.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and those staff with management responsibilities. The school has very clear direction and its aims and values are fully reflected in its work.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are fully committed to the school and are developing a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are very good so its priorities for development are highly appropriate.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning is very good and resources are used very well to support teaching and learning.

The very good arrangements the school makes to ensure subject co-ordinators have time to fulfil their roles ensure they have a clear understanding of their role and have well thought-out plans to improve standards and teaching in their areas. The number and qualifications of staff to the demands of the school are very good, resources are sufficient and the accommodation is good. The principles of best value are applied well.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• Teaching is good, children behave well and make good progress.</li> <li>• The school helps pupils become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work pupils get to do at home.</li> <li>• How well they are kept informed about how their child is doing in school.</li> <li>• How closely the school works with parents.</li> <li>• They would like to feel more comfortable about approaching the school with suggestions or concerns.</li> </ul>

The inspection team endorses parents' positive view of the school. However, the inspection found that the amount of work pupils get to do at home is good and that the school provides good opportunities for parents to work with the school. Overall, the information they get about the progress their children are making and the work of the school is satisfactory. Parents have plenty of opportunities to discuss their children's progress and some information provided for them is good. However, improvement is needed in the quality of some of the written information given to them on the work of the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall standards in recent years have improved at a rate broadly in line with the national trend. Following a fall in standards in 2001, particularly in mathematics and science, they are now beginning to improve so that standards are now similar to those found at the last inspection. In the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science were average when compared to all schools. When compared to similar schools, standards were average in English and science and above average in mathematics.
2. Evidence from the inspection is that, overall, by the end of Year 6 pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations in all subjects except mathematics in which standards are below average. However, when the current Year 6 pupils joined the school, assessment information shows that their attainment in English and mathematics was below average so, overall, pupils achieve well as they move through the school. This good achievement is also reflected in the lower years in the school, particularly in Years 4 and 5 where standards in English, mathematics and science are good. Within these overall results, specific groups of pupils with particular needs do well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the high quality support in lessons and the close match of teaching methods to the targets in their plans. Pupils who the school has identified as being gifted and talented also make good progress due to the innovative approach the school has taken to provide them with a programme designed to develop their language and thinking skills. Talented pupils who take extra lessons from visiting music specialists or in classes out of lessons make good progress in learning to play their chosen instrument. There is no significant difference in the progress made by girls and boys.
3. By the end of Year 6, overall standards in English are average, but pupils' achieve well as they move through the school. Pupils' standards in speaking and listening are good. Most pupils are confident and articulate speakers. In reading most pupils are fluent and read a range of different texts confidently and expressively. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in writing is below average. Although their spelling, punctuation and grammar are good, the content of about a third of pupils' writing lacks the detail and broad range of different writing styles expected by the end of Year 6. However, this reflects the low starting point of these pupils and the higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs so overall they achieve satisfactorily in this aspect of the subject. The school has placed considerable emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills and these are now good. However, in mathematics overall, standards are below average due to the lower proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels for their age. This partly reflects the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the group, but also the fewer opportunities pupils have to use their number skills to solve practical problems in mathematics lessons so standards in this aspect of the subject are below expectations. In science, pupils achieve well to attain standards in line with expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of all the aspects of the subject including how to set up and evaluate investigations.
4. In other subjects, standards have been maintained since the last inspection and some, such as design and technology, have improved well. Standards in design and technology are now in line with expectations due to the implementation of a whole

school scheme of work and careful monitoring by the subject co-ordinator of teaching and learning. In information and communication technology (ICT) pupils are achieving well. This reflects the improvements in the resources for the subject and improved teachers' subject knowledge since the last inspection. As a result, pupils develop a secure understanding of the basic skills in all aspects of the subject. However, these improvements have not had sufficient time to raise standards of attainment overall and not enough opportunities are provided in all other subjects for pupils to practise and use their skills. Pupils also achieve well in history due to the emphasis teachers place on encouraging pupils to come to conclusions about people and events in the past by looking at evidence.

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

5. Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning, their behaviour and personal development have all strengthened since the time of the last inspection and are now very good. The quality of relationships throughout the school is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to the good, all round education that the pupils enjoy. There has been no need to exclude any pupil in recent years and pupils have responded particularly well to the recently introduced strategies to promote good behaviour. The great majority of pupils attend school regularly and punctually, unless taken on holidays during term time, although the attendance of a very small number is erratic. Overall, attendance levels are satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average.
6. Early morning at school, before the official day starts, sets the tone for how it will proceed. Many pupils arrive in good time and either wait sensibly in the playground, chatting in a friendly manner, or make their way purposefully into school, to find a book or make sure what time their music lesson is that day. Staff, too, are busy finalising their preparations for the day but take time to greet pupils warmly while trusting them to find what they need and then return to the playground. The atmosphere is relaxed yet businesslike, creating a very good environment for learning. Pupils like being at school and appreciate the friendliness and helpfulness of their teachers. These very positive attitudes mean that they are eager learners and keen to get involved both in lessons and in the wide variety of extra-curricular activities that are on offer. Occasionally, where sessions are long or teaching is pedantic, pupils become less involved and their attention wanes, but generally they concentrate very well and try hard to succeed.
7. Pupils' excellent relationships, among each other and with adults, ensure that they behave very well. They collaborate well and value each others contributions, have a very good understanding of others' needs and treat displays and the accommodation with respect. At break time, some pupils were practising a song and dance routine with great enjoyment and concentration. They were happy to praise the girl who was the main choreographer and explained how a group that had started as three pupils had grown, as others watched and were allowed to join in. Elsewhere, there were mixed gender games of football and basketball, while other pupils were reading, chatting and generally having a good time. Pupils see the rotas and demarcations for the different games as entirely fair. Through the suggestion of the School Council, the school has provided football nets to help avoid arguments and reinstated Playground Friends to help anyone who is feeling left out. While clearly developing particular friendships, pupils treat everyone well and as of equal value whatever their age, ability or ethnic background. These mature attitudes extend into the classrooms as well so that, for example, pupils readily place themselves in the situation of an evacuee, share their thoughts about the characters in a book or bounce ideas off each other

when tussling with challenges in mathematics. They understand that groups work best when everyone pulls together, with the result that the school operates as a happy, calm and orderly community in which good quality learning takes place.

