

INSPECTION REPORT

St Sebastian's R.C. Primary School

Salford

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 105963

Headteacher: Mr E McDermott

Reporting inspector: Mr R Robinson
21024

Dates of inspection: 31st March – 3rd April 2003

Inspection number: 246545

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery, Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Douglas Green
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Fr. L Houlihan

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21024	Mr Robert Robinson Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Provision for children in the foundation stage	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements What should the school do to improve further?
1234	Mrs Tina Bradley 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? How well is the school led and managed?
18344	Mr David Earley Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2607	Mr Brian Griffiths Team inspector	English Geography History English as an additional language Special educational needs	How well are the pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This average-sized primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years is situated in the Charlestown area of Salford. It is part of the Salford East Education Action Zone. The school is involved with the Charlestown New Deal for Communities and Excellence in Cities initiatives. A good proportion of pupils come from socially and economically disadvantaged areas. The school has 152 full-time pupils, 74 boys and 78 girls. A higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Twelve pupils are from travellers' families. Nine pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Twenty pupils (13 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs which is below average and an average proportion of pupils has a statement of special educational needs. Most of the pupils receiving additional help have mainly moderate learning difficulties. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about 41 per cent which is well above the national average. There has been a significant movement of pupils to and from the school during the last academic year. In this academic year, ten refugees' children joined the school. The school received national School Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School provides an effective education for its pupils. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because the teaching is good. Pupils have good attitudes to work, behave well and relate very well to each other and adults. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and he is supported well by senior managers and the governing body. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well from entry to the school in the nursery to leaving at the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are good throughout the school
- Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour are good, and relationships with one another are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for and make good progress.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.

What could be improved

- Boys' performance in English is too low and it is significantly lower than that of girls.
- Attendance rates are very low compared to the national average, and procedures for checking and improving attendance are insufficient.
- The planning for school improvement for the next academic year and future years is insufficient.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in October 1997. In the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, the average performance of pupils from 2000 to 2002 has been close to the national average overall. Pupils' behaviour remains good. The leadership of the school is still a particular strength. The following items represent responses to the areas of development identified at the last inspection:

- standards in design and technology, information and communication technology and art and design have improved to be at national expectations;

- pupils' attainment in reading and writing by the end of Year 6 has improved and pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6;
- the accommodation is now satisfactory;
- the procedures for attendance have been improved but the use of information from the computerised attendance management system has not been used sufficiently well to improve the very low levels of attendance.

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	D	A	E	C
mathematics	D	A	E	D
science	D	B	E	E

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

The performance of pupils varies from year-to-year because of significant variations between the groups of pupils. Over the period of time 2000 to 2002, the average overall performance of pupils has been close to average in English and mathematics but below in science. Consistently, girls have outperformed boys in English and reached standards above national averages.

Standards of the present groups of pupils in Year 6 are below the national average in English, mathematics and science; however, pupils who have been at the school since the end of Year 3 are on course to achieve the national average or above by the end of Year 6. Pupils are set to achieve national expectations by the end of Year 6 in all other subjects, except music where a judgement could not be made because no teaching was observed. Trends of pupils' performance for the past five years are broadly in line with the national trend.

Children in the nursery and reception class make good progress but are unlikely to achieve national expectations in all their areas of learning because of their well below average attainment on entry to the school. Standards of the present group of pupils in Year 2 are set to be below the national average in reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics and science.

Pupils achieve very well from entering the school in the nursery to leaving at the end of Year 6 as the quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Pupils, including travellers' children, those learning English as an additional language, pupils with special educational needs and those pupils who are new to the school, make good progress in each year group.

The school's targets for the proportion of pupils likely to reach the level expected nationally and above were demanding and were likely to be achieved; however, the recent significant movement of lower attaining pupils into Year 6 means that the school is unlikely to achieve its previously set targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn. They have respect for their teachers and respond well in their lessons and to the activities provided for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are willing to take an active part in the daily life of the school and build strong relationships with their teachers and friends.
Attendance	Very poor. Attendance is very low compared to national averages. Absence levels for boys are higher than those of girls in the school and this trend is reflected in the academic standards achieved.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The good teaching throughout the school has many positive features and no feature is less than satisfactory. In all three stages, there are examples of very good teaching. In all classes, good teaching predominates and both newly qualified teachers and the more experienced ones make substantial contributions to the quality of pupils' learning. Throughout the school, pupils learn well because lessons are very well planned, drawing on very careful and effective assessments that are made of pupils' attainment in earlier lessons. Often, these assessments are undertaken by teaching assistants who make many other positive contributions to pupils' learning. Lessons are managed very well, so that pupils respond with real commitment to their work, acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate.

English, including literacy, mathematics, including numeracy, science, information and communication technology and physical education are taught well as are design and technology in Years 3 to 6 and music in Years 1 and 2. Too little teaching was observed to judge teaching in art and design, geography and history, as well as design and technology in Years 1 and 2 and music in Years 3 to 6. In parts of many literacy lessons girls not only outperform boys but also are more confident and take up much of the teachers' time, often with eager and perceptive questions; as a result, they continue to make better progress than boys. The teaching ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the learning targets set for them. Travellers' children usually respond well to teaching and make good progress during lessons; this does not translate into nationally expected standards because of their absences from school. Many of the pupils for whom English is an additional language are children of refugees and have been in school for only about six months. The school is working hard to assess their full learning needs but some of these are not yet precisely enough defined for the full benefit to be felt from the dedicated teaching provided by the school or from the local authority expert who works in the school for one day each week. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a well-planned curriculum that meets statutory requirements effectively. A very good range of activities outside of lessons enriches the curriculum. Overall, pupils have good opportunities to take advantage of the provision offered by the school, although boys do not have sufficient help to pose and answer questions and to articulate their views and ideas in literacy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. As a result, the pupils make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. It allows most pupils to make giant strides quickly, both socially and academically; a small number of pupils have needs that are not responded to quickly enough, because teachers are inexperienced in their identification.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This enhances their personal development and is a significant factor in the ethos of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. The procedures for child protection are satisfactory because few members of staff are fully trained and written guidance is limited, although, in practice, pastoral care of pupils is good. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are under developed. The school does not use the full capabilities of the computerised registration systems available or check reasons for pupils' absences on the first day of absence. The checking of pupils' progress is good and used well to determine their future learning.

The school works well with parents who have a very good opinion of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and effective management of the school. The deputy headteacher and other senior managers assist him ably. Curriculum co-ordinators fulfil their leadership and management roles satisfactorily; however, their roles in monitoring teaching and learning are underdeveloped.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Effectively. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and of the areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. The tracking of pupils' progress is good and the monitoring of the quality of teaching is satisfactory. The priorities for future development do not take into account sufficiently the changing circumstances of the school. Staff and governors have a strong commitment to improve standards and to meet the needs of all pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Additional funding is used well to assist the learning of all pupils, including travellers' children, pupils' learning English as an additional language and those pupils with special educational needs. New teachers receive very good guidance. The governors apply the principles of obtaining best value soundly. The school has a good number of staff that is very well suited to meet the needs of the pupils. Teaching assistants give very effective help to pupils. The accommodation and learning resources are adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children enjoy school and make good progress because the teaching is good and children behave well• Children are expected to work hard and the school helps them to become more mature and responsible• The school works closely with parents and they find the staff approachable• The amount of homework is appropriate and there is an interesting range of activities outside lessons• Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress• The leadership and management of the school are good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents expressed no significant concerns

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below average overall. The range of attainment is wide with a significant proportion of pupils above average but a greater proportion below average. Many children have benefited from pre-school education; however, some have had no pre-school experiences and a high proportion is learning English as an additional language. The attainment on entry of boys is generally below that of girls.

2. Pupils achieve well in all subjects throughout the school, irrespective of the time they spend at St Sebastian's, because of the good teaching. The school meets the needs of all its pupils very well, including travellers' children, refugees' children, pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs. The pupils who remain at the school from the nursery to the end of Year 6 achieve very well and the overall performance of these pupils by the end of Year 6 is at least average in all subjects. Standards of the present group of pupils in Year 6 are on course to be below average in English, mathematics and science by the end of this academic year and at national expectations in other subjects, except in music where a judgement could not be made because no lessons were observed. The performance of pupils in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, music and physical education was based on analysis of the present group of pupils' work and lesson observations, whereas in art and design, design and technology, geography, and history standards were judged mainly from the scrutiny of the pupils' work over this academic year and, therefore, did not include the performance of all of the recent entrants to the school.

3. Pupils from all backgrounds make good progress. Their attainment differs at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 because of their different starting points; thus pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the individual targets set for them. Travellers' children often make very good progress in lessons but their overall progress over time is also affected by their attendance, which is intermittent and dependant on family commitments; however, the higher attaining Travellers' children become confident readers and handle other subjects at satisfactory levels. Refugees' children arrive, often, with little or no English; many of them make very good progress with English but, in all subjects, the short length of time that they have spent at St Sebastian's results in their standards being well below average by the end of Year 6.

4. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils and provides work well suited to their needs. In addition, a group in mathematics of gifted and talented Year 6 pupils are given opportunities to attend special classes organised locally for higher attainers to enable them to make good progress at the higher than normally expected levels for their age in the subject.

5. Standards have varied considerably over time and need to be closely analysed because of the complexities of the differences in groups of pupils from year to year. The care needed in the understanding of statistical information in a school with low class sizes and a high transient population is demonstrated clearly by the results of the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002. Standards in 2002 were well below the national average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools the standards were well above average in mathematics, above average in reading and average in writing. However, a third of the pupils were absent for the tests and the performance of pupils was based on the achievements of 11 pupils, which means that caution is necessary when comparing performance between years.

6. Similarly the performance of pupils by the end of Year 6 requires close scrutiny to make sense of the statistics. The overall performances of pupils in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were below average in 2000, well above average in 2001 and well below average in 2002. This year, pupils' performance is set to be below average. In 2001, most of the pupils started compulsory education at the school, whereas, in contrast, in 2002 and 2003 a significant proportion of pupils joined the school after Year 2. In the present Year 6, for example, one in four pupils joined the class since the beginning of the academic year and most of these pupils were lower attainers.

7. The overall average performance of pupils over the period 2000 to 2002 in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 is close to the national average in English and mathematics but below average in science; however, the differences between boys' and girls' performance varied greatly. Standards of the present group of pupils are similar for English, mathematics and science, but girls are still achieving better than boys in English. Girls over the three-year period, 2000 to 2002, have consistently outperformed boys at the school and girls nationally in English, whereas boys have been below the national average of boys in 2000, well below in 2002 but well above in 2001. In the present group of pupils in Year 6 only about a third of the pupils are girls and once again they are outperforming boys in English. The differences between the attainments of boys and girls is less marked in mathematics and science; however, over the three-year period 2000 to 2002 boys' performance was below that of girls, although boys far exceeded girls' performance in 2001 in both subjects. In the present Year 6 class, most girls will achieve the national average in mathematics and science; however, most of the higher attainers and lower attainers are boys. Most of the lower attainers have joined the school in Year 6.

8. The movement of pupils' performance in the national test at the end of Year 6, since the time of the last inspection, is in line with the national trend. The maintenance of overall average performance of pupils over time represent good improvement taking into account changes in the context of the school and the significant proportion of lower attaining pupils joining classes throughout the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils enjoy learning and have good attitudes to school. They respond well to all that the school provides for them and are respectful when dealing with adults. On occasions, pupils' attitudes are exemplary and, during a school assembly presented by Year 6 pupils, attitudes were excellent. Pupils dramatized the Easter story in a unique and original manner, far removed from the usual solemn portrayal of the Crucifixion. The music chosen for the assembly was appropriately used to reflect the youth and vitality of the participants. The pupils involved gave remarkably original and uninhibited performances which made a very strong contribution to the spiritual, social and moral development of all pupils in school as well as to their relationships. Another example of very good attitudes to learning was seen during a physical education lesson for pupils in Year 4, during which pupils demonstrated their skills in imitating small creatures; they worked with total concentration and dedication to produce their best work and were rewarded through their teacher's appreciation of their efforts.

10. Behaviour is good. Often, pupils behave very well in response to inspirational teaching. Some pupils with a potential to disrupt or challenge their teachers respond maturely to the high expectations of good behaviour set for them. On the playground, the quality of behaviour slips a little, yet remains generally satisfactory. When pupils try to settle disagreements outside the normal channels, their teachers quickly bring them into line. There have been no exclusions.

11. The personal development of pupils is good and begins in the nursery where children settle quickly to daily routines and grow in confidence. Their teachers congratulate them warmly on their achievements and this philosophy continues as pupils progress through the school. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to become mature and responsible individuals. Older pupils are willing to participate in school life and are enthusiastic volunteers when assistance is required. Pupils in Year 5 were proud to demonstrate their knowledge of the Italian language which contributes to a good mix of cross-curricular activities such as geography and history as well as making a positive contribution to the cultural and personal development of the pupils.

12. Refugees' children often arrive having suffered a good deal in the recent past. The very positive and welcoming atmosphere of the school allows them to feel increasingly settled; they grow in confidence and often contribute well to lessons and to the social life of the school. Pupils already in the school usually welcome new arrivals in ways that ensure that their own personal development is enriched along with that of the newcomers. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, travellers' children and refugees' children, benefit from the school's provision for their personal and emotional development.

13. Relationships are very good and friendships develop well throughout the school. The school has experienced some unsettled and occasional racist behaviour; however, the head teacher and staff are aware of these problems which are addressed very well and result in racial harmony and warm friendships. A very good example of the extent of relationships in school was seen in the response of pupils to the Year 6 assembly. There was no racial disharmony when pupils of all cultures celebrated the talents of their peers and joined together in prayer. Children were seen smiling in complete and unspoken agreement of the success of an outstanding assembly, bringing a deeply spiritual element to the proceedings.

14. Although pupils' attitudes to school are good, the attendance levels of all pupils continue to be very low when compared with other schools in the country. The school's records show that boys are more frequently absent from school than girls and are poorer timekeepers. This trend is reflected in the results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 that show that girls are attaining more highly than boys.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The good quality teaching has a number of very good features. It is based on very careful planning that draws on a detailed knowledge of pupils' learning needs that, in turn, are the outcome of meticulous assessment of their learning during most lessons. Very good relationships between adults and pupils, together with teachers' very good management of pupils' behaviour and learning, ensure pupils' good progress. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection; the teaching is good in all subjects where judgements were made.

16. Teaching assistants support the teaching very well. All of them make substantial contributions to learning, especially when they work with pupils who need help with, for example, reading and other basic skills. Pupils who need particular help include those on the school's special educational needs register, travellers' children and the children of refugees. The school's provision for pupils in each of these groups is thorough and often imaginative; at various times of day, including lunch-times, individual pupils and small groups can be found working intently with teachers or teaching assistants on tasks that have been carefully designed to match their needs. Thus, the great majority of pupils with special needs make good progress towards their individual learning targets. Teaching is effective in the development of pupils' social and emotional needs; this is particularly true of refugees'

children, who clearly feel very welcome and cared for so that they settle remarkably well; however, teaching is not fully geared up to meeting the academic needs of pupils who have only recently become part of the school community and who may speak more than one language, none of which is English.

17. Teaching time is used well. Teaching usually moves pupils smoothly from whole-class instruction to group work with practised ease and with hardly a minute wasted. Part of the attraction for pupils is that in many lessons the tasks that they are moving to have been interestingly described and the learning materials waiting can be seen to be stimulating, so that pupils want to get on with their work. The sense of purpose slows sometimes when the task proves to be centred on the completion of worksheets or following closely a set of instructions, rather than requiring a more personal response.

18. The higher attainment of girls has, on occasions, an effect on teaching and learning; this is seen mainly in literacy lessons. During whole-class teaching, adults involve meticulously all pupils equally in question and answer. However, on some occasions when group work begins, especially in literacy lessons, girls' higher levels of understanding and resulting confidence mean that they make more contributions, ask more questions and so benefit more than boys from the teaching. When combined with boys' clearly stated preference for subjects such as mathematics, science and physical education and girls' equally clearly expressed preferences for arts and literacy, it is unsurprising that in these parts of literacy lessons girls make better progress than boys.

19. In the least successful lessons, which were few, there were occasions when teachers' subject knowledge was not secure.

20. In the very good teaching the strengths described above come together so well that there is a real sense of excitement and pupils' learning accelerates. This was the case in a Year 2 English lesson, the themes of which, whilst important, did not on the surface appear to promise much excitement. It was partly concerned with the use of prefixes to make a new word from an existing one and moved on to teach the basics of how to interpret the words and pictures in a circular flow diagram; for example, the life cycle of a frog from spawn to adult and on again to spawn. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the teachers' animated and precisely expressed presentations. When attractively made cards appeared, designed to be held up by changing groups of pupils, their responses were immediate and positive. Many quietly acted out 'happy' and 'unhappy'. One girl called out with a real sense of discovery, 'It turns it into the opposite!' 'Unsafe' prompted pupils to recall their history topic on the Great Fire of London and the teacher skilfully but briefly capitalised on the input and so enriched learning both in history and English. Together with the subsequent planned use of science in the work on flow diagrams, the teaching ensured well that time in that the hour was used fully for English, as intended, but had the bonus of also taking learning forward in other subjects. In other lessons, in other classes, in subjects such as history and geography, opportunities to do this were neither made nor taken.

