

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ilkeston

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112903

Headteacher: Mr David Jones

Reporting inspector: Mrs Rachael Andrew
21460

Dates of inspection: 20th – 21st January 2003

Inspection number: 247287

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church View
Allendale
Ilkeston
Derbyshire

Postcode: DE7 4LF

Telephone number: 0115 9320550

Fax number: -

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Ward

Date of previous inspection: January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a voluntary-aided Catholic primary school of average size situated in the town of Ilkeston. It draws its pupils from the Parish of Our Lady and St Thomas of Hereford and from further afield. The pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds, most of them from Catholic families. Most of the pupils are white and all speak English as their first language. The few ethnic minority pupils are of Indian or mixed backgrounds. There are 236 boys and girls on roll including 39 full-time children at the Foundation Stage in the reception class. The school is over-subscribed. Although there are only ten more boys than girls in the school, in two classes boys significantly outnumber girls. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is, at around three per cent, below the national average. The school has identified 18 per cent of its pupils as having special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average. Four of these pupils have written statements, which outline their learning and communication difficulties. The school assesses children on entry to the reception class and finds their attainments to be broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is well led and provides a good standard of education for its pupils. The headteacher sets high standards and he and the governors manage the school well so that it provides good value for money and continues to improve. A committed and hardworking staff enables the school to achieve its aims. The quality of teaching ensures that pupils make good progress and reach high standards by the time they leave. Pupils enjoy going to school, work hard and get on well with each other and with teachers. Parents hold the school in high regard and they and the wider parish give the school their strong support.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching, especially in Years 2 and 6, leads to good progress and high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The way the school provides for pupils' personal development results in very good relationships and behaviour and positive attitudes to work.
- The high expectations of the headteacher, the determination of the staff and the support of governors have enabled the school to improve academic standards further and to maintain the already very high standards of behaviour.
- The strong links with parents and the parish contribute to pupils' progress and have enabled the school to grow successfully.

What could be improved

- Better use should be made of the expertise of key staff to improve the quality of teaching further.
- Pupils' independent learning, investigative and decision-making skills could be better.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1998. Since that time the action taken to secure improvement, in those areas identified by the last inspection report, has been good. Sufficient funds have been earmarked to enable standards to rise to meet national expectations in information and communication technology. This has been done by buying computers and software, training teachers to use them efficiently and improving the planning of the curriculum. There have been substantial improvements to the building and outside area and this is continuing. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been improved but could still be better if key staff other than the headteacher were regularly involved. Academic standards have improved further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	A	A	A*	A	well above average A
Mathematics	B	B	A	A	above average B
Science	A	B	A	A	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

The table above shows that by the time pupils leave the school they reach standards that are well above average and well above those found in other similar schools. In 2002, pupils' English results were in the top five per cent nationally. The school sets sufficiently demanding targets for pupils at the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve these. The work in English, mathematics and science, seen during the inspection, indicates that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are already achieving the standards that are expected by the end of the year. Many pupils are likely to exceed these because of the rapid progress made in these years that enables higher attaining pupils to do their best. Progress in other years is good but does not always enable the most able pupils to do as well as they could. The school succeeds in enabling lower-attaining pupils to reach average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 by thorough teaching of basic skills and good support from teachers and teaching assistants. This is confirmed by the results at the end of last year. The school's results, although already high, are improving over time. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Year 6 read and write fluently. The emphasis given to reading and writing poetry contributes to the use of adventurous vocabulary in pupils' own writing. Pupils write competently to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings and to record their work in many areas of the curriculum. In mathematics pupils calculate accurately and quickly because of the attention given to mental arithmetic. They have good knowledge of science in all the areas studied although their understanding of testing procedures is hampered by a lack of opportunity to design and carry out their own investigations. Children at the Foundation Stage in the reception class make good progress and are on course to achieve what is expected of children of this age nationally in all the areas of learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn, try hard and persevere. They concentrate well. In Year 2 and Year 6, levels of concentration and effort are excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They play sensibly at playtimes.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils get on well together. They show respect for property and for each other. They value the opinions and ideas of others and co-operate well.
Attendance	Good. It is above the national average.

The consistent way in which teachers apply rewards and sanctions helps pupils to behave well. Teachers value pupils and treat them fairly. Pupils follow their lead and show trust and respect.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	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.

