

Pre-Publication Report

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**ST FRANCIS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118853

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Green

Reporting inspector: Mrs E W D Gill  
17766

Dates of inspection: 19 – 22 May 2003

Inspection number: 247964

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

Pre-Publication Report

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**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Queens Road Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	M16 0LD
Telephone number:	01622 771540
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father John Clark
Date of previous inspection:	8 December 1997

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17766	Eira Gill	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage, art and design, music and English as an additional language.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils' taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
8919	John Kerr	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27243	Ian Tatchell	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, special educational needs, and educational inclusion including race equality.	
2756	Michael Barron	Team inspector	Science, design and technology and physical education.	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
503	Robert Allen	Team inspector	English, geography and history.	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Francis is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school, which educates boys and girls between four and eleven years. The school serves the Catholic community of Maidstone and, in October 2001, relocated from the other side of the town when the school was on two separate sites. This has had a significant effect on the school's intake of pupils who now come from several different parishes. The social circumstances of the families whose children attend the school were more favourable before the relocation and attainment on entry is now usually average although this can vary year on year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There are 351 pupils on roll and the school is bigger than most primary schools. There are 50 children in the reception year and all attend full time. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average and the range of needs covers mostly moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is above national averages and has increased since the last inspection. There are six pupils learning English as an additional language. Their main language is Portuguese.

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

St Francis is an effective school and provides a good quality education for its pupils. Since the relocation, the good leadership of the headteacher and the very effective governing body has been successful in establishing an efficiently run school, and a very harmonious atmosphere as well as continuing to provide a good Catholic ethos. Standards of attainment have been maintained and are above average in English, mathematics and history, and average in other subjects. In April 2003, the school received an 'Achievement Award' for improving standards. Teaching is good overall with several examples of very good teaching throughout the school. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils' progress over time in English, mathematics, history and information and communication technology (ICT) is good by the end of Year 6.
- The good quality teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning.
- Provision for ICT is good, with very good facilities.
- The effective leadership of the headteacher and very good support by the governing body ensure a good team spirit among all staff and a focus on improvement.
- The very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development contributes to their good behaviour and very good relationships.
- The school's partnership with parents is very good and this has a significant effect on the pupils' very positive attitudes to school.

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

- Standards in science could be better.
- The roles of the subject co-ordinators to make sure they have sufficient time to monitor and evaluate their subjects, particularly by observing lessons.
- The reliance on commercial schemes of work in a few classes in mathematics and science, in particular, that provides pupils with work that is sometimes too hard or too easy.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made a good improvement since its last inspection in December 1997 and has a good capacity for further improvement. The weaknesses identified at that time have been addressed successfully. Standards have improved in writing in English, geography, history and ICT and teaching has improved significantly. These improvements are the result of a tighter focus on the teaching of writing in English that has also had a good impact on geography and history attainment. Provision for ICT is good and the result of a determination on the part of the headteacher and governors to provide a high quality computer suite in the new building. Several other aspects of the school have improved also and these include the attitudes of the pupils and their relationships, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, health and safety and child protection procedures and partnership with parents. In addition, provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good. Schools set targets for the proportion of Year 6 pupils they think should reach the expected standard in national tests. In 2002, St Francis met its target in English but not in mathematics. Future targets are challenging but achievable. During the last five years, the school's results have improved steadily, in line with the national trend.

## 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	C	A	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	C	C	B	D	
Science	D	C	C	D	

The findings of the inspection are that in the current Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics; in science, standards are average. Standards are above average in history and average in all other subjects, except for music and physical education where not enough teaching was observed to make a judgement. However, the standard of pupils' singing in assemblies, singing practices and in the choir session was above average. Achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, pupils who speak English as an additional language, those pupils from ethnic minorities and those deemed to be gifted and talented, is good in English, mathematics, history and ICT and satisfactory in other subjects.

Most of the current group of reception children will meet the expected standard in all areas of learning by the time they join Year 1, and their achievement is good overall. In Year 2, standards are above average in English, mathematics, history and ICT and average in all other subjects. The achievement of all pupils is good in English, mathematics, history and ICT and sound in all other subjects. No judgements were made in music or physical education where not enough teaching was observed.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils really enjoy school and are very enthusiastic learners. They have a very confident approach to learning and listen very attentively. Pupils show a great interest in all that they do, their concentration is good and they work very hard.

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Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. There is a harmonious atmosphere throughout the school and pupils are considerate of each other. Pupils respond quickly to the teachers if, on a few occasions, they become a little boisterous. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships support learning in lessons. Pupils are eager to take on responsibility and members of the school council have brought about real improvements.
Attendance	In line with other schools nationally and improving.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 - 2	Years 3 - 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Improvement since the last inspection is good and there is a higher percentage of very good teaching. Teaching and learning in the reception classes are good and a wide range of appropriate activities helps the children to grow in confidence and make good achievement. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection when several aspects of teaching were judged to be unsatisfactory in one of the reception classes.

In Years 1 to 6, the teaching of English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, is good overall. This shows an improvement in mathematics since the last inspection. Basic skills such as tables, spelling and handwriting are taught well, and very well in Year 2. Pupils' learning in these aspects is good in English and mathematics. There are a number of strengths in the quality of teaching and, for example, most teachers have very good management and control of their pupils and this results in a good pace in most lessons. Liaison between teachers and assistants is very good and has an impact on the learning of all pupils and not just those with special educational needs. Teachers work hard to ensure that there are very good relationships in their classrooms and most are successful at establishing a calm atmosphere for good learning to take place. Effective teamwork was in evidence when the Years 5 and 6 teachers planned their artwork together and this resulted in good quality work being produced in most classes. Attainment in history is good because most teachers use inspiring methods to teach the subject. Teaching in ICT is good and both technicians give very effective support. Weaknesses in teaching were observed in science lessons where several teachers rely on the use of commercial schemes of work and pupils are not being challenged enough. This also occurs in mathematics in a few lessons but not to the same extent. Although teachers mark the pupils' work, few examples were seen of comments that guide pupils forward in their learning. The school meets the needs of all pupils well overall, including those with special educational needs, those from an ethnic minority background and pupils who speak English as an additional language.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is good provision for English and ICT. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. In physical education, the breadth of the curriculum is limited due to the accommodation.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Effective support for pupils is carefully planned and organised by the teachers and assistants.



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Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are supported well by the teachers and assistants and their attainment is in line with that of all other pupils by the end of Year 6.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The school develops the pupils' personal skills very effectively through the day-to-day life of the community and in lessons. Very good provision for spiritual, moral and social development and good provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school provides a very caring environment for the pupils and child protection procedures are secure. Monitoring procedures for attendance are very good.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Very good. A number of parents help in school and on visits. At the pre-inspection meeting and in their response to the questionnaire the parents were very supportive of the school.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is a good leader and is assisted appropriately by the senior management team and co-ordinators of subjects and aspects. This has a significant impact on improving the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body supports the school very effectively. Governors bring useful professional experience to the school. The Vice Chair, in particular, has had a significant role in the relocation of the school and has been granted a 'Papal Award'.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Sound. The school has analysed the results of end-of-year tests and identified weaknesses. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection as a result of monitoring by the headteacher and the local education authority.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses specific grants well. All available funds are used very efficiently.

