

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST CATHERINE'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Sandyford, Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108507

Headteacher: Mr M Ewing

Reporting inspector: Mr J J Peacock  
25344

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 246801

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Greystoke Gardens Sandyford Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE2 1PS
Telephone number:	0191 2326803
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father C Carr
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This voluntary aided Catholic primary school caters for pupils from three to eleven years of age and is about the average size for schools of its type. There are 244 pupils on roll, 131 boys and 113 girls in seven single-age classes. The total includes 61 children who attend the two nursery classes on a full-time basis. Only about half of the pupils attending the school live in the immediate area and the rest travel from other parts of Newcastle. Although children enter the reception class with a wide variety of levels of attainment, overall their attainment is average for their age.

Just under one fifth of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. The school has 22 pupils with special educational needs and this is well below the national average. The number with a statement of special educational needs is low. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is high when compared to other schools, with 33 at the time of the inspection. Additional funding is available to help 13 of these pupils to learn English. The school is located near two hospitals and a university, and the school is dealing on a regular basis with incoming pupils whilst their parents are in this country to study. This adds to the significant number of pupils who join or leave the school during the school year. When pupils from other European countries are added, there are 45 pupils from a background where English is the second language.

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

This is a very effective school, which strives for excellence in everything it does. Immediately after the Millennium, a new mission statement, based on the Gospel and teaching of the Catholic church, was discussed and agreed in a joint meeting of staff and governors. The key aim, 'for children and adults in the school community to achieve their full human potential in all aspects of school life' reflects the commitment of all who work at the school to 'provide a framework for a way of living both inside and outside of the classroom'. The deeply committed and highly professional headteacher, supported most effectively by governors, staff and parents, has created a very special learning community where pupils feel happy and have a positive self-image. The quality of teaching is consistently of a high standard and by Year 6, all pupils achieve the targets set for them, with many exceeding them. This is a remarkable achievement when the significant mobility of pupils is considered, together with the high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, where many speak English as an additional language. When all these factors are taken into account, along with the below average costs per pupil, the school provides very good value for money.

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

- The outstanding vision and leadership of the headteacher inspire teachers and pupils to give and achieve their best in all areas of school life.
- The consistently high quality of teaching contributes to the well above average standards being achieved by Year 6, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- The partnership with parents is outstandingly effective because it promotes very good pupil attendance and an excellent attitude to learning.
- Excellent curriculum provision enables pupils to achieve very well, both in and outside of lessons.
- The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This has a major impact on pupils' personal development and their relationships, which are excellent.

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

- The quality of provision for some of the higher attaining pupils, particularly the very able, for pupils with special educational needs and for those who speak English as an additional language.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Described as a school with many strengths in the previous report, the headteacher, governors and staff have guarded against complacency by constantly and thoroughly evaluating all aspects of school life with a view to eradicating any perceived areas of weakness. All of the issues raised in the previous report of November 1997 have been improved as well as many other aspects such as the quality of teaching, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the curriculum. For example, all subjects now benefit from carefully prepared guidance for teachers, standards in mathematics have improved and assessment information is used effectively to inform lesson planning. Governors now have a much more proactive role in school management. They take a keen interest in, and are fully involved with, school development planning. The level of improvement has been good as many of the strengths identified previously have been further improved. Parents are very appreciative and pupils really enjoy the wide range of interesting activities provided for them both in and out of the classroom. As a direct consequence, the rate of attendance, which is already very good, is getting better and pupils show an excellent attitude towards their learning.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	A	B	B
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	D	C	C	C

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

A high mobility rate, with 22 per cent of pupils joining or leaving during the school year, and a high proportion of pupils who have difficulty in speaking or understanding English, inevitably has an impact on the overall standards being achieved each year. Very good teaching and an excellent curriculum coupled with pupils' excellent attitudes to learning have helped to compensate for this. The improvement trend for all core subjects from 1998 has been in line with that nationally. Overall comparisons about improvement in relation to pupils' prior attainment are made difficult, as relatively few pupils actually did the national tests as Year 2 pupils. However, pupils in Year 6 are on course to achieve the challenging targets set for them in English and mathematics in 2003 and pupils' individual records show all make significant gains. Inspection evidence confirms that standards, by Year 6, are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Good strategies have been introduced to improve the quality of pupils' writing and this is currently above average and improving steadily.