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

8. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. It is now good, but a good proportion of teaching seen during the inspection was very good, particularly in Years 4 and 5 and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. As a result, pupils learn well as they move through the school. At the core of the teaching is teachers' very good management of pupils and their organisation of lessons. Consequently, pupils behave very well and concentrate very well on the tasks they are asked to do.
9. Throughout the school teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of their behaviour and of what they are expected to do in lessons. In most lessons, teachers share the aims of the lesson with pupils so they know what they will be learning about. As a result, classrooms have a very positive and productive atmosphere. Pupils work hard and have pride in their work. The standard of presentation in most subjects is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it very well to plan a broad range of activities that generally challenge pupils of all abilities effectively. Occasionally, introductions are too long and, in science for example, tasks provided for lower attaining pupils are too difficult so they struggle to do what is asked of them. As a result a few pupils lose their concentration. However, most lessons are brisk and activities well matched to pupils' abilities. In some subjects such as history and science, pupils have good opportunities to use and practise their literacy skills which has a positive effect on the progress pupils make in English. However, the opportunities provided for pupils to use their mathematical and ICT skills is less consistent. In geography for example, pupils have few opportunities to present their work or produce graphs and charts of the results of their investigations, but in English, pupils are encouraged to present their work using word-processing programs.
10. A consistently strong feature of the teaching is teachers' very effective use of questions in class discussions to check pupils' understanding and to encourage them to use what they have learnt in previous lessons. In the best lessons, teachers frequently direct questions very well to specific pupils so all pupils are fully involved in the lesson. Pupils' learning is further promoted by teachers' effective use of homework to reinforce and develop what pupils have been doing in school.
11. Teaching support assistants make a very good contribution to the pace of all pupils' learning, but have a particularly positive effect on the learning of pupils with special educational needs. They have a good understanding of their role and teachers make good use of their skills in all parts of lessons. For example, in class discussions, they frequently record which pupils have answered questions so that teachers can ensure that in future lessons any pupils who have been less confident to contribute can be drawn into the discussion. In group activities, which are frequently closely matched to the targets in pupils' individual plans, they provide very good support to pupils helping them to make good progress. They also achieve a good balance between helping pupils work out answers for themselves and guiding them so pupils understand what they have to do. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from very good teaching when they are working on specific programmes in small groups designed to improve their listening and learning skills. Teachers and support staff respond well to pupils in lessons, but teachers' marking of pupils' work does not consistently reflect the

school's policy to highlight what pupils have done well. Although teachers explain the aims of the lesson at the beginning to guide pupils in their work, they do not refer to them sufficiently in their marking to help pupils improve.

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

12. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the educational standards achieved by pupils and has improved since the last inspection. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good for all pupils and are strengths of the school. A broad and a balanced curriculum is in place that covers all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Subjects are given appropriate lengths of teaching time. Policies and schemes of work are now in place for all subjects. These are closely monitored by subject co-ordinators and this ensures that staff and pupils have good support. Subjects are reviewed on a regular basis to check the quality of provision, new targets for improvement are set and included in the school development plan. The very high quality of both medium-and short-term planning provides teachers with a clear focus that helps steer pupils' learning. In addition the school has introduced a programme of focusing on specific subjects each year. This year, the subjects are science, art, design and technology and music. Very effective use is made of individual teachers' interests and expertise and pupils benefit from this specialist approach in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding and opportunities for creative learning experiences.
13. Significant improvements have been made in the provision for design and technology, which was identified as a key area of weakness and a factor in the lower than expected standards in the subject at the time of the last inspection. These improvements are due to a range of reasons. The school has put into place a well-balanced scheme of work and teachers make effective use of this to guide planning for teaching and learning. The school has also successfully tackled the weakness identified in the provision made for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school has appointed a co-ordinator to monitor and develop provision and all teachers have received training. The school's investment in a scheme of work now ensures that all aspects of the programme of study for this area of learning are covered. All pupils now have planned, weekly PSHE lessons and work in books shows pupils develop a growing and mature awareness of a range of social and moral issues. Sex education and drug awareness programmes are fully in place as part of the PSHE programme.
14. The school is fully inclusive in its approach and practice, committed to equal opportunities for all and provides well for pupils with special educational needs and higher ability pupils. Good provision is made in most classes for pupils of all abilities to achieve well. However, occasionally the work provided for lower ability pupils is sometimes too difficult for them and as a result, in those lessons they do not make as much progress as other groups. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school's policy and procedures reflects the guidance in the 2001 Code of Practice for special educational needs well. There are plans in place for each pupil identified by the school in need of additional support. The teaching methods in these plans are well matched to the targets so pupils make good progress. The school's innovative approach to provision for gifted and talented pupils provides good opportunities for this group of pupils to further develop logical thinking skills, creativity and independent learning skills. In one lesson, for example, some pupils from Years 5 and 6 demonstrated high-level thinking skills when playing a number game and

were confident and articulate as they explained their strategies to the rest of the group.

15. There are good strategies in place to teach both literacy and numeracy skills. Daily literacy and numeracy lessons are an integral part of the school's morning sessions and these areas of the curriculum are well planned for and effectively delivered. A systematic and well-structured approach has been successful in promoting teachers' technical skills needed in these lessons. Close monitoring of planning by subject coordinators and accurate assessment by teachers promotes a consistency in approach. Provision in these lessons is having a good effect on the standards reached by the pupils in English and mathematics. For example, pupils' listening and speaking skills are above average and in Years 3, 4 and 5, numeracy skills are also higher than seen in most schools. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use their numeracy skills to solve practical problems in mathematics lessons or to support learning in some other subjects, for example, geography and design and technology.
16. Ninety-six percent of parents who responded to the questionnaire believe that the school offers an interesting range of activities both within and outside lesson time. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to make visits to places such as the Manchester Science Museum and Castleshaw Outdoor Centre. The range and impact of extra-curricular clubs is very good. There is strong provision in music, art and sport as well as a wide range of other opportunities. In addition, the school reviews and changes its extra-curricular provision each half term. This provides pupils with a wider choice and addresses their different interests. Pupils are also provided with good opportunities to learn to play a woodwind instrument and this is effective in helping them to develop their musical skills to a higher level. The school has a successful choir that supports school productions and performs for older residents at the local Community Day Centre. Links with the neighbouring infant and secondary schools are promoted well. These include shared training sessions with the infant school, visits by specialist staff from Failsworth Sports College to teach physical education to pupils in Years 5 and 6 and opportunities for pupils to work in the Kaskenmoor High School ICT suite.
17. Links with the local community are satisfactory. The school has close contacts with St John's Church and the Salvation Army. There is further scope for the school to work more closely with the local business community. The school has acknowledged the need to promote these links and is in the early stages of setting out an action plan.
18. The excellent relationships and very mature attitudes that pupils of all ages display are the product of the school's high quality provision to promote their personal development. This has improved very well since the time of the previous inspection when it was judged to be 'sound'.
19. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well. All staff act as good role models through the way that they treat everyone in a consistent manner and with respect. Teachers regularly invite pupils to consider why something might happen or what they might do in order to improve things, and they provide opportunities for them to respond to, for instance, the beauty of nature or the different moods that music can evoke. This results in pupils being interested and excited by life. They are prepared to register delight when they succeed in solving a control problem in ICT or to applaud spontaneously the moving writing of a classmate. A genuine atmosphere of reverence and reflection is created in assemblies, with music playing while pupils enter the hall and candles lit to provide a focus for concentration. Pupils sing hymns

with good expression, clarity and tunefulness, and this contributes to the development of a 'special' time in each day in which pupils can think about aspects of life beyond the mundane. Pupils' evaluations for their end of year reports, which they clearly take time and independent thought to complete, show that they are developing a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. So, one pupil writes, '*...I have improved maths a bit*' and another decides, '*I think I need to get better at being ready quicker and also getting more work done in groups.*' The school does well to foster such mature reflection and self knowledge.