21. English and mathematics are taught well in discrete lessons. Teachers use the nationally recommended technique of breaking lessons up into segments, so ensuring that pupils experience a good balance of direct teaching, practising new and existing skills and finding out things for themselves; for example, in a very well taught Year 5 mathematics lesson on multiplication, pupils listened intently to the teacher's clear explanations of how to recognise multiples of 8 and 9 and they benefited considerably from the links made to earlier work. The use of calculators to support the work gave an extra fillip to pupils' levels of commitment to learning and they cooperated well in small groups, discovering the patterns in sequences counted in eights and nines.

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

22. The school provides a wide and rich range of learning opportunities to meet the overall needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection because the school has improved its provision for art and design, design and technology and information communication technology. These subjects are now sufficiently balanced to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and to enable pupils to reach satisfactory standards. The school makes good provision for pupils to build on their previous learning because it has effective planning systems and makes good use of the national curricular guidance.

23. The curriculum for pupils in the foundation stage is well planned and carefully based on the expected standards for children up to the time when they leave reception class and the early stages of the National Curriculum. The school ensures that, overall, pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and equal opportunity to succeed in them. It is particularly successful in its provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language, for refugees' children and for pupils from the travellers' community. These pupils are well integrated into the life and work of the school. This enables them to make good progress. However, the school does not ensure sufficiently that boys have equal opportunities to pose and answer questions and articulate their views and ideas in literacy lessons. This leads to missed opportunities to improve their skills.

24. The teaching of literacy and numeracy and information communication technology enhances the curriculum. This is helping to raise standards. Teachers make sound use of literacy, numeracy and effective use of information communication technology in other subjects in order to enhance pupils' learning. In Year 5 design and technology work, pupils made effective use of bullet points in their descriptions of how they designed and constructed musical instruments. In Year 6, pupils plotted and interpreted line graphs in their work on the rate of dissolving of different materials. As they progress through the school, pupils become increasingly proficient in the way they use computers to control model vehicles as part of their work in design and technology.

25. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The curriculum is adapted sensibly to cater for all pupils' needs. Those who need particular help with literacy and numeracy benefit from a number of expertly handled strategies that are funded either nationally or locally.

26. The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship. At times when the whole class meets teachers ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop co-operation and self-esteem and to help them understand their feelings and emotions. Pupils have opportunities to help with the smooth running of the school; for example, at the beginning of sessions pupils take registers. Pupils organise the morning toast distribution, run the school bank and help to look after the library. Older pupils take part in a life skills programme, and the school is involved in the local authority healthy schools scheme. The school makes good provision to teach pupils about the uses and misuses of drugs and use of a mobile life education unit. A clear moral framework supports its well-considered provision for teaching sex education and teaching about relationships. This is achieved through its personal and social education programme and through teaching, in such subjects as science. Older pupils have additional provision during their annual residential retreat.

27. The school provides a very good range of extra curricular activities in order to enrich the curriculum. These include, a wide range of sporting opportunities and an after school club. It also makes provision for clubs involving drama, street dancing, chess, recorders and choir. The curriculum is further enriched by a very good range of visits outside the school. These include such places as an astronomy centre, museums and the City of Chester. Pupils make residential visits to such places as an outdoor centre, a holiday camp and a retreat centre. Visitors to the school also enrich provision; for example, they receive visits from theatre groups, orchestras, poets and artists.

28. The school makes good use of the local community in order to enrich pupils' learning. It has close links with the local church and parish. Pupils visit the church in order to participate in Masses and the school plays a significant role in the programme for sacramental preparation. The local police visit school to talk to pupils and to hold a surgery in school for pupils and parents. Senior citizens discuss their experiences as part of work in history. The school maintains strong links with local businesses which assists pupils' learning in many subjects. Pupils visit local areas in their work in geography history and art and visit interesting places, such as local museums and theatres. The local professional rugby league and soccer teams work with pupils in their physical education programme.

29. The school has good links with partner institutions. Local schools work closely together as part of the local Education Action Zone and take part in competitive sports. There are strong links with the local secondary school, whose staff, for example, provides support in such areas as physical education, art and information communication technology. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the next stage of their education ensure that this usually runs smoothly.

30. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The school is very successful in providing pupils with knowledge and insights into values and beliefs. This is because the school's strong adherence to the precepts of the Roman Catholic faith, which underlie the life and work of the school, helps to create an ethos where all are respected and values and beliefs are appreciated. Pupils have opportunities to take part in moments of reflection and prayer. In the well-planned provision for assemblies, and in their participation in Mass in the local church, pupils join in sensitively with prayers and hymns. Older pupils take part in residential retreats where they have further opportunities for reflection and prayer. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to share moments of excitement; for example, younger pupils were filled with wonder when they observed the growth of tadpoles. Pupils in Year 4 shared their amazement when they identified unseen creatures through the use of classification keys.

31. Provision for moral development is very good. The school has a very clear behaviour policy which is used consistently throughout the school and reinforces the general good behaviour. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. The adults in school provide very good role models in their relationships with one another and with pupils and in the promotion of honesty and fairness. Pupils are highly valued and respected. This is a reflection of the school's Christian beliefs. Throughout the school, there is a high expectation of good behaviour. Assemblies, which contribute well to personal development, further enhance this and by the time teachers allow to consider issues, such as kindness, fairness and personal responsibility. Pupils help one another and visitors, unprompted by staff. Members of staff take time to discuss any issues of behaviour which might arise so that pupils have opportunities to reflect on their actions.

32. Provision for social education is very good. From their earliest days in school, pupils are taught about the importance of sharing and taking turns. They are encouraged to be polite and courteous by all staff. The wide range of residential experiences provided by the

school helps them to develop their social skills and to learn to live together. Relationships between pupils and staff are generally very good. This gives pupils confidence and helps them to co-operate well together and to collaborate; for example, in Year 6, pupils collaborated effectively in their scientific investigations into reflection. The school works very hard to develop a very warm, caring and secure community in which pupils from many diverse backgrounds and cultures are made to feel welcome. It provides many opportunities for pupils to care for others less fortunate than themselves. In this way pupils contribute to local and national charities.

33. Provision for cultural education is very good. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of their own culture are very good. Because the school is involved in the life of the church and parish, pupils have many opportunities to learn about seasonal activities and celebrations. They visit local museums and art galleries to raise awareness about their own cultures. Pupils become aware of the achievements of local people in the entertainment industry and sport. In literature, music, art and dance, they learn about their own and other cultures. Provision for pupils to learn about the richness and diversity of other cultures is very good. In subjects such as geography and history, they learn about cultures in different places and times. Teachers carefully display pupils' detailed and attractive work on the cultures and traditions of Africa and China as part of their school wide themes of study. The school is involved in the European Language Programme so that pupils in Years 4 to 6 learn Italian. They have visits from musicians and dancers from other cultures and strong links with a local Jewish school. The festivals and celebrations from the cultures of pupils within the school are valued and their identity acknowledged.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school has maintained its high level of care for pupils since the last inspection and continues to support them well. The head teacher and staff know the pupils in their care and their families. The 'open door' style of the head teacher demonstrates his willingness to listen to parents and to support their children through difficult times in their lives.

35. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, although they remain informal with few staff having received the appropriate training. The special educational needs co-ordinator has recently been appointed to oversee child protection issues. In her absence, one of the head teacher, deputy head teacher or the learning mentor will assume responsibility. Staff members note any changes in circumstances and keep an eye on pupils for whom they have concerns. The school complies with statutory requirements for health and safety by carrying out regular risk assessments and fire drills.

36. The school monitors personal development well through its strategies to promote the confidence and motivation of its pupils. Pupils are encouraged to follow their interests and are provided with good opportunities to build on their talents. Gifted pupils are encouraged to take up advanced learning opportunities through additional activities provided in and out of school. The school consistently celebrates the achievements of its pupils by awarding certificates for special efforts in lessons or for improved self-discipline and behaviour.

37. Good behaviour is promoted well through the high expectations of all the adults in school and the head teacher's prompt response to any anti-social or disruptive behaviour. Stickers and certificates are used well to emphasise positive behaviour.

38. The procedures used to monitor attendance are unsatisfactory and are not yet having a significant effect on the high levels of absence. The school is not using the capabilities of its computer systems to develop the monitoring of attendance sufficiently well nor is it demonstrating its determination to improve attendance by rigorous and prompt monitoring of all unexplained absences.

39. The school is providing good quality support for its pupils by identifying individuals or groups who are under-achieving. There is good provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties who benefit from the school's work within the Education Action Zone. Pupils are now being identified and supported academically and in their behaviour management; for example, the teaching assistant involved in the strategy to improve reading is providing good quality support for pupils on a one to one basis. In addition to this, the newly appointed learning mentor is working to assist individual pupils as their class teachers refer them to him. Pupils with English as an additional language are very well integrated and their language skills are developing well.