The performance in the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2002, compared to all schools, was similarly affected by the factors above. Reading was well below average and writing and mathematics below average. Until last year, the school achieved well above average standards in reading and mathematics compared to all schools. However, the performance in writing was weaker, being well below average in 2001. Inspection evidence shows standards for Year 2 pupils this year are above those expected for all aspects of English, mathematics and science. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from the very good quality of teaching and are likely to achieve nationally set targets called early learning goals in all areas of their curriculum well before they transfer to Year 1.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils love coming to this school and are very enthusiastic in everything they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning. All are extremely friendly and well mannered. There has been only one fixed-term exclusion in the past two years.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils from the many different backgrounds really care for one another. There are many opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take on responsibility both in and outside of lessons.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are punctual despite many having to travel some distance to school. Attendance figures are well above the national average and rising.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the previous inspection and meets the needs of all pupils most effectively. In just over half of the 26 lessons seen, teaching was graded very good or excellent. Almost all teachers produced lessons of this high standard. Good or better teaching was seen in over nine out of ten lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This is a remarkable achievement by all teachers who show enthusiasm for their work and a very strong commitment to raise standards. Teachers' caring and supportive relationship with their pupils means that all pupils feel valued and always try to do their best. Targets for learning are usually shared with pupils and they are given lots of opportunities for independence or to take responsibility for their own learning. The overall quality of learning is very good. Pupils show the highest possible interest in their work, try extremely hard and have the maturity to concentrate on their work, even when not directly supervised by their teachers.

Literacy and numeracy are taught well, showing that the national strategies have been carefully and thoughtfully implemented. However, some of the sessions are very long, lasting one hour and 25 minutes, making it difficult for pupils to work productively all of the time. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are fully included in lessons and receive good support, helping them to achieve as well as other pupils. The few pupils with special talents are identified, and in most lessons care is taken to ensure that they are sufficiently challenged. In the Foundation Stage, teaching in all the lessons seen was either good, very good or excellent, reflecting the high quality of provision for children in the nursery and reception classes.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. Statutory requirements are met exceptionally well. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent and 96 per cent of pupils are involved. Links with the local community, Catholic church and other schools are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual targets are clearly defined in individual education plans. Good support is available from well-trained specialist staff and the classroom support assistants. However, individual targets are not routinely included in teachers' planning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.	Good. A specialist teacher helps pupils to gain valuable English language skills often working outside the classroom but there is little evidence of effective liaison with the class teachers to speed up pupils' acquisition of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent, overall. The Catholic faith is central to the ethos of the school. Pupils' very good conduct is influenced by the examples set by the adults around them. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Teaching about cultural diversity in British society could be further improved by making it more explicit in subject schemes and in teachers' lesson planning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school provides a very caring and secure environment for all pupils, making them feel safe and valued. Assessment procedures are good.

Parents are very knowledgeable about the school and were able to list the key strengths responsible for the high standards at the meeting prior to the inspection. They are very appreciative of the school and willingly give their full support. This is a strength, as the successful partnership considerably enhances pupils' learning and willingness to learn.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher inspires confidence and has created a shared sense of purpose and direction. As a result, everyone is totally committed to improving standards and the quality of education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors, led by an experienced and most able chair of governors, are active, well informed and very supportive. They are firmly committed to building on the school's excellent reputation in the local area.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are detailed records on pupils' and teachers' performance. Co-ordinators annually prepare an action plan following a full evaluation of their subject.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The finances are efficiently managed by the headteacher, ably supported by the conscientious administration staff. Best value is sought in all expenditure to secure continuous improvement.



Classroom support staff and nursery nurses make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The accommodation is undergoing considerable improvement with the building of a sports and arts facility and new administration office.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and school helps pupils to become more mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Pupils get the right amount of homework.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• Parents are well informed about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching school and the school works closely with them.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside normal lessons.</li> </ul>	<p>There was no significant disagreement with any of the 12 questions.</p>

There was a very good response to the inspection questionnaire with a return rate of almost half of all those sent out. Rarely are parents so positive in their comments. It was also apparent at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection just how appreciative they are about all aspects of school life. Inspectors wholeheartedly agree with parents' opinions. They are right to be proud of this outstandingly good school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The outstanding vision and leadership of the headteacher inspire teachers and pupils to give and achieve their best in all areas of school life.**