20. The promotion of pupils' moral development is very good and that for their social development is excellent, resulting in the very high quality of behaviour and relationships displayed throughout the school. Assemblies are often centred around moral themes, such as 'Right and Wrong' during the week of inspection. They are related directly to pupils' own lives so that they come to their own understanding that, for instance, '*The more lies you tell, the more you have to tell*' and, '*the worse you feel about yourself.*' Pupils' involvement in creating their classroom rules, based on the whole school code of conduct, helps them to develop a clear sense of right and wrong, and also to grow in their awareness of how to create a harmonious society. Initiatives such as the School Council and Playground Friends give pupils an effective say in how the school runs and also help them to develop a sense of responsibility. They are generous in their support for charities and the school ensures that much of the fund-raising is generated by pupils so that, for instance, £88 was raised last year for BBC Children in Need by pupils creating games and being responsible for stalls. Circle Time sessions, when pupils explore their emotions such as 'nervousness' or 'gentleness', and PSHE lessons provide very good opportunities for them to develop an awareness of moral and social issues while, across the curriculum and throughout the day, teachers encourage pupils to discuss their ideas, help each other and collaborate on different activities.
21. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well. English lessons, in particular, offer pupils opportunities to study texts, such as 'Carrie's War' or 'Grandpa Chaterjee', that portray different cultures, while in history they learn about, for instance, Tudor England or the Aztecs. The school organises educational visits to places such as Norton Priory and annual visits from theatre groups. The recent 'Circus Day' when pupils practised skills such as stilt walking and juggling was a great success. In art, pupils learn about the work of different artists and in music they are introduced to work from a variety of times and places; in one lesson responding with different levels of enthusiasm to Gregorian chant, 'Nessun Dorma' and 'Cotton-eyed Joe'! The religious education programme introduces pupils to aspects of different world religions and teachers capitalise, when possible, on the different cultural backgrounds of pupils' families and friends. The overall emphasis that the school places on according everyone equal respect prepares pupils well for living successfully in a diverse society.

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

22. The quality of the school's support for pupils has strengthened since the previous inspection and it is now good. There have been particular improvements in assessment procedures, arrangements to ensure health and safety, and the way in which all staff promote good behaviour and discipline. Teaching support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and their personal development. They are well trained and knowledgeable about what the pupils are expected to learn during the lesson and are supported by specific learning plans for the group of pupils they are working with. Teachers and support staff know pupils very well as individuals



and, although the school does not yet record pupils' personal development in a formal way, they make time to listen to them and offer them good quality personal support which helps them to grow in confidence.

23. The arrangements to ensure child protection are good. The headteacher, as named person, has received recent training and ensures that all staff know what to do should they have any concerns. While all information is kept suitably confidentially, the school's weekly pastoral meetings provide a good opportunity for staff to discuss any issues and to share their observations of pupils' welfare. Health and safety procedures are also good and the school now conducts risk assessments, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. Midday supervisors are an integral part of the school's support mechanism for pupils and have regular meetings with the headteacher so that any issues are quickly ironed out. Supervision in the playground is good and staff take good care of those who have accidents, although they do not always record the treatment that they give.
24. Procedures to ensure pupils' regular attendance are good. Teachers complete the registers in an appropriate, clear manner and the school monitors pupils' attendance on a regular basis, involving the educational welfare officer when necessary. Most parents are helpful about informing the school if their child will be absent, or requesting permission to take them on holiday during term time. Over the past year, the school has revised its procedures relating to pupils' behaviour and these are now very good, with pupils and staff alike confirming that behaviour has improved. The simple code of conduct has clearly graded incentives and sanctions. There is a house reward system, which contributes to pupils' sense of community, and also the possibility of earning individual 'Well Done' vouchers. Pupils accumulate these in reward wallets until they have gained enough to exchange them for a gold card, which is similar in design to a credit card. When pupils have earned three of these cards they are rewarded with a book token. In tandem with this system runs 'Privilege Time' when pupils may elect to do an educational activity of their own choice, provided that they have behaved well throughout the previous week. Pupils spoken with were unanimous in agreeing that staff operate the system in a fair, consistent manner and that it is highly effective in establishing a happy, calm environment.
25. Procedures to assess pupils' attainment and progress are very good. In addition, to national tests at the end of Year 6, the school uses the optional national tests at the end of Years 3, 4 and 5 and a reading test to monitor the progress whole classes, groups of pupils within classes and individual pupils are making. This information is used well to set whole class targets and to identify targets for each pupil. This ensures that teachers are clear about what they are aiming to achieve through their teaching and this is a major factor in the improving standards seen in the lower years of the school. However, pupils are not systematically involved in this process so they are not fully aware of what they are working towards.
26. Procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress are good. For most subjects, including science and design and technology, teachers use a system of tests at the end of each topic or evaluate pupils' work against national guidelines to check what they have learnt. This information is also used well to inform future lessons.
27. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good. Pupils' individual plans reflect the aims laid out in their statements and any external support recommended is provided appropriately. These pupils benefit from high quality support from teaching support assistants in classes and in small groups so they make good progress towards the targets in their individual plans.

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

28. Many more parents than last time completed and returned the inspection questionnaire and, overall, they express more positive views than in 1997. They are particularly pleased that their children like school, are growing in maturity and make good progress because of good quality teaching and the expectations placed on them to work hard. A sizeable minority are less happy with the amount of homework that their children receive and with the information about pupils' progress. A considerable number do not feel that the school works closely with them.
29. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. The prospectus has recently been updated and is a bright, attractive and clearly written document which includes all the required information. In contrast, the governors' annual report is less inviting and the information it contains is presented in a dry manner. The school issues regular newsletters but these, too, are quite formal in presentation and the information about what pupils will be learning in the coming half-term is very basic, with little indication of how parents might help. The school has arranged meetings for parents about different areas of the curriculum but these have not attracted large numbers so the school is considering organising less formal workshops for families to take part in together. It is also planning to extend the open sessions aimed at new parents to those who already have children there, on the basis that this would help parents to have a better understanding of the good work of the school and allay their feelings that they do not have sufficient opportunities to get to know staff.
30. Pupils' progress reports have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers make clear what the individual can and cannot do, whether he or she is working at a standard above or below the average for their age, and they identify specific targets for pupils to work towards in English, mathematics and science. They do not fly shy of indicating when, for instance, a pupil's erratic attendance is having a clear impact on their achievement. There is an opportunity during each term for parents to discuss pupils' progress with their class teacher, but they are not able to talk with a different teacher if he or she teaches their ability group in mathematics.
31. Overall, the school's partnership with parents is good in that it is clear that home and school have similar aspirations for pupils and work together effectively in order to achieve these. Parents support pupils well with their homework and help them to develop their reading skills, as well as attending performances and class assemblies, and raising extra funds through the 200 Club. The Friends of St John's is becoming more active than in recent times and provides useful opportunities for those connected with the school to meet informally. Parents are welcome to talk with staff whenever necessary about their children. No parents currently help regularly in school, but there are always volunteers to help on specific occasions, for example, one parent helped with the information and technology after school club held during the spring term. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in reviewing their progress and are provided copies of the individual plans, although there are few examples of them having a specific role as part of the plan.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