40. The learning needs of all pupils are carefully assessed in order that additional help can be given where it is needed. Pupils who need most help with learning, especially in literacy, have their needs assessed in considerable detail and subsequent teaching is focused well on these. The school has good systems for checking pupils' attainment and progress and uses the information it gathers effectively. The use of assessment information is improving and is contributing to pupils own knowledge of their learning; for example, teachers are using assessment information very well to plan lessons in English, history and geography and using it well in mathematics. Older pupils in Years 3 to 6 are now well informed about attainment levels in literacy and numeracy and know what they need to do to progress to the next level of the National Curriculum. These strategies are making a good contribution to raising standards for all pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Parents are very happy with the school and all that it provides for their children. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good and is mainly due to the headteacher's relationship with them. New pupils are made welcome in school and that welcome is extended to their parents. In response, parents are very supportive of the school and its work.

42. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school has sought the views of parents through its questionnaire survey and all parents were informed of the national changes in provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school informs parents about their children's progress at its parents' consultation meetings; however, the targets for learning, of which the older pupils are now aware, are not formally passed on to their parents. Annual reports to parents vary in quality. All teachers are telling parents what their children have learnt and the results of national tests but there is an inconsistency in the usefulness of reports for those parents who wish to help their children progress through the levels of the National Curriculum. The school prospectus and governors' reports provide parents with the information on the school and its work.

43. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are aware of the processes involved in responding to their children's needs. Parents and leaders of the travellers' community are regular visitors to the school and help the school to do its best for their children. Parents of

pupils for whom English is an additional language are kept in touch with the work the school does on behalf of their children and are happy at how well they settle.

44. Parents are contributing appropriately to their children's learning by hearing them read regularly and supporting their homework routines. Some parents accompany pupils on educational visits, and a small group of parents is involved with other school activities. The school's home-school agreement is very much a working document which commits all parties, including pupils, to work together to support the school community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The head teacher and senior staff are providing good leadership and management of the school. The head teacher's very dynamic leadership style is well suited to the needs of the school community. His friendly, and outspoken approach is appreciated and respected by his pupils. Likewise, parents respond very well to the head teacher's support for them and their children. His very good leadership has a positive effect on the motivation of staff who respond with confidence to their developing roles in the management of the school.

46. The high standard of leadership reported by the last inspection has been maintained. The headteacher has a clear vision for the pupils in his care to reach the highest possible standards and benefit from the talents of the good teachers at the school. Both the headteacher and the governing body recognise that standards are still too low and that priorities need to be refined to raise standards in English, mathematics and science. The leadership and management of the school have identified the difference of attainment of boys and girls and the need to improve attendance. Action has already begun to address these issues. A decision was understandably taken by the governing body to have a school improvement plan up to the end of this academic year because of the uncertainties regarding the future of the school. A strong commitment to improve the opportunities and achievements of pupils is well established and this is reflected in the work of the school.

47. The senior management team, which includes the head teacher, deputy headteacher, co-ordinator for the nursery to Year 2 and the teacher responsible for pupils with special educational needs, work well together. They are aware of the importance for teachers to develop and formalise their roles as subject co-ordinators if they are to make a further improvement in the management of the school. The subject co-ordination of English is very strong whilst history and geography are being managed well. However, whilst most other subjects are managed satisfactorily, there are weaknesses in the management of physical education. At present, there is an inconsistency in the practical role of the curriculum co-ordinators, who have few opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in order to raise standards further.

48. There are very good systems in place to track pupils' progress in English, history and geography, whilst good systems support the teaching of mathematics and most other subjects. From Years 1 to 6 data is carefully analysed to inform and set realistic, but challenging, targets for improvement in these subjects. The tracking of children's progress in the nursery and reception class is very good and is comparable with the other well established systems used throughout the school to raise standards and meet the school's targets.

49. The co-ordinator for special educational needs also takes responsibility for the school's response to travellers' children and to the children of refugees and others for whom English is an additional language. It is fully recognised in school that, although there is some overlap between these groups of pupils, their individual needs are paramount, and often different; for example, some are rightly regarded as potentially high attainers. In all of these

instances, leadership is very good. It is well informed and vigorous. The only area in which the school lacks some expertise is in its work with pupils with English as an additional language; even here, considerable strides have been made in the short time that such children have attended St Sebastian's. The consideration currently being given to the provision of training for staff in this area is both timely and wise.

50. Specific grants for travellers' children and those with English as an additional language or special education needs are used well. The school's involvement within the Educational Action Zone is co-ordinated well and the school is impressed with the benefits the initiative brings to pupils with specific difficulties. Together with funding from Excellence in Cities and New Deal for Communities, these initiatives have helped provide more teaching assistants and a learning mentor who provide very good help for pupils. In addition, the scheme to improve reading, organised by the school together with the Education Action Zone, is making a significant contribution to the achievement and progress of pupils involved in the project.

51. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good. The school has a good number of staff that is well suited to meet the needs of the curriculum. Newly qualified teachers have settled well into the school's establishment and are being supported well by their mentors. In the nursery and reception class, the mentor evaluates and supports the newly qualified teacher formally; professional dialogue and advice is recorded and the quality of this support contributes very well to the school's good potential for training new teachers.

52. The governing body has strong links with the senior management team and there is effective communication between them. Relationships are very good and governors fulfil their duties and responsibilities well. An effective committee structure covers all aspects of the school's work and seeks the views of parents through consultation. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the main areas for development. They are committed and knowledgeable and take an appropriate role in shaping the direction of the school; however, there is no documented long-term plan to take into account the changing circumstances of the school or to make any provision for the needs of different groups, such as the refugees' children. The present school improvement plan is a temporary document, drawn up whilst the school was under threat of closure, and it has not been updated. It is basically an extensive 'to do' list with no evaluation, no costing and no detailed delegation of responsibilities or with success criteria beyond the immediate future.

53. The school's resources and accommodation are satisfactory for the needs of the curriculum. Resources are used very well to teach history and geography, and teachers make good use of the resources at their disposal for the teaching of English. The office manager is efficient and plays a major role in administering, and supporting the school's educational priorities. Staff and governors monitor the school's budget carefully. A larger than average contingency has been carried forward this academic year to ensure the maintenance of staffing levels. The principles of 'best value' are applied satisfactorily and spending decisions are linked to improving standards. Parents perceive correctly that the school is well led and managed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. The headteacher, staff and governors should take the following action:

- Raise standards of boys' performance in English by the end of Year 6 by*:
 - improving the attendance of boys;
 - ensuring literacy lessons have a closer relationship to their interests;
 - encouraging boys to take a more active part in discussions.Paragraphs: 7, 14, 18, 23, 69

- Improve the attendance of boys and girls by*:
 - developing the role of the learning mentor further in the monitoring of attendance;
 - checking on unexplained absences on the first day of absence;
 - utilising fully the statistical information available from the computerised attendance recording system to identify patterns of absence.Paragraph: 38

- Formulate a school improvement plan, which takes into account the views of all members of the school community, to include*:
 - succinct priorities for the current year with indications of plans for future years;
 - detailed action plans for all aspects of the school's work including action plans for subject co-ordinators;
 - sources of funding for proposals;
 - clear identification of persons responsible for the implementation of initiatives with defined timescales;
 - methods of evaluating the success of initiatives.Paragraphs: 52, 77, 86, 91, 95, 102, 109, 114

The following less important areas for development should be included in the action plan:

- Develop further the role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning*.
Paragraphs: 47, 77, 86, 91, 95, 102, 109, 114

- Provide additional guidance and help for the teaching of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language*.
Paragraphs: 16, 71

* The senior managers and the governing body have already identified these areas for development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

46

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	16	25	4	1	0	0
Percentage	0	35	54	9	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	16	136
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		63

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		20

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	42
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	11.0
National comparative data	5.4

School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	10	6	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	9	7	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	56 (50)	44 (60)	63 (75)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	8	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	50 (50)	63 (60)	63 (55)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	13	6	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	13	12	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (85)	63 (95)	84 (95)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	13	12	*16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (85)	63 (95)	84 (89)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

* Numbers omitted where the number of boys or girls is below 11.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	86	0	0
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	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	13	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	6	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: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1
Average class size	20.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	227

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32
Total number of education support staff	2

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	455963
Total expenditure	425547
Expenditure per pupil	2799
Balance brought forward from previous year	1064
Balance carried forward to next year	31480

Total aggregate hours worked per week	47
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	153
Number of questionnaires returned	102

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	2	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	25	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	39	3	2	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	64	30	3	2	1
The teaching is good.	76	19	3	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	30	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	16	1	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	16	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	63	30	4	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	71	24	3	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	23	1	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	26	7	2	5

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

55. Children enter the school with well below average attainment and achieve well in all the areas of learning because the quality of teaching, by the teacher, nursery assistant and teaching assistants, is good. All areas of teaching are effective, with particular strengths in the planning of interesting activities which enables children to make good progress in the learning of new skills. The organisation of lessons is very good and this helps children to work productively. Another strong feature is the attention members of staff give to checking children's progress in lessons so that they can effectively plan the next step of learning for each child. The good provision of education for children prior to entering Year 1 has been maintained since the last inspection and provides a good foundation for pupils' future learning

Personal social and emotional development

56. Children in the nursery and reception class make good progress and achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development, although they are still likely to be below expected levels by the end of the reception year. The quality of teaching is good. The teaching is very well organised and children know the class routines; for example, older children write their names on a whiteboard to indicate their attendance whilst younger children select cards with their names on and hang the cards up on a large board. Children enter the class happily and members of staff are welcoming to parents and provide ample opportunities for them to discuss any relevant matters with them. The teaching encourages children to respond to questioning appropriately. A calm atmosphere in the learning areas is achieved, resulting in children being very settled and well behaved. The children co-operate well with one another and begin to respect the needs of others.