1. Why do pupils do so well at this school and enjoy coming so much? It is because everyone from the top down is determined to play their part in creating a centre of excellence for the benefit of the pupils who are fortunate enough to attend. As a result of this commitment, there are strengths in many aspects of school life. One of the most influential is the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher. It was described as effective in the previous inspection and is now judged to be excellent. For the past eight years, the headteacher has shared his vision for the school with all who have a stake in its future. He is undoubtedly an inspirational leader. Staff, governors and parents acknowledge this and describe his enthusiasm, friendliness and the high priority placed on pupils' achievement which 'raises their esteem brilliantly'. He has succeeded in creating an ethos of partnership, ambition and respect. Teachers are valued as professionals and governors are respected for their voluntary contributions. All adults associated with the school have a common goal: the improvement of standards and the development of well-rounded young people who can make a positive contribution to society.
2. The experienced deputy headteacher has a key role in the management structure, supporting the headteacher very effectively. She is the special educational needs co-ordinator and carries the responsibility for many other educational initiatives. For example, she manages the Beacon School Partnership and the link with Hadrian Special School. Subject leaders also take their responsibilities very seriously. They were decisive in their actions to correct the weaknesses identified in the previous report, such as providing detailed schemes for all subjects and developing their monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment. Without exception, they work assiduously to promote the highest possible standards in their subject or aspect areas. They look seriously at the ways in which pupils learn and adapt their plans accordingly. The school's monitoring procedure is quick to identify areas of weakness, and prompt action is taken to correct any found. When the quality of writing was identified as an area for development, links with a nearby Beacon school, which had a recognised strength in this aspect, were developed. Good strategies, such as increasing opportunities to write in all subjects, were introduced and the impact of these is beginning to have a beneficial effect on standards, which are rising steadily.
3. The governing body benefits from the experienced leadership of its chairman. A more proactive role has been developed which involves governors monitoring more closely the delivery of the National Curriculum and acting as 'critical friends' to the headteacher and his staff. The work of the governors is organised effectively and all legal requirements are now met. All have specific areas of responsibility, which they approach with a sense of duty. Relationships between the governors and the headteacher are securely based on trust and mutual respect. Governors are fully committed to a rolling programme of training and development. Leadership of special educational needs is effective. The strong management networks within the school have helped to ensure a good quality of provision throughout.

4. All staff are involved in regular meetings for which agendas and minutes are published. There is a planned focus and appropriate emphasis on teaching and learning in these meetings. This decision-making process informs the professional development needs of all staff. Mentoring of new staff is a strong feature. Newly appointed staff soon feel 'at home' in the family atmosphere created in the staff-room and the school. This is a community in which all participants are valued. Although the senior management team is small, every teacher is fully involved in all decision making and, technically, they are an integral part of the whole-school management team. It is an effective way of empowering staff.
5. The annual school improvement plan is produced following a thorough process of consultation and evaluation. This includes questionnaires sent out to parents and a separate one for children. An appropriate focus on raising standards is at the heart of identified priorities. Additionally, the school never forgets that it is dealing with children, whose needs are individual, diverse and often complex. Governors are fully involved in the process of evaluating the success of identified priorities.
6. The headteacher manages all aspects of the budget most effectively. In this, he is ably supported by the office staff, who maintain meticulous records of all transactions. Best value is constantly sought in all expenditure, showing that the school has an effective framework for self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It includes a review of the budget allocated to staffing and all the priorities identified in the school development plan. Computer software is used efficiently and all necessary back-up systems are in place. The school actively seeks additional funding and makes good use of specific grants to improve pupils' learning. The recent National Lottery grant to build a sports hall is a major project for the school and although the building work is not due to be completed until May, staff are already planning for its effective use.
7. When the well above average standards being achieved by Year 6 pupils, the consistently high quality of teaching, the exciting curriculum on offer and pupils' excellent attitude towards school are taken into account, along with the below average costs per pupil, the school is providing very good value for money. This is a considerable improvement from the previous report and is a true reflection of the highly professional leadership and hard work and devotion shown by all staff.

**The consistently high quality of teaching contributes to the well above average standards being achieved by Year 6, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.**

8. The quality of teaching is another key strength of the school and it makes a substantial contribution to the standards being achieved, pupils' attitudes and their attendance. Parents were quick to praise the quality of teaching at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection and were happy with the standards being achieved. In the past two years, three teachers have been appointed, strengthening further the quality of the teaching staff. The quality of teaching is very good in all departments of the school. It has improved a great deal since the previous inspection in November 1997 when it was described as 'sound or better in the majority of lessons'. Problems with teachers' planning, the match of work for pupils of different ability levels and the challenge offered to all pupils in some lessons have all successfully been corrected. This is clearly apparent when over half of the lessons seen in this inspection were either very good or excellent compared to 13 per cent last time and over nine out of ten were good or better compared to three out of ten last time. The quality of the headteacher's leadership and a shared determination by all staff to give pupils, whatever their ability, the best possible education are largely responsible. As a direct

consequence, the quality of learning is very good, enabling pupils to achieve well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. Just as importantly for the staff and parents, pupils really enjoy coming to this school and respond very positively, not only to their lessons but also to the wide range of activities provided out of normal lesson time.