32. Since the last inspection a new head teacher and deputy head have been appointed and the majority of co-ordinators have changed. The sound leadership and management found at the last inspection have been built on well and the head teacher has achieved a great deal in a short space of time. Her strong leadership, clear vision for the school and efficient management skills are having a very positive effect on the quality of education the school now provides. Consequently, standards are now beginning to rise, the curriculum has improved, the quality of teaching is better than at the last inspection and the issues identified for improvement have been effectively and efficiently addressed. There is a very determined and tangible ethos about the school which results in a very good atmosphere for learning. Together staff and governors are planning effective measures to meet the schools needs and the school is very well placed to make further improvements.
33. The headteacher is well supported by a very able deputy and a group of hard working subject co-ordinators who fully share her commitment to improve the school. She effectively guides the work of all the staff to look carefully at the areas for improvement and has planned effective measures to meet the school's needs. The headteacher has a firm grasp of the strengths and areas for development in the quality of teaching. Performance management is thorough and rigorous and is linked to individual and whole school improvements. She offers focussed advice and maintains open and constructive relationships which encourage a commitment to hard work and better results.
34. The deputy headteacher supports the headteacher very well. He is particularly effective in the analysis of assessment information. Assessments and test result are analysed very carefully and colleagues are advised about how to use this information to improve pupils' progress. Curriculum co-ordinators provide very good quality leadership and management to their subjects. They use their weekly non-contact time very effectively to improve standards through the systematic and focussed monitoring of the teaching, learning and planning. Good use has been made of the help given by the local education authority's consultants and inspectors. The co-ordinator for special educational needs leads and manages this aspect of the school's work very well. She provides advice and support for teachers and support staff in reviewing pupils' individual plans so the majority of targets are specific and closely linked to the planned teaching approaches.
35. Governors are well informed about the life of the school. The Chair of governors and the headteacher work very closely together. Since the last inspection most governors have undertaken training provided by the local education authority so they now fulfil their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. As they become better informed through the high quality information provided by the Head and her staff they are growing in confidence and expertise in developing their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
36. Strategic planning has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The head teacher, deputy head and co-ordinators have formed an active partnership in planning and reviewing the school's work. The school improvement plan is a very useful tool for guiding the school's future direction. The targets for raising academic standards are now precise and manageable. The overall priorities for development and how they will be implemented, funded, monitored and evaluated are very clear and appropriate. Governors discuss the progress of the improvement plan regularly and their contribution to shaping the direction of the school is sound.

37. Finances are controlled very efficiently. The office is managed very well by the school administrator enabling the school to plan and monitor its finances very effectively. A very recent financial audit was favourable and its few recommendations are being acted on. The Head teacher and governors apply the principles of best value well. For example, they are well aware of how the school's performance compares with others and consult parents on policies such as race equality. They are also carefully reviewing the options open to them for improving the school's accommodation. The school has a very strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils and monies have been allocated to employ additional teaching staff to provide non-contact time and small group teaching. This along with the high quality teaching support assistants is very effective in helping groups of pupils make better progress and enabling specialist teaching to occur in subjects such as art, design and technology, music and aspects of science.
38. Accommodation, staffing and resources are good overall. All staff are well qualified with a very good range of experience and work well together for the benefit of the pupils. The accommodation is suitable for the learning opportunities provided. The building is very well maintained to a high standard of cleanliness by the caretaker so the school is a bright and stimulating place for adults and pupils to work. Resources are satisfactory. The school is making good use of its ICT facilities both in the classroom and to support the schools financial and management roles.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

39. In order to improve the standards pupils' attain and the quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) **Raise standards in mathematics by:**
- providing more opportunities for pupils to use their number skills to investigate and solve practical problems in mathematics lessons and other subjects.  
(Paras: 3, 9, 15, 48, 50, 51, 70, 75)
- (2) **Further improve the quality of teaching by:**
- ensuring that teachers' marking of pupils' work consistently reflects the school's marking policy and clearly highlights for pupils what they have done well and how they can improve their work.  
(Paras: 11, 44, 55, 59, 75)

#### **OTHER ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

Improve the quality of some of the information provided for parents on the work of the school.  
(Para 29)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	9	13	6	0	0	0
Percentage	3	31	45	21	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.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	136
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	16

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	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	94.5
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.3
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 2 (Year 6)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	18	15	33

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	15
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	27	26	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (74)	79 (55)	91 (90)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	15	14
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	27	30	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (90)	91 (87)	88 (90)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	128	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	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: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.6
Average class size	34

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y3**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	71

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2002-03
	£
Total income	359,544
Total expenditure	317,142
Expenditure per pupil	2,333
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,967
Balance carried forward to next year	19,000

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.4

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	136
Number of questionnaires returned	91

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	38	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	45	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	46	3	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	49	15	7	1
The teaching is good.	51	45	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	44	14	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	33	12	7	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	40	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	41	21	7	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	37	7	4	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	51	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	36	2	1	0

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

40. By the end of Year 6, overall, standards in English are average. Standards in pupils' speaking and listening are good, they are average in reading, but below average in writing. However, the school's assessment records show that the attainment of this group of pupils' was below average when they entered school with a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Due to good teaching that places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, punctuation, grammar and spelling, pupils achieve well as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This is partly due to the general focus on basic skills, but also because teachers use teaching support staff very effectively in lessons to help pupils and use their individual plans well to plan activities in small group sessions that are well matched to their needs. Gifted pupils make good progress because the school has introduced specific small group programmes to help them develop their listening and thinking skills as well as to group these pupils' by ability in some English lessons. Standards are improving lower down the school with pupils' in Year 5 working at levels above expectations for their age.
41. By the end of Year 6, standards of speaking and listening are above average. Throughout the school, pupils are given good opportunities for speaking and listening so most pupils are confident and articulate speakers. Most express their views; ask questions; explain the strategies that they have used to tackle work; and put forward a reasoned argument clearly. Even lower attaining pupils give coherent and detailed explanations about, for instance, the type of books that they like to read and their favourite pastimes. In lessons, pupils listen respectfully to teachers and each other. They are keen to answer questions and in most subjects they have a good understanding of subject-specific vocabulary and use it well in their answers.
42. Standards in reading are average. Pupils are confident and fluent readers and have secure understanding of how to use punctuation to add interest when reading aloud. They have a secure grasp of how to use non-fiction books, fact sheets and the Internet to research topics using indexes well to follow a line of enquiry. Higher attaining pupils read a broad range of books and can discuss them in detail, expressing their views and opinions on the characters and events in the stories well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in this aspect of the subject and although most do not attain the expected levels for their age and do not read with consistent fluency and expression, they develop a very secure understanding of how to use letter sounds to work out unfamiliar words. They understand what they have read and can discuss the events and characters in stories.
43. Standards in writing are below average, but pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. They learn to write satisfactorily in a range of different styles such as poems, stories and diary accounts, but their use of descriptive vocabulary and the detail of their stories are limited. Pupils' handwriting is joined, neat and legible. Higher attaining pupils organise their work well into paragraphs and use a broad range of punctuation such as commas and speech marks accurately. Pupils' stories develop their ideas well and they use a good range of different writing styles and devices to keep their stories interesting and pacy which keeps the attention of the reader. These stories have plenty of action and events are described well, but the

characters are not always developed fully. Lower attaining pupils also write neatly and legibly and use basic punctuation well. Most words are spelt correctly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in developing their basic skills of punctuation, spelling and grammar.