Communication, language and literacy

57. Children are likely to be below the expected standards by the end of the reception year in this area of learning. The quality of teaching is good and the children make good progress in their learning. The speaking skills of children vary considerably. Higher attaining pupils speak clearly and confidently in sentences. Some lower attainers are reluctant to speak at all. The teaching encourages children's speaking and listening skills well through careful questioning appropriate to children's level of attainment. Teachers keep very detailed notes on children's progress. Children learning English as an additional language are given good help from staff as well as provided with additional assistance from visiting specialist teachers. These children are making good progress because staff ensure very good integration with other children in activities and this helps the children to acquire a basic understanding of language, though their understanding, sometimes, is limited; for example, a younger child could tell an adult his name but gave random numbers between one and six when asked his age.

58. The planning of lessons to develop children's skills in reading and writing is very good and the teaching provides many opportunities to practise skills in these areas. Many parents work with teachers to help their children develop their reading skills by listening to them read regularly at home. Older children are interested in books and most make good attempts at writing their names. Higher attainers know all the sounds and names of letters of the alphabet, read confidently a good range of common words and write neatly short sentences such as, 'This is a van,' to label a drawing. Average attainers know a small range of words

and the sounds letters make. They use pictures to help them 'read' stories though sometime read words incorrectly; for example, 'no' for 'on' and 'dad' for 'did'. They copy words written by teachers and form letters correctly. Lower attainers recognise a small number of words and are beginning to hear the initial sounds in words. Most make a reasonable attempt at writing their own names.

59. Information and communication technology is used well to assist pupils' learning; for example, younger pupils enjoyed listening to stories on a listening centre. Members of staff discussed and questioned well to check children's understanding, using 'big' books of the stories the children have listened to. The teacher questioned and checked older children's understanding of sounds well using a good quality program written by the teacher which was projected onto an interactive whiteboard. Children took turns in using the resource and operated it well. The children had plenty of practice in the recognition of sounds and rhyming words.

Mathematical development

60. By the end of the reception year, children are likely to be below expected levels. The quality of teaching is good and the children make good progress in their learning. Relationships between staff and children are very good and children are confident to answer questions because they know their contributions will be valued. Children are organised very well by staff; for example, children sat in a circle and listened attentively to the teacher. They knew to put up their hands to respond to questioning and listened attentively. In activities, children have good opportunities to recognise numbers and different shapes; for example, children counted out different numbers with close supervision by adults and were given opportunities to find shapes, such as squares, rectangles and circles around the classroom and in the outdoor area.

61. The planning of work is very good and suited to the levels of attainment of children; for example, in a lesson for older children, the teacher questioned pupils generally well and a teaching assistant kept detailed records of focussed children's responses. Learning resources, such as fans with numbers attached, were used effectively. Occasionally, the work was too demanding for lower attainers, particularly, when they were asked to work with numbers above ten. Higher attaining children could identify 'one more' than numbers up to ten. Average attainers could order numbers up to ten, though some were rather slow at doing this. Lower attainers were beginning to recognise numbers correctly up to ten and staff kept a record of their achievements.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. The children are likely to be below the standards expected nationally at the end of the reception year. The quality of teaching and children's progress is good. Teachers develop children's interest in the world around them well; for example, the teaching explained simply and clearly the life cycle of different small creatures, such as butterflies and frogs. The children were very interested and marvelled at the sight of frogspawn. Few children recognised frogspawn and a lower attainer remarked with interest on the 'little bits' in the water. The teaching used a 'big' book effectively to describe the life cycle of a frog and compared it with the previous learning about the life cycle of a butterfly. The children were intrigued by the pictures in the book and noticed that tadpoles lost their tails before they became frogs.

63. Younger children showed an interest in the outdoor environment when they were given the opportunity to observe plants and flowers. Most appreciated the many colours of the flower of a pansy but none could name the plant. Teachers encouraged children to

become aware of different cultures; for example, children made yarn pictures to celebrate the Chinese New Year and completed jigsaws showing people from different countries. Children are given good opportunities to use information and communication technology to assist their learning; for example, children used a program on the computer to simulate the assembly of a car.

Physical development

64. The children are likely to be below the national expectations by the end of the reception class. They make good progress, as the teaching is good. Younger pupils are given good opportunities to develop their skills in an outdoor environment. Children are given responsibility for getting out and replacing equipment and have a good range of wheeled vehicles to steer, including tricycles and scooters. They ride the equipment appropriately, though tend to just ride around following each other. Physical education lessons for older children are very well planned. The teaching provides clear instructions and stresses safety points. The children follow instructions well; for example, they jump up and down and remember to land on the balls of their feet. Games are played to reinforce 'following' instructions; for example, children played the 'Baked Bean' game and upon the teacher's commands quickly took up movements and positions to represent 'broad beans', 'runner beans' or 'jumping beans'. The teaching is very well organised and a brisk pace of energetic activity is maintained. Teaching assistants work very well with individuals and small groups. The teaching ensures that children have plenty of practice in developing skills; for example, throwing and catching. Children dress and undress quickly, although some older children still need help with undressing and dressing.

Creative development

65. Children achieve well because the quality of teaching is good, although they are likely to be below the national expectations by the end of the reception class. The planning of lessons is very good, resulting in children having a broad range of experiences during their time in the nursery and reception class. Younger children enjoy painting using ready-mixed paints; however, they have few opportunities to mix powder paints themselves. The teaching encourages pupils to make observational drawings; for example, a few children carefully drew detailed pictures of a plant and were praised by the teaching assistant for their efforts. The children practise drawing pictures in chalk in the outdoor area. Older pupils gain confidence and discuss the different textures of materials. They know primary colours and can identify different shapes. Most children have good control of the 'mouse' on the computer and hold and control pencils appropriately. The control of scissors of lower attaining children is very poor.

66. The children enjoy acting; for example they took on a variety of roles in a well-planned imaginary 'garden centre' they had helped to decorate by painting the wallpaper. They played alongside each other well and took on their responsibilities well, such as scanning items 'customers' purchased. The teaching of exploring and using sounds is very well planned. Younger pupils follow the teacher's hand signals with interest and enthusiasm; for example, children sang quietly, slowly or loudly when singing *Miss Polly had a Dolly*. Children learning English as an additional language quickly learnt the words and joined in with the other pupils. A few other children were reluctant to join in and just mouthed the words. The good use of music helped children to gain confidence. Older children can sing a range of simple songs from memory and, particularly, enjoy singing number rhymes. Most pupils recognise and repeat sound patterns.

ENGLISH

67. Standards in English are below the national average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. This is equally true of speaking and listening, reading and writing.

68. All groups of pupils make progress that is at least good. Those who start work on the National Curriculum in Year 1 progress from below average standards to average whilst those who arrive later progress from very low to well below average standards and some make very good progress in order to reach the national average standard. This is because teaching is good, very well planned and purposefully taking place in a positive atmosphere; pupils respond by behaving well and working hard.