9. Children enter the nursery with above average levels of attainment. The very good quality of teaching ensures that they have a very good start to their education. The two class teachers are supported exceptionally well by the nursery nurses. All work effectively as a team for the benefit of the children, and together they have created an exciting and attractive learning environment. The outdoor area, shared with children in the reception class, is spacious and well equipped with a roadway marked out and lots of large wheeled toys available. It is used effectively to promote learning in all areas of the curriculum. Planning of children's work meets the new requirements of all six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. Less than half of the nursery children transfer to the one reception class. An early assessment of their attainment shows that, overall, it is in line with that expected for children of this age. Teaching here is equally effective, with the talented nursery nurse giving valuable support to the teacher and children. The class teacher, with the support and advice from early years specialists has dovetailed the six areas of learning with the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, making the transition from one to another seamless. In a literacy session, for example, good methods are used to develop children's writing as they are made aware of individual letter sounds and the sound combinations letters make. The teacher uses her advanced information and communication technology skills effectively by using the latest interactive computer-linked whiteboard to reinforce numbers to 20 and all children confidently use the class computers, showing a very good knowledge of the keyboard and programs. Almost all children are expected to achieve the early learning goals in all six areas of their curriculum well before the end of their reception year.
10. Teaching in the infant and junior classes is of the same high standard. During the inspection, relatively few lessons were seen in the infant classes and some of these were taken by supply teachers, as regular staff were either ill or involved in visits with pupils to Hadrian Special School. Evidence from the scrutiny of work and the standards being achieved show that the quality of teaching in this phase is no less effective. In their lesson planning, all teachers are now guided effectively by a wealth of assessment information and detailed teaching programmes for each subject. This, along with a willingness to undertake training and close links with a nearby Beacon school, has helped to bring about a marked improvement in teachers' expertise, particularly in the strategies for teaching writing.
11. The overall quality of all teachers' lesson planning is very good with learning objectives clearly defined and shared with pupils. In Year 6, for example, the objectives for a science lesson on mixing materials were displayed on the new interactive whiteboard and, before the end of the lesson, pupils were involved in evaluating their success in achieving them. This gives pupils a very good knowledge of their own learning. Some small improvements to lesson planning, however, are still necessary in some classes, as not all teachers include the specific targets for pupils with special educational needs from their individual education plans. As a result, it takes longer than necessary for them to achieve these targets. In some lessons, it was also noted that higher attaining pupils, on occasions, surprised their teachers with the speed with which they completed their work, even though it was quite challenging. In the best lessons, teachers were prepared for this and had additional tasks prepared to further extend these pupils. This was not always the case in all

lessons and, as a result, a few pupils were not sufficiently extended throughout the lesson.

12. All other aspects of teaching, such as teachers' high expectations of pupils, enthusiasm and use of resources, like computers or people with specialist knowledge, are very good. Junior pupils, for example, sang with great skill and enthusiasm during their hymn practice session, encouraged by some genuinely inspirational teaching provided by two teachers and a pianist from the local education music service. Year 4 pupils later benefited from this expertise in a very good music lesson combining a performance of singing and instrumental work using penny whistles. Year 3 had no inhibitions when developing a sequence of gestures in a dance lesson as they were led effectively by a very energetic teacher! Boys and girls thoroughly enjoyed the session.
13. Classroom support staff are used effectively to support lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs or those experiencing difficulty in speaking or understanding English. This enables all these pupils to be fully included in all activities. Praise, strict time targets given to finish tasks, humour and teachers acting as good role models, result in very good class discipline. As a result, pupils work sensibly and independently of their teacher when necessary in a quiet orderly learning environment. Their interest, concentration and level of independence are all excellent as a direct consequence. In Year 2, for example, pupils' concentration was so intense when using the index of books to research information about the Great Fire of London in a literacy lesson, that they did not want to break off at the end of the lesson.
14. The quality of teaching and pupils' response to it meant that an extensive amount of pupils' completed work was available to the inspection team for their scrutiny. Teachers' enthusiasm, their very good knowledge of the curriculum and ability to make learning challenging and exciting, helps to keep all pupils fully motivated and extremely busy. In Year 6, the analysis of work and teachers' records show that in science, virtually all pupils will achieve the expected level and at least four out of ten will attain the higher Level 5. The proportions are similar for English and mathematics.
15. Teachers frequently make very good links between different subjects. In the Year 2 literacy lesson on using indexes, for example, pupils gained valuable knowledge in history and science as they discussed flammable materials. In a Year 5 science lesson on a healthy lifestyle, pupils' debating skills were tested as they argued about whether smoking should be banned.
16. Teachers develop pupils' social skills well by planning lots of opportunities for pupils to work on their own or as part of a small group. These opportunities are extended into activities outside of normal lessons. All staff give their free time during the lunch hour or after school unselfishly for the benefit of pupils. This very successfully extends pupils' opportunities to learn new skills, such as playing musical instruments or taking part in sporting activities. It also develops close relationships, giving many pupils added confidence in lessons. Praise is used well throughout to motivate or raise pupils' self-esteem, as shown in the supportive written comments attached to pupils' marked work. The quality of teachers' marking, although thorough, is not consistent. In some classes there are few written comments to let pupils know how to further improve their work. The best marking, and an example for all staff, was seen in Year 4. Comments were evaluative and pupils were regularly given targets for improvement.
17. The quality of teaching in the literacy hours and during numeracy sessions is very good throughout the school. When teaching other subjects, all teachers use the skills