44. English is taught well. Teachers' and support staff have very good subject knowledge so they plan very well for lessons and small group sessions providing activities that are closely matched to pupils' needs. At the start of lessons, teachers share the aims of the lesson with pupils so they know what they will be learning about. Frequently, these are recorded in pupils' book before they start the actual activity. This positive approach to involving pupils in lessons promotes their learning well because it ensures that they enjoy lessons, are well motivated and try hard to do what is asked of them. Their very positive attitude is reflected in the quality of the presentation of their work. Written tasks have underlined dates and titles. Handwriting is generally neat and legible. However, this also reflects teachers' high expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour. In most lessons, pupils' behaviour is very good. Occasionally, opening discussions last too long so some pupils, mainly lower attaining pupils begin to lose their concentration, but generally lessons are brisk and challenging. Teachers use open-ended questions very well to challenge and involve all pupils in lessons. Teaching support assistants have a very clear role during these discussions. In some cases they support individual pupils well, prompting them or re-phrasing questions so they are able to contribute. In other lessons, they record which pupils are contributing so the teacher is aware of those pupils who are not as confident to join in so they can involve them more in future lessons. When pupils are withdrawn to work in small groups on specific programmes such as Additional Literacy Support or Booster groups, they are very well taught by teachers and support staff. Tasks are very well matched to pupils' ability and the focus of the lessons on developing pupils' basic skills of reading and writing has a very positive effect on the pace of their learning. Teachers and support staff respond very well to pupils in lessons, but teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In the best examples, lesson objectives are used well to guide the comments so pupils' understand how they can improve their work. However, the school's policy is not always used as the basis for the marking and comments are too general.
45. The national strategy for literacy is taught well and literacy skills are promoted well in some other subjects such as history and science. This helps pupils learn to write in different styles and to express their own views through their writing, but this is not consistently done in all subjects. There are some missed opportunities in, for example, geography, to promote pupils' research and writing skills. ICT is used well in English lessons for pupils to present their work.
46. The subject co-ordinator leads the subject very well. Since the last inspection, the school has placed a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning so the provision for English has improved well. A comprehensive programme of observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and teachers' planning means that the priorities for development for the subject are highly appropriate. The result of this work is reflected in pupils' achievement and improving standards in the lower years of the school. The co-ordinator has only been in post for a short time, but has a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards further. The school has also introduced very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress so teachers have a very clear understanding of how well pupils are doing.

## MATHEMATICS

47. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics are below expectations. This indicates that standards are not as high as at the time of the previous inspection. However, the school's assessment records show that the attainment of this group of pupils was below average when they came into the school. Lesson observations and the analysis of work, in addition to assessment information indicate that this group of pupils has made satisfactory progress during their time in the school, but the proportion likely to attain the average or above average levels is below national expectations. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average, but these pupils make good progress in most classes because they are provided with effective support in lessons and activities are well matched to their learning needs.
48. Standards in the subject present an improving picture, particularly in the progress being made in the development of number knowledge and skills. Although standards in Year 6 are below expectations, evidence found in lessons and in the pupils' work indicates that as a result of the action taken by the school in meeting its aim to improve number skills, standards are rising in Years 3, 4 and 5. Attainment in these classes in number is above that seen in most schools. Attainment in understanding measures; the properties of shape; and, processing and interpreting mathematical information is broadly in line with expectations. However, as with Year 6, pupils in these classes do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solving practical problems. Boys and girls achieve similar standards and make similar rates of progress. The school's decision to offer more challenge to gifted and talented pupils is paying dividends in their development of strategic thinking when tackling mathematical problems.
49. Working closely with the local education authority, the school has responded very successfully to the need to improve pupils' numeracy skills and standards in this area are rising. This was identified as a particular area for improvement at the time of the 2001 national tests when attainment in mathematics was well below average. A range of strategies have been put into place, including the regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, planning, assessment, and the quality of work in pupils' books. Greater attention is paid to mental mathematics and the development of number skills and teachers have high expectations of the pupils' responses in lessons.
50. Above average pupils in Year 6 have rapid recall of number facts and operations and use these very effectively to solve number problems. In the lesson observed, they responded very positively to the teacher's high level of challenge as they worked out and explained the strategies they used to reach an answer. The teacher and pupils discussed alternative answers and considered the reasons why some worked and others did not. Some lower attaining pupils are developing satisfactory skills in working out which number operations to use when finding an answer to a number problem. In the lesson observed, this small group were able to explain, for example, that addition is the inverse operation to subtraction and could use calculators efficiently to check their answers using this strategy. Lower ability pupils work more confidently with straightforward calculations, for example, finding fractions of whole numbers such as one fifth of thirty. Most of the work in books covers the development of number skills. This goes some way to ensuring that pupils have many opportunities to develop their number skills. Opportunities to work with shape and measures and data handling are satisfactory. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to use their number skills to solve practical, 'real life',

mathematical problems in lessons. As a result, below average pupils are not skilled enough in problem solving, through deciding which strategies to apply, searching for ways to tackle difficulties or checking their work as a natural, independent activity. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to use computers in lessons to support learning, but do not have enough opportunities to use their ICT skills to present the results of their work in different ways, for example, graphs and charts.

51. The quality of teaching is good and leads to good learning throughout the school. This shows that the quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. The teaching observed during the inspection was focused on number and was of a very good quality. Teaching of other aspects of mathematics is satisfactory, but there is more scope for pupils to use and apply their number skills both in mathematics and in subjects such as geography and design and technology.
52. The National Numeracy Strategy is well established and taught well. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject. Lessons are very clearly planned. Teachers ensure that pupils know what is expected of them and this helps them to gain a good idea of how well they have learned when the objectives are revisited at the end of lessons. It also contributes to the very good progress made in many lessons and the good gains made over time, particularly in the development of number skills.
53. Lessons begin with mental mathematics practice and most of these sessions are conducted at a challenging pace capturing the pupils' attention. Teachers question pupils carefully to help them explain their thinking and to assess their understanding. Explanations of new work are clear and pupils know what is expected of them in activities. The very positive and supportive learning environment and the use of skilled teaching support assistants, encourages pupils to work hard and do their best. Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost always very good. However, numeracy lessons regularly last for longer than one hour and a minority of younger pupils find difficulty in sustaining concentration towards the end.
54. Teachers organise lessons well and there is smooth movement between whole class discussions and group or individual tasks. Activities are almost always appropriately matched to the learning needs of different groups. Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils and they respond very positively to what they are asked to do.
55. Teachers make effective use of resources to support learning. For example, the use of the computer to project a diagram onto a screen in a Year 6 lesson ensured that pupils were starting from the same knowledge base and this equipped them to tackle the activity independently. Support staff work very effectively with groups of pupils and individuals and this ensures they make the same progress as other pupils in the class. Although all work is marked, teachers do not provide pupils with enough information on how well they are doing and how they might improve their work. Homework plays an effective part in reinforcing learning, particularly the development of number knowledge.
56. The subject is led and managed very effectively by an enthusiastic and dedicated co-ordinator. His commitment to improving standards in number skills through working with the local authority is paying dividends. He has a very clear overview of standards in the subject and has set challenging targets for improvement. There are very good systems for checking pupils' progress carefully and regularly. Assessments are used effectively to place pupils into groups and sets based on attainment. National test

results and other assessment information are analysed thoroughly to identify aspects of provision, teaching and learning that need to be improved. The quality of teaching is monitored very effectively and this has made a positive contribution to the high standards in the teaching and learning. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, particularly in the opportunities provide for them to work collaboratively.