69. Speaking and listening are promoted well, enabling most pupils to become confident and increasingly articulate. In the great majority of lessons, teachers question pupils in such ways that they have to think carefully before answering and are then encouraged to speak clearly, in sentences that express their full meaning. Only occasionally are pupils allowed to speak indistinctly and on these occasions contributions are also usually less advanced in content, and so learning slows. Most typical of good practice was a Year 6 literacy lesson during which the teacher explained precisely what pupils were to learn and showed very good grasp of the subject as she described the use of punctuation, such as a semi-colon; prompted by careful questions pupils were able to explain, 'The semi-colon in that sentence pulls together the two main ideas'. Good teaching of speaking and listening takes place in subjects other than English. In a Year 3 art lesson, pupils were encouraged to look for pattern and comment on what they saw. A pupil was pressed by the teacher to explain precisely what he was trying to say and responded by pointing out, 'This pattern has got three that are different from each other, and then it does it again and there are three more the same'. In many lessons, in all subjects, pupils work in small groups on tasks that require them to discuss their thinking before, for example, writing their ideas down. This successfully develops speaking and listening skills. A major probable reason for girls' higher attainment in English is seen in the group work that forms a main part of most English lessons. When working with the whole class, teachers meticulously involve boys and girls equally, as well as matching questions to pupils' learning needs. However, on many occasions as soon as group work starts, girls are more confident; they ensure that they try out their ideas on adults and ask questions of teachers two or three times as frequently as boys. As a result, they get more attention and make better progress than boys; that is, they make very good progress whilst boys made satisfactory progress. This feature also has an effect on attainment in reading and to an even greater extent on writing.

70. Overall, pupils make good progress in reading, whether it is from the below average base of most pupils when they enter Year 1 or from the lower base of pupils who enter higher, or much higher, up the school. This good progress is the outcome not only of good teaching but also the identification of which pupils need what type of help. Many different and well-chosen nationally and locally recommended strategies are used and are carefully matched to pupils' needs; the work is often undertaken in small groups and sometimes in break and lunch times. A number of staff is trained in particular techniques and they use these well, showing immense attention to detail and patience as lower attaining pupils progress, often in small steps but at a good rate, towards the goals set for them. A particularly strong contribution is made to pupils' progress by the use made of very careful recording of pupils' reading successes and difficulties; for example, in a lunchtime session run by a teaching assistant who is trained in the technique in use, a pupil read from a carefully chosen text. She received comment and encouragement as she read but the teaching assistant also made a note of every word that was pronounced wrongly, and of the actual pronunciation that the pupil used. This was to be analysed later in order to identify with a good degree of precision where the pupil was succeeding and where she needed help. The great majority of pupils enjoy reading, and higher attainers read very expressively,

understanding the meaning well. They are able to discuss the plots of stories and the likely events that could follow on from where they have reached in their books. Lower attainers experience a wide range of difficulties. Some do not yet know the sounds that are made by all letters; others do, but cannot blend them. Some pupils are very adept at picking up clues from what they have already read to help with the next, difficult, word they are trying to read, whilst others lack confidence and guess. Pupils retain good attitudes to reading and try hard even when they are finding work difficult; this is largely due to the positive atmosphere towards learning that permeates from the top to all adults working with pupils. Most older pupils understand the layout of non-fiction books, that they are often kept in reference libraries, and have tables of contents and indices; many higher attainers understand the purpose of a glossary. However, because the school library does not make reliable use of the method of classification of books that is used by reference libraries, most pupils have under-developed skills in the accessing of non-fiction books in reference libraries.

71. Although overall writing standards are below average the higher attaining pupils produce good work and a number of others write at the level expected nationally. However, there is a higher than usual number of pupils whose work is limited in quality, imagination, length and technique. Their handwriting is often poorly shaped and not joined up: spelling is inaccurate but it is often based on a correct use of letter sounds; for example, 'Dear Ser' was used by an eleven-year-old to begin a letter. Verb tenses are often wrong; for example, 'My brother eated all the cereals'. Many of these errors are typical of pupils for whom English is an additional language or who are very irregular attenders; nonetheless they depress overall standards. The teaching of pupils with limited English when they enter school is a new challenge to staff. They are handling the pupils' social and emotional needs extremely well but have yet to develop a full understanding of their complex language needs.

72. The better writers have both a good understanding of how language works and an imaginative and effective turn of phrase; for example, a higher attainer, analysing the effectiveness of the language in a book she had read, wrote, 'There is an effective balance of simple and complex sentences'. Another wrote, in her own story, 'But danger was just a few steps away; there was a quicksand pit. Nearby was a leaning tree that allowed...etc'. A ten-year-old wrote, 'When the bridge fell down with Dordon the Great on it, everyone thought that they were safe for ever.'

73. The writing of average attainers is technically accurate but often lacks flair. Part of the reason for both of these situations lies in the balance between English exercises and pupils' own writing. By far the bulk of their work is exercises and many pupils become competent in the analysis of sentence construction and in the use of, for example, an adjective with a noun. The relative lack of practice limits the length and interest of pupils' own story writing; opportunities are not taken often enough to develop these skills when working in other subjects. For example, much work in history and geography is worksheet based when it would make greater demands of pupils if they had to use more of their own words.

74. There have been improvements since the last inspection in attainment in reading and writing. This is largely due to capable leadership and the development, through training, of a staff that is skilled in the use of nationally recommended methods of teaching literacy. New challenges are being met with determination and the co-ordinator has sensible plans to develop expertise where it is needed. The facing of new challenges has not had any effect on the work with, and the standards reached by, existing pupils, who continue to progress well. In fact, in English group-work, pupils often show real empathy and care for others which adds to their personal development.

MATHEMATICS

75. Standards, by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, are below average. Pupils, including travellers' children, pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, make good progress because the teaching is good throughout the school. Pupils are interested in their work and behave well. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory.

76. Members of staff are committed to, and capable of, improving standards further so that the school is well placed to improve pupils' achievements. Good use is made of information and communication technology to assist learning in mathematics; for example, Year 6 pupils use spreadsheets to calculate and explore the effect of changing data on totals. Mathematical skills are developed satisfactorily in other subjects, such as, in Year 2, the measurement of the growth of plants in science and the calculation of periods of time in history.

77. The tracking of pupils' progress is thorough, although the significant changes of pupils make the task difficult. To help improve the systems of tracking groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, the school has introduced a computerised system to record and analyse pupils' attainments; however, this initiative is at an early stage of development. A member of the senior management team is keeping a watching brief on the co-ordination of the subject because of changes of staffing. A new co-ordinator has been identified to lead and manage the subject from the start of the next academic year. The monitoring of pupils' work is not done regularly and pupils' answers in statutory and non-statutory annual tests are not analysed sufficiently to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' understanding of mathematics in order to affect future teaching. The action plan for the subject is out of date and there is no detailed plan for the development of the subject for the current and future years.

78. The quality of teaching is good in Years 1 and 2. The planning of lessons is very clear and provides very good guidance. Teachers maintain a brisk pace and check to make sure pupils understand what they are to learn. Teachers question boys and girls equally but generally girls are more responsive than boys. Occasionally, pupils are allowed to call out rather than take turns answering. Resources are used well to assist pupils' learning; for example, pupils in Year 1 gained a better understanding of probability using cards with the words 'likely' and 'unlikely' written on them. In answers to the teacher's questions, pupils selected the appropriate card. The teaching assistant helped lower attainers take an active role in the activity. The teacher was able to check quickly which pupils understood and which did not when pupils displayed their answers. In Year 2, pupils gained a better understanding of multiples of five when they sang enthusiastically, *Alice the Camel has Five Humps*. Travellers' children were given very good help from a visiting specialist teacher. With the help of members of staff, pupils in Year 2 made clock faces to practise telling the time. Higher attainers could tell the time in five-minute intervals and used their understanding to interpret information from a block graph. Most pupils could tell the time to the nearest hour, half past and quarter past the hour. Lower attainers drew pictures to represent different times of the day. A computer program was used well to extend and consolidate pupils' understanding of time.

79. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching is good and sometimes better. In the best lessons, for example in Year 3, the pace of learning was brisk. Pupils were encouraged to explain the reasons for their answers and they discussed well with others the difficulties with dividing odd numbers. The teaching assistant kept detailed notes of pupils' responses. Throughout the teaching, there was a strong emphasis on developing and understanding of mathematical language, such as 'divide', 'share', 'groups of' and 'product'. The pace of questioning was very fast and circulated around the group of pupils with particular emphasis on boys. Higher attainers were able to recognise the relationship between multiply and divide.

Pupils with special educational needs were given opportunities to share, practically, beanbags into three groups. The teacher helped pupils learning English as an additional language to understand the difference between the terms 'odd' and 'even'.

80. In Year 5, the teaching drew out answers from pupils to develop their understanding of multiples of eight and nine. Both boys and girls were highly motivated and very responsive to questioning. The teacher's very good management of pupils by assertive quick reminders to individuals when concentration lapsed ensured a fast pace of learning. Pupils had a clear understanding of what they had to learn and individual targets challenged them to recognise what they must learn next. The teaching assistant helped lower attainers very well and enabled them to work alongside other pupils by constantly discussing and encouraging individuals. Travellers' children were helped well by teaching assistants and provided with work and explanations suited to their level of attainment.