that pupils have learned in these sessions effectively. The written work about the character of puppets made by Year 2 pupils in their design and technology lesson is a typical example. Pupils are frequently provided with the opportunity to use computers to practise or reinforce their literacy or numeracy skills. In English and mathematics, all achieve the targets set for them by the time they are ready to leave the school. This is a direct result of the quality of teaching and the successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Parents, at their meeting prior to the inspection, reported that they were happy about the opportunities for pupils to use computers. Inspectors agree. The ratio of one computer for every 12 pupils is about average for primary schools. These are located in the classrooms, giving pupils good access to them. Pupils, from the time they enter the school in the nursery to the time they leave, have lots of opportunities to use computers and skills are taught effectively almost entirely through the use of computers to support learning in all subjects.

18. The good provision made for pupils with special educational needs shows that the school is determined to help all pupils, whatever their ability, to do well. Those on the register for pupils with special educational needs are provided with much individual attention in each class. Staff use expert advice and very good assessment information to ensure that individual learning plans identify precise and achievable targets in relation to literacy, numeracy and social behaviour. Most teachers take full account of these individual targets in their lesson plans. Classroom support assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that the best possible use is made of their time when teaching pupils in class or withdrawing them for short sessions to work on a one-to-one basis. As a result, all pupils with special educational needs consistently receive the help they need to make good progress in relation to their personal targets. Similarly, pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well in class. However, the specific targets for individual pupils, set by the visiting specialist, are not routinely shared with class teachers, making it difficult for them to follow up work. Teaching for all pupils, including those with special educational needs is of a high quality, characterised by well-planned activities and a sensitive and caring approach, which successfully builds pupils' confidence, whatever their ability. As a result, all pupils are able to take a full part in all activities in this school. This includes the wide range of activities outside of normal lessons where every pupil has the opportunity to be involved. Participation is virtually 100 per cent with just about every pupil benefiting from at least one extra-curricular activity.

**The partnership with parents is outstandingly effective because it promotes very good pupil attendance and an excellent attitude to learning.**

19. The school's partnership with parents is excellent. It has been systematically improved from the previous inspection, when it was reported as very good. It was clearly apparent at the meeting for parents, prior to the inspection, that all had a high opinion of the school, its headteacher and staff. They believe this to be an excellent school. Almost half of the 249 questionnaires were returned and the analysis shows that parents have no major concerns over any of the aspects listed. It is rare for such a positive response to be received. In 10 of the 12 questions, there was 90 per cent or more parents in agreement and the other two were only below that because the questions were not particularly relevant for nursery parents and they responded as don't know. Ninety-nine per cent agreed that teaching was good, for example and 98 per cent said the school was well led and managed. A very small number tended to disagree over how well they were informed about their children's progress. Inspectors judge the amount of information to be very good with a detailed annual report, termly meetings and a truly open door policy giving parents many opportunities to discuss any concerns.