## SCIENCE

57. The quality of the provision in science continues to be good. Since the last inspection standards have improved steadily in line with the national trend. Standards in science for pupils at the end of Year 6 are broadly average and similar to those at the last inspection. This is similar to the results in the 2002 national tests which showed standards were comparable with those in similar schools. The present Year 6 pupils entered the school with standards which were below those expected nationally. However, over ninety per-cent are now working at the expected level for their ages and this represents good achievement and progress. Inspection evidence shows that standards in other year groups are improving rapidly and are poised to move above those expected nationally. Pupils are now entering the school with levels of attainment that are closer to those expected nationally. This is higher than has been in the past. In Years 3, 4 and 5 almost half the pupils are now working at a higher than expected level and are making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their lessons because teaching support assistants give them very good support and are completely in tune with the teachers' objectives for the lessons. In most cases the pupils are provided with tasks that are matched to their particular needs. They often work in mixed ability groups and learn from their peers as well as the adults in the class. Their work is valued so they are encouraged to do their best.
58. There are a number of factors responsible for the improving standards:
- Teaching overall is good and sometimes very good; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
  - Booster classes taken by the Deputy Head are very effective in helping to raise standards across the school particularly in the investigative aspect of science.
  - The scheme of work provides a good framework for teaching and learning and the support of the LEA and in-service training has had a positive effect on teachers' confidence resulting in rising standards.
  - Analysis of test results identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject and assessments of pupils' individual progress are used very well to identify gaps in learning and adjustments to future planning are made as a result.
  - The subject is well managed. The co-ordinator is very effective in raising standards through rigorously monitoring the teaching and learning and leading by example.
59. The teaching is good with some very good aspects. When a lesson is very good, for example in Year 5, the teaching provides very well-planned opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and have responsibility for the way they work. The very good use of resources and hands on experiments to investigate the properties of air created a buzz of interest and anticipation. Pupils had to use their initiative to complete the task and record their findings using precise scientific vocabulary. In all lessons the relationships between the teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils are encouraged to 'have a go' and not to be afraid of giving a wrong answer. The objectives for each lesson are shared with the class and revisited at the end of the tasks so pupils know

what they have learnt in each lesson. Pupils are encouraged to question, predict and evaluate their investigations and experiments. This encourages confidence and moves thinking and learning on at a good speed. Teachers expect the best of their pupils and this is reflected in the amount of work the pupils produce. However, the match of work for some pupils who learn at a slower rate is not always appropriate. Occasionally, tasks are too difficult so these pupils lose their concentration, the tasks are not always completed and presentation is poor. The quality of the teachers' marking is too variable throughout the school; written comments do not help pupils to know how they can improve their work; most either just tick the work or praise effort and presentation.

60. Pupils rapidly improve their knowledge, understanding and scientific skills as they move through the school. Learning is built on well because aspects are re-visited at a higher level in each year. Pupils investigate confidently and evaluate their findings using a variety of strategies. For example, in Year 3 pupils conduct fair tests well and surveys as they investigate magnetism, rocks and soils and the importance of a healthy diet. There are good links with mathematics as Year 4 pupils use bar charts and concept maps to record their investigations into the growth of the human skeleton. The level of challenge increases in Year 5 as pupils use their scientific knowledge to provide three pieces of evidence to support the fact that the earth is a sphere.
61. By Year 6 pupils' understanding is secure. Their work shows a sound understanding of scientific materials, processes and investigations. They investigate using fair tests, classification, problem solving and research topics using books and information sheets. Their recording includes pictograms, tally charts, pie charts and word processing skills. Higher attaining pupils investigate micro organisms, exploring the effects of bacteria on food and the symptoms of viral infections.
62. ICT is used effectively to support pupils' learning in science. Pupils have good access to CD ROMS and Internet sites and have used data handling and control programs to record their investigation into the measurement of light.
63. The subject is particularly effective in supporting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils work well together in small groups, co-operating, exploring and sharing new ideas. They are becoming independent and responsible learners who are aware of their role in caring for the planet, its people and resources.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

64. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress and are on course to attain the standards expected for their age by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are provided with effective additional support in lessons.
65. Evidence from work on display around the school and in pupils' sketch books indicates that standards in each year group are similar to those seen in most schools and the subject is taught well. Pupils in Year 3 make careful observational drawings of fruit, with their work showing a growing awareness of the use of line and form and the importance of perspective. Opportunities for creative observation were seen in Year 4 sketch books where pupils had drawn concave and convex mirror images of themselves. Pupils also study the work of famous artists. An example of this, in the school's art portfolio, depicts a 'copy' of L S Lowry's work, 'The Old Stone Steps, Stockport, 1957'. Pupils in Year 6 have produced collage work in the style of Van

Gogh following a visit to Gallery Oldham. Although computers were used effectively for research in the lesson observed, there is limited evidence that computers and other ICT resources are used to support specific skills development in the subject.

66. In the one lesson observed, in Year 3, pupils achieved well. The well-planned lesson, linked to work in history about the Ancient Egyptians, gave them good opportunities to use computers and well-chosen information books to explore ideas about Egyptian masks before beginning their mask designs. The teacher demonstrated secure knowledge about art, particularly in guiding the class in how to collect visual information. However, not enough time was given to reinforcing specific approaches to drawing. Nevertheless, their work during the lesson indicated that they had been provided with appropriate guidance in the past and as a result, most pupils drew their designs with a satisfactory awareness of detail, line and proportion.
67. The co-ordinator teaches art throughout the school and has a good overview of provision in the subject. She has completed a major review of planning this year to adapt the programme of study closer to the needs of the school and provide pupils with more creative opportunities in their work. The implementation of this approach is in its early stages with a review planned later in the year. The revised scheme of work ensures that the full programme of study is addressed. Assessment and recording procedures are good. Pupils' work is evaluated each half term in line with the school's assessment policy. Lessons are also evaluated to identify what went well and which areas need to be revisited. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development through opportunities for them to be creative and to work with others. Good opportunities are provided for pupils with a special interest in art to be a member of the school's weekly art club. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for pupils to see the work of famous artists through visits to Gallery Oldham, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to raise their awareness of work by artists from a range of different cultures.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