In all parts of the school, the majority of teaching is good. It enables pupils to make good progress in their work and to do their best. The teaching in Year 2 is very good. It is outstanding in Year 6. At these points there is a significant surge in pupils' efforts, progress and achievements. In Year 6, inspirational teaching has pupils on the edge of their seats with anticipation. There is a 'can do' atmosphere in the room and pupils are mutually supportive. Well-focused programmes of more demanding work help more able pupils to achieve their best. In all classes, basic skills of literacy and numeracy, particularly mental skills, are taught thoroughly. Pupils' learning builds carefully on what has gone before. New learning is consolidated well so that lower-attaining pupils remember it. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and at the end of lessons often go over it again to check that all have understood. In English the pupils gain confidence and fluency from writing in a range of different forms. They increase their competency because teachers ensure the pupils use writing to record their work in other subjects. In mathematics, teachers expect pupils to try out different strategies and explain their thinking. This helps to extend their understanding of the number system and how it works. The way that pupils record their work is, however, somewhat restrictive of their independence and creativity. Many published worksheets are used and these do not always provide the pupils with sufficient challenge to think of how they could best record what they have done or develop their understanding further by applying what they have learnt in different ways. There are too few opportunities for pupils in most classes to make decisions about the materials and equipment needed for a task, to think about how they are going to tackle the work and to ask questions. This hinders the development of independent learning skills so, for example, infant pupils who read well are not sure how to find information in reference books. Literacy and numeracy sessions in the reception class sometimes require children to sit and listen for too long rather than putting their learning into practice in classroom activities. Children make good progress when they put their skills into practice in carefully structured activities related to a theme, for instance a nursery rhyme, that captures their imagination and interest. Good use is made of teaching assistants and volunteer helpers in the reception class and Year 1 to manage effectively the large numbers of children in these classes and to ensure good levels of adult support for small group work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is planned well so that pupils cover a wide range of work. Appropriate links are made between different subjects so that pupils see the relevance of what they are learning. Teachers use a range of methods so pupils find the work interesting.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Teachers are aware of individual needs and ensure that pupils work towards their targets. Teaching assistants give effective support and build pupils' confidence.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. There is a taught programme of personal and social education that helps pupils to understand their responsibilities and the effect of their actions on others. Pupils are given time to express their thoughts and feelings. The Catholic ethos of the school based on the value of each individual permeates the work of the school. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about other ways of life and cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are carried out efficiently.

The school works very well in partnership with parents and the wider parish. Parents support pupils' work well at home. The financial support provided by the parish has contributed substantially to the improvements to new classrooms.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads the staff well. The whole staff is committed to improving standards even though these are already high. They are successful in achieving high academic standards and a learning environment where pupils can do their best.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They support the school's work in many ways and take a lead in planning and overseeing the building programme.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has an effective system for checking how well it is doing. The local education authority supports this process well and provides a useful outside view. The headteacher checks the quality of teaching in lessons on a regular basis and has identified areas for improvement but at present does not involve other key staff in spreading the good practice in school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses its funds, including specific grants, wisely and for the purpose intended. It makes good use of expert financial advice from the local education authority. Good financial planning has enabled the school to improve its learning resources and build new classrooms.

Through effective school improvement planning and evaluation the school reviews its procedures and measures its success carefully. When the school makes spending decisions, it makes sure that it gets the best value from the funds available to it. These funds are used wisely to promote pupils' progress and improve standards. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate for the needs of the curriculum.

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 like school. The teaching is good and pupils make good progress. The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. Pupils behave well and become mature and responsible. The school is well led and managed and parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents would like to see a more interesting range of activities outside lessons. Parents are concerned that not enough time is given to physical education, especially in the reception class. Parents felt that too much homework was given to pupils in Year 2 prior to the end of year tests rather than being spread throughout the year.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. There is a range of activities available to older pupils outside normal lesson times but not as many as is found in most schools. The amount of time given to physical education is slightly less than in most schools especially for younger children. It is not possible to make a judgement about how the time allocation affects younger children as no physical education lessons were arranged for them, during the two days of the inspection. The school has already changed the arrangements for homework in Year 2 to ensure that the work is spread more evenly through the year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching, especially in Years 2 and 6, leads to good progress and high standards in English, mathematics and science.

1. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in all parts of the school. Teachers plan work that builds carefully on what pupils have learnt before. Because they have good understanding of the subjects they teach, teachers can pass on their knowledge effectively and explain new learning well. Basic skills, especially of reading, writing, spelling and number, are taught well so that pupils learn these vital skills quickly. Good progress in reading helps pupils to gain information about all other areas of the curriculum. Older pupils, for example, search the Internet for information about the Second World War. Quite young children are able to record and present their work in writing in many subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 wrote at length about how Howard Carter discovered the tombs of the pharaohs. Older pupils develop a wide vocabulary, which they use adventurously in their writing. One reason for this is the emphasis on reading and writing poetry. The effect of this is noticeable from Year 4 onwards.
2. Science is taught well. Each part of the science curriculum is given sufficient weight so that pupils make good progress in learning about living things, materials and physical processes. Pupils of all ages take part in investigative work but their understanding of how to design, carry out and make a test fair is weak as they are not encouraged to think for themselves. Each area of the work is studied again at a higher level as pupils get older so that earlier work is revised thoroughly and the learning moves on substantially.
3. Teachers' planning ensures that different parts of each subject is given sufficient time. In mathematics, for example, as well as becoming proficient in number work and calculating skills, pupils show good progress in using and understanding graphs. There are good opportunities for putting this knowledge into use, for example in Year 5 when pupils record information from a survey. Mathematical language is developed well so that pupils use it to describe their work; for example, pupils in Year 4 can describe the properties of three-dimensional shapes accurately.
4. Teachers, teaching assistants, students and volunteers work well together to support and guide pupils while they work individually or in groups. They provide especially effective help for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Teachers explain or provide notes so that the assistants know precisely what to do. It is made clear to each group what they are expected to learn so that everyone knows what they should have accomplished by the end of the lesson. Assistants are patient, help pupils overcome difficulties by providing further explanation and remind them about taking care. They pitch questions at the right level to extend pupils' thinking. If pupils' concentration wavers they draw them back to the task. Pupils are praised for their efforts so they are encouraged to persevere. There are effective extra programmes of work and short courses, in English and mathematics, to help lower-attaining pupils to reach the levels expected nationally and to enable the most able pupils to achieve higher levels. School information about pupils' progress shows that these programmes contribute well to the standards achieved in the school.
5. In the upper junior classes particularly, regular homework supports the work done in class and builds on the good progress pupils make there. There is a good variety of research, skill practice and written work to keep pupils interested. The quality of some marking, for example in Years 5 and 6, helps pupils to see where they need to improve. Targets for individual pupils are also having a positive impact on improving specific areas of pupils' work. Pupils are keen to discuss them and to show how they now do better in these areas.

6. The teaching in Year 2 is very good. The teacher manages pupils expertly so that no time is wasted reminding them what they should do or how to behave. Pupils concentrate very well because the teacher makes the most of teaching time. She explains new work carefully, checks pupils' understanding and provides interesting tasks to capture their interest. Her enthusiasm and skill make learning enjoyable and she has many useful strategies for helping pupils remember important facts. Mathematics lessons are fast paced and pupils make rapid progress in learning how to use different methods of addition. Pupils are taught to use number patterns to see relationships so that, for example, more able pupils say during the lesson that "if you add an odd and even number the answer's always odd". At the end of the lesson, time is used well to go over what pupils have learnt. Pupils make very good progress in this class.
7. The teaching in Year 6 is outstanding. Such is the skill and enthusiasm of the teacher that pupils are on the edge of their seats with anticipation of each lesson. There is a 'can do' atmosphere so that when the teacher asks "Are you ready to fly?", pupils mean what they say when they respond "We are ready to fly!". Relationships are excellent and the teacher frequently encourages and praises pupils' well-deserved successes and the effort they put into their work. There is nothing dull about the teaching in this class. The teacher uses a wide range of methods, groupings and techniques to keep pupils interested and ensure maximum effort and progress. The work challenges the pupils and taxing questions make them think more deeply. The skills pupils need to help them read, write and calculate are taught very effectively and the teacher skilfully tests the pupils' level of understanding by asking pupils to use them in different ways. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher challenged the pupils to use their substantial knowledge of solutions to identify and separate the different components. In all the lessons observed, mathematics, science, geography and personal and social education, learning was of high quality. Particularly good use is made of the end of the lesson to draw together what pupils have learned and to lay the foundations for the next steps. At the end of the day the teacher reviews the work of the whole day, checking what pupils remember and reminding them of key elements of the work. Very good use is made of computers and other information technology equipment to support learning in many subjects. Pupils gather information from CD-ROMs and the Internet. They use graphics software to design and plan, word-processing skills to present work in different ways, and databases, graphs and spreadsheets to show information. Pupils also use a digital camera to produce computer-enhanced photographs of the school grounds. They make presentations to the rest of the class using computer programs and design and control a series of flashing lights and buzzers. Pupils' progress is exceptional and they reach standards that compare very favourably with those in other similar schools in English, mathematics and science.