The number of teaching staff is adequate and teachers are well qualified. The accommodation in the school building is excellent but there are subsidence problems with the school field and it is not safe to be used. [The governors have contracted engineers to deal with this problem.](#) Learning resources are satisfactory overall with an excellent computer suite. The governing body applies the principles of best value well.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school and are making good progress.</li><li>• Behaviour is good and the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li><li>• Teaching is good and parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li><li>• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li></ul>	The great majority of parents are happy with all aspects of the school.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. Children enter the reception class with average levels of attainment. Most children are achieving well overall and are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals in all the areas of learning. The children are confident and contribute sensibly when they are sitting with their teachers. All the children enjoy listening to stories and they are particularly enthusiastic to explore the activities arranged for them in the classroom and in the outdoor learning environment.
2. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 have been maintained since the last inspection in most subjects with improvements made in writing, geography, history and ICT. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002 indicated that pupils' attainment had declined in reading, writing and mathematics, and in teachers' assessments of science. However, the pupils in that particular group had been identified by baseline assessment as having more significant learning needs than other groups in the school. The results, although lower than usual, showed that most pupils had made better progress than the predicted levels. In addition, the school has evidence to show that the previous very high standards attained by ~~the some of the~~ Year 2 groups ~~of pupils~~ are not a true reflection of their ability. In English, mathematics, history and ICT standards are above average and average in other subjects. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language, pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and pupils who are deemed to be gifted or talented is good in English, mathematics, history and ICT and satisfactory in other subjects. No judgements could be made in music or physical education as not enough teaching was observed.
3. In the end of Year 6 national tests in 2002, standards improved in English and mathematics from previous years and average standards were maintained in science. The standards attained when compared to similar schools showed that the school's performance was only average in English and below average in mathematics and science. However, very few pupils take up the free school meals option that is used as the criterion for comparing schools and the unemployment figures in Maidstone are below the national average. Inspection findings for the current Year 6 are that standards are above average in English and mathematics and are average in science. These judgements are in line with the last inspection. In other subjects, standards are above average in history and average in all other subjects. Standards in writing, history and geography have improved since the last inspection. The inspection judgement of above average in English, rather than well above in the end of Year 6 national tests, is not significantly different and is due to slight differences of ability in the year group. Although mathematics standards are judged to be above average, it is likely that fewer pupils will attain the higher levels this year. Pupils' attainment in science has lagged behind that in English and mathematics, and this is probably because teaching skills overall are not as strong in science. The achievement of all pupils is good in English, mathematics, history and ICT and satisfactory in other subjects. There has been a strong focus on the teaching of writing in Years 1 to 6 and this has resulted in standards in writing improving. This has had an impact on the pupils' writing in history, which has improved since the last inspection. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had an impact on standards in mathematics and most teachers teach the numeracy hour well. No judgements could be made in music or physical education as not enough teaching was observed. However, the quality of the pupils' singing in assemblies and hymn practices was very good.
4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics, history and ICT, in particular. They make good progress due to the good support they receive from the teaching assistants and specialist teacher. When they are working in small groups or individually, the pupils show an improved level of confidence and persevere with challenging tasks.

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

5. Pupils of all ages have very good attitudes to their work. They are very happy to come to school in the morning and are eager to start the day. They are clearly inspired by their wonderful new building and there is an atmosphere of calm and thoughtfulness throughout the school. Pupils take care of each other and are interested in the achievements of their friends. This fosters a very good working environment where pupils learn to enjoy learning and reflects the very good provision for the pupils' social development.
6. The attitudes and behaviour of children in the reception classes are very good. They cope well with the life in school, adapting quickly to routines and showing interest and curiosity in all they do. They concentrate effectively and are keen to offer suggestions, showing well-developed powers of observation. They persevere with difficulties and finish their tasks. They mix well together and form very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Their positive approach has a real effect on their learning.
7. Throughout the school, pupils are very interested in their work and are often seen to be totally absorbed in what they are doing. For instance, some more able pupils in Year 2 asked if they could progress to the next set of tasks in their question and answer books. This they did with no need of help. Pupils of all ages show initiative as they set about their work. They work well on their own or in groups, helping each other to achieve a common aim. They form good relations with their teachers and with each other and are happy to discuss their work, learning from their successes. For example, pupils in choir practice really appreciated the contribution of the soloists.
8. Parents all agree that the attitudes and behaviour of their children have improved since the move to the new site. All pupils, of whatever background, relate to each other well. There is a pleasant atmosphere in all classes and behaviour is good, reflecting the school's very effective provision for moral development. Pupils move about the school in an orderly fashion and they are considerate of each other in the playgrounds. If they bump into one another, they apologise sincerely. In lessons, most pupils behave sensibly. In a Year 2 class, when pupils became too boisterous, they responded quickly to their teacher's fair but firm reminder of the need for classroom rules. Parents are very satisfied with the standards of behaviour. There have been no exclusions in recent years. There is very little bullying. When it does occur or when a pupil is inconsiderate of another, they are expected to apologise. Older children help younger ones in the playground and in many other ways during the day.
9. Most pupils respond well to a high level of challenge. They are eager to suggest answers to questions and to put forward ideas. These are often thought-provoking and of a spiritual nature. Pupils in a Year 5 class demonstrated this sensitively as they wrote the thoughts and feelings of a wartime mother who had just said good-bye to her children as evacuees. Discussions, which are often built into lesson plans, result in good general levels of participation. In the junior classes, circle time is often used when the class needs to discuss something that is troubling them. There is often a moral element in these discussions as pupils are encouraged to solve their own problems together. When given the opportunity pupils show considerable initiative in the planning of their work and in helping with school routines. The chess club is organised by pupils with one or two parents overseeing. Pupils have formed their own club rules and have a committee. The school council is well established; they meet regularly and their recommendations are considered by management and with the governing body.
10. Attendance has improved over the last two years. The level is being maintained in the current year and is in line with similar schools in the country. Almost all absence is accounted for and parents are very co-operative in bringing their children in good time for the start of the day. This is commendable, considering the wide catchment area and the difficult journeys some pupils have in coming to school.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school. In their response to the questionnaire, the majority of parents indicated that they believe teaching is good. The quality of teaching was good in two out of three lessons seen, and very good in two out of five. A small proportion of teaching was excellent and one lesson was unsatisfactory. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection when 13 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory and only one in five lessons very good.
12. The quality of the teaching and learning for children in the reception classes is good overall and this is a very significant improvement from the last inspection. Teaching is very good in ICT with most pupils exceeding the Early Learning Goals in this element of the area of learning. Planning is good, and assessment is very good and is shared with the assistants. The teachers and assistants manage the children well and provide caring support and guidance. They listen carefully to what the children have to say and demonstrate effective skills in helping the children to develop their language skills, in particular.
13. The quality of teaching for pupils who have special educational needs is good. Pupils are given good support within well-planned lessons or in small groups. The pupils make good progress in lessons and when withdrawn to the designated room. The teachers and support staff have built up very good relationships with the pupils and, using gentle encouragement, take every opportunity to extend their knowledge and understanding.
14. The teachers' use of ICT is good. The computer suite is excellent and all classes make full use of it. In addition, there are computers in every classroom but they are not sufficiently used in every subject of the curriculum. Most staff are proficient and confident using the suite and its very good facilities. Teachers of very young children were observed showing very effective skills, and the progress of the children in lessons was very good. The co-ordinator and technicians are very supportive and skilled, and give all teachers help when it is needed. Very good use is made of the computer suite and teachers' good planning is effective in creating good teamwork with the ICT technicians.
15. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, ICT and history. In other subjects, teaching is satisfactory. No overall judgement could be made in music or physical education as not enough teaching was observed. However, the teaching of singing by the music specialist was very good. There are strengths in the quality of teaching. Throughout the school, most teachers have very good management and control of the pupils' behaviour and, as a result, very little time is wasted and the pupils complete a wide range of work in most lessons. In art and design, the four teachers in Years 5 to 6 had planned their lessons in art and design together effectively and this had an impact on the considerable effort most pupils have made to produce their hessian pictures of habitats. The good teamwork has also helped a very few teachers whose knowledge and understanding of how to teach art and design is not as strong. Several teachers use inspiring methods to ensure that history is interesting and this impacts well on pupils' learning, which is good. All teachers and assistants work hard to ensure that they enjoy very good relationships with each other and the pupils. They are very successful in creating a calm atmosphere in most classrooms. In addition, the teachers' use of the assistants is very good throughout the school and this has an impact on the good progress of the special educational needs pupils in English and mathematics. However, although the pupils' work is ticked or a few occasional words written by most teachers, few examples were seen of comments that help pupils to make the next step in their learning.
16. In English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, the basic skills are taught well, and in Year 2, very well. Most pupils are secure in their knowledge of tables and calculate quickly. In English, the skills of spelling and handwriting are taught very thoroughly and pupils' good progress is evident from Years 1 to 6. Teaching in English and mathematics is strengthened further by the headteacher who takes the lower attainers regularly. In addition, a part-time teacher is employed to boost the skills of the higher attaining pupils in the two subjects. The teaching in a drama