68. Pupils achieve steadily to reach the standards expected by the end of Year 6. This indicates good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were below the national expectations. The subject is now taught well. The school's considerable success in improving its provision is particularly evident in the good quality of planning, supported effectively by the scheme of work now in place. The subject is very effectively led. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and demonstrates a high commitment to continued improvement. She teaches two of the four year groups and has a good knowledge of standards and provision across the school. In all classes, pupils have books or folders in which to record their plans and designs within a range of interesting projects. Pupils' work is also attractively displayed around the school and this adds to the value placed upon it. Work is carefully and regularly assessed and this information is used effectively to inform the next steps in learning.
69. Work done during the year indicates that pupils are developing a secure understanding of the elements of design, planning, making and evaluation of their work. Year 3 pupils' have drawn clearly labelled diagrams, to record the sequence of how to make a sandwich. They have evaluated a range of sandwich-packaging materials and have completed a 'Supermarket Sandwich Survey'. By Year 4, pupils identify detail in their plans, such as the type of fastenings for money containers and decide on the best way to join the component parts. By Year 6, pupils consider a range of criteria. For example, when designing and making slippers, they took into



account the needs of the intended user, the best materials to use, and aspects of comfort and safety. They evaluated the completed slippers carefully and recorded their opinions on how well they reflected the original designs.

70. A particular strength in pupils' learning lies in their creative approaches to recording their plans and designs. This is because teachers provide them with good opportunities to make their own decisions on how they are going to present their work. This is successful because pupils have been taught the key elements in designing, planning and making. Their use of these skills produces detailed, labelled drawings and diagrams that show an appropriate awareness of tools, materials and processes. However, there is scope for pupils to use their mathematics skills more for estimating and measuring and as yet, very limited use is made of ICT in lessons to build upon pupils' design skills.
71. Teaching is good, although in the one lesson seen it was very good. The teacher's very secure subject knowledge, clear explanations and effective use of technical vocabulary, combined with very good opportunities for groups of Year 5 pupils to work independently, results in very good learning. Working on the topic of 'moving toys', pupils carefully examined a range of toys and evaluated their properties, such as what they were made of, and how they worked. The pupils' keenness to share their evaluations at the end of the lesson reflected their enthusiasm and willingness to take on a challenge. Attainment in this lesson was above expectations. All pupils achieved very well, including pupils with special educational needs due to very effective support by the teaching support assistant and activities that were carefully matched to pupils' abilities.
72. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development, particularly in the many opportunities for them to work collaboratively and to experience the success of having control of a complete process in creating a finished product.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

73. Standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress to attain standards by the end of Year 6 that are in line with national expectations.
74. In geography, as pupils get older they develop a secure understanding of all the aspects of the subject. They draw detailed maps and they understand how to use a map to find places. Pupils know that areas of the world have different climates and understand that this affects the way people live. However, they also develop a secure understanding of how people affect the environment through pollution and the demands of growing populations on factors such as water usage. In their writing higher attaining pupils show they can use observations and other evidence to express a personal view on these issues. In a topic on looking at the school environment, pupils show a secure understanding of how places can be developed and improved by careful planning and by thinking about the use that different areas of the school will have.
75. Due to the timetable arrangements no lessons of geography were seen during the inspection. However, from looking at teachers' planning and pupils work it is clear that teaching of geography is satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it satisfactorily to plan a range of activities that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding across all the aspects of the subject satisfactorily. However, activities

do not always reflect the range of abilities in classes with all pupils being asked to do similar tasks often based on commercial worksheets. This approach limits the opportunities pupils have to use their literacy skills to express their own views and opinions on the lives and places they study. Similarly, the opportunities pupils have to use their numeracy and ICT skills to present their work and to analyse information from any investigations they undertake are restricted. However, marking of pupils' work does not consistently reflect the school's policy and gives pupils insufficient guidance on how they can improve their work.

76. Since the last inspection, some good improvements have been made to the curriculum by introducing the nationally available scheme of work as the basis for the teaching. This is well supported by using the assessment procedures at the end of each topic so teachers do know how well pupils are doing. Resources have been improved appropriately to reflect the developments in the curriculum. The co-ordinator has just taken over the post and combines this with overseeing the school's work in history. However, because the school ensures she gets time each week to fulfil her role, she has quickly developed a good understanding of what needs to be done to develop the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, the subject is well set to develop and improve further.

## **HISTORY**

77. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are in line with expectations, but pupils achieve well as they move through the school because teachers give pupils many opportunities to express their own views and opinions on the lives and times of people in the topics they study. Pupils' standards in history in Year 6 are not better than average due to the proportion of pupils with special educational needs which restricts the depth and detail of pupils' writing. However, standards in Years 4 and 5 are above expectations as pupils respond well to this approach.
78. By the end of Year 6, pupils have learnt about such diverse topics as the Aztecs, Ancient Greeks and the Tudors. They develop a secure understanding of the key events of these periods in history and of how people lived. However, they are good at researching topics using books, worksheets and the Internet and have a good understanding of how to use a range of sources to find out about the past. The improving standards in Years 4 and 5 are demonstrated in pupils' ability to use this information to reflect upon and appreciate how people lived in the past and how it is different from their own lives.
79. History is taught well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and involve pupils in a good range of interesting activities that develops their interest and their skills and understanding well. In lessons, pupils are managed very well so they behave very well and get on well with their work enthusiastically. Lessons have a positive and purposeful atmosphere based on excellent relationships between pupils and adults. At the beginning of lessons, most teachers share the aims of the lessons with pupils so they know what they will be learning about. They also use questions very effectively to challenge pupils' and to encourage them to use their knowledge from previous lessons. Consequently, class discussions are lively and involve all the pupils. Teachers use teaching support assistants very effectively to support groups of pupils so all pupils are fully involved in all activities which has a positive effect on the progress lower attaining and pupils with special educational needs make. A strength of the teaching in lower years of the school is the good range of opportunities provided for pupils to use their literacy skills in lessons, but the opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills to present their work are limited.

80. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over the post, but has developed a secure understanding of what she needs to do to improve standards of teaching and learning further. Since the last inspection the curriculum has improved well by adopting the national guidance and the assessment procedures suggested. Consequently, teachers have a secure understanding of how well pupils are doing. The subject also makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development through the opportunities they have to reflect on the lives of people in the past.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

81. Attainment on entry to the school has consistently been below that expected nationally and the staff of the school have worked closely with staff from the neighbouring infants school to identify how the standards and provision for the pupils can be improved. As a result of these links, the improved teaching and the quality of resources and the effective management of the subject, the majority of pupils in Year 6, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and reach the expected standards for their ages.
82. The scheme of work, introduced since the last inspection, provides a very precise framework for the teaching and learning of the subject. It is taught well through well-planned lessons timetabled each week ensuring pupils learn the skills needed to be successful. In these lessons, considerable emphasis is placed on the acquisition of ICT skills and pupils are able to use their skills satisfactorily in supporting their learning in some subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 who learn at a faster rate worked independently on a challenging mathematics program to extend their problem solving skills in handling 4 digit numbers. In addition, pupils have some opportunities to use computers to support work in other subjects such as data handling, word processing and researching for information. However, overall, this aspect of pupils' work is still underdeveloped and pupils do not use their ICT skills sufficiently well to extend their work in some other subjects. The school is now well placed to develop these aspects of the subject to improve standards even further.
83. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic users of ICT. They develop skills in learning how to produce, amend and enhance text. They correct spelling, adjust the style and size of print and confidently combine text and graphics in different layouts to produce information. As pupils move through the school, their skills and confidence increases. In Year 3 a challenging program is helping pupils to learn how to use E-mail. The program enables pupils to learn at their own rate and to re visit areas they are unclear about. However, there are no plans for pupils to use E- mail to communicate in real situations in order to enhance their learning and to challenge higher attaining pupils. In Year 4, pupils can reposition a picture by copying, pasting, flipping and rotating pictures. Year 5 pupils are learning to use databases and spreadsheets accurately to record, add and retrieve information. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can access the Internet independently and successfully extract, edit and save information for their own use. Clear and precise teaching introduced these pupils to how ICT can control simple devices such as small motors, light bulbs and buzzers. By the end of the lesson pupils were able to write their own procedures to complete a given task.
84. Teaching is good and pupils learn at a good rate. Teachers work hard to teach pupils new skills and their management of behaviour is very good. Programs are interesting and support is well directed to support and challenge pupils who learn at different rates. Teachers are enthusiastic and confident in their use of the computers and demonstrate basic skills clearly. They give clear instructions and a good description

of their expectations. The way teachers plan a series of progressive activities, which are well matched to the age and ability of pupils is a strength of the teaching. Each new skill is taught and practised in a purposeful activity, which extends and develops a range of skills. Lessons are well organised to ensure that pupils receive a good level of individual support to enable them to gain new skills and grasp ideas. Teachers achieve a good balance between whole class explanations and appropriate opportunities for pupils to work on their own tasks. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to work in pairs and this helps them to develop good social and work skills.

85. The subject is very well managed. The subject co-ordinator has a good understanding of the areas for development in ICT and has prepared a good quality action plan which outlines the steps to be taken. Since the last inspection, funding has been used wisely to buy in a large number of lap top computers to supplement the PCs available in the library. This increases the scope for using ICT in lessons to support pupils learning in other subjects such as mathematics and literacy. However, governors are committed to continue improving the provision in ICT and have set aside more money to develop the range of programs available so the school is well placed to improve further on the present position.

## **MUSIC**

86. It was not possible to judge standards in music by the end of Year 6 or teaching as only one music lesson was observed in Year 4 and there were few examples of pupils' written work. However, music is an important feature of the school. In assemblies it is used well to give opportunities for pupils to develop their listening skills. They are also encouraged to appreciate music and to reflect on their own thoughts. In all of the assemblies observed, the pupils were responsive to the music being played, sitting very quietly and attentively as they listened. Standards in singing in assemblies are very good. Pupils sing very tunefully and expressively, with good skills in singing two-part songs. In one assembly, for example, the hymn, 'Abba Father' was beautifully sung and made a special contribution to the feeling of the school as a community.
87. The scheme of work and the planning framework for music show that all aspects of the programme of study are taught throughout the school. Opportunities for pupils to compose music, identified as a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, are now fully addressed.
88. Music is taught throughout the school by a skilled music co-ordinator who maintains detailed on-going records of how well pupils are achieving in the subject. This information is used appropriately to inform reports to parents and assessment information is passed on to the next teacher at the end of each year.
89. Teaching was good in the lesson observed and as a result, all pupils achieved well, including pupils with special educational needs, making good gains in their understanding of the different ways in which songs can be accompanied. The teacher used her musical expertise well to ensure that pupils were given a clear idea of what they were to learn by the end of the lesson. Each step in learning was explained carefully and good opportunities were provided for the class to listen, discuss and rehearse their work. Pupils were interested and responsive to the challenge and were able to identify accurately a number of accompanying instruments in pieces such as 'Nessun Dorma' and 'Cotton-eyed Joe'.

90. Other musical activities provide good opportunities for the pupils to share music through concerts and performances in school for parents and visits into the community. The school's choir plays an important part in these visits, through concerts for the community's older residents at the Age Concern Day Centre. An example of the school's commitment to the inclusion of all pupils in a wide range of opportunities is evident in the opportunities provided for pupils in each year group to be involved in school concerts such as the performance of, 'Light of the World', given last Christmas. In addition, the school takes part each year in the Oldham Music Festival at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn to play a specialist instrument with nineteen learning to play an instrument from the woodwind family. In the sessions observed, the development of technical skills was skilfully supported by the teacher from the local authority music service. As a result, these pupils' skills in instrumental playing and reading music are above national expectations. Their positive response in the sessions indicated that pupils take their learning seriously and are prepared to practise at home ready for their next lesson.
91. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, particularly in opportunities for reflection when listening to music and through sharing music with parents and the local and wider community. A good link has been made between music and history. Pupils study South American music as part of their work on the Aztec civilization.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

92. By the end of Year 6, standards in physical education are in line with those expected for their age. This is a similar picture to the findings of the last inspection. Pupils including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons. There are no significant differences in the performance of girls and boys.
93. In gymnastics, pupils have a secure understanding of how to create sequences of movements combining balance and different ways of travelling within a specific context. For example, they demonstrated their skills and imagination by creating a dance to interpret a scene from the show 'Jesus Christ Super Star'. In swimming, records show that all pupils are achieving the 25 metres expected. However, pupils develop their skills steadily in all aspects of the subject. For example, pupils in Year 4 develop sound ball skills and learn different ways of throwing and hitting a ball. They worked well together practising their new skills in readiness for playing rounders later in the term. In Year 5 pupils worked hard to produce a sequence of movements as they travelled along different equipment incorporating the skills they learned.
94. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared with tasks that provide appropriate challenge to pupils and capture their interest. Consequently, pupils look forward to physical education and this is reflected by the speed with which they get changed. They are anxious to get started and are keen to develop their skills in after school activities. Teachers manage pupils well and there are high expectations of their behaviour. They give clear instructions and remind pupils of the need for safety in exercise and when moving apparatus. Resources are managed and used well to develop pupils' skills. However, there are some inconsistencies in the teaching. There are examples of good warm up activities, for example in Year 4, but in other lessons this is not as evident and teachers do not emphasize to pupils why warming up and cooling down their bodies are important before and after exercise. Skills, knowledge and understanding are built on systematically as pupils' move through the school, but in some lessons there are missed opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work by observing each other.

95. The subject is appropriately managed. There are good links with local secondary schools and sports clubs and the school actively takes advantage of local and national initiatives to improve the quality of the teaching and learning. Pupils are involved in a range of team sports, many of which have a competitive element. Good opportunities are also provided for pupils in a range of extra-curricular sporting activities that includes swimming, football, netball and table tennis.