20. The school provides very good information for its parents. An interesting newsletter called 'Top Cat' is regularly circulated throughout the whole community and each half term parents receive detailed curriculum information so they know exactly what their children are going to learn in each subject. This information enables them to be closely involved with their children's learning. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report are both informative and comply with all statutory requirements.
21. Parents have very high expectations of the school and their interest in, and contribution to, pupils' learning has a major impact on the standards being achieved, on attendance and on pupils' attitude to school in general. Attendance was well above average in the last academic year and figures for this year show a further improvement. Parents help specifically with hearing reading and supporting homework tasks. Many volunteer to assist class teachers in lessons or when supervision for trips is needed. Virtually all attend meetings each term to discuss pupils' progress and assist in setting new targets for learning which are sufficiently challenging for their children. Most willingly support all fund-raising events organised by the active Friends Association.
22. The school values and goes out of its way to encourage the support and involvement of parents. Each year, for example, an Ofsted-style questionnaire is sent out seeking parental views, and governors use this information when deciding the priorities for development in the school management plan. Courses are also arranged for parents to help them to be more effective classroom assistants or to understand computer programs that their children use in school. The 'keep up with your kids' courses to help parents support their children in literacy and numeracy are very well attended. The headteacher and all members of staff have worked very hard to ensure that relationships with all parents are as good as they possibly can be. Future plans to try and communicate with parents in their own language demonstrate the attention to detail and strong belief in an effective partnership. The end result is that parents feel comfortable about approaching the school for any reason and have utter confidence in the people responsible for their children's education.

**Excellent curriculum provision enables pupils to achieve very well both in and outside of lessons.**

23. The school has considerably improved the quality of the curriculum on offer to pupils. It fully meets statutory requirements and is another strength of the school. Weaknesses noted in the previous inspection, in the opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills, in computer skills and the long periods when science was not taught, have been addressed. Each subject now has detailed programmes to guide teachers' planning. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught effectively and there is excellent provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including special lessons to discuss social and moral issues as well as teaching programmes to cover sex and drugs education. Personal, social, health education and citizenship have featured on the timetables for several years. The school has attained a Healthy School award for three consecutive years.
24. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage are very good. Teachers' plans show good coverage of the areas of learning recommended for this age group in the nursery. Children get a very good start to their schooling due to the interesting and exciting learning opportunities available to them. They have access to three computers, for example, interesting areas such as the balcony play area and a

wide range of play equipment and construction kits. This very good start is built on effectively in the reception class. A high priority is given to teaching the basic skills in communication, language and literacy, and numeracy, as well as to children's personal, social and emotional development. The 'vets' area, for example, was particularly effective in promoting speaking and children's social skills. Integrating aspects of the National Curriculum with the early learning goals is a very effective way of ensuring that the transition from one to the other is seamless. Access to a spacious outdoor play area further enhances children's opportunities for their physical development as well as supporting all other areas of learning. As a result, many achieve the national targets, called the early learning goals, in all areas of the curriculum well before they leave their reception year.

25. The school has adopted national guidance for all subjects. The school's curriculum map sets out very clearly when each unit of work will be taught and for how long. In each subject, the designated co-ordinator monitors planning termly and regularly samples pupils' work to check that teachers are conforming to the planned organisation of units of work. By this means, any inconsistencies affecting the quality of teaching and learning can be quickly corrected.
26. The school's emphasis on literacy and numeracy is good and the national strategies have been carefully implemented. However, literacy and mathematics lessons often extend beyond the recommended time, some lasting for one hour and 25 minutes. This is, in the view of the inspection team, too long to expect pupils to fully concentrate and work productively. However, due to the excellent attitude of most pupils and their very good behaviour, they do remain attentive. An increased focus on standards in writing is beginning to have an impact on raising standards of pupils' work. There are signs, too, of increasingly effective links between subjects with, for example, literacy skills being used well in history, and numeracy skills developing soundly in science.
27. Booster classes for Year 6 pupils are having a significant impact on the standards achieved by all pupils. A very talented part-time teacher shares the class with the class teacher, giving all pupils more individual attention. By working with pupils of a similar ability, work is matched closely to pupils' capabilities. For the highest attaining pupils it is demanding, and the level of challenge gives additional motivation to concentrate and meet the challenge. In mathematics, one very able pupil quickly worked out the VAT amount on £1,000 and used this to re-calculate it for £2,500, without using a calculator. In English, pupils understand how to bring events to life through carefully chosen vocabulary or details about the setting for scenes when writing an autobiography. The pace of the mathematics booster class, in particular, was rapid and the quality of teaching was very good in both. An after-school science booster session is provided for ten pupils, mostly boys. These booster sessions are having a significant impact on the school's overall performance in the national tests and help compensate for the difficulties caused by the mobility of pupils and the pupils who are experiencing difficulty with English.
28. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The emphasis is on early and accurate identification and intervention, and all pupils on the school's special educational needs register receive additional support from the learning support assistants. The curriculum provided for pupils is closely linked to the targets in their individual education plans and to the National Curriculum. The good quality of teachers' speech in most lessons is a key factor in enabling pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language to take a full part in the life of the school, both in and outside the classroom. Pupils with



statements of special educational needs are given suitable support in line with the requirements of their statements.