lesson was excellent as a precursor to a writing lesson on tropical islands, and the pupils' learning in the two lessons was very good. There has been a focus by the headteacher on raising teachers' skills in creative writing and there was very good evidence to show that this focus has had a considerable impact. In addition, extra teaching sessions of guided reading are included in the timetables of all classes and this has clearly had an impact on the pupils' good achievement. However, in mathematics, at the beginning of a very few lessons, opportunities were missed to use quick-fire questioning to challenge the pupils and, in a few lessons, teachers depend too much upon the use of commercial worksheets or books. As a result, the higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged.

17. Although teaching in science is satisfactory, it is less effective overall than in English and mathematics. Effective teaching was observed in a Year 2 lesson where the teacher's good subject knowledge ensured that the pupils' understanding of a fair test moved forward appropriately. However, too much reliance is placed by several teachers on the use of commercial schemes and worksheets when planning for lessons. Work in science is not often matched to the needs of different groups of pupils and higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. As a result, their skills in investigative and experimental work are underdeveloped and there is limited evidence of pupils learning how to predict or to plan their own experiments.

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

18. The quality and range of the curriculum provided by the school are satisfactory with a few strengths and weaknesses. The school enriches the curriculum with its provision for ICT. There is a good range of visits and visitors as well as two residential visits in Years 4 and 6. Provision is broad and meets the interests, aptitudes and special educational needs of all pupils and gives them a good preparation for the next stage of their education. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Provision for extra-curricular activities is sound and gives the older pupils, in particular, opportunities to improve their sporting skills.
19. The balance of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but the weaknesses in resources such as the school field and gymnastic equipment are affecting the breadth of pupils' experiences in the physical education curriculum. In music, again, there is a lack of breadth. Although the teaching and coverage of singing skills and performance are very good, the lack of an appropriate scheme of work and lesson planning is limiting the coverage of all the strands of the music curriculum.
20. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in the quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage, which are now good. Planning of work is effective and takes full account of the six areas of learning as recommended in the curricular guidance. Emphasis is placed on providing first-hand experiences for the children and resources are plentiful in the classrooms although there is a lack of climbing equipment in the outdoor learning environment. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator and teachers identify and agree the pupils' specific needs as part of their individual education plans. They are then discussed with the parents. Pupils are fully integrated and those who receive additional support make good progress. This works particularly well during literacy and numeracy hours and is a very efficient use of the teaching assistants and specialist teacher. The individual education plans generally match the needs of individual pupils although targets are not always sufficiently specific or easy to measure.
22. The strategies in place for teaching literacy skills are good and are used and developed in a range of subjects. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills are sound. Daily mathematics lessons are taught effectively overall although, in a very few lessons, opportunities were missed to improve pupils' skills in mental mathematics using quick-fire questions. The use of numeracy skills in other subjects is good and was evident in science, design and technology, geography and in history.

23. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and older pupils have access to a range of after-school sessions including well-attended football, netball and cricket clubs. The ~~lunchtime~~ chess club is very popular and the level of skill displayed by many older pupils is impressive. Visits, including two residential trips, also contribute positively to out-of-lesson experiences for the pupils. However, the lack of a school field for sport and for recreation limits opportunities for pupils to experience a wide range of activities.
24. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The programme covering these aspects is closely tied in with the religious aspects of the curriculum. Subjects are covered in dedicated lessons, in assemblies and in circle time, which often happens on an ad hoc basis when there is a need to resolve a problem. The school nurse makes a valued contribution to the health education programme and visitors, many of whom are linked to the faith aspect of the school, also help to extend the programme.
25. The school is very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. These aspects of the curriculum have improved greatly since the last report. They are covered in the school's curriculum planning and staff are well aware of pupils' broader needs. Teaching in these respects is very effective.
26. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good and is the basis for much of the school's teaching. From an early age pupils are encouraged to be reflective and reverent at important times, in assemblies and when they learn about their own lives and the needs of others. When the extension to the hall is opened to include the new chapel, a very spiritual dimension is added to special assemblies and choir practice. The school celebrates special days and pupils' achievements are regularly noted. Singing, sometimes unaccompanied, is effective in helping pupils to reflect as they leave an assembly. Teachers give their pupils time to explore their inner thoughts. They talk about feelings expressed in music and literature. In Year 5, pupils read from a wartime diary and wrote their own thoughts on what it would be like to be a mother separated from her children in the war. Year 6 pupils experience a day of spiritual reflection at a nearby Catholic retreat.
27. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school's strong moral standards are the basis on which the teachers' high expectations for good behaviour are founded. From the early years, pupils are expected to distinguish right from wrong. There is a moral tone to the stories chosen by teachers. As a result, pupils think about their actions and attitudes from a moral point of view. A local retired deacon visits the school regularly and is a prime mover in talking to pupils about their spiritual and moral responsibilities. Older pupils are actively encouraged to support younger ones and pupils always look after their friends who have been hurt in the playground.
28. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. From their early days in school, pupils learn to value the school as a society and their role in that society. Group discussions, known as circle time, are frequently used very effectively to create a bond within a class and to promote the qualities of a responsible society. Pupils feel secure and are confident to take part in all the activities the school provides. They are encouraged to work in pairs or small groups and are often given specific tasks to do for the benefit of the whole class. For instance, in Year 5, an Internet group reported details they had learned on an aspect of a history topic. Year 4 pupils are offered a residential visit to help them become self-confident and more independent. The frequent visitors to the school, including parent volunteers and volunteers from the community, help pupils to see how adults relate to each other.
29. Good provision is made for pupils' awareness of their own and other world cultures. From their early days in school pupils learn nursery rhymes and traditional stories of this country. Knowledge of the many types of celebration and festivals of Christian and other faiths are included in the curriculum. The school supports the rich diversity of cultures represented by parents and members of the local community in lessons and in the after-school activities. The school is in the final stages of organising a multicultural week. Parents and volunteers have offered to read the pupils stories from their own cultures, to show them traditional clothes and to eat the foods from their countries of origin. ~~There is a popular and enthusiastic Irish country dance club, led by a parent~~