The way the school provides for pupils' personal development results in very good relationships and behaviour and positive attitudes to work.

8. The school's personal and social education programme is well structured so that pupils' needs at each stage of their development are taken into account. It is used to foster an understanding of pupils' rights and responsibilities and to help them to consider the effect of their action on others. Young children, for example, talk about people who help them and discuss what makes a good friend. Older pupils consider why cheating is wrong and discuss other moral issues that confront them in the world news. Pupils learn to empathise with others because teachers use the curriculum thoughtfully. For example, pupils take on the role of an evacuee or a soldier during the Second World War and write a letter home.
9. There are high expectations of behaviour. Pupils have discussed school rules and the reason for these and understand why they are necessary. They try hard to comply and this results in an atmosphere where pupils can concentrate on their work and play, without fear of intimidation. They know who to turn to when they or others have problems or are in trouble and they are confident that their teachers and the headteacher will deal with them seriously. The consistent way that teachers apply rewards and sanctions helps pupils to behave well.

10. Teachers value pupils' ideas and contributions and treat them fairly so pupils learn to trust and respect them. This provides good examples for them to follow and they form mutually supportive relationships with other pupils. In Year 6 in particular, pupils are expected to work in pairs so that their co-operative skills develop well. For example, on occasions the teacher asks pupils who are good at mathematics to work with those who find it difficult. He reminds one to show respect by watching carefully and the other to exercise patience until the new learning is understood. Not only does this develop pupils' social skills very well but also produces good progress in mathematical thinking. Teachers encourage and reward concentration, effort and hard work and pupils respond to this by doing their best. The school's reward system supports this further by recognition in assemblies.
11. Pupils grow in maturity and self-control. They are trustworthy and are well prepared for their transition to secondary school. Many are ready to take on more weighty responsibilities for the communal life of the school and to help to shape its future by contributing their ideas, but at present there are only a few opportunities for them to do so. For example, there is no school council or other means by which pupils can make suggestions about how to improve school life.

The high expectations of the headteacher, the determination of the staff and the support of governors have enabled the school to improve academic standards further and to maintain the already very high standards of behaviour.

12. The headteacher leads the school well. He has formulated with governors a clear set of aims that encompass Christian values, the fulfilment of academic and personal potential and strong links with the parents and the parish. These aims are published in the prospectus, made clear to all parents when they visit the school to seek admission and have their full support.
13. The headteacher manages the school well so that these aims can be realised. He has built up a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff and won their commitment to improving all areas of the school's work. He has enabled subject leaders to develop skills in overseeing their subjects, particularly in leading changes to the curriculum and assessing the quality of pupils' work. This has led to a further rise in standards. He has deployed teachers well so that they can make the best use of their particular skills. The potential and capacity for further improvement are good.
14. The headteacher has established effective systems to check what works well and where improvements need to be made so that school development planning reflects the most pressing needs. He ensures that effective action is taken and with staff and governors checks how successful these have been. For example, the action taken to deal with weaknesses in the provision for information and communication technology has led to substantial improvements to the range of learning opportunities available to pupils and the standards they achieve by the end of Year 6. The school has constantly checked the progress of its plans and sought better ways of doing things when confronted with technical problems. Further improvements are planned to tie in with the next phase of the building programme. The local education authority's representative supports this process skilfully, providing an objective outside view and insights into alternative approaches. The headteacher encourages the governors to take a lead, especially in areas where they have expertise. They do this successfully, particularly in initiating and overseeing the building programme.
15. There are efficient systems to enable the school to run smoothly and good support from administrative and non-teaching staff. The school has thorough procedures and keeps careful records to ensure the welfare of its pupils.
16. The headteacher has nurtured a fruitful working partnership with parents and the parish. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and hold it in high regard. They feel able to hold the school to account when things go wrong and are confident of a fair hearing and