29. The curriculum is designed to enable pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to have equal access to learning opportunities and, in this, the school is most successful. The school does well to make a clear distinction between pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. It has a strong commitment to, and is successful in, achieving equal opportunities for all its pupils. The school is well aware of the diverse social and emotional needs of its pupils as well as their academic needs and so is able to meet these through the taught and extended curriculum.
30. The school offers an excellent number and range of extra-curricular activities for pupils of all ages. These include the chance to learn how to play musical instruments like the drums, recorder, flute or violin, to take part in the usual range of sporting activities and also an art, library, drama or thinking club. Younger pupils have Fitkids and an art club. There are plans to introduce a dance club for this age group when the new sports facility is ready. The wide variety of activities offers valuable opportunities for pupils to socialise with each other and to develop relationships with one another and their teachers. A good range of educational visits, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 6 to Keilder, enrich the curriculum, giving pupils opportunities to learn from first-hand experiences. The school successfully extends the curriculum through its well-established links with the community, including close links with the church and other local schools. It is these strengths within the extended curriculum that play a significant part in the excellent provision for pupils' personal development. This is a positive feature of the school's provision that has been strengthened since the inspection of November 1997.

**The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This has a major impact on pupils' personal development and their relationships, which are excellent.**

31. The overall provision has been further improved since the previous inspection when it was reported as very good. One important factor responsible for the improvement is the broad, balanced, and at times exciting, curriculum. This includes the excellent range of activities available to all pupils outside of normal lessons, such as drumming or 'thinking games' at lunchtimes. These support pupils' personal development just as well as their academic progress. Although there is a strong emphasis on raising standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teachers have not lost sight of the importance of all other subjects in the National Curriculum, including the arts and sport. Last year, the school achieved an award called 'Artsmark' in recognition of its good practice in the arts and 'Activemark' for good practice in physical education. The many opportunities for pupils to work and perform together enhances their personal development.
32. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is excellent and reflects the Catholic ethos of the school. Daily acts of worship meet statutory requirements and provide a good opportunity to celebrate achievement. Pupils are regularly required to reflect on issues that are relevant in their own lives in lessons called circle time. For example, Year 4 pupils defined positive adjectives like 'able', 'enthusiastic' or 'imaginative' and tried to match them to their classmates. This was an excellent way of raising individual pupils' self-esteem as others explained why they thought that they fitted the description. The school's mission statement recognises the equality and dignity of all people in the eyes of God and aims to bring a deeper understanding of the Gospel

values of trust, respect and dignity. Pupils show immense compassion for one another and those with different beliefs. The 'buddies', for example, take their responsibilities seriously and are quick to respond if anyone is hurt or tearful. Many pupils exhibited high levels of mutual respect throughout this inspection. With the very good quality of teaching, there are many moments when a sense of spirituality is created in lessons. In the reception class, for example, children were inspired to share their own precious memories after listening to their teacher sharing a special time in her life, getting her first pet kitten. Children responded beautifully, with the quality of listening as good as that of telling.

33. Excellent moral and social values are implicitly communicated to pupils in such a natural way that all pupils respond to the very high expectations of them and behave impeccably in school. Many examples of pupils working together and supporting one another were seen during lessons and in extra-curricular sessions. This has a direct impact on the quality of learning in every class as pupils display excellent attitudes to one another and to their work. In a Year 6 science lesson on mixing materials to cause change, for example, pupils responsibly gave out the materials and worked sensibly in groups. No water was spilt and all took it in turn to mix a material, whilst others watched carefully. Other initiatives to develop pupils sense of responsibility include wet lunchtime supervision by the 'buddies' who arrange games or activities for younger pupils and the Hadrian Project in which pupils undertake weekly visits to a special school or receive pupils from there to work alongside them in class. Pupils' independence and initiative are put to the test each year as Year 5 organise a talent show for pupils. This includes all the marketing and publicity for the event.
34. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. The school uses the wide cultural variation among the pupils very well. Pupils have, for example, tasted Chinese and Japanese food, enjoyed Spanish dancing sessions and listened to an Indian storyteller. Pupils show a clear understanding of some of the major religions in the world such as Sikhism and Judaism. There are good opportunities for pupils to visit different places of worship and visits by non-white people are frequent. As a way of further improving pupils' awareness of non-western cultures and the different Faiths which exist in Britain today, teachers could include in their planning important festivals such as Eid, which occurred during the inspection but was not mentioned.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**The quality of provision for some of the higher attaining pupils, particularly the very able, for pupils with special educational needs and for those who speak English as an additional language.**