~~volunteer, that meets regularly at lunchtime.~~ Music is important to the school. Pupils are keen to take part in singing traditional songs and hymns as well as more up-to-date music and music from other countries.

30. The school's partnership with the community is good and these links have a very positive impact on the pupils' attainment and personal development. The school readily supports local events, such as a recent 'Walk to School' by pupils to raise money for the nearby hospice. They also collect money for homeless people in Maidstone. Irish dancing lessons are organised by ~~a parent who runs a local Irish dancing school~~ a local headteacher who supports parish projects. There are excellent links with the Catholic Church. The deacon, in particular, is a frequent visitor to the school. Several people from the community will be joining the staff and pupils to take part in the multicultural week after half-term.
31. The school's links with its partner institutions are good. The school has benefited immensely from the move to the new site adjacent to the Catholic secondary school. There is a strong community spirit where pupils feel part of the greater school complex. Practically all of the pupils will transfer to the school and, before the end of this term, the pupils will visit for a whole day to familiarise themselves with the building and a few of the staff. The pupils in Year 5 also visit for a day simply to be reassured that the headteacher and staff are looking forward to their arrival. The secondary school is allowing St Francis' pupils to use their playing fields as the school field is unsafe. The school is part of the West Maidstone Consortium of schools and is also part of a group of local Catholic schools. Several joint projects are organised to benefit the pupils, for example to join together to celebrate liturgical singing.

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

32. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its standard of care for pupils and provision is now good. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school, seeing it as a caring community where the headteacher and teachers are approachable if there are any problems. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are satisfactory and those for monitoring personal development are good. Strengths lie in the very good procedures for monitoring attendance and the good procedures for monitoring behaviour and for preventing bullying. Provision for the support, guidance and the welfare of pupils is good.
33. The good personal support and guidance pupils receive make a significant contribution to their very good personal development and effective learning. Looking after pupils' personal and emotional needs is the responsibility of the class teachers, who together with the teaching assistants, know their pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. The very good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. Also, the pupils who are members of the school council listen carefully to any problems put forward by the representatives.
34. Attendance is very carefully monitored with the full co-operation of parents. Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a Family Liaison Officer. This has been a particularly successful appointment as she has established a useful rapport with parents, making early contact and even visiting homes if there are problems with attendance or welfare. Since the school has moved to the new site, attendance has improved from an unacceptably low point just before the move. The school works closely with parents in their effort to increase the attendance rate of a small core of pupils who are regularly absent. The Education Welfare Officer also gives valued help with family visits and truancy checks.
35. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are effective. Pupils are expected to be orderly in lessons and as they move about the school. There are clear procedures to combat bullying and racial harassment. Incidences of such behaviour are very rare. If they occur, staff act quickly and effectively. Staff are encouraged to foster good manners and a sense of self-discipline amongst pupils and to give them increased responsibilities as they grow older. Teachers' high expectations of good behaviour mean that lessons proceed with purpose and at a good pace. For



example, when a Year 2 class became too boisterous, their teacher quietly reminded them of the class rules and the need for class rules so they could all learn together.

36. Procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being are good. All staff are fully aware of their child protection responsibilities and the routines involved. The health and safety procedures are thorough. Staff and governors carry out routine checks of premises and equipment and defects are dealt with swiftly. The area designated as the future playing field at present constitutes a hazard. This is because there are a number of sharp stones on its surface and a considerable hole to one side caused by poor drainage. This whole area has had to be fenced off until it is safe for pupils to use it. Trained members of staff deal with accidents and injuries promptly and efficiently. Records of such accidents are recorded and parents informed.
37. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own lives and the life of the school. There is a very active school council. Representatives are invited to join the governing body's Pupil Welfare Committee at their meetings to report on specific issues. There is a need to involve pupils in becoming more aware of their own learning, through better use of targets, so they know what they need to do to improve. Group discussion sessions are used effectively to consider topics that will broaden pupils' minds and develop their awareness of others. By their fundraising and valuable help in school, governors, parents and supporters widen the educational opportunities offered to pupils.
38. The care and support of pupils with special educational needs are good. The teachers know the pupils they work with well and systems are in place to enable pupils to cope with difficult situations. Their work is monitored effectively and specialist support from a variety of external agencies is sought when needed and used effectively.
39. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are satisfactory overall. However, very good assessment was carried out to establish progress from attainment on entry for pupils in Years 1 and 2 last year. The data produced from the assessment identified specific weaknesses, particularly for the Year 2 pupils in last year's group, and the co-ordinator requested additional support for the pupils in reading and writing. This had an impact on results and these were better than predicted in the end-of-year tests in 2002. The school tracks the progress of pupils in English and mathematics appropriately at the end of each year when pupils complete the optional national tests as well as other standardised tests. These assessments enable the school to predict the targets for pupils in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. They also help to select those pupils who will benefit from being included in booster groups either to attain the average levels or higher levels.
40. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. The systems in place for science and all other subjects are too generalised to be of much help in identifying the progress of individual pupils. In science, for example, pupils who are not making expected progress are listed but details of their specific problems are not identified. As a result, in science, pupils with different needs are often given the same tasks and this is one of the reasons standards in science are not as good as in English and mathematics. The use of assessment procedures is consistent in Years 1 and 2 but not in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are not given individual targets in English and mathematics. Although there is a fairly detailed action plan for assessment, this has had little impact on consistency in Years 3 to 6.

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

41. The school's partnership with parents is very effective. Parents themselves recognise the improvement in this aspect of the school's work since the last inspection. They are supportive of the school and are very keen to see it develop and prosper in its new location. They speak well of the new building and the quality of education and guidance by the teaching staff. Their very positive response to the pre-inspection questionnaire reflects the confidence the community has in the school.