appropriate action being taken. For example, older pupils speak of using their parents as advocates to initiate changes to the lunch-time arrangements. The parish is very much a part of the wider school family and provides spiritual, financial and practical support.

17. As a result of these strengths in leadership and management the school enables pupils to reach high academic standards and become mature and responsible, in fulfilment of its aims.

The strong links with parent and the parish contribute to pupils' progress and have enabled the school to grow successfully.

18. The school makes sure that each prospective pupil has a home visit so that the reception class teacher has a full picture of the child's needs and background and can sow the seeds of a fruitful partnership from the start. This is followed by a visit to the school so that parents are keenly aware of the school's aims and what is required of them in supporting the school and their child. This is backed up by the home/school agreement for which there is widespread support.

19. Parents support pupils' work well at home and help them to make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The school provides parents with information so that reading support is effective and concentrates on reading for meaning. Most parents listen to their children read on a regular basis and help them to learn spellings and multiplication tables. Parents work with their children to reach the individual targets that teachers set for them. Parents of older pupils support more formal homework well. There are good examples in Year 6, where pupils have carried out research at home, with guidance from their parents, to supplement work done in school. They have produced project reports of high quality, for example about their family history. There is a high level of attendance at parents' evenings when parents discuss their children's progress.

20. Parents provide effective help in school by working alongside teachers, making sure that pupils can understand what they have to do, talking about the work and helping them to get the most from it. Other parents help with visits, performances and school projects. For example, they have been involved in improving the wetland area and helped pupils to design and construct Chloe's garden in memory of a pupil who died. This has helped pupils to come to terms with the death of a much-loved member of the school community and to remember and value her personal qualities. Parents join pupils for the School Mass and other important celebrations, showing their commitment to supporting the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development.

21. The Parish of Our Lady and St Thomas of Hereford supports the school in many ways. Members of the parish, many of them former pupils, have a high regard and affection for the school and do all that they can to promote pupils' learning and help the school to improve its facilities. Under the leadership of their parish priest, who is a member of the governing body, they have raised substantial sums of money to ensure there is adequate funding for new classrooms. This is in response to their concerns about overcrowding raised in the last inspection report. Together with parents they support the parents' association social events that also raise money for learning resources. They support the spiritual development of the pupils and the prayer life of the school by attending the School Mass.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Better use should be made of the expertise of key staff to improve the quality of teaching further.

22. Whilst the quality of teaching is good overall it varies from class to class. At its best, in Year 6, it is outstanding. It is very good in Year 2. In the other classes, teaching in about half the lessons was good and half was satisfactory. This leads to overall good but uneven progress

through the school. The work in pupils' books shows a similar picture – steady progress through the early stages of the infants and juniors with rapid improvements being made in Year 2 and Year 6 enabling the pupils to reach high standards at crucial stages in their education. Whilst teaching and learning overall are clearly good, they could be even better.

23. Subject co-ordinators and skilled teachers are not able to influence good practice well enough because they rarely work alongside other teachers, give demonstration lessons in their subjects or observe and evaluate their colleagues' teaching.
24. The headteacher checks the quality of teaching in each class regularly, both on an informal and on a formal basis. However, the observations too often concentrate upon what teachers do rather than on how well pupils learn. This results in the guidance for teachers sometimes not being precise enough about what is working well and the reasons why, and what needs improving and the reasons why. Subject co-ordinators have built up substantial expertise in their subjects but should be more involved in improving the quality of teaching further by sharing good practice. They collect examples of work at different levels of competence and help other teachers to make accurate assessments of what pupils do well and what the next steps should be. They look carefully at pupils' completed work and identify aspects that need improving. However, they do not have release time to see how effective teaching and learning are in other classrooms. They have part of the picture but not enough to make a real difference to the quality of teaching. As a result, important areas for improvement, for example insufficient opportunities for pupils to take control of investigative work in science, have not been identified. When evaluating pupils' completed work, subject leaders have identified weaknesses, for example that there is insufficient emphasis given in some classes to creative writing, but the action taken has not been wholly effective. This is because how teachers actually teach creative writing has not been investigated well enough.

