

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST FRANCIS CHURCH OF ENGLAND (AIDED)
JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Newton Aycliffe, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114267

Headteacher: Mrs Sandra J Whitton

Reporting inspector: Mrs Lesley Traves
24039

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th March 2003

Inspection number: 247442

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Aided
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Scholars Path Newton Aycliffe County Durham
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon W E L Broad
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
24039	Mrs L J Traves	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Quality and range of opportunities for learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
9843	Mrs S Drake	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Partnership with parents and carers
18370	Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	English Design and technology Physical education Educational inclusion	Teaching and learning
12394	Mrs C May	Team inspector	Science Art and design Music Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Francis Church of England Junior School is situated in the town of Newton Aycliffe, in County Durham. It is smaller than most schools of the same type with 144 on roll, aged between 7 and 11. There are more boys than girls, which results in an imbalance in some classes. More pupils join the school after the beginning of Year 3 and leave before the end of Year 6 than in many schools. Numbers have risen steadily in recent years and as a result, classes are large. Most pupils are white and all speak English as their first language. The school mainly draws its pupils from two large areas of local authority housing, with some pockets of social and economic need. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (44 per cent) is well above the national average. Over a third of pupils have special educational needs, which is above average. Most of these relate to learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils with a statement (1.4 per cent) is broadly average. When they enter the school, the attainment of a significant number of pupils is below average in English, mathematics and science. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2002, after a period when the school had two different acting headteachers. Two new teachers have also joined the school recently and an acting deputy head has been appointed from among the staff. The school has won two awards from the Department for Education and Skills in recognition of its achievements. It has also been awarded the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark' and 'Investors in People'.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, which provides a high standard of care for its pupils. Teaching is good and as a result, pupils develop very good attitudes to learning and make good progress. Standards have risen since the last inspection and many more pupils now reach the expected levels by the age of 11 in English, mathematics and science. They achieve significantly better in the national tests than pupils of schools in similar circumstances. The headteacher leads and manages the school very well. The acting deputy, staff and governors give good support. They are strongly committed to the school and work together effectively as a team, for the benefit of the pupils. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good; she is well supported by all staff and governors in moving the school forward;
- Teaching is good and as a result, pupils develop very good attitudes to learning and make good progress;
- It provides a high standard of care for its pupils;
- It enables pupils to develop as thoughtful, caring individuals, who respect themselves and others;
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for; they receive high quality support;
- It provides a wide range of opportunities outside lessons, which enrich pupils' experiences and develop their social skills well.

What could be improved

- Standards in music;
- The skills of some subject leaders in leading and managing their areas of responsibility;
- The effectiveness of teachers' marking in helping pupils to improve their work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1997. There have been good improvements in the issues identified last time. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved significantly. Better use is now made of information on pupils' progress to plan the next learning steps, set targets and give extra support where needed. There has also been a significant improvement in standards in ICT, as a result of a stronger curriculum, better teaching and improved resources. Good use has been made of

national and local subject guidance in most subjects to ensure that pupils can build progressively on their skills from year to year. Good systems are now in place for checking on the work of the school and identifying areas for improvement. However, there is still more to be done to develop the skills of subject leaders in checking on standards in their areas of responsibility.

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	C	A	D	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A*	A*	B	A	
Science	A	A*	C	A	

There have been significant improvements in the test results since the last inspection, with standards rising faster than in schools nationally. In 2000 and 2001 in mathematics and in 2001 in science, results placed St. Francis in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country. There was a dip in standards in the 2002 tests for 11-year-olds. This is because there were more pupils in the Year 6 class with special educational needs than in the previous two years. Although these pupils achieved well in relation to their abilities, a significant number did not reach the average level in the tests. There were also fewer pupils in this class capable of reaching the higher level (Level 5) than in the previous year. Also, a significant number of pupils in this class joined the school after Year 3 and some had too much ground to make up. Despite these factors, pupils at St. Francis did significantly better than pupils in schools in similar circumstances, in all three subjects. This is because more pupils achieved both the average and higher levels in the tests than in these schools. In mathematics a higher percentage of pupils achieved the higher level (Level 5) in the tests than in all schools nationally. The current Year 6 class is likely to achieve average standards in all three subjects. A similar number of pupils are on course to reach the average level in all three subjects as in 2002. There is likely to be a slight increase in the number on course to reach the higher level in English, but fewer in mathematics. This still represents a good improvement since the time of the last inspection. The school sets itself appropriately challenging targets and is working hard to meet them.

Throughout the school, pupils make good progress from a below average starting point. In English and mathematics, the introduction of the national strategies for the subjects has had a strong impact on both teaching and learning. Better use of assessment data is ensuring that those pupils experiencing difficulties are quickly identified and given the support that they need. Good teaching ensures that pupils build rapidly on their previous learning. Standards in science are broadly average throughout the school and pupils' skills of investigation are improving. In ICT, standards have improved and are now at the expected level. Standards in all other areas are typical of those usually seen, with the exception of music, where they are not as high as they should be. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their abilities because they are well supported. Small, achievable targets are set for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children are keen to learn, work hard and take part in all aspects of school life.
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Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in lessons, on the playground and around the school. They show respect for others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are very good. Pupils work and play well together. The older pupils are mature and sensible. They work well independently. The school has an effective policy to promote racial harmony.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The school monitors attendance well. However, figures are affected by pupils moving in and out of the school and by periods of long-term sickness.

Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and each other. They have very positive relationships with all the staff who work with them. Most are thoughtful and considerate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good

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

Teaching is good overall. This is a stronger picture than that of the last inspection. The unsatisfactory teaching seen then has been eliminated and there is now a much higher proportion of very good teaching. Pupils make good progress in most subjects, throughout the school as a result. A strength of the teaching is the quality of relationships between staff and pupils and the high expectations staff have of them in terms of their work and behaviour. As a result, pupils develop very good attitudes to learning and work hard to please their teachers. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers explain very clearly to pupils what they want them to learn. Consequently, pupils understand their tasks and get down to work with the minimum of disruption. Questions are used effectively to draw out what pupils already know and check their understanding of new learning. Teachers also make good use of resources in most lessons and often plan practical, 'hands on' experiences for pupils. As a result, their interest is engaged and they are well motivated. Teaching is consistently good in literacy and numeracy lessons. Pupils demonstrate good mental agility and develop a wide range of strategies for calculation. A strong focus on teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation ensures pupils make good progress in these areas. Teaching in music is not as strong as in other areas, because staff lack confidence in the subject. A weaker aspect of teaching is the use teachers make of marking to help pupils to improve their work.

Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, both in class and in small groups. Work is often specially adapted to meet their needs, which helps them to achieve good results and boosts their confidence. Teaching assistants are very skilled at supporting these pupils and work closely with teachers to provide exactly the right learning experiences for them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school is working hard to enrich the learning experiences provided by improving the opportunities for visits and visitors. A good range of activities outside lessons is offered. Insufficient time has been allocated to music until very recently and requirements for the subject have not been met.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Carefully designed work programmes and highly skilled learning support enable these pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' spiritual development is very good. The pupils are encouraged to think deeply about life and reflect on their own attitudes and feelings. Cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils learn about their own culture but more opportunities could be provided to learn about the cultures of other people.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils are very well cared for and their academic progress is carefully monitored. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are very secure

Parents have positive views about the school. They support their children effectively with homework. The school values their contributions and seeks and responds to their opinions.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is a very strong and effective leader. She has set a very clear direction for the work of the school. The acting deputy head supports her well in managing key aspects of the school's work. Some key staff need training in their new areas of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. They give good support to the headteacher and staff. They are closely involved in setting the direction for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. She identifies the right priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finances are managed well to support the school's priorities and raise standards. Funds for ICT have been used effectively to improve the subject.

The school has adequate staff and resources to support its work. The 'open plan' accommodation poses some problems, but staff work hard to minimise the impact. The outdoor environment is uninspiring and does not provide for pupils who want to take part in quieter pursuits. The school applies the principles of best value well. It consults effectively with its pupils and parents and compares the cost of the goods and services it purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects their children to work hard; • The teaching is good; • Their children make good progress; • Children get the right amount of work to do at home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about their children's progress; • The range of activities provided outside lessons; • The way the school works with them.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views. They also agree that there could be more information provided on children's progress. However, inspectors judge the range of activities provided outside

lessons to be better than found in most junior schools. The team also feels that the school is working hard to improve the ways in which it works with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards have improved significantly in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection, when they were judged to be below average. Many more pupils now achieve the average level in all three subjects and standards have risen at a faster rate than in the majority of schools in the country. In the 2001 tests, St. Francis achieved results that were in the top 5 per cent in the country in mathematics and science and well above average in English.
2. A dip in results in the 2002 tests was the result of a higher number of pupils in that particular Year 6 class having special educational needs. Although these pupils achieved well in relation to their abilities, a significant proportion failed to reach the average level in all subjects. Also, there were fewer pupils in this particular class capable of achieving the higher level (Level 5) in English and science. In mathematics, there were a few more pupils who were capable of reaching the higher level than in the other subjects. A significant number of pupils joined the school after Year 3 and some had too much ground to make up, despite the school's best efforts. When compared to all schools nationally, results were below, but very close to, average in English. This was because fewer pupils reached the higher level in the tests than in other schools. In mathematics, results were above average and in science they were average. When compared to schools in similar circumstances, St. Francis is doing much better than most, with results well above average in all three subjects.
3. Inspection findings judge standards in all three subjects to be average. In the current Year 6 class the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly similar to last year. A similar number of pupils are likely to reach the average level in all three subjects. There is likely to be a slight increase in the number of pupils who reach the higher level in English, but fewer in mathematics. There are fewer more able mathematicians than last year. However, this picture still represents a good improvement since the time of the last inspection.
4. An analysis of assessment data and pupils' work indicates that standards are below average, when pupils enter the school. They make good progress throughout the school to reach average standards in most subjects by the time they leave. An exception to this is music, where standards are below those expected.
5. Improvements in standards in English and mathematics have been brought about by better teaching and more careful analysis of pupils' progress. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively, enabling pupils to build systematically on their skills from year to year. In English, pupils make good progress in both reading and writing. By Year 6, most are fluent, confident readers who enjoy books and can use them effectively for learning. They develop control and confidence as writers over a range of text types and write for different purposes and audiences. Strong teaching of mathematics ensures that pupils make good progress in working with numbers. They develop a good range of calculation strategies and use their skills effectively to solve problems and carry out investigations. Effective use is made of 'catch-up' programmes in both literacy and numeracy to accelerate the progress of pupils experiencing difficulties.