35. Teachers know their pupils well and invariably provide work which is well matched to individual pupils' capabilities and is sufficiently challenging. All pupils concentrate exceptionally well, showing a keen interest in the tasks set for them. However, some minor areas for improvement for particular groups of pupils were noted in some classes during the inspection. On occasions, higher attaining pupils managed to complete their work quicker than their teachers anticipated. Suitably challenging additional work in the same subject area was not always available and, as a result, these pupils did not always work as productively as they might. It is important, particularly with such long literacy and numeracy sessions, that the level of challenge is maintained for these pupils.

36. All pupils with special educational needs have carefully prepared individual education plans, which have specific targets for improvement. Teachers take great care to match the difficulty of work to the ability level of these pupils in all subjects and also make sure they are closely supervised so that help is readily available. However, an analysis of teachers' planning showed that not all included the specific targets for individual pupils when preparing lessons. Although pupils with special educational needs make good progress, due to their excellent attitude towards school, strong relationship with their teachers and very good quality of teaching, this lack of focus means that progress towards some individual targets is perhaps not as rapid as it could be.
37. A third area for fine-tuning exists in the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Being so close to two hospitals and the university means that the school currently has 45 pupils from bilingual homes, which is high when compared to schools of a similar type. Of these, 13 pupils are at an early stage in their ability to speak and understand English. The school enlists the help of a specialist teacher to support most of this group. They often receive individual tuition once or twice each week, usually out of their classroom. The quality of this support is good and very detailed records are maintained for individual pupils. However, there is little liaison between the class teachers and this specialist. The class teachers are often unaware of the specific action being taken to help individual pupils gain confidence with English. Other than giving additional support with class work in general, teachers have no specific guidance on how they can support the work of the specialist teacher when they have the pupil for the greater part of the week. As a result, some pupils are not mastering the necessary skills as rapidly as they could if information was more effectively shared. It would enable the class teacher to practise or reinforce specific linguistic skills, helping pupils to speak and understand English more quickly and be able to join in lessons sooner.

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

38. There is no doubt that this is a very effective school. The qualities of leadership and management, amply displayed by the highly professional headteacher, the commitment of all staff to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils, and pupils' excellent attitude to all aspects of school life, are helping to build the school's reputation locally. Parents know and appreciate the school's many strengths and value what is being provided for their children. Not surprisingly, no major weaknesses were found during this inspection.
39. Although all teachers strive for perfection in all they do for the benefit of the pupils in their care, some minor inconsistencies in provision occur. In most of the lessons observed, teachers carefully planned work to match the capability of individual pupils. However, in a few lessons, planning did not specifically meet the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs, those who are very able and the few who are still finding it difficult to speak or understand English. Therefore, in order to continue raising standards and the quality of education, the headteacher, governors and staff need to:

- (1) Ensure more consistently effective provision for the needs of:
- a) higher attaining pupils, especially those who are gifted or talented in a particular subject by making sure that they are always sufficiently challenged;
  - b) pupils who speak English as an additional language by creating better liaison between the specialist teacher and class teachers in order to give them the quickest and fullest access to the curriculum; and
  - c) pupils with special educational needs by routinely including their specific targets for learning in lesson planning.

(Paragraphs 11, 18, 35, 36, 37, 39)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	12	10	2	0	0	0
Percentage	8	46	38	8	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three 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)	61	183
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	40

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	45

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	17	11	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	16
	Girls	9	8	10
	Total	22	22	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (91)	79 (84)	93 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	8	10	7
	Total	21	24	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (88)	86 (91)	75 (94)
	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	9	7	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	13	15	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (81)	94 (78)	88 (89)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	11	12	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (81)	75 (88)	100 (88)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Separate scores for boys and girls are not supplied as the small numbers of each in this cohort could lead to the possibility of individual recognition.



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

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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	154	1	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	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)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	26

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	117

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	31
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	73

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001 / 02
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	£
Total income	534,692
Total expenditure	536,611
Expenditure per pupil	2,096
Balance brought forward from previous year	39,262
Balance carried forward to next year	37,343

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
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**

Number of questionnaires sent out	249
Number of questionnaires returned	120

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	28	1	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	64	32	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	42	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	39	3	1	14
The teaching is good.	76	23	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	32	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	15	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	24	1	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	61	34	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	72	26	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	25	0	0	1

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

58	30	4	1	7
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