Pupils' independent learning, investigative and decision-making skills could be better.

25. The structure of many lessons is similar. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher and then either practise new skills or record what they have learnt in a format presented to them, before gathering together at the end to draw things together. The structure on the whole is effective but weaknesses lie in the content of the middle part of the lesson. This has become over-prescriptive and discourages individuality, creativity and flair. This is not the case in Year 6, where the best learning and progress take place.
26. In many classes, there are too few opportunities for pupils to make decisions about how they are going to record their learning. Teachers overuse worksheets that often limit pupils' response and provide little challenge for higher-attaining pupils. These worksheets can be helpful on occasions when they are well chosen for a particular group of pupils, for example to provide a framework for lower-attaining pupils to get them started quickly as in a history lesson in Year 2. The worksheets helped lower-attaining pupils to compare statements about how the fire of London spread and decide which were true and which false. It was an effective way of reminding them about what they had learned. However, the worksheets did not challenge higher-attaining pupils to extend what they had learnt by, for example, writing an eye-witness account or finding more information from simple reference books or pictures that were already available in the classroom.
27. In the youngest classes the children sometimes sit for too long listening. This results in waning levels of concentration although children try very hard to stay alert. When there is a shorter period of explanation by the teacher and this is followed by a more practical approach the children have more chance to put their learning into practice and progress is better. The children learn best when they are given the opportunity to try out new skills in a variety of interesting tasks, often closely related to a theme such as nursery rhymes. Children enjoy these activities, their response is more lively, and they often practise several skills at once. For example, the children used their creative and manipulative skills to design, cut out and

decorate cards for the Knave of Hearts to send to the Queen of Hearts. They also tried out their skills to write "I am sorry" – for stealing the tarts!

28. In science pupils are involved in experimental work but this is often too closely directed by the teacher. As they get older they play a bigger part in carrying out experiments but even in the upper juniors they are not sufficiently involved in designing an experiment, deciding what equipment they will need, organising it and presenting their findings in a way they have chosen themselves. As a result they have a tenuous understanding of how to make a test fair. This is an important part of the work and one that leads to a better understanding of science to add to their good grasp of facts.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the rate of pupils' progress and raise the already high standards even higher, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) enable key staff and subject co-ordinators to contribute their expertise more widely to improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in lessons in other classes;
 - giving demonstration lessons to share good practice; and
 - working alongside other teachers in the classroom to give support and guidance.

- (2) provide more opportunities for pupils to develop independence in their learning by:
 - encouraging them, from the start, to ask more questions;
 - encouraging them to make decisions about what equipment and materials they will need for a task;
 - challenging them to record their learning in different ways;
 - encouraging them from a young age to find things out for themselves from reference books and teaching the skills they need to do it more successfully; and
 - involving all pupils more often in carrying out their own experiments in science and older pupils in designing, planning and conducting their own.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

18

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	1	5	6	6	0	0	0
Percentage	6	28	33	33	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	236
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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	12	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (90)	100 (90)	100(90)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (90)	100 (97)	100 (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	24	11	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	24	24
	Girls	11	10	11
	Total	35	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (89)	97 (81)	100 (97)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	24	24
	Girls	11	10	11
	Total	35	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (92)	97 (81)	100 (97)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	219	0	0
White – Irish	6	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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	26:2
Average class size	33

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	123

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	425256
Total expenditure	420999
Expenditure per pupil	1830
Balance brought forward from previous year	4744
Balance carried forward to next year	9001

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	236
Number of questionnaires returned	138

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	29	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	70	27	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	82	17	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	37	7	0	2
The teaching is good.	83	14	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	36	6	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	22	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	17	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	61	33	3	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	74	23	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	22	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	38	22	4	14

Other issues raised by parents

Parents felt that too much homework was given to pupils in Year 2 in the run-up to the end of year tests. Parents felt that there were too few opportunities for children in the reception class to take part in physical education.