81. In Years 4 and 6, good teaching builds effectively on pupils' previous learning. In Year 4, the teaching made good use of small whiteboards to assess pupils' understanding of multiplication. Work was well suited to pupils' levels of attainment. Overlapping circles were used well to consolidate and extend pupils' understanding of multiples of numbers up to nine. In Year 6, the good use of an interactive whiteboard helped the teacher to demonstrate effectively rules for sequencing numbers. The teaching led on well to develop pupils' understanding of triangular numbers. The interactive whiteboard enabled pupils to participate actively and the visual demonstrations by the teachers and pupils, helped most pupils to spot the pattern. A few boys lacked concentration and needed reminders about behaviour; in contrast, the small number of girls in the group was very attentive. The work was consolidated effectively using a previously prepared worksheet. Higher attainers correctly identified up to the tenth triangular number. Lower attainers were given good help from the learning mentor but found recording of their learning difficult.

SCIENCE

82. Standards for the end of Years 2 and 6 are below average. Although this is below the standards identified during the previous inspection, trends in standards are broadly in line with national trends and there is a significant degree of pupil mobility which affects the continuity of education. However, as they move through the school, most pupils achieve well and make good progress from a low base. Significant factors in this are the overall good and often very good quality of teaching and the sound use the school makes of assessment in order to identify areas for improvement.

83. Teachers ensure that throughout the school pupils generally cover the full range of work. They mark pupils' work regularly and provide encouraging and supportive comments to help pupils make progress; for example, in Year 6 the teacher commented, 'Excellent work. You know how reflections are used in every day life.' In Year 3 work on investigations into the uses of materials, the teacher challenged the pupil to reflect on the methods used: 'Was it a fair test?' However, too much work involved pupils of all abilities in copying out the same words when recording their investigations. This limited the opportunities for independent work and for pupils to extend their knowledge and skills. There were insufficient opportunities for older, and particularly, more able pupils, to plan and organise their own investigations in order to increase their skills.

84. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher reflected this in her good use of scientific language, such as, 'vibration' and 'pitch', so that pupils' understanding of changing sounds was extended and their vocabularies were increased. Teachers make good use of questioning to prompt pupils to think hard about their investigations so that, in Year 4, children with learning difficulties, well supported by the

teaching assistant, made good progress in their understanding of the use of keys to identify organisms; in this lesson information and communication technology was used well to assist the teaching and learning. In Year 6, higher achieving pupils' skills in calculating the angles of reflection were extended when they were provided with more taxing work and were supported by the learning mentor. Because teachers present work in lively and interesting ways and because relationships are very good, pupils are eager to learn. In Year 2, pupils participated enthusiastically in a game leading to the identification of similarities and difference between various living things, and were eager to describe their observations because they knew that the teacher welcomed and valued their contributions.

85. Teachers plan their work carefully and organise pupils and materials well so that lessons run smoothly. The pace of pupils' learning in Year 5 ensured that pupils worked rigorously on their investigations into sound and because the teacher circulated the different groups during the lesson she was able to assess and advise how they might improve. Teachers share lesson objectives with pupils so that they know clearly what is expected. In Year 4 when the teacher used the plenary session in order to discuss with the pupils how far the learning objectives had been achieved, their skills in the identification of organisms were increased and their understanding of their own learning was deepened. Good use of information and communication technology assists learning well.

86. The co-ordination of the subject is shared temporarily until a permanent co-ordinator is appointed. This ensures that it is organised efficiently in Years 1 to 2 and Years 3 to 6. During this time there has not been a consistent programme of monitoring of teaching and learning in science throughout the school, although the co-ordinators check planning, assessment and pupils' work.

ART AND DESIGN

87. It was not possible to see any teaching in Years 1 to 2 and only one lesson in Years 3 to 6 was observed; however, teachers' planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils and teachers show that attainment is broadly in line with what would be expected for pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. This has been helped by the school's success in addressing criticisms from that inspection by improving the planning so that pupils build securely on previous work.

88. In Year 3, the quality of teaching was very good. The teacher explained her very good knowledge of random and repeated patterns very clearly so that pupils made good progress in producing coloured paper patterns inspired by the work of Kadinsky. Very well supported by the artist in residence, she made very good use of computers and digital cameras to enhance pupils' work. The teacher shared her own enthusiasm for the subject with the pupils so that they were eager to explore the use of colour and pattern and produced some well-considered and attractive results.

89. In Year 1, pupils created imaginatively coloured crayon patterns and careful sketches of human figures. However, the figures drawn by lower achieving pupils were less well proportioned. Most pupils in Year 2 produced colourful printing and pictures using paint. They showed good progress in their pencil sketches of figures, and higher achieving pupils produced clear and detailed posters advertising healthy eating. Most pupils showed sound observational skills in their pictures of feathers, pinecones and bark. There were close links with history in lively pictures of the Great Fire of London, and scientific work on the growth of sunflower seeds was combined with work on Van Gogh.

90. Older pupils build well on the skills they have learnt in Years 1 and 2. For example, Year 4 pupils produced detailed sketches of a local church and Year 5 pupils carefully

designed and made attractively decorated clay pots. In Year 6, higher achieving pupils produced vibrant and well-considered paintings after the style of Picasso, although the work of lower achieving pupils was not as well finished. Most pupils used their sketchbooks to produce well-crafted studies of figures and movement; however, the school does not have a consistent approach to the use of sketchbooks and opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to develop their skills. A real strength of the school is the promotion of theme weeks where pupils are inspired by studies of Chinese and African art and culture. They produced an impressive range of attractive work in such areas as sculpture, fabric, paint, crayon and clay work, and created artefacts such as masks, kites, and paper-mache models.

91. Although the co-ordinator does not have opportunities to check teaching and learning, she organises the subject efficiently and with her comprehensive subject knowledge, provides useful support for colleagues. She monitors planning and teachers' evaluations in order to make improvements. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily in the subject to assist teaching and learning. Pupils have opportunities to visit art galleries to study the work of local artists such as Lowry and their work receives further inspiration from the work of an artist in residence.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. It was not possible to see any lessons in Years 1 to 2; however, pupils' work and teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers, shows that standards are in line with what would be expected by the end of Year 2. Standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with national expectations. Standards throughout the school show an improvement since the previous inspection. A significant feature in this improvement is the school's successful response to criticisms from the previous inspection by the appointment and training of a member of staff to take responsibility for the subject. It has also implemented schemes of work that enable pupils to build on previous skills and understanding and has improved the resources for the subject. A further important aspect in the improving standards in Years 3 to 6 is the quality of teaching, which is never less than good and is sometimes very good.

93. In Years 1 to 2 teachers ensure that pupils develop a sound understanding and use of the designing, planning and making process; for example, in Year 1, pupils carefully sketched their designs in their work on moving pictures. They planned the use of materials and methods of joining. The teacher supported closely the work of lower achieving pupils whose sketches were less clear. In Year 2, pupils showed increasing understanding of the design process. Higher achieving pupils produced clear designs and showed good sewing and cutting skills in their production of puppets. Most pupils produced attractively finished puppets which reflected the pride taken in their work.

94. Because teachers have a good understanding of the designing, planning and making process and explain this clearly most pupils increase their confidence and skill as they move through the school; in Year 5, for example, the teacher prepared a booklet for each pupil which outlined the process so that they made good progress in their work on making and packaging biscuits. Lower achieving pupils were supported well by the teaching assistant so that they made good progress, although their plans and designs were less clear. The teaching also made very good provision for pupils to evaluate their work. Higher achieving pupils made clear, thoughtful, reflections on how their work might be improved; however, this aspect is not consistently developed throughout the school. Relationships are generally very good and teachers manage pupils well; this gave pupils in Year 6, for example, the confidence to discuss work on mechanisms used in model fairground toys with the teacher and peers. This was because they knew that their contributions would be valued and respected. They handled equipment sensibly and behaved well.

95. The school makes good use of projects where pupils respond well to challenges to produce artefacts, such as egg holders, bridges and moving vehicles which shift loads from one level to another. Older pupils make soundly constructed vehicles powered by motors, using their scientific knowledge. Throughout the school, pupils increase their skills in controlling moving vehicles using their computer skills well. The subject co-ordinator has thorough subject knowledge. The co-ordinator works hard to organise the subject and to support staff. She does not have opportunities to check teaching and learning in order to make further improvements in standards.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

96. In both geography and history, too few lessons were observed to allow teaching and learning to be judged reliably; however, in both cases, there was some teaching seen and sufficient other evidence exists to allow a range of other judgements to be made.