6. Pupils make good progress in science as a result of good teaching. Progress has accelerated and standards have improved in recent years because more attention is paid to developing pupils' investigative skills as well as their knowledge of scientific facts. Good opportunities are provided in all classes for practical investigations.
7. Pupils make good progress in ICT and reach average standards by Year 6. Progress is accelerating lower down the school and younger pupils are on course to achieve more in the future. This is a major improvement since the last inspection, which has been brought about through stronger teaching, a better curriculum and improved resources. More opportunities are now provided for pupils to practise their ICT skills in other subjects.
8. With the exception of music, standards in all other subjects are broadly in line with expectations at the age of 11. Standards in music are unsatisfactory. Not enough time has been devoted to the subject, until recently, to enable pupils to build appropriately on their skills from year to year. Elements of the curriculum have not been covered sufficiently well. As a result, older pupils in particular have little musical knowledge and their skills are poorly developed. Staff also lack confidence and skill in teaching music. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They receive high quality support, particularly in English and mathematics, to help them develop their skills. Pupils are set small, manageable targets. Careful records of each child's progress towards these are kept by the class teachers and learning support assistants and updated regularly and used effectively to plan the next learning steps for them.
10. From its analysis of pupils' progress, the school sets itself appropriately challenging targets for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of Year 6. In recent years targets have been achieved and on occasions, exceeded. The school revisits targets and updates them in the light of current information on how well pupils are doing. The targets in English for 2003, for example, have been revised upwards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The good attitudes and behaviour of pupils noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and the quality of their relationships and awareness of others' needs have improved and they are now very good. The school operates as a warm, friendly community in which everyone is valued. Pupils, therefore, feel confident to ask questions if they are not sure about something and also to welcome visitors, offer them help and chat in a pleasant manner.
12. Pupils like being members of St Francis School. They all take part enthusiastically in activities and enjoy their learning. They settle well at the beginning of lessons, listen attentively to teachers and to each other and they take care with their work. They generally work diligently and concentrate well, raising their performance in response to teachers' high expectations. In a music lesson, Year 4 pupils responded very well to the teaching of a visiting specialist from the neighbouring secondary school, really concentrating hard and delighting in learning a new song, 'I'm being eaten by a boa constrictor'. Year 6 pupils quickly got over their initial surprise on finding their class teacher transformed into a Victorian school master, with the support assistant acting as class monitor. They swiftly fell into role, enjoyed acting out the drama of an arithmetic lesson in Victorian times and deepened their knowledge of the life of a school child long ago. This was demonstrated the following day when they could readily recall how large Victorian classes were, what pupils used to write with and the

terrors of 'the strap'. Pupils' enthusiasm and interest also extends to activities outside the classroom so that there is very good attendance at extra-curricular activities and there are generally more pupils than can be accommodated who wish to participate.

13. The school has a small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave well consistently but overall, the behaviour of pupils is good. They walk around school in a very quiet, orderly manner and are particularly sensible about, for instance, moving from their tables to the computer bank without disturbing others who are working elsewhere in the large open-plan area. They are polite and treat the accommodation and inviting displays with respect. Pupils respond very well to adult reminders and reasoning so that on most occasions, those who feel cross and at odds with the world restrain themselves from creating an outburst. Older pupils understand how the body reacts when a person gets really wound up and use this knowledge to help calm themselves. The number of exclusions has reduced considerably since the time of the previous inspection but there are still more than in most primary schools. It is clear that the school uses this sanction entirely appropriately and only as a last resort after all other action has failed to have an effect.
14. Pupils develop very good relationships with each other and with staff members. This means that they work well together in the classroom, whether this is with a friend or in a grouping chosen by the teacher. They often have a quick exchange of ideas with their talking partner before a whole class discussion about, for instance, some mathematical calculation. They share equipment well and are helpful towards each other whether this is grappling with the intricacies of spreadsheets on the computer or offering another class member a sharp pencil. They are quite likely to burst into spontaneous applause for a correct answer from an unlikely source or a particularly good movement in gymnastics. Adults and pupils make good use of humour, which contributes, to a harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. In a science lesson about liquids and solids one boy praised his teacher as she melted some margarine with the admiring words, "You could have your own cookery programme!" which prompted much laughter. Pupils are generous in their support of those less fortunate than themselves and are also thoughtful about their actions. In a Year 5 geography lesson, they came to the conclusion that they took water for granted and made sensible suggestions about how to reduce consumption. In physical education lessons they show awareness of others' need for space and in assemblies they take time to reflect on the chosen themes. They show independence and initiative when, for instance, working on the computer or running the tuck shop or operating the equipment during assemblies.
15. Levels of attendance at school are unsatisfactory. They are well below the national average. The school is considerably smaller than most primaries so that the attendance of one pupil has a large impact on the overall figures. There are also a significant number of pupils who arrive or leave during the school year and who remain on the roll of this school until they are officially registered elsewhere. This can lead to many weeks of recorded absence about which the school can do nothing. A few pupils have extended absence for medical reasons which, although the school provides work for them to do, again affects the overall figures. This academic year the school was also afflicted by a virus, which affected many pupils and staff. All these circumstances combine to bring down the levels of attendance despite the fact that the great majority of pupils attend school regularly because they enjoy being there, are interested in what their teachers prepare for them to do and like the company of the staff and other pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is good overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, with a higher proportion of good and very good lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching observed. One excellent lesson was observed in history in the Year 6 class.
17. A strength of teaching is the quality of relationships in all classrooms. Teachers and teaching assistants are excellent role models for pupils in the way they work as a team and show that they respect and value one another. As a consequence, pupils also have a high regard for others and treat both their classmates and adults with respect and courtesy. In the Year 4 class, for example, a boy immediately apologised to his teacher after she had pointed out that he was interrupting her, and got on with his work quietly for the rest of the session. Pupils are eager to please their teachers, so they work hard and behave well. Teachers reward pupils' efforts by praising them for their achievements. In turn it is not uncommon for pupils to applaud a member of the class who, for example, answers a challenging question or reads out a good piece of work. This makes for a happy, harmonious atmosphere in almost all lessons.
18. There is consistently good or better teaching in literacy and numeracy lessons, which is a significant factor in the improvement of standards in those subjects. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively by all teachers and subsequent training has had a positive impact on their subject knowledge and confidence. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively. As a result, pupils demonstrate good mental agility when doing number work and written calculations are generally clear and accurate. There is a strong focus on the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Recently revised systems for teaching and spelling are having a noticeable impact. Reading is promoted strongly throughout the school, resulting in a growing enjoyment of books and awareness of authors.
19. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, with clear objectives for what pupils will learn. These are shared with the pupils and as a result, learning is focused. In the best lessons, these are revisited at the end to check on what has been achieved. Teachers' explanations are usually clear and this ensures that pupils quickly understand new concepts. A particularly good example of this was seen in an ICT lesson in Year 6. The teacher broke the learning down into small, manageable 'chunks', so that pupils had time to master one skill before moving on to the next. As a result, the class made good progress in their new learning about using spreadsheets. In most lessons, the pace of learning is brisk. Lessons get off to a sharp start and particularly in numeracy, pupils are quickly 'tuned in' to learning through the quick-fire mental arithmetic questions posed at the start of the session. In a small number of lessons, the pace of learning is more ordinary because teachers' confidence with a subject, such as music or dance, is not fully secure.
20. Resources are used effectively on most occasions to motivate pupils and help bring their learning to life. For example, an exciting range of artefacts was used in Year 3 to help pupils to understand life in Viking times. In a Year 6 lesson, a lower ability group worked on capacity using actual bottles and cans of familiar products. Individual white boards are also used well particularly in mathematics lessons to help pupils speed up their calculations and ensure that all are involved in the learning. Teachers also make good use of overhead projectors so that all pupils can read a particular text or view an illustration.
21. Throughout the school, teachers are introducing new methods of working to remove barriers to learning and ensure more active involvement in lessons. Very effective use

is made, for example, of 'talking partners' where pupils discuss problems with one another to clarify their thinking and help find solutions. Drama and role-play are used to give good quality, 'first hand' experiences, which fire the pupils' imaginations. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 6 history lesson, where the class became a Victorian schoolroom for the session. A strong feature of lessons is collaborative work, where pupils work in pairs or small groups to generate ideas for writing or solve problems. Regular 'brain gym' exercises, where pupils break from their tasks to do exercises to stimulate different parts of the brain for a few minutes, quiet background music and access to drinking water are strategies used effectively to ensure maximum concentration. The strategies that teachers are using are often explained to pupils to help them develop an understanding of the way they learn best. For example, one Year 6 boy stated, ' I use the Internet a lot to find things out because I know I learn best by seeing things.'

22. Skilful questioning is used in many lessons to draw out what pupils already know and build on this. Teachers also use questions effectively to assess pupils' understanding and encourage them to think about what they are doing. For example, while demonstrating how to make biscuits during a Year 5 design and technology lesson the teacher continually asked, 'Why did I do that?' or 'What do you think will happen next?' encouraging pupils to think about the outcomes of what they do. Similarly in a history lesson, the teacher showed pupils artefacts and challenged their thinking with such questions as 'Who might have worn this?' and 'What would this have been used for?'
23. Homework is used well by teachers both to help pupils improve their basic skills and to prepare them for forthcoming lessons. A good example was seen in a Year 5 geography lesson, where pupils had monitored the use of water in their homes during the previous week. They used the information gathered to compare with one another and discuss how water might best be saved. The data gathered was also entered into a spreadsheet, so pupils' ICT skills also benefited from their work at home.
24. In some lessons, ongoing assessments of pupils' progress are used well to inform planning for future lessons. The best examples involve the pupils in deciding what has gone well and what needs further reinforcement. For example, time at the end of a PE lesson was used effectively, with the teacher involving the pupils in evaluating how well they had achieved in the various activities. The general agreement was that their skills of holding a balance could be improved, so this is what they should focus on next time. This aspect of teaching, however, is inconsistent and could be developed throughout the school.
25. A weaker aspect of teaching is the effectiveness of marking in helping pupils to improve their work. Although marking is carried out conscientiously by all teachers, it often amounts to just a tick, sometimes with a positive comment. There are very few examples of marking being used to help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses and set targets for future learning.

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

26. The overall quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory. This is a similar picture to the time of the last inspection. However, there have been some improvements since then in the way the curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils can build progressively on their knowledge and skills from year to year. The school has recently implemented national and local authority guidelines for most subject areas. This is supporting teachers effectively in knowing what to teach and when to teach it. Recent training has also been undertaken by staff to enable them to increase the range of teaching styles they use to motivate pupils and enable them to learn in a way that suits them best. This is already having an impact on both teaching and learning in many subjects, with more opportunities for practical and investigative work being provided. These initiatives are still at the early stages, however, and older pupils in the school have not always benefited from such a wide range of experiences in the past.
27. Since the last inspection, the school has rightly concentrated on raising standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT as these were judged to be unsatisfactory. Much has been done in these areas to improve the quality of the curriculum. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively and have been a significant factor in the improvement in the school's results. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to build on their early reading skills and spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught systematically. Good opportunities are also provided for pupils to develop their numeracy skills through the daily mental arithmetic sessions and through opportunities to apply their skills to solving problems. 'Catch-up' programmes are used effectively to boost the progress of those who are struggling with aspects of literacy and numeracy. In science, pupils have many more opportunities to carry out first hand investigations, which deepens their understanding. A strong programme of work in ICT, based on local authority guidance, ensures that pupils cover all the required elements of the subject. However, the emphasis given to these subjects has meant that other areas have not been a priority. As a result, until recently, time for other subjects has been squeezed. In history and geography, for example, although the required topics were covered, the emphasis has been on learning facts rather than skills. The most significant impact of this has been in music, where until very recently, statutory requirements have not been met. Consequently, standards for pupils in Year 6 are unsatisfactory. The headteacher quickly identified this as an issue when she started at the school and has taken swift action. She has reorganised the structure of the timetable to ensure that more time is given to each subject and all pupils receive the programmes of work they are entitled to. In music, a specialist singing teacher has been employed and the headteacher is teaching the newly acquired published music scheme alongside each class teacher to ensure that standards rise rapidly.
28. The school works hard to ensure that all children are able to take full part in the curriculum. A 'can do' attitude is fostered throughout the school. This helps to raise the self-esteem and self-confidence of all pupils who respond very well by working together to support each other in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for. Teachers and teaching assistants plan work for pupils jointly, on a daily basis, after discussing progress. Tasks are then carefully adapted and learning is broken down into small, manageable steps to help pupils understand key concepts. High quality adult support is often provided, both in class and small groups. Teaching assistants have a very clear idea about how these children learn best and plan practical activities for them, using the wide range of resources available. The needs of children with statements are very clearly identified on their

individual educational plans. These are used effectively by teaching and support staff to ensure their needs are fully met.

29. A developing strength of the curriculum is the way in which teachers are now planning links across subjects. This is enabling pupils to apply the skills learned in one area in a wider range of situations. For example, good use is made of literacy skills in history and geography, as pupils engage in debates and write first hand accounts, for example as though they are a Victorian child. Mathematics skills are used in geography, as pupils calculate the amount of water they use in the home, Pupils also use their knowledge of mathematics, as they create symmetrical designs in the style of William Morris. Good use is made of ICT in many subjects. For example, pupils have used the computer-linked microscope to study crystals in science and have used the digital camera to produce pictures of movement sequences in art. Good use is also made of teachers' expertise. For example, ICT skills are taught to both Year 5 and 6 pupils by the co-ordinator.
30. The curriculum is enriched by the very good range of activities provided for pupils outside lessons. Grant funding has been used very effectively, in recent months, to extend these and visiting specialists are 'bought in', where appropriate. Activities include sports, dance, gardening, French, sewing, singing and ICT. There is a very good take up of pupils at each activity and all are well supported by both boys and girls. These activities have a strong impact on pupils' learning. For example, in the ICT club, pupils are using both their literacy and computer skills to good effect to produce a school magazine.
31. Although there has been some use of visits out of school and visitors to school to enrich the pupils' learning experiences, they have not figured highly in the past. Opportunities are missed. For example, in geography, little use is made of the local area for fieldwork, to explore the immediate area around the school at first-hand. In history, more opportunities could be provided to explore the wealth of places of historical interest, for example, in the nearby city of Durham. The school has recognised this as an area for development and is currently implementing plans to broaden this aspect of its work. The recent visitor who brought birds of prey to the school sparked great interest and enthusiasm and good work has been produced as a result.
32. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good and is currently being strengthened. Good emphasis is placed on developing a healthy lifestyle. An example of this was seen, for instance, in physical education lessons and throughout the day through the provision of water in the classrooms. Teachers now encourage pupils to do 'brain gym' exercises (mental agility activities) between lessons to help sustain their concentration and have introduced 'circle times' (when pupils have the opportunity to discuss and grow to understand more about their own and others' emotions) into the weekly timetable. Suitable attention is paid to increasing pupils' awareness of drugs, general safety and the importance of making sensible choices.
33. Overall, the community makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' education. The school makes good use of the local police and school nurse as contributors to pupils' personal education and also uses their expertise to help at specific times of difficulty. The school and the church share parts of the same building and various members of the congregation are regular helpers. This ensures the church plays a large part in school life. However there are few links, for example, with other local organisations or businesses. There is a good partnership with the neighbouring secondary school with regular visits by staff and pupils, sharing of expertise and loans of equipment. The

links with the adjacent infant school are satisfactory, with effective liaison over pupil transfer and growing links between subject co-ordinators to share expertise and develop the curriculum.

34. As at the time of the previous inspection, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, reflecting the mission statement of providing 'a welcoming and caring school inspiring a Christian ethos.' Teachers place much emphasis on helping pupils to develop respect for themselves and others. They strongly encourage them to adopt a thoughtful attitude to life in which they consider the impact of their own and others' actions. Adults act as good role models for pupils in the way that they treat others and make regular, good use of praise. For example, when pupils were entering the hall for assembly one teacher said to another, loud enough for pupils who were close by to hear, 'It's your class again, Miss,' meaning that they had settled extremely well, to which she replied, 'I know, they're a cracking lot aren't they?' Such brief, spontaneous moments provide pupils with excellent examples of how best to deal with others, while at the same time helping to raise their self-esteem and encouraging them to even better performance.

35. The provision to encourage pupils' spiritual development is very good. Throughout the day adults encourage pupils to think before they act but also offer them opportunities to express open appreciation of the wonders of the world or others' skills. Colourful displays around the building help to lift the spirits. The gardening club's flowers and sock puppets with grass 'hair' brighten small corners. The mechanics of seed dispersal are explained through displays of dried seed heads. Year 6 pupils' comments about the school, such as 'When you are down in the dumps, there's always someone to cheer you up', create a positive atmosphere. The delightful display above the reading books vividly exemplifies the school's way of thinking. Caterpillars made from fabric transform, through the vegetation, into wonderful, gauze butterflies around the words:

'As we evolve from emergent readers, we learn to open our minds, to appreciate and understand the wonder of life. We look forward with anticipation to what the future holds for us, because we know the sky is the limit!'

36. Assemblies and class prayers provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on life and to grow in understanding of God's love for the world. The theme during the inspection was 'Forgiveness' within a Lenten context, and different speakers effectively made the same connections between the 'theory' of Bible stories and the reality of everyday life. The school's behaviour system greatly encourages pupils to grow in understanding of themselves and to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils take part in fundraising for a variety of causes and the school emphasises the importance of sacrifice, for instance of pupils giving up their pocket or crisp money rather than asking parents for money. They are also encouraged to consider how the money raised might be spent, which helps to bring home to them the poverty in different parts of the world and how the value of money varies.

37. The way that the school operates on a day to day basis provides a good backdrop for developing pupils' moral and social development. All staff make quite clear the difference between right and wrong; pupils are fully aware of how to behave and will own up when they have not lived up to expectations. They are proud to be chosen as playground buddies and try hard to sort out arguments or find companions for those who have nobody to play with. Activities such as classroom debates about, for instance, child labour or the environmental implications of land development, help

pupils to see both sides of an argument. There are many opportunities in lessons for them to work in different groupings, and lunchtime in the hall is a good, social occasion. The development this year of a school council, which is being introduced in a highly structured and sensible manner so that pupils fully understand its significance, will further enhance their social development. It is a pity that, unlike the inside accommodation, the playground is bleak and uninteresting with little to encourage social interaction or appreciation of the environment.

38. Provision to develop pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are introduced for instance, to myths and legends, the Tudors and the art of Gustav Klimt, Paul Klee and William Morris. They learn about their local area in geography and have very occasional opportunities to visit museums or enjoy performances in school from theatre groups. Through religious education they study Judaism and Hinduism as well as Christianity but overall the school is at an early stage in helping pupils to grow in their appreciation of the wealth of creativity among people of different cultures and in their understanding of life in multicultural Britain. The new music scheme includes songs from other continents and there are firm plans, with resources already purchased, to include the study of a mountainous region in India as part of the geography programme. The popular singing club has learnt some traditional American spirituals and the library has a very attractive display of pupils' work in the style of Aboriginal artists. However, such examples are thin on the ground and the school is well aware that this is an area for development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school provides a high standard of care for its pupils. As a Year 6 pupil states, 'The teachers understand us and the pupils in my class are very friendly to me.' The school dinners are lovely.'
40. Staff, including the midday assistants, know pupils very well and cater very effectively for their individual needs. The arrangements for transfer to secondary school are very good and include an extended 'Bridges' programme for those who might find transferring to secondary school particularly difficult. There are also effective arrangements in place to help pupils move smoothly from the infant to junior school. The school works closely with outside experts when necessary to help with, for instance, managing pupils' behaviour and is persistent in trying to find solutions to individual problems. The 'Circle of Friends' initiative, for example, is particularly effective in helping pupils manage their own behaviour. The arrangements to ensure child protection are very good. All staff know what to do should they have concerns and they are alert to noticing changes in a pupil's mood or attitude to work. Any information is kept in a suitably confidential manner. The procedures to ensure health and safety are also very good. The headteacher has a very secure knowledge of this aspect of the school's work and in conjunction with the acting deputy, is ensuring that all the necessary systems and procedures are in place. The appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken and some practices have been amended in the light of these. Governors are fully informed and appropriately involved. All required equipment checks are up to date. In lessons, teachers pay very careful attention to health and safety issues and ensure, for example, in PE that safe practices are observed. Pupils' medical needs are also well catered for and the first aid arrangements are very good.
41. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Registers are well kept and the school secretary is meticulous in tracking attendance on a weekly basis, as well as contacting parents on the first day of a child's absence if there has

been no information about the cause. The headteacher and secretary regularly analyse attendance patterns and ensure that any issues are flagged up and dealt with. The education welfare officer visits on a weekly basis to monitor the registers and pick up on any problems and is available to help more frequently, if necessary. Pupils are praised for being on time, particularly if they have had problems with this and are warmly welcomed back after absences, in registration times. Teachers provide work as appropriate for those who are absent through illness or for other reasons.

42. The procedures to promote good behaviour and discipline are very good and result in the predictable, secure and relaxed atmosphere that pervades the school. All staff are very clear about the agreed behaviour strategies, which hinge upon praising the good and helping pupils to understand the consequences of making choices. They apply the guidance consistently and thoughtfully, ensuring that pupils are fully aware of why, for instance, they have been given a warning. Any bullying or other unkindness is taken very seriously and dealt with very effectively and quickly. There are good procedures in place to promote racial harmony. The school involves parents wherever possible in helping to sort out any persistent problems, so that the individual child sees school and home working together and does not receive confused messages. Staff are skilled at diverting potential trouble before it escalates. Most pupils respond well to this and grow in their ability to exercise self-control. Initiatives such as encouraging pupils to 'Search for the hero inside yourself', which are a daily feature of school life, prove very effective in promoting good behaviour.
43. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school complies with the most recent legal requirements for educating these pupils. All the records that have to be kept are fully up to date and reviewed regularly at the agreed dates. Teachers and support staff are vigilant about identifying and meeting the needs of the pupils. The school has very good procedures in place for early identification of particular needs. The academic and personal development of these pupils is very carefully monitored. Parents are involved from the earliest opportunity and supported in helping their child. The programme of support in small groups and in class is very effective in helping pupils feel secure, develop confidence in their abilities and make good progress. Good links are made with outside agencies, such as the local authority's 'behaviour support team' to meet individual needs effectively. Pupils with statements are also very well supported and their needs are conscientiously and fully met.
44. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Standards have risen because teachers now have a much clearer idea of what pupils have achieved and what their next steps in learning should be. Effective use is now made of the comprehensive test data collected on pupils in each year group. This is analysed closely to identify any 'gaps' in teaching and learning. Changes to the curriculum and teaching are made in the light of these analyses. For example, spelling was identified as an area for improvement and new teaching programmes have been introduced, as a result. These measures are having a positive impact on standards.
45. There are good systems in place in English and mathematics for monitoring and tracking pupils' ongoing progress. These have been computerised so that it is easier to check on individual progress both within a year group and year on year. This information is used to highlight any pupils who are not performing as well as they should, or doing better than expected. This then allows appropriate provision to be made for them. Accurate projections, based on pupils' previous performance, are

used to set the school targets for attainment in Year 6. The information is also used to set individual targets, which are shared with the pupils. In science and ICT, end of unit assessments are carried out and teachers plan new work for groups accordingly, in the light of these. In some other subjects, end of unit assessments are also carried out. However, systems for recording these are more informal, with teachers monitoring pupils' progress through their weekly evaluations of planning. This makes it harder for them to keep a check on the progress made by individuals. The school has identified this as an area for future development. Pupils' personal development is monitored well at an informal level. This is because all staff know the pupils very well and are sensitive to their needs. However, unless there are specific problems, for example with behaviour, relevant information is not recorded systematically. This makes it harder for key information to be passed on to the next teacher.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents and carers hold positive views of the school and more of them than at the time of the previous inspection strongly agree with the statements in the questionnaire. They are pleased that their children are expected to work hard and are able to make good progress because of the good quality of teaching and useful homework that they receive. Some are concerned about standards of behaviour and do not feel that the school works particularly closely with them while a considerable number are unsure about the quality of leadership. Inspectors agree with the positive comments and judge that the 'do not know' responses relate to the period of uncertainty that parents and pupils have undergone during recent staffing upheavals. It is clear that the school is working increasingly hard to involve parents at all levels in their children's education, for example, during the last academic year governors conducted a survey of their opinions and provided good feedback on the results.
47. The overall quality of information provided for parents has improved during this academic year, as was highlighted as necessary through the governors' recent survey. The prospectus is welcoming, bright and easily read, containing much useful information about school life and expectations. It now complies with statutory requirements. Letters to parents have become far more attractive and 'user-friendly' over the past six months and keep them well informed about school events and important dates. The written information is complemented by meetings for new parents and those whose children will be taking national tests, with others planned to help parents understand what their children are taught in literacy and numeracy lessons. As yet the school does not provide parents with an outline of what their children will be learning in the coming term. Pupils' progress reports are satisfactory and give a clear indication of what level they are working at in English and mathematics. Teachers' comments about pupils' progress in different subjects are relatively brief and include more about what has been covered during the year and pupils' attitude towards the subject rather than the standard of their work. As yet, reports do not give any indication of what pupils should specifically concentrate on in the future in order to move their learning on.
48. Parents are supportive of the school. A large percentage ensures that their children complete their homework and encourages them to improve their reading skills. Parents and carers attend consultation meetings in high numbers and there was standing room only at the Christmas concert. Commission from family purchases at the recent Book Fair allowed the school to acquire £200 worth of books. Although there is no parents' association, parents are willing to help at school-organised events and a few help on a regular basis in school, along with other helpers from the parish. Parents are willing to work with the school if their child is causing concern and are

happy for their children to extend the school day by taking part in the many extra-curricular activities that are on offer. Overall, the partnership between parents and school is good and there is clear evidence that it is growing increasingly strong.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The recently appointed headteacher leads and manages the school very well. The school had experienced a time of some turbulence, prior to her appointment. Two different acting heads were in post last year, as governors strove to find the right person for the job. The deputy headteacher has been absent for some time, on long-term sick leave and changes have also occurred in staffing. This had led to a period of uncertainty in terms of direction for the school. The headteacher has dealt very swiftly and effectively to change the situation. She has purposefully set a very clear direction for the work of the school. She has a very sharp vision of how she wants the school to be and is determined to build on its strengths and develop it further. Her primary aim since taking over has been to communicate this vision to staff and governors, involve them more closely and secure their commitment. She has been very successful in this and has gained the confidence of all who work with her in a very short time. As a result, there is an atmosphere of energy and enthusiasm throughout the school and a strong sense of purpose about its work. Staff and governors are extremely supportive and are working together effectively as a team, committed to providing the best for the pupils. As a consequence, the school is moving forward.
50. A senior teacher in the school has recently been appointed acting deputy head. He and the headteacher are working together closely to share the management tasks. The acting deputy has taken on a significant number of responsibilities, such as the oversight of health and safety, in addition to his roles of Year 6 teacher and curriculum co-ordinator and is managing these effectively. He is providing good support for the headteacher and also providing continuity for his colleagues. For example, he played a large part in ensuring that all staff understood and accepted the reasons for changes to subject time allocations. This resulted in a smooth implementation of the new systems. He has given particularly effective support and guidance to the newly qualified teacher, acting as her mentor and assisting her in making very good progress towards her targets.
51. One of the strongest aspects of the headteacher's work is her ability to identify very clearly what needs to be improved and how improvements should be brought about. Since her appointment, she has undertaken a very thorough evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. As a result of this, she already has a very firm handle on strengths and weaknesses and has sensible priorities for action. She has led staff and governors in producing a high quality School Improvement Plan to underpin developments and steer the work of the school. The aims and criteria for judging the success of each development area are expressed very clearly. This is enabling governors to monitor developments effectively and check the impact of the money they are spending, for example, on staffing. Each governor has been allocated an area of the plan to monitor and this is directing their work and using their expertise very efficiently.
52. As part of her evaluation, the headteacher has rightly identified the need to improve the learning opportunities offered to pupils in some subjects. In order to bring about improvements, she has reorganised teaching time to ensure that all subjects now receive their full allocation and pupils receive their entitlement. She has also worked with curriculum co-ordinators to implement national and local guidance in most

subjects, to ensure that pupils can build progressively on their skills from year to year. She has also introduced a more practical, 'hands on' approach to teaching and learning, ensuring that staff have had the relevant training. As a result, children are benefiting from a more interesting range of learning experiences and teaching is of a higher quality than was seen at the last inspection. Teachers are also very enthusiastic about these developments and determined to make them work. The headteacher has also recognised some of the barriers to teaching and learning posed by the open-plan nature of the building, which sometimes limits activities such as music. She and the governors have obtained the necessary funding to make improvements and have had plans drawn up to modify the building in the near future.

53. A key feature of the headteacher's work is her ability to motivate and develop others. She is providing an excellent model of leadership and management through working alongside staff, developing their skills, for example in identifying areas for improvement in their subjects. Recent staffing changes, with a newly qualified teacher and a temporary member of staff in post, have meant that more established staff have had to take on extra responsibilities for leading and managing subjects and aspects of the school's work. Consequently, some co-ordinators are very new to their roles and have taken over areas where their expertise and confidence are not as strong. However, all have made a sound start and are keen to develop further. The head has recognised that developing the skills of co-ordinators in leading and managing their areas of responsibility is crucial to the future development of the school. Not all staff have sufficient skills, for example, in observing lessons and giving feedback to colleagues about areas that need attention. This is an aspect that will need to be developed if the workload is to be shared more effectively in the future. Currently, the workload of monitoring teaching falls mainly on the headteacher. Performance management is still in the early stages in the school because of the recent changes in staffing and leadership, which has led to a lack of continuity.
54. Co-ordinators who are more established in their roles, or have high levels of expertise in their subjects are doing a good job. For example, mathematics is led effectively by a member of staff who is a leading numeracy teacher for the county. She uses her expertise well to provide support and guidance for colleagues, for example, in teaching the three-part daily numeracy lesson. ICT is well led and managed by the acting deputy to bring about improvements in standards. The special educational needs co-ordinator has only recently taken over the role. She has made a sound start in understanding the needs of individual pupils and is getting to grips with the requirements of the new legislation and the systems the school has in place. However, she has identified a need for training in the role to enable her to carry out her duties more effectively.
55. The governing body carries out its roles and responsibilities well. They are highly committed to ensuring that the pupils are given the best education possible. There is a good mix between long serving and more recently appointed governors. They are using their individual expertise effectively to assist with the management of key areas of the school's work. Some have strong links with the community and know the context of the school well. This enables them to have a clear idea, for example, of how best to meet the personal and social needs of the pupils. Governors are keen to become more effective in their roles. As a result, they carry out regular 'self-review' audits to identify where they need to improve. Training is accessed, where appropriate. Governors use the very high quality information they receive from the headteacher and staff to guide their decision making and to help them monitor the work of the school. They take their role as 'critical friend' seriously and ask searching questions, for example about the impact on standards of employing support staff. The

various committees are clear about their responsibilities and have an appropriate role in formulating policies and evaluating developments. They have not been afraid of taking difficult decisions for the long-term benefit of the school. For example, they were determined to appoint the right headteacher for the school and re-advertised the post on more than one occasion. They firmly believe that this has already paid dividends. The chair of governors gives very strong support to the headteacher and knows exactly what is going on in the school through their regular meetings. This enables him to give good first hand information to other governors.

56. Financial planning and monitoring are good. The expertise of consultants from the local education authority is used effectively to ensure that decisions taken are based on secure financial information. For example, governors have investigated several options for dealing with staffing and organisation issues that will be brought about with the projected increase in numbers over the next few years. As a result, the school is well prepared to meet the range of possible circumstances it might face and ensure that good quality provision for the pupils is maintained. Specific grants are used effectively for their intended purpose. For example, standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection because funds have been used wisely to improve resources and access training. The school secretary manages the day to day financial procedures very effectively and efficiently. This ensures the headteacher and governors have a very clear idea of what has been spent and what is available. Governors ensure they are getting good value for the money they spend, for example, through comparing the cost of goods and services they purchase and through consulting parents and pupils about what they would like to see improved.
57. Staffing and resources are adequate. The constraints of the open-plan building are minimised through good organisation and pupil management. Firm plans are in place to make more effective use of the space available. The school is very bright and attractive, with some good quality displays to stimulate the pupils' interest. Caretaking and cleaning staff ensure high standards of cleanliness. However, the outdoor play area is rather featureless. There are no areas for children to sit and chat quietly or sections set aside for quieter games.
58. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school and very good progress when compared to schools in similar circumstances. Significant value is added in the way the pupils are developed as individuals. There is good teaching and very effective leadership and management on the part of the headteacher. The school is well placed to improve further. The school is, therefore, judged to give good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governors should now address the following issues:

(a) **Raise standards in music by:**

- ensuring that all statutory requirements for the subject are met;
- ensuring that all aspects of music are taught in sufficient depth, so that pupils develop their knowledge and skills systematically;
- ensuring that adequate time is given to the teaching of music;
- improving staff confidence and expertise in teaching the subject.

(paragraphs: 8, 19, 27, 108, 110)

(b) **Develop the skills of the co-ordinators in leading and managing their areas by:**

- providing training for them in undertaking their roles and responsibilities;
- establishing clear, agreed criteria for monitoring teaching and learning;
- developing the skills needed for monitoring teaching and learning effectively;
- providing planned opportunities for co-ordinators to check on standards in their areas.

(paragraphs: 53, 54, 82, 91, 93, 101, 116)

(c) **Improve the effectiveness of teachers' marking in assisting pupils to improve their work by:**

- ensuring that teachers follow an agreed policy and guidelines to achieve consistency;
- indicating more clearly to pupils how they might improve and setting them targets for future learning.

(paragraphs: 25, 68, 74, 98)

The headteacher, staff and governors may also wish to include the following minor issues in the action plan:

- i) Improve the provision for developing pupils' multicultural awareness;
- ii) Improve the outdoor play area;
- iii) Develop procedures to promote good attendance.

(paragraphs: 15, 37, 41, 38, 57)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

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

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	10	13	5	0	0	0
Percentage	3	34	45	17	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 four percentage points

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	144
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	64

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	49

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	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	16
	Girls	13	14	15
	Total	26	26	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (91)	76 (91)	91 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (81)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	12	12
	Girls	12	10	12
	Total	21	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (69)	65 (81)	71 (84)
	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
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll
140
0
1
0
1
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
2
0
0
0

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
5	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.8:1
Average class size	36

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	326745
Total expenditure	326271
Expenditure per pupil	2364
Balance brought forward from previous year	22796
Balance carried forward to next year	23270

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	2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	144
Number of questionnaires returned	79

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	42	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	53	43	1	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	42	11	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	52	4	0	0
The teaching is good.	54	41	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	46	13	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	32	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	46	11	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	41	41	6	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	51	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	34	15	0	3

Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and may not total 100.

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

ENGLISH

60. Standards seen in English are average for pupils at the end of Year 6. Since the previous inspection there has been a good improvement, overall, in standards attained in the national tests. They are now significantly higher than they were at that time. Although tests results in 2002 show a decline over the previous year, this can be accounted for by the very high proportion of pupils in the year group who were on the school's register for special educational needs. There were also a significant number of pupils who joined the class outside of normal admission times, who often had a significant amount of ground to make up. There is no significant difference between girls' and boys' performance. St Francis' pupils achieve very well when compared with schools in a similar context because more pupils achieved both the average and the higher levels than in these schools.
61. Standards have improved because of stronger teaching and a better curriculum. This is in part, down to the implementation of the national literacy strategy, which has provided a clear structure and good guidance and training for staff. Assessment in English is also being used more effectively to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for them. Teachers have a much clearer idea of what pupils have achieved and what their next steps in learning should be. This has also helped to raise standards.
62. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory overall by the end of Year 6. Pupils confidently engage in informal conversation about things that interest them. They express their ideas clearly and politely. Pupils respond well in lessons to questions from teachers, which require thoughtful responses, such as explaining the processes they use to solve mathematical problems. They discuss questions with a partner effectively to formulate ideas for writing. A good example was seen in a geography lesson when pupils in Year 5 discussed how they could use less water in their homes. Pupils listen to others attentively and respond respectfully to their questions and views. They are less confident however when speaking more formally to an audience such as at an assembly. This results in speech being too hurried and sometimes inaudible.
63. Pupils make good progress in their reading. Standards are generally below expectations when pupils start the school. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 6, most are fluent and confident readers. Reading is promoted strongly throughout the school. Classroom displays of books by specific authors and pupils' book reviews indicate an increasing range of reading for enjoyment. Reading skills are developed systematically throughout the school, through good phonic teaching in the younger age groups, which is built on well to enable pupils to develop and extend the strategies they use. As they move through the school, pupils learn to self correct when necessary and use punctuation effectively to help them gain meaning from what they read. Older and more confident readers can discuss the plot and comment on the characters' feelings and motives in their stories. They have a sound knowledge of books and authors. For example, pupils talk knowledgeably about the Harry Potter series and the novels of favourite authors, such as Judy Blume and Jacqueline Wilson. They can also talk about authors they have been introduced to in literacy lessons, such as CS Lewis and Shakespeare. Pupils' library skills are sound. Most know how to locate information using contents and index pages and understand the purpose of a glossary. Year 5 and 6 pupils can access the books in the library, using the card-index system as well as the colour coding. Throughout the school, pupils

also use the Internet and CD-ROM effectively to find information and this is well developed by Year 6.

64. Pupils make good progress in writing and achieve well, given their levels of attainment when they start the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident and competent in writing for different purposes and audiences. They know how to plan and draft their work and edit it to make improvements. Most pupils write well-structured narratives and begin to choose language thoughtfully to heighten the effect. For example one pupil began a story with, 'The leaves rustled in the wind as Olivia rode up the empty drive', in order to build up an atmosphere of suspense for the reader. Pupils also make good use of descriptive language in poetry, writing lines such as : 'Night is a dull frightening monster' or 'Winter is a blanket of frosty leaves'. The use of formal language in writing is often underpinned by discussion and debate. For example, pupils write arguments for or against issues such as, 'Do circuses need animals?' Sometimes they use other subjects such as history to stimulate writing, for example, after discussing reasons why Victorian children should or should not be sent out to work. Basic skills of punctuation and grammar are generally satisfactory, though errors in the use of tenses such as: 'She was sat'...and basic spelling errors are too evident in some pupils' books. Nevertheless new strategies for teaching spelling are beginning to have a positive impact. Handwriting is clear and legible and reflects pupils' conscientious attempts to produce their best work. Some good examples of purposeful writing are seen in most classes. Pupils in Year 5, for example, designed and wrote books for younger children, which incorporated 'pop-up pictures' and also showed good use of technical language in their explanatory texts about the solar system. Year 3 generated some good ideas about things they like and dislike for their poems about 'sizzling sausages' and 'barking dogs', while pupils in Year 4 wrote their own books with illustrations based on stories they have read.
65. The quality of teaching is good overall. This accounts for the good learning and progress seen. Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and maintain high expectations of both work and behaviour. As a consequence pupils are keen to please their teachers and work hard. Good subject knowledge and understanding of the National Framework for Literacy ensures good planning. Lessons have clear objectives, which are shared with the pupils. There is good pace and challenge and clear explanations in most lessons, which help pupils make good progress. This was demonstrated well in a lesson for pupils in Year 5. After some probing questions to assess pupils' understanding of the difference between 'fact' and 'opinion', the teacher quickly introduced new objectives for them to learn how to use specific persuasive language, in order to put forward a particular point of view. Teachers use a good variety of methods to interest and motivate pupils. For example, pupils in Year 6 prepared ideas for their writing by debating a question linked to their history studies. Resources are used effectively to help pupils learn and often a calm atmosphere is established by quiet background music.
66. Teaching assistants are very skilled and provide valuable support for groups within the classes. They work very effectively with pupils who have additional learning needs in order to boost their literacy skills. Relationships in small group sessions are very good because teaching assistants know pupils very well and deal sensitively with their particular difficulties.
67. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking. The best marking seen evaluates pupils' achievement against the learning objectives and sets further challenges for future work. At other times marking is superficial and basic errors are not always corrected. On occasions, higher attaining pupils would benefit from a

clearer knowledge of what is expected of them in order to help them improve on their current writing levels.

68. Leadership and management of the subject by the headteacher are very good. She has a clear vision for improvement and has secured the commitment of staff, who are working effectively as a team. This is ensuring that standards are maintained and further improved. There is a shared willingness to try new initiatives in order to strengthen weaker areas of learning, such as spelling.
69. Resources for English are satisfactory, overall. Reading books are plentiful but non-fiction books to support literacy skills across the whole curriculum are in short supply. Nevertheless the well-appointed library is used satisfactorily to improve research skills, particularly by pupils in Year 5 and 6. Library loans are also acquired to add to the stock of information books available for topics.

MATHEMATICS

70. Standards in mathematics are average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The overall rise in standards is due to better teaching and more emphasis on mental arithmetic and practical and investigative work, brought about by the implementation of the national numeracy framework. Although standards have risen, overall, there was a dip last year in the number of pupils achieving the average level. This was largely because the class contained a higher number of pupils with special educational needs. Also, a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties had joined the school since Year 3 and had insufficient time to make up lost ground. However, standards were still above average in comparison to all schools and were well above average when compared with schools in similar contexts because more pupils achieved the higher level in the tests. The current Year 6 class has a similar proportion of pupils with special educational needs, but slightly fewer capable of achieving the higher level than last year.
71. An improvement since the previous inspection is the way in which teachers now give children more opportunity to apply the skills they learn to solve problems and investigations. For example, Year 6 pupils are tackling problems related to capacity, working out how much liquid various containers can hold. They are confident with estimating and can quickly identify the operations needed to work out the answers to problems. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs carry out these problems practically, or use a step by step approach to help them with the process. The more able are challenged to find their own methods of working. In Year 4, pupils use their knowledge of co-ordinates, compass points and angles to plot objects on a grid and work out their positions in relation to one another. There are also good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects such as geography, when they collect data and present their results in tables and graphs. Whilst there is a strong emphasis on number work, there is also a good balance of work across the different elements of the mathematics curriculum. For example, pupils build up a good understanding about measuring and about the properties of shapes. By the time they leave Year 6, most pupils have a good understanding of the properties of different types of triangles and can use their knowledge to calculate the size of angles. They can use formulae to find the area of a rectangle using a formula and work out the perimeter of different shapes. Most pupils set out their work well and present it neatly. This ensures a good degree of accuracy.
72. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. The best progress is made in the Year 3 class taught by the subject co-ordinator. Her expertise and enthusiasm for the subject

catches the children's interest and develops their skills and confidence very effectively. In all classes, teachers use the mental and oral sessions at the start of lessons well to challenge pupils. This benefits the more able pupils, in particular, because questions are posed which make them think very hard and stretch them to the limit. Very occasionally, however, in Year 4 and Year 5, pupils could be given more difficult tasks in the main part of the lesson, from the outset, rather than extension work when they have completed the same task as others. Pupils with special educational needs are provided for very well. Work is carefully adapted to meet their needs and extra adult support is provided for them, which enables them to achieve well in relation to their abilities. Teaching assistants give high quality support to these pupils, both in small groups and in class. They are very well briefed as to what the children should learn and understand their needs very well. A good example of this was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where the learning had been broken down into very small, easily achievable steps by the teaching assistant. The task was carried out practically and as a result, the two pupils not only developed their understanding of capacity, but increased their confidence, also.

73. Teaching is good, overall, with some very good lessons observed. Teachers are confident and have a good knowledge about the best ways to teach number. Lessons begin sharply, with mental arithmetic sessions. These challenge pupils' thinking and get their brains working. For example, in Year 3, pupils were challenged to give ten facts about the number 187. This task required them to use their mathematical knowledge in different ways. They came up with some really good answers, such as, 'If you round it up to the nearest 10 it becomes 190' and 'It has 1 hundred, 8 tens and 7 units'. Resources such as individual white boards often support these sessions well, enabling all pupils to be involved all the time. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils used these to add pairs of 2 digit numbers. This allowed them all to answer the teacher's questions and to check their answers. It also enabled the teacher to check on who had understood and tailor her next examples accordingly. Teachers also ask pupils to explain their methods of working out their answers and by the time they reach Year 6, pupils are confident in explaining the strategies they have used. For example, pupils could explain the methods they had used to calculate 3.7×100 and 0.25×1000 , confidently moving decimal points, but demonstrating why they had done this. Teachers recap previous learning very effectively to help pupils build on this and use their knowledge in different situations. For example, in Year 5, the teacher's recap of strategies for rounding up and down helped the pupils to increase their speed in adding larger numbers mentally. In all lessons, teachers' questions are well chosen to challenge pupils thinking. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, the level of difficulty was constantly stepped up and pupils were expected to answer quickly. Pupils enjoyed the competitive element and worked really hard, as a result. Teachers share objectives for the lesson with the pupils at the beginning and often return to them at the end to check on what has been learned. In the best examples, they deal with any misconceptions and set the scene for future learning. A weaker aspect of mathematics teaching is the quality and effectiveness of marking. This is not often used as well as it might be to help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses and set targets for future learning.
74. ICT is used well to support work in mathematics. Pupils often work on programs related to their class work. For example, pupils in Year 4 were learning about symmetry and used a program which replicated shapes and patterns. This enabled them to quickly understand the concepts of reflection and rotation. There were gasps of amazement as their patterns developed. Year 3 pupils used a program to good effect to practise number bonds. The 'game' format really caught their interest and motivated them.

75. The development of mathematics is led and managed very well by the co-ordinator who, as a leading mathematics teacher for the local education authority, has a high level of expertise. This enables her to support and advise her colleagues particularly well. For example, she has ensured that teachers new to the school and to the profession have had adequate training to enable them to implement the daily numeracy lessons to ensure consistency throughout the school. She has a sound grasp of pupils' standards through occasional observations of teaching, analysing test results and sampling pupils' work. She has identified the need for staff to use the sessions at the end of lessons more effectively and consistently.

SCIENCE

76. Standards in science are average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be below average. In 2001, the school's results in the national tests for 11-year-olds were in the top 5 percent of schools in the country, which was a significant achievement. In the 2002 tests, results dipped, although they were still average when compared to all schools and well above average when compared to schools in similar circumstances. The dip was a result of more pupils in the 2002 Year 6 class having special educational needs and fewer pupils who were capable of achieving the higher level (level 5) in the tests. The current Year 6 class is on course to reach average results in the tests this year.
77. Stronger teaching and the introduction of a more practical, investigative approach to science throughout the school has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils' understanding and their skills of scientific enquiry are now developed effectively as well as their knowledge. Test data is now analysed and results used to better effect to identify areas for improvement in teaching and the curriculum. The standards reached by pupils are assessed at the end of each unit of work and this is giving teachers a clearer idea about where pupils are up to and what they might need to learn next.
78. Pupils in Year 3 can describe simple features of objects, living things and events observed. They can name parts of the body and of plants. They know that plants need water and light to grow. They know that light and sound come from a variety of sources and have made a study of shadows and can explain why it is dangerous to look at the sun. However, as yet, their explanations are short and general rather than scientific in nature. For example, their responses include, 'Because it hurts your eyes', and, 'The sun is too strong.' By Year 6 most pupils have made good progress and use scientific vocabulary well to explain their work. This is because teachers emphasise this throughout the school. Pupils know how to construct a fair test. They have learned how to use specialist resources such as a Newton Meter to measure weight during their investigations. The less able and those with special educational needs achieve well because of the additional adult support they receive, and the way in which teachers adapt the work to suit their needs. Pupils' interest and enjoyment in science throughout the school is evident in both the quality of their work and in the attitudes they display in lessons, where they behave well and try hard.
79. The quality of teaching in science is good overall, with some very good lessons seen. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils were learning to plan and carry out a test for absorbency and to form a conclusion based on the outcome of their test. The teacher was well prepared for the lesson and sets of appropriate resources were readily available for each table to ensure that the lesson ran smoothly. The teacher used questioning

techniques effectively, initiated discussions and helped pupils to learn from one another. The teaching assistant effectively helped and supported the least able pupils to undertake their tasks. By the end of the lesson, all pupils had made significant progress in thinking scientifically and in formulating the kind of questions that would help them to find out which material was the most absorbent. In Year 4, the children were learning that different materials have different freezing and melting points. In a very good lesson, the teacher was very careful to ensure the health and safety of the children by first laying down the 'ground rules'. The teacher and teaching assistant worked together, demonstrating what happened to a variety of different solids when heat was applied. A range of interesting materials and resources were used, such as chocolate, candles and a hair dryer. The lesson moved at a fast pace and relationships between the adults and children were very good. The children were excited to see that the hair dryer melted the chocolate faster than the hot water, and were absolutely amazed at the speed at which the melted candle wax reverted to a solid once the source of heat was removed. In a Year 6 lesson involving experiments with plants, the teacher expected pupils to formulate their own questions and to explain their meaning clearly using the correct scientific terms. For example, when one pupil said, 'We could change the warmth.' The teacher said 'I think we've had one similar to that before. Can you find it?' This led the pupil to find a previous contribution where the correct term 'temperature' had been used. In this lesson, whilst the teacher supervised half the class doing practical experiments, the rest of the class were using computers to research the needs of green plants with the classroom assistant on hand to help. This used time and resources to really good effect. In all of the three science lessons observed, the teaching assistants provided valuable support for the teachers and contributed very well to the good progress made.

80. Pupils use ICT frequently in science lessons and some Year 6 pupils were proud to demonstrate the use of computer-compatible microscopes to view salt and sugar crystals. There are also good links emerging between science and other aspects of the curriculum. Pupils use their mathematical skills well, for example, to insert data into tables. Also, a lesson in design and technology helped to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding about the properties of materials and the strength of structures.
81. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over the subject. However, he has made a good start in implementing a new scheme of work to ensure that pupils can build systematically on their knowledge and skills. He has drawn up a plan of action for future developments in the subject, including the use of assessment information to set individual targets for pupils. As yet, however, he has not had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school to ascertain strengths and weaknesses.

ART AND DESIGN

82. Although no lessons were seen, the evidence of pupils' work shows that standards in art are broadly average and pupils make steady progress. Pupils with special educational needs tackle the same tasks as their peers and make similar progress. This represents similar findings to the last inspection. The quality of work produced shows that teaching is satisfactory.
83. Pupils' observational drawing skills are developing satisfactorily. Good use is made of sketchbooks to practise skills and try out ideas as they examine and draw a variety of objects. In Year 4, pupils have made careful sketches of trees and in Year 5 where they have made observational drawing of fruit. These are very well done using

shading for added effect. All the art - work, whether in sketch books or on display around the school, has been done with great care showing that pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. They take pride in their work and try hard to improve. Work around the school has been attractively displayed and labelled by the teachers to acknowledge pupils' efforts and raise their self-esteem.

84. Appropriate time is now allocated to the teaching of the subject during the year and teachers are now ensuring that children build on their skills progressively. Pupils are introduced to an appropriate range of media and techniques. There is systematic coverage of the work of artists studied throughout the school. For example, Year 4 studying designs in the style of William Morris and Year 5 study the work of Monet and the Pointillists. Pupils in Year 3 have studied the work of Paul Klee and produced 'portraits' in a similar style using blocks of orange, red and yellow effectively separated by black lines. Year 6 have studied the work of Gustav Klimt working both as a group on a collage portrait of Jesus, and individual work in a similar style after studying a variety of his work. Pupils talk knowledgeably about his pictures and are clearly very well motivated and interested in works of art.
85. There are many examples of art supporting other subjects. Pupils have studied the work of Eadward Muybridge and his ideas of movement. They have transported them into the technological age by use of a digital camera and computers. The results of this work are very effective. Pupils are also practising and refining skills outside 'blocked' time. Here, work is generally of a good quality. For example, after seeing some birds of prey pupils produced drawing of owls that are of a high standard. Art makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development, through the opportunities they have to appreciate works of art from their own and other cultures.
86. The co-ordinator has only recently taken responsibility for the subject. She has made a sound start, in conjunction with the headteacher, in formulating a clear, well thought out plan to further raise the profile of art in the school and thereby raise standards. She is well supported by a classroom assistant, who organises and manages resources. Good links with the local secondary school, which has specialist arts status, are being forged. For example, a recent project based on Aboriginal style art was carried out with support from the secondary school art department, which enriched the pupils' experience and developed their skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. Standards seen in design and technology are broadly typical of those seen in most schools. This is similar to the last inspection. The school has recently adapted national subject guidance as a basis for planning. This is now ensuring a more systematic approach to the teaching and development of designing and making skills. Throughout the school pupils make satisfactory progress. However, there is a much stronger focus now on designing skills and evaluation than in previous years and this is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work. As a result, progress is starting to accelerate. Pupils in Year 5 for example undertook some thorough research into the designs of musical instruments used around the world. They planned their own designs for instruments, working in small groups and pairs. Designs were carefully evaluated and modified as a result. The finished products are carefully made and attractively finished.
88. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good and is ensuring that pupils now learn effectively. However, the impact of teaching over time has been

satisfactory. In the past, pupils have had too few opportunities to build progressively on their skills from year to year. Teachers plan their lessons well and share clearly with pupils what it is they expect them to learn. As a result, pupils work more purposefully to achieve their targets. Resources are used effectively to ensure all pupils are fully included in lessons. In Year 3 pupils were given one normal sized sheet of paper and without scissors or glue had to find ways to make a stand to support a piece of card. Pupils experimented in different ways, modifying and changing their ideas in order to solve the problem. By the end of the lesson all had discovered that their paper needed to be folded to strengthen it and discovered that triangle shapes were strongest. This was a challenging activity, which motivated pupils and held their interest. It was more meaningful because it was linked to their science topic about materials. In another lesson pupils used their thinking skills to create a recipe for a 'healthy' biscuit suitable for a child. This required them to solve problems of shape and packaging as well as ingredients. Good collaborative work resulted in products such as 'coconut smile' and 'super sour singer' (lemon flavoured). During the lesson the teacher paid particular attention to helping pupils to understand personal hygiene when handling food. The task required pupils to think of others' rather than their personal preferences, successfully promoting good personal and social development.

89. Pupils' learning has benefited recently from the skills and ideas brought in by visitors to the school. Those in Years 3 and 4 for example enjoyed a workshop during which they made puppets and silhouettes and learned some puppet theatre techniques. Pupils currently in Year 6 worked with visitors from the local authority engineers department where they built and tested bridge structures, which they made from paper.
90. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. The co-ordinator has identified the need to ensure that the new scheme is fully established and properly evaluated to ascertain its strengths and areas for development.

GEOGRAPHY

91. Standards in geography are similar to those found in most schools at Key Stage 2. This is a similar picture to that found at the time of the last inspection. An analysis of pupils' work and discussions with them indicates that until this year, there has been more emphasis placed on teaching geographical knowledge than on developing skills. There have been more limited opportunities in the past for pupils to learn through investigation. The amount of fieldwork undertaken by pupils, both around the school and further afield has also been limited. As a result, pupils' skills of geographical enquiry are not as well developed as they could be by the end of Key Stage 2. However, there have been some good recent improvements since the appointment of the new headteacher and these have started to redress the balance
92. The new subject co-ordinator has made a sound start to leading and managing the area. She has worked with the headteacher to identify key areas for development. Nationally recommended subject guidelines have been adopted recently and these are providing good support for teachers in planning and delivering lessons. It is also ensuring that pupil can build on their knowledge and skills progressively from year to year. More time has been devoted to geography in recent months, as the school has identified the need to ensure topics are taught in greater depth..
93. By Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge of geographical facts. For example, they can name the continents and oceans of the world and find these quickly on a globe.

They are able to name important rivers and know the capital cities of the major European countries. More able pupils can describe the terms 'northern and southern hemispheres and can talk about climate in different parts of the world. They know for example, that Britain is in a temperate zone and can describe conditions in desert regions. In Year 5, pupils understand the different stages of a river as it flows to the sea. They know the meaning of related terms, such as 'meander' 'mouth' and 'tributary'. Opportunities have been missed, however, to enrich learning through studying local rivers at first-hand. Good use is made by pupils of all abilities of the Internet to research facts and find pictures and maps. Growing links are being made with other subjects. For example, pupils have used their mathematical skills when measuring water used in the home and collecting and presenting data related to this. Pupils in Year 4 have used their literacy skills to good effect to debate issues regarding the development of a local site. However, experiences of this quality are not yet provided consistently throughout the school.

94. One geography lesson was observed during the inspection. This was in the Year 5 class and was good. The best progress is found in the Year 4 and 5 classes because the subject has had a higher profile and more time has been given to it. In the Year 5 lesson seen, pupils were learning about the importance of water in people's daily lives. The teacher made very good links with previous work the pupils had undertaken, relating to the water cycle and rivers. This ensured that they quickly understood the concepts she was introducing. Homework was used well in this lesson, with the pupils using the results of surveys they had conducted at home to discover how much water families used in a week. The results of these were entered into a data-handling program on the computer, to produce comparison graphs. Pupils with special educational needs were supported through working with more able pupils and also through extra input from the teacher.

HISTORY

95. Standards in history are similar to those found in most schools, as they were at the last inspection. Throughout the school, pupils have a better knowledge of important people and events in history, than they have of when events are located in time. Pupils have made steady progress in the past. However, the school has made improvements in the way that the subject is taught and organised and these are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The newly appointed co-ordinator has a high level of expertise and has started to adapt national guidance for the subject to meet the needs of the school. This is giving good support to teachers in knowing what should be taught and when. As a result, pupils are experiencing a broader range of learning experiences than they did in the past. A higher emphasis is now being placed on the skills of historical enquiry and exciting learning techniques, such as role-play and 'hands-on' examination of artefacts are being used to good effect. This is ensuring that pupils enjoy the subject and are very keen to learn. As a result, there are signs that progress is accelerating. More time is also being devoted to the subject and this is ensuring that pupils are covering topics in greater depth.
96. In Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge of the key events of the Victorian period. They have a good understanding of the impact of the work of famous Victorians, such as Robert Peel, on society then and now. They can explain the differences between life for children in Victorian Times and life now, showing empathy, for example, for the plight of the poor. They can also explain the impact of the industrial revolution for different people in society. Pupils in Year 4 have a sound understanding of life in Tudor times. They can draw inferences from their research, for example, about Henry VIII's character and describe how it changed as he aged. Good progress is being

made by the current Year 3 class because of the enthusiasm generated by the co-ordinator who teaches them on a regular basis. This is ensuring they get off to a really good start. Year 3 pupils are encouraged to interpret the past through asking questions and finding out the answers for themselves. For example, they can make sensible hypotheses about what a range of artefacts from Viking times might have been used for, based on their developing knowledge of 'Invaders and Settlers'.

97. The lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to excellent. However, an examination of pupils' work reveals that the impact of teaching over time has been satisfactory. There are encouraging signs that the picture is improving. In the excellent lesson seen, Year 6 children were enthralled as the teacher and teaching assistant took on the roles of Victorian schoolteachers. The pupils joined in the role-play with great enthusiasm. This high quality first-hand experience gave them a good taste of life in a Victorian classroom and as a result, they made excellent gains in their understanding. This method of teaching was particularly beneficial for the pupils with special educational needs, who benefited from learning through doing. Similarly in a very good Year 3 lesson, the opportunity to examine a range of 'Viking' artefacts first hand led pupils to pose interesting questions. For example, pupils wanted to know about which animal the leather for the shoes would have come from and how they made candles from beeswax. They made very sensible predictions about what some articles might have been used for. Until the beginning of this school year, pupils have had far fewer opportunities to learn in this way. A weaker area of teaching is the marking of pupils' work. Although this is carried out regularly, it often amounts to a tick and sometimes a positive comment. It is rarely used to help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses and set targets for future learning.
98. Growing and effective links are being made between history and other subjects. For example, ICT is used effectively for research. For example, in Year 6 children have used the Internet to research life in Victorian Britain. They are currently using their findings to produce computer presentations to provide information for others. This work is also making effective use of the skills learned in literacy lessons. Greater emphasis is being placed on developing pupils' speaking skills in history. For example, in Year 3, pupils presented their findings about the artefacts they were studying to the rest of the class. Whilst opportunities for pupils to record their work in different ways are also being extended, more attention could be paid to this area lower down the school.
99. In contrast, throughout the school, pupils' understanding of how key historical events relate to each other in time is a weaker area. This is because pupils have few opportunities, for example to construct and use time-lines of events. As a result, some pupils are hazy about where key periods in history 'fit' in relation to one another. Better use could also be made of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, to provide a greater range of first hand learning opportunities and further enrich pupils' experience.
100. The co-ordinator has been in post for half a term and has made a good start, in conjunction with the headteacher, in identifying the key areas for development. She has already made good use of her expertise to advise staff about how they might approach topics. Both the co-ordinator and the headteacher recognise that training will be needed in subject leadership and management skills, to ensure that recent improvements are sustained and that consistency in teaching and learning are achieved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

101. At the time of the last inspection, ICT was identified as a key area for improvement and standards were judged to be unsatisfactory. The quality of the curriculum, teaching and resources have all significantly improved and standards are now satisfactory throughout the school and are set to rise in the future. All pupils make good progress.
102. The acting deputy head has recently taken over co-ordination of the subject and leads and manages it well. He has adapted local authority and national guidelines effectively to ensure all elements are covered. Teachers are now using these well to plan their lessons and to identify opportunities for using ICT in other subjects. Training has been undertaken and teachers are now confident and competent at using a wide range of computer programs and applications. Funds have been used well to improve the ratio of computers to pupils, to group them together in classrooms and connect them to each other and to the Internet. A system for assessing pupils' progress has recently been introduced and this is beginning to ensure that teachers have a better grasp of pupils' abilities and know what to plan for the future.
103. A particular improvement is the way that ICT is now used to support learning in other subjects. Computers are regularly used to support work in literacy and numeracy lessons, for example, to plan stories and practise number bonds. They are also used effectively to research and present information in history and geography. In science, a computer-linked microscope has been used to good effect to examine the structure of crystals and to monitor changes over time. In art, pupils have used the Internet to research the work of Gustav Klimt. They have also used the digital camera very effectively to produce movement sequences in the style of Eadward Muybridge.
104. In all classes, pupils are competent at saving, loading and retrieving their work from their own files. They have good knowledge of the various keyboard and mouse functions and a good understanding of how to use the Internet. They have learned to use word processing facilities effectively, for example, to write stories and poems. In the Year 6 class pupils have combined a variety of applications to create good quality 'PowerPoint' presentations related to their work on the Victorians. They have researched the topic using the Internet. Their written work has been presented in interesting formats, using different background colours and pictures. Different text styles and colours have been used to add interest and pictures and photographs have been added to the text. Currently, the strongest aspect of ICT is the use of text-based programmes, such as word processors and desktop publishing systems. However, other areas are developing rapidly. In both Years 5 and 6, pupils have learned how to use spreadsheets, for example to collect information about the amount of water used in the home. Year 6 pupils have written simple procedures to work a set of traffic lights on the screen. Throughout the school, pupils can use 'paint and draw' programs to create their own pictures. Good teaching of keyboard skills, using the desktop word processing machines is having a strong impact on the speed at which the pupils work.
105. Teaching in ICT is good. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to break learning down in to clear, easy to follow steps. They demonstrate a concept to pupils, then let them practise this at the computer, before moving on to the next step. As a result, pupils develop confidence in their abilities. Teachers also ensure that when skills are taught, they are relevant to pupils' other learning. For example, in Year 6, when pupils were creating spreadsheets, they were applying their knowledge of mathematical formulae and their understanding of capacity. The focus was very much on learning ICT skills, but with a real purpose. As a result, pupils are very aware

of the many uses of ICT in everyday life and know how to use it for their own purposes. Throughout the school, pupils have very good attitudes to learning in ICT. They show good levels of independence and collaborate and co-operate with others particularly well. The weekly computer club is well supported and gives pupils the opportunity to improve their skills as part of a small group. They are currently producing a school magazine. Pupils are encouraged to use the computers independently and this ensures that the skills of the more able are stretched as they have opportunities to work at their own level. Pupils with special educational needs often use computers to develop their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This motivates them and ensures learning is visual and 'hands-on'. Teaching assistants are skilled at supporting them in achieving their targets.

106. The school has recently successfully acquired funds to build an ICT suite to further improve opportunities in ICT. Staff and governors have had plans drawn up and are currently examining the best use of the suite to maximise learning for all. As yet, the co-ordinator has had little opportunity to check on standards of teaching and learning throughout the school. He has identified this as an area for development, along with the need for time to observe lessons, to ensure that areas for improvement are recognised and the good progress sustained.

MUSIC

107. Standards in singing are broadly in line with expectations at age 11, as at the last inspection. Standards in all other aspects of music are unsatisfactory and have declined since the last inspection. This is partly due to a lack of emphasis on the subject, while the school was concentrating on raising standards in English and mathematics. It is also due to the lack of teacher knowledge and confidence in teaching the subject. However, the new headteacher has recently taken over the leadership and management of music. She has a good level of expertise and has already carried out an evaluation of the subject and identified the key priorities for action to improve standards. She has introduced a new, commercially produced scheme of work, which follows national guidelines to support teaching and learning throughout the school. She has spent time team-teaching with staff to get the scheme up and running. She has also enlisted the support of music specialists to work with pupils and teachers, for example through giving regular singing lessons. As a result, standards are starting to improve. Good links have also been made with the local high school, to share expertise. However, the school still has some way to go because of pupils' lack of prior experience.
108. Throughout the school pupils take part in singing and have plenty of opportunities to listen to a variety of different types of music, for example, as they enter the hall for the daily act of worship and when working quietly in class. However, teachers do not always tell the pupils the name of the piece or its composer. Pupils have limited opportunities to work as part of a group using percussion instruments, as for example when accompanying hymns for assembly. At present, however, these skills are not built on systematically. By the end of Year 6 pupils can sing accurately at a given pitch with clear diction and expression but, unlike Year 5, they have not had the opportunity to work with others to compose, perform and record extended sequences of sounds. Year 5 pupils have recently worked with a music teacher from the local comprehensive school to write and perform a song that they will record on a compact disc.
109. During the inspection, lessons taught by school staff were satisfactory. Some very good lessons taught by a visiting teacher were also seen. This teacher has been

employed by the school for one morning per week. His very good subject knowledge and choice of lively, amusing songs, coupled with the brisk pace of the lesson ensured that pupils learnt a great deal in a very short time. Throughout the lessons the children were well motivated, listened carefully and joined in enthusiastically. The teacher sensitively ensured that all pupils remained actively engaged in the lesson. Pupils rose to his high expectations and it was clear that they were enjoying the lessons. Other lessons were more pedestrian and lacked the same pace and flair.

110. The curriculum for music has not met statutory requirements because the school has not taught all the nationally required components. This omission is being addressed, as staff become more competent in the use of the new scheme of work. It is designed for use by teachers with very little musical training or experience. The scheme is assisting staff in providing cross - curricular reference points to other subjects such as religious education, history, geography, science, games and movement. A good example of this was seen in design and technology. Pupils from Year 5 have made models of a variety of musical instruments from around the world. The music curriculum is enhanced by the singing club and dancing club that are held after school. The dance club is very popular and is taken by a dance specialist from the local high school.
111. Although the subject is in the very early stages of development, the leadership and management are now good. The headteacher is well placed to provide the training and support that the rest of the staff need. The school's resources for music are currently unsatisfactory. However, they have been supplemented by borrowing from other schools locally.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. Standards in physical education have been maintained since the previous inspection and are in line with expectations for pupils in Year 6. All pupils, including those who are on the school's register for special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 6 pupils demonstrate expected levels of fluency, co-ordination and control in their movements. They achieve the appropriate standard in swimming and understand the need to work safely during physical education lessons.
113. There are good opportunities for pupils to test the skills they learn in competition with others. The school regularly enters tournaments in rugby, cross country running, swimming and soccer. All teams include girls and boys. The curriculum is further enriched for pupils in Years 5 and 6 when they engage in adventurous activities such as hill walking and orienteering during their residential visit to a centre in North Yorkshire.
114. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection ranged from very good to satisfactory. Pupils' overall skills suggest that the impact of teaching over time has been satisfactory, particularly in dance, where teachers lack confidence. Some very effective teaching was seen in one lesson. This resulted from the teacher's very good subject knowledge and management of the lesson. The objectives for the lesson were very clearly planned. As a result, activities were well focused on improving pupils' balancing and their sequencing of movements. The teacher promoted personal development very well by questioning pupils to remind them about safety and regard for others working around them. There were also good reminders about their learning in science, when the teacher referred to 'cardio-vascular' exercises during the warm-up session. All pupils worked hard making best use of the very limited space. They collaborated well by evaluating each other's performance and

worked out some imaginative and challenging sequences with their partners. In contrast pupils were less motivated during a dance lesson because the activity and purpose of the lesson did not interest them. The pace of the lesson was controlled more by the audiotape used, than by the teacher. Although pupils were more effectively challenged when working with a partner, their overall progress during the lesson was just satisfactory.

115. Leadership and management of physical education are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are supported by a good scheme, but lesson quality is not monitored or evaluated in order to ensure consistency and identify areas for improvement. The co-ordinator has established good links with the nearby secondary school and there are firm plans in place to use their sports hall in the near future to further develop games and gymnastics skills. The school's equipment for physical education is adequate and well maintained, but indoor space is limited in relation to class sizes and this inhibits pupils' freedom of movement somewhat, during gymnastics and dance lessons.