42. Parents of children with special educational needs are involved and informed at all stages of a pupil's assessment and review, and contact is maintained at other times on an informal basis. Parents have access to class teachers who have good communications with the special educational needs co-ordinator and this maintains a steady flow of information. Parents of the pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs are fully involved in the annual review of the agreed provision and progress of their children.
43. Parents are very well informed of news and school events and look forward to receiving the weekly up-dates. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are professionally produced and written in an interesting way. The brochure gives comprehensive information about provision for special educational needs in the school. Other methods of communication are friendly and of good quality. Homework is given in all years. Most parents support the home reading programme but the school is aware that a significant minority of parents do not take an active part in their children's learning. This is particularly so in Years 2 and 4 where there is little home support for reading. The school is taking active steps to involve the Family Liaison Officer with home visits to discuss this aspect of parenting.
44. Pupils' annual reports are personal and give details of what pupils know and can do, particularly in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science. Information is given about their children's targets with suggested ways in which parents could help them to improve performance. Parents are satisfied with the reports that deal with their children's past but some say they find the review meetings with teachers a better means of learning what their children will be doing and how they can help them progress.
45. Parents find it easy and interesting to come into school to talk to the headteacher or members of staff. They are very willing to share ideas and suggestions. There is a nucleus of parents who regularly offer help in school and with after-school activities. A wider group give valued support with school events. For instance, many have agreed to take part in the multicultural week. They will be reading traditional stories to pupils, showing them their national costumes and letting them taste dishes from their country of origin. The Friends' Association has been successful in raising funds for charity and for the school, in addition to organising social events and activities.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

46. The quality of leadership of the headteacher, key members of staff and the governing body is good overall and has been maintained since the last inspection. The headteacher provides effective leadership and, since the last inspection, has worked hard to improve the school. She has a clear vision of how to improve the school further and knows how to secure commitment from the staff. Since the school relocated in October 2001, the headteacher has created a hardworking and committed team. She has been very successful in ensuring that the strong Catholic ethos and aims of the school are reflected in classrooms and around the school. This is reflected in the school's very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a high commitment to promoting very good relationships, equality of opportunity and racial equality for all staff and pupils and this reflects the impact of the school's policy. The parents' response to the questionnaire and their comments at the meeting held before the inspection reflect their support for the school and for the headteacher, who, they affirmed, had been responsible for improvement in the school since the relocation. The headteacher has found the management of the relocation the most bureaucratically demanding task.
47. The management of the school is sound overall with strengths. The senior management team is still developing its role since the relocation and, although the minutes of meetings show that aspects of school improvement are included on the agendas, very minor administrative issues are also included that should be the responsibility of other members of staff. As a result, not enough time is spent discussing major issues, such as how to improve standards and teaching further. The headteacher has made good decisions about the appointment of specific members of staff such as the Family Liaison Officer and the ICT technicians. These appointments have proved to be good value for money as attendance has improved and so have standards in ICT. Co-ordinators carry out many aspects of their work well, such as supporting colleagues and auditing and

purchasing resources. They bid for money and manage their budgets to support their annual action plans. However, the co-ordinators' action plans that form the school improvement plan vary in quality and format and some pay more attention to maintenance rather than ways to raise standards. The headteacher has identified linking the school improvement to the budget as a priority in her pre-inspection documentation. Support given to new members of staff and students is good. The students who were undergoing training during the inspection were being given appropriate developmental opportunities by the school.

48. The management of special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator is assisted effectively by the headteacher and the school's Family Liaison Officer. All assessments and reviews are carried out accurately and regularly and parents are informed quickly of any suggested changes to their children's provision. The co-ordinator administers the day-to-day organisation of pupils with the assistance of the headteacher and class teachers. She checks that targets set in pupils' individual education plans are clearly linked to pupils' needs and addressed by class teachers and learning support assistants. Parents are involved at all stages and receive regular reports on their child's progress. A representative of the governing body supports and monitors the provision for pupils with special educational needs in order to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.
49. The management of pupils with English as an additional language and those pupils from a minority ethnic background is satisfactory. Progress is good as the pupils are well supported by the teaching assistants. However, the number of pupils in both categories has grown rapidly over the last two years, and the management has not kept pace. These two groups of pupils have complex language problems but do not necessarily have other special educational needs. However, there is no register of the pupils that details their needs and pupils who need support had not had any from the local authority since December 2002. Support has now been allocated to the school the week before the inspection.
50. The governing body is a very stable and committed group. Their own professional backgrounds are often helpful when problems arise with the building, for example. The Vice Chair of the governing body has worked very hard and has been instrumental in ensuring the relocation of the school after many years of discussion and attempts to move. As a result of his fine leadership in this aspect of school improvement, he has been given a 'Papal Award'.
51. Governors are very effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, are strongly committed to the school and are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They account well for the performance and improvement of the school and are very keen to make a difference. The governing body is very well organised with individual committees responsible for particular aspects of the school's performance. Governors' knowledge of the school is very good and underpinned by focused visits by individuals. Governors who form the Curriculum Committee evaluate the school's performance with the headteacher and are knowledgeable about the data generated by the authority and government departments. In addition, at every meeting of this committee, a subject co-ordinator is invited to report on developments and to comment on how their action plans are progressing. Members of the Welfare Committee have invited pupils to their meetings in order to find out their opinions of aspects of the school, such as the quality of the school lunches. This is good practice and is effective in raising the pupils' self-esteem as well as developing their personal qualities.
52. Performance management is linked to priorities in the school improvement plan, is good overall and has resulted in improvements in standards in English, in particular. One of the general targets for all staff was to further develop their skills in teaching creative writing. This focus was led by the headteacher and has resulted in improvements in standards. The assessment of the writing skills of pupils was carried out very thoroughly and extra funding provided to support pupils in Years 1 and 2. The headteacher has monitored teaching and learning in mathematics throughout the school as part of her performance management targets. Although the headteacher's monitoring was very focused and feedback gave explicit comments on strengths and weaknesses, there has been no follow-up to check up that the weaknesses have been addressed. Provision for performance management also includes the teaching assistants, who reported to the inspection

team that they have found the target-setting procedures to have improved their skills and, in addition, they feel valued by the school.

53. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is satisfactory but not always sufficiently rigorous. Although co-ordinators monitor some aspects of teaching and learning in their subject, such as looking through the pupils' exercise books and displays of their work, they have had insufficient opportunity to monitor work in the classroom. This is limiting their ability to evaluate and influence the work in their own subjects and is leading to discrepancies in the use of schemes of work. It is also limiting the co-ordinators' ability to fulfil the responsibilities identified in their job descriptions.
54. The efficiency of financial control is good. The headteacher and governors receive clear information provided by the Bursar. As a result they have a very good understanding of how spending decisions impact on budgets, and a strong commitment to maximise the use to which money is put. Specific grants are correctly claimed and effectively used for their designated purposes. The governors have taken a very active role in the planning and deployment of funds to create the new school. During this process, the school has wisely retained the use and advice of their own accountants. At the culmination of the project, part of the surplus funds have been earmarked for known commitments or planned final developments. In matters of capital spending and in the running of the school, the principles of best value are successfully applied. The recommendations of the most recent audit report have been put in place.
55. Teachers are well qualified and the number of teaching assistants has increased since the appointment of the headteacher. The school building is excellent and is well maintained by the site manager and his staff. There are several designated rooms used for special needs, the ICT suite, a medical room and, a chapel ~~and a large central space for the library.~~ There is a large central resource area that contains the library. However, the quality of the outside accommodation is significantly affected by the unsafe school field. Since the relocation, the field has not been used because of subsidence problems and also due to a lack of foresight in preparing the ground for use by the pupils for sporting activities. This is limiting the school's ability to give the pupils a breadth of experience in their physical education activities. The governing body is addressing this issue and plans are being formulated by the engineers contracted by the school. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. Resources for ICT are excellent, those for design and technology and English are good, and in other subjects they are satisfactory. Although music resources are just satisfactory, more untuned percussion instruments are needed to improve provision.
56. The school has taken effective action to address the key issues from the last inspection. Teaching for the children in the reception classes has improved significantly and pupils throughout the school are now given opportunities to take part in investigations and problem-solving activities. Pupils are now allowed to select their own resources within the classroom, although there was little evidence during the inspection of pupils finding books or other resources in the library. The teachers are now more aware of the potential of the higher attaining pupils but there is room for further improvement in this aspect of teaching.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to raise standards, the headteacher, governors and staff should improve the effectiveness of the school's management and use of resources by:
- (1) improving standards in science by extending teachers' expertise and subject knowledge, particularly in Years 3 to 6, and by reinforcing confidence so that all pupils realise their full potential and so raise overall attainment;  
(paragraphs 3, 17, 40, 85, 90, 91)
  - (2) reviewing the roles and responsibilities of subject co-ordinators to make sure they have time to monitor and evaluate their subjects, particularly by observing lessons;  
(paragraphs 53, 76, 84, 97, 101, 105, 111)
  - (3) ensuring that the weekly lesson plans, particularly in mathematics and science, include a range of challenges appropriate to the different needs of the pupils and avoid excessive use of commercial worksheets and books.  
(paragraphs 84, 85, 87, 89)

In addition to these points, there are lesser issues that the school should consider for inclusion in its action plan. These involve:

- (1) reviewing and adapting schemes of work that meet the particular needs of the school and its pupils in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and music;  
(paragraphs 77, 84, 91, 105, 111, 122)
- (2) reviewing assessment arrangements to ensure consistency across the school, including the marking procedures;  
(paragraphs 15, 40, 74, 89, 91, 97, 101, 105, 111, 118, 122, 126) \*\*
- (3) making sure that work is carried out on the school field as soon as possible, so that pupils have complete access to the physical education curriculum, and the areas for their recreation are improved.  
(paragraphs 19, 36, 55, 126)

\*\* Denotes issues already identified for improvement in the school improvement plan.

**PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS****Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection**

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	17	15	16	1	0	0
Percentage	6	32	29	31	2	0	0

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

**Information about the school's pupils**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	351
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	19
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	76
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

**Attendance****Authorised absence**

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	25	19	44

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	22
	Girls	16	16	15
	Total	37	37	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (90)	84 (94)	84 (90)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	22	23
	Girls	16	15	15
	Total	37	37	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (94)	84 (94)	86 (96)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	26	23	49

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	22	23
	Girls	21	17	21
	Total	44	39	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (84)	80 (80)	90 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	20
	Girls	18	17	19
	Total	36	36	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (82)	73 (80)	80 (91)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	289	0	0
White – Irish	16	0	0
White – any other White background	22	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	30

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	199

**Financial information**

Financial year	2002/03
	£
Total income	741,471
Total expenditure	735,679
Expenditure per pupil	5,792
Balance brought forward from previous year	2,114
Balance carried forward to next year	44,818

FTE means full-time equivalent.



Pre-Publication Report

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	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	349
Number of questionnaires returned	113

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	37	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	46	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	55	3	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	50	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	64	31	4	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	53	7	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	36	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	42	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	11	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	5	3	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	50	1	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	42	14	5	5

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

**AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

58. Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes and improvements in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage. There is now an outdoor play area that is utilised during the day as part of the learning environment. New teaching appointments have been made and the hours of the teaching assistants have increased. In addition, both assistants have undergone appropriate training and show good skills when supporting the children. They take a full part in assessing the children in both classes and this aspect of provision is very good. An excellent portfolio shows examples of progress from the children's entry to the school to the end of the reception year. Teachers plan thoroughly together both for the medium and short term, and this is another aspect of the Foundation Stage that has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly and is now good overall. The management of provision for the Foundation Stage is good. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and has worked hard to improve teaching and planning since the last inspection.
59. Children are admitted to the two reception classes at the beginning of the autumn term. One class contains a very few Year 1 pupils who are at an early stage of learning. The reception children begin by attending part-time only but by the fifth week of the autumn term, all children are in school full time. Practically all of the pupils have attended pre-schools or nurseries before they enter the reception class. Children's attainment is average overall with a very few higher attaining children in this year's group. A few children have entered the school with complex needs, such as difficulties in learning English or emotional and behavioural problems. Overall, more than 30 per cent are lower attaining children and have special educational needs or have difficulty speaking and learning English. They receive good support and are making good progress. Most children are achieving well in the personal, social and emotional area of learning and will exceed the Early Learning Goals. In all other areas of learning, the children will meet the Early Learning Goals. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good but in the physical development area of learning, teaching is satisfactory. There were no observations of teaching in the creative development area of learning and no judgement can be made.

**Personal, social and emotional development**

60. Children's achievements are good. The well-organised procedures help the children to develop self-confidence and to take care of their own needs. Children choose activities sensibly, find the right equipment and use their initiative. The behaviour of the children is very good both in the classrooms and when moving around the school. They need very little help to undress for physical education lessons. Most children settle quickly to whole-class sessions, such as the adapted literacy and numeracy lessons. Most concentrate fully on tasks when working in small groups with the teachers or assistants. Teaching is good and personal and social development is strongly promoted in the planning of the curriculum. The management and control skills of both teachers are very good and all adults working with the children treat each other and the children with courtesy and respect. This leads to trusting relationships and helps the children to develop an awareness of others.

**Communication, language and literacy**

61. Children's achievements in this area of learning are good. Several children joined the reception classes with complex language problems and another group have special educational needs. Good teaching and effective support from the teaching assistants have resulted in the children making good progress and most will meet the national expectations in the Early Learning Goals. The children have learned to listen well and their speaking skills, although variable, have improved considerably. Most children are confident in discussions and when sharing ideas. Their speech is usually fluent and expressive. A few children can read simple texts, using the pictures and letter sounds to help their understanding. Most children can write their first names only and can write simple well-known words unaided. Good use by the teachers of individual small boards helps the

children to learn three-letter words, for example, by 'having a go' at writing them unaided. In an example of good teaching, singing was used effectively to learn vowel sounds and, in addition, the children were invited to come out to the board to attempt to write three- and four-letter words in a simple frame. The children enjoyed this activity and were highly motivated to show the teacher and the other children their knowledge. When children are given a variety of activities to extend their language and literacy skills, adult intervention is good and all staff take every opportunity to develop and extend vocabulary and language skills.

### **Mathematical development**

62. This area of learning is well taught overall and, by the end of the reception year, most children will meet the national expectations in the Early Learning Goals. Their achievement is sound. The teachers use a range of strategies in direct teaching sessions, for example, using a counting song to subtract numbers. This was a useful activity as the children were very motivated to remember which number was going to come next. However, in one lesson observed, this first session of the adapted numeracy hour was very brief and the children made little progress. In the most effective lesson observed, the teacher was imaginative in the methods she used and the children enjoyed jumping in the hoops if they were holding the shape the teacher was describing. Their listening skills were very good in this lesson. Several children in both classes can describe the properties of simple shapes, such as, *'My shape has four straight sides. Two sides are short and two are long.'* The children were encouraged in one lesson to paint sequences of two shapes using water on the playground. They enjoyed this activity and made good progress in a short time. An effective final teaching session ensured that the children had to think hard about the shape they thought one of the children was hiding behind their backs, and asked a question such as *'Does it have four straight sides?'* Independent mathematical activities are well organised in both classes using good resources and the children are well motivated to concentrate and make patterns of colours. For example. A few children can add up numbers less than ten using plastic cubes and other equipment and most can write numbers unaided.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

63. Children enter the reception classes with a varied general knowledge and those with English as an additional language lack the vocabulary to describe, for example, parts of plants. Planning is effective and the teachers are building on the children's previous knowledge to help them to learn more about the world around them. Teaching and learning are good and a high proportion of children are on course to meet the national expectations in the Early Learning Goals. The children achieve well. Activities are effectively planned and organised and are linked between the areas of learning and subjects. The story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' has been used this term as a theme for several activities, for example, to introduce the science element of this area of learning. The children are growing beans as well as a variety of seeds. They collected the soil from the 'Digging Area' in the outside environment and planted the seeds with the help of the assistant. In addition, the children were helped by their teacher to experiment with squares of chocolate and discovered that their pieces will melt if placed in hot water or if they are held in their hands. They know that the chocolate will go hard again when placed in a colder place.
64. The children are achieving very well in the ICT element of this area of learning. Since they joined the school last September, the children have been visiting the ICT suite once a week, where they are supported very effectively by the ICT technician as well as their teachers. Teaching in the ICT element is very good and the children will exceed the Early Learning Goals. They can log on and off, can open up an application, delete, use the backspace key, drag and drop pictures into Goldilocks' bedroom and use the pencil to draw pictures. During the inspection week, the children were taught how to save their work.

### **Physical development**

65. Pupils' achievement is sound in this area of learning and the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is an appropriate range of equipment available in the outside learning environment although there is no climbing apparatus, such as a slide. The children enjoy riding the

few bicycles and show good skills and energy. There are plenty of opportunities for the children to develop their writing skills and they can handle scissors and paintbrushes. They use a variety of construction building resources in the classrooms. The children are encouraged to explore, investigate and discover for themselves through practical experiences. They have regular opportunities to use the hall for physical education lessons and, in the lesson observed, the children made good use of the space and moved well in different ways. A commercial music and movement tape was used for the lesson. The children listened to the instructions well and loved running around quickly or slowly on their toes pretending to be the 'Giant' creeping up on his victim. The teacher and assistant joined in with all the movements and encouraged the children well but the use of the tape did not enable the children to use their own imaginations or to show their individual ideas for extending the story.

### **Creative development**

66. No direct teaching was made in this area of learning and no judgement can be made. However, there was evidence from displays of the children learning to experiment with colour and shape. They had painted faces on paper plates and attached ears and noses by sticking on cut-out shapes. There were few displays of individual imaginative artwork or examples of the children creating models in three dimensions. The children enjoyed being in the role-play area that is organised to be the 'castle' connected to the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. The children were eager to dress up in the various clothes available and to hide from the giant under the draped seats. They use their imagination freely. It is likely that most children will meet the national expectations in the Early Learning Goals and their achievement is sound.

### **ENGLISH**

67. Inspection findings are that standards of attainment in English are above average by the end of Year 2 and these standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The achievement of all pupils is good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, pupils who are deemed gifted and talented and those pupils who are learning English as an additional language as well as those from different ethnic minority backgrounds is good as a result of the effective support they receive from the teaching assistants and specialist teacher. Although the results in the national tests in 2002 were not as good as in previous years, this was because of the difference in the ability of the year group. In fact, the school had identified the weaknesses of the group from their baseline results on entry, worked very hard to support the pupils and were pleased with the overall progress. The data available for the inspection team shows that at least half the pupils in the year group made better progress than expected.
68. Standards in Year 6 have also been maintained since the last inspection and are above average. This would appear to be a decline from the national test results in 2002 when results were well above average, but is due to differences in ability between the year groups. The achievement of all pupils is good. Over the last three years, boys have outperformed girls in English but, during the inspection, no significant difference was identified. The school's performance in national tests over the last three years has improved.
69. By the end of Year 2, pupils have developed above average skills in speaking and listening. They listen well to their teachers and to their peers, as seen in a lesson where they carefully evaluated each other's work. They speak with considerable confidence: for example, in a drama lesson they made thoughtful predictions about what might happen next, and went on to justify what they were saying. These qualities of thoughtfulness and confidence can be identified as pupils move through the school. Their very good attitudes are developed because teachers use probing questions that provoke thoughtful responses, and provide pupils with an environment in which they feel secure enough to 'have a go' and do not mind too much if they are wrong. Year 6 pupils, discussing their reading, comfortably and maturely gave their impressions of the two '*Lord of the Rings*' films and gave reasons why they did, or did not, prefer the books to the films. Pupils' responses are well argued, demonstrating above average competence in this element of the curriculum.

70. In reading, higher levels of attainment are demonstrated by pupils' ability to show understanding. By the end of Year 2, pupils read appropriate texts with accuracy, liveliness and enthusiasm, leading to good expression that effectively communicates meaning. Pupils have basic research skills, and about half of them can quickly find an item in a simple dictionary. They have good strategies for tackling unfamiliar words, sometimes breaking them down into their component parts, sometimes using pictures or contextual clues, and sometimes relying on intelligent guesses that are often very accurate. Because of the regular reading encouraged in school and at home, there is consistent improvement through Years 3 to 6 and higher attaining pupils read with fluency, accuracy and expression and, often, poise and sophistication. Research skills, however, do not develop as fast, and pupils are still too ready to ask an adult rather than to go to a dictionary or other source. Nevertheless, many pupils in Year 6 have developed good analytical approaches to their reading: they are aware of how authors achieve their effects in a variety of genres, and of the range of ways in which meaning may be communicated.
71. This awareness of what makes pleasing reading is also evident in pupils' writing. In looking together at a story, Year 2 pupils chose between an interesting and a less interesting sentence. They suggested their own way of writing something in the best way, confidently expanding simple sentences by using more descriptive language. By the end of Year 2, middle and higher attaining pupils put together stories which have clear structures, with vocabulary carefully chosen to be interesting. Full stops are mostly used accurately, and spelling is often correct and logical. Lower attaining pupils are beginning to join clauses together with 'and', and almost all produce continuous writing at some length, from three sentences to more than 150 words. Handwriting, in many cases, is joined, well formed and positioned, but this is not consistent and it is questionable whether the amount of teaching time devoted to handwriting is justifiable and there are often, for example, contrasts between the quality of the writing in handwriting exercises and in imaginative compositions.
72. This comment applies also to older pupils, in whose work the same inconsistency is to be seen. Nevertheless, from Years 3 to 6, the content of pupils' writing develops well. By the end of Year 6, their work is often full of interest, rich and varied. Higher attaining pupils are accurate in their spelling and use of a wide reserve of words, and middle attainers write well for effect, with a comparatively small number of errors: *'They heard the desperate cry of their friend. Crawling against the horrendous torrential storm, they saw a shape, silhouetted against the ground....'*. A significant majority of pupils are writing in line with national average standards, and a good number of these display standards that are above or well above average. Particularly notable features of the pupils' writing, springing from the school's rich reading ethos, are its sensitivity and vividness.
73. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school. The teaching of English in Year 6 is well supported by the headteacher who teaches the lower attainers regularly. In addition, a part-time teacher is employed to ensure that the higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately. There has been a focus led by the headteacher to improve the skills of teaching creative writing and extra sessions of teaching guided reading are included in all timetables. Very effective methods of teaching English ensure that the pupils are highly motivated, enjoy their work and try to do their best. In an example of excellent drama teaching in Year 3, the teacher used the music *'Peer Gynt'* by Grieg to inspire the pupils to imagine the atmosphere, climate and food of tropical islands as a prelude to their writing in the next lesson. In another example in Year 4, the teacher used most imaginative methods to motivate the pupils to write an advertisement and produced a quacking, moving toy duck as the product. Most teachers have very good skills of management and control and, with very few exceptions, behaviour is very good, and the quality of learning is enhanced by co-operation between pupils and teachers, who know their pupils well. As a result, very little time is wasted in lessons. Teachers provide well for the pupils' different needs so that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are included in all the opportunities provided, and make progress in parallel with their peers. The high quality of the work provided and of teachers' questioning skills provides an appropriately challenging stimulus for the gifted and talented. Lessons are well structured and planned, and objectives are shared with pupils. All pupils know what is the starting point and what is expected of them, although pupils are not routinely invited at the end of lessons to contribute to the evaluation of how well they have reached their objectives.

74. Good relationships between the teachers and their pupils ensure a good learning climate in the classrooms. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in lessons was at least good or very good, and two were judged as outstanding. Teaching assistants have a significant role in lessons, and provide effective support to pupils with special educational needs or other difficulties by leading small groups or working with individuals. Although pupils' work is marked diligently, sometimes this is with no more than a tick, and perhaps an encouraging remark. Evidence of developmental marking that makes suggestions for improvement, and subsequently checks whether the advice has been followed, is rare. The targets pupils are given and pasted into their exercise books are too general to give each pupil firm knowledge of what he or she must do to improve.
75. Literacy skills are promoted well throughout the school, particularly through the way in which reading is encouraged, and through the way in which teachers have adopted and used the National Literacy Strategy. In other subjects, the use of appropriate subject-specific vocabulary is promoted through key words on display and encouraged in pupils' writing. In history, the pupils use their skills to write factual and imaginary accounts. Teachers expect pupils to listen carefully and to speak thoughtfully. There is a very positive approach to reading for pleasure, through good classroom collections of books. Pupils keep reading diaries, although their use diminishes as they move up the school. Diaries seen in Year 6 were completed no further than mid-October, and there was no indication that teachers had looked at them. The school library is satisfactorily stocked, with a well-ordered non-fiction collection. However, no pupil was seen using it as an information resource and this is a missed opportunity as the library is ideally situated to allow access at any time.
76. The leadership of English is good. The co-ordinator is a very experienced, skilled and committed teacher. She has a clear vision of the priorities for the subject, and she ensures that the pupils' achievements are tracked and weaknesses identified. However, she is not routinely provided with time to observe her colleagues so that teaching can be monitored. A policy and schemes of work are in draft and these are waiting to be formalised, adopted and applied. Procedures for assessment of reading and writing are satisfactory, in the form of a number of tests. Progress in speaking and listening is not formally tracked and the co-ordinator plans to introduce these assessments together with more detailed assessment of reading progress. Resources for English are good, particularly in the stock of materials for the promotion of reading held in every classroom, and in the collections of graded readers. There is sufficient use of ICT in English.
77. English makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The pupils are given opportunities to hear extracts from great literature and experience the thrill of writing well. They collaborate well with each other in paired and group work, where they are particularly successful in their discussions of moral questions in class and through contacts with their own and other cultures in a range of books and poems.

## **MATHEMATICS**

78. Inspection findings are that standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 are above average and the achievement of all pupils is good. This is a significant improvement from the national tests for this year group in 2002 when standards were well below average. However, the school has identified an overall difference in ability of this group of pupils from their assessment on entry to the school. The findings of the last inspection five years ago were that pupils' attainment was above average. Since then, the National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced and expectations are higher.
79. Inspection findings show that by the end of Year 6 standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection and are above average. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2002 were also in line with these judgements although it is evident from the work scrutiny and discussions with pupils that fewer pupils will attain the higher levels compared with last year's group. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, is good. Over the last three years results in the national tests show that boys attained higher

standards than girls in mathematics, although no difference between boys and girls was in evidence during the inspection. This is most likely because the school identified this and has worked on improving girls' attainment successfully. The school's performance in national tests over the last three years has improved.

80. The overall quality of teaching observed across the school is good, which is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection in 1997 and is the result of the school's good commitment to raising standards and to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy.
81. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed in Years 1 and 2 was good overall. Where teaching was very good, there was a brisk pace and pupils benefited from a high level of direct teaching at all stages in the lesson. They made very good progress in their learning because the teacher and assistant challenged them to explain their thinking as they worked. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were challenged continually to respond to a variety of activities including reading flash cards, turning in different directions and working in groups to produce a route to be used later to control a screen robot. Higher attaining pupils know that a quarter turn is the same as a 90-degree turn. All pupils were able to use the correct symbols to produce a route which they could describe using the correct mathematical vocabulary. The pupils' good attitudes and behaviour were a result of the teacher's good planning and high expectations, ensuring that pupils of all abilities were fully involved. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the additional support they receive from the teacher and teaching assistants.
82. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed in Years 3 to 6 was good overall. In a few lessons, teaching was very good. This is an improvement on the satisfactory judgement of teaching at the last inspection although one lesson was unsatisfactory because the work set was too difficult for most of the pupils. The teaching of mathematics in Year 6 is well supported by the headteacher, who teaches the lower attainers regularly. A part-time teacher is also employed to ensure that the higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately. Teachers