97. In geography and history, pupils make good progress from Years 1 to 6, achieving standards at the end of Year 6 that are in line with the national expectation. Their learning is supported by a well-designed curriculum that uses nationally recommended materials intelligently. Rather than teach each subject throughout the school year, only one is taught in each term or half term. This allows for the relatively intensive study of a topic in, say, history, for several weeks before moving on to the other subject for some weeks. These topics are chosen in ways that allow pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to be built on. The work of individuals is carefully assessed at the end of each topic and these evaluations are used when later work is planned. In addition, in key lessons, teaching assistants monitor the work and responses of selected pupils either during whole-class instruction or whilst pupils work in groups. These evaluations are also used in the planning of later work. This results in teaching that directly focuses on not only requirements of the National Curriculum but also on pupils' earlier learning and needs. This plays a major part in the good achievement of pupils in all aspects of geography and history.

98. The interlocking of the two subjects has a number of benefits; for example, in Year 6, geography has helped pupils to understand how river systems work and know the meaning of terms such as source, confluence, meander, ox-bow lake and delta. When they come, a little later, to study Ancient Egypt in history some of these terms are both revised and used confidently. Thus work in both subjects is enhanced.

99. The relatively intensive study of each subject for short periods helps the resultant depth of study to engage pupils' interests and enthusiasm; for example, Year 2 work on the Great Fire of London had also stimulated pupils' imagination. Many could not wait to tell visitors the wide range of knowledge they had acquired and they referred to it on other occasions. An example of such knowledge retention was seen in an English lesson where pupils designed new, and opposite words; at one stage they made 'safe' into 'unsafe, and one pupil reminded the teacher that London had been unsafe before the Great Fire. The teacher responded very well. She accepted the comment, ensured briefly that other pupils understood and moved on with the lesson. When a few minutes later another word prompted a different pupil to inform others that he knew the capital of Scotland there was a very brief but telling tour of the capitals of Great Britain and Eire before the lesson theme was returned to. This revisiting of earlier learning, both planned and seized when opportunities occur, clearly plays a major part both in pupils' enthusiasm for learning and in the standards that they reach.

100. The leadership and management of the subjects, undertaken by the same teacher, are good. They have resulted in teachers who are confident and sufficiently knowledgeable to plan lessons that are well focused, within the well-balanced curriculum. The use of

information and communication technology to assist teaching and learning is effective. The school has maintained the good rate of achievement reported after the last inspection and is well placed to continue this and make further improvements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

101. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are on course to be in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve well relative to their prior attainment because the quality of teaching is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because standards of pupils' attainment, the quality of teaching, learning resources and accommodation, and the guidance for teachers and training of teachers have improved significantly.

102. The leadership of the subject is good. The subject co-ordinator, together with the learning mentor and a teaching assistant, has a very clear understanding of the future direction of the subject; however, there are no written details of the developments anticipated for the current and future years to inform the school improvement plan. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The monitoring of pupils' work is developing slowly. Satisfactory procedures for checking pupils' attainment on completion of each unit of work have been established recently; however, there is no detailed tracking of pupils' progress in developing skills in the subject linked to levels of the National Curriculum. Members of staff are keen to raise standards further. The level of staff expertise is higher than normally seen and this places the school in a strong position to improve pupils' achievements further.

103. Information and communication technology is used well to assist learning in other subjects. The teaching is of good quality and develops pupils' skills well because of the very good planning, very effective use of the computer suite and the expertise of teaching assistants. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and use information and communication technology well to assist learning in other subjects as well as to develop computer skills by effective demonstrations using the interactive whiteboard in the computer suite; for example, in Year 1 the teaching linked the development of word processing skills to literacy when pupils created, on the computer, labels, including a picture taken from the 'picture gallery' of the computer.

104. The teaching of basic skills in information and communication technology is good and pupils gain a good understanding of using computers; for example, in Year 2, the teaching helped pupils effectively to use a bank of words on the computer to consolidate in writing their historical studies of Florence Nightingale. Lower attaining pupils used the bank of words well but when they missed a space they deleted the word rather than moving the cursor and adding a space. Higher attainers were able to use the delete key and moved the cursor around the text confidently to make corrections.

105. The planning of lessons is very good and pupils work hard, behave well and show interest in their studies; for example, in Year 3 a very well prepared lesson enabled pupils to access a series of slides about coal mining in the Victorian age on the computer in order to add text to the slides. The teacher explained the new learning well and pupils were able to access the program efficiently. Most pupils knew how to enlarge a slide. Pupils gained a better understanding of the hardships endured by adults and children in coalmines in the Victorian age as well as learning how to add text to slides and to move from one slide to another. In Year 4, the high level of expertise of the teacher and teaching assistant helped pupils to gain a better understanding of the use of computers to create a branching database to assist pupils' scientific learning of the characteristics of different organisms. Pupils were proud of their achievements which were celebrated well by staff through the awards of 'computer' stickers.

106. In Year 6, the planning of lessons follows national guidance effectively. Teachers maintain detailed records of pupils' achievements in each unit of work taught. Most pupils by the end of Year 6 can search the Internet to find appropriate information. They can copy text and pictures from the Internet, such as information about food rationing during World War 2. Higher attainers are able to create programs in order to control models. The teaching makes good use of the facilities of the local high school and the local business education partnerships; for example, pupils worked with the partner institutions well to produce a news sheet from information collected from the Internet and through interviews. The teaching helped pupils to import pictures and graphics into their work and to learn how to write text in columns.

MUSIC

107. By the end of Year 2, standards in music are in line with national expectations. Most pupils make good progress and achieve well. This is because the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. It was not possible to make an overall judgement on standards in Years 3 to 6 because no lessons were observed; however, evidence from assemblies and from hymn singing produced by the school, show that pupils sing tunefully and harmoniously.

108. Because teachers manage pupils well and present lessons in lively and interesting ways, most pupils enjoy music and are keen to take part; for example, in Year 2 pupils behaved well and were eager to mark the phrases with actions as they sang. They listened attentively and recognised changes in speed when they were played recorded extracts from the *Nutcracker Suite*. Teachers plan work carefully and ensure that lessons include a range of activities so that pupils work hard and extend their learning to include appropriate aspects of the programmes of study. The school makes very good use of the visiting teacher provided by the local education authority, in order to enrich its teaching of music; in Year 1, for example, because the teacher had a very good understanding of the different elements of music and explained and demonstrated these clearly, pupils increased their skills in distinguishing between pulse and rhythm. They sang clearly and tunefully and when listening to extracts from *Carnival of the Animals* they recognised changes in style. Because the lesson was conducted at a brisk pace and pupils were reminded of previous work, they quickly adapted their understanding of pulse and rhythm in their work with percussion instruments.

109. The subject co-ordinator works hard to organise the subject and to support colleagues. Although the co-ordinator does not have opportunities to monitor teaching and learning, he has a clear understanding of the subject and of the way ahead necessary to raise standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

110. Pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 6; this represents unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection when standards were above average. Fewer than the expected of pupils can swim 25 metres in Year 6; however, the pupils will have additional lessons before the end of the year and the school believes that by the end of Year 6 most pupils will be able to swim the required distance.

111. The quality of teaching seen is good and pupils achieve well, including pupils with special educational needs, and make good progress in gymnastics and dance. The planning of lessons is good and pupils gain a good understanding of the need to 'warm up' before energetic exercise as well as to 'cool down' at the end of lessons. In a Year 2 lesson, the

teaching encouraged pupils to move to music and made different suggestions to challenge pupils to move in different ways. Teachers provide opportunities for children to demonstrate to other pupils their sequences of movements; these demonstrations together with additional instructions from teachers spur other pupils on to improve their performance. The pace of lessons is brisk and pupils enjoy energetic activity and can describe the effect of the exercise on their bodies.

112. Where teaching is very good, for example in Year 4, the teacher planned very well and linked the learning well to a study of small creatures in science. Relationships were very good between pupils and between adults and pupils, resulting in very good behaviour and attitudes to learning. The teaching assistant was used well to check the teacher's questioning of gender groups as well as boys' and girls' responses. Pupils made good efforts to move rhythmically and expressively to music in a manner similar to that of snails, butterflies and spiders. In Year 5, the teacher used the expertise of a visiting teacher very well to develop pupils' skills in street dancing. The pupils were very responsive and thoroughly enjoyed the activities. Pupils linked skills, techniques and ideas and applied them accurately to develop a dance sequence.

113. In Year 6, lesson planning was very detailed. Pupils worked well on apparatus at different levels. The teacher gave pupils opportunities to demonstrate and pupils, sensitively, evaluated individuals' performance and identified clearly strengths and how sequences could be improved. The high level of skills of some pupils who are learning English as an additional language was identified and celebrated by the spontaneous applause of other pupils. Pupils put away equipment extremely efficiently and safely.

114. The co-ordination of the subject is unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has not ensured that records are kept of pupils' attainments; for example, the school does not maintain records of pupils' achievements in swimming. There is limited planning for the future development of the subject; however, the co-ordinator has worked recently with other local schools to produce appropriate curriculum guidance, though this has not been fully implemented in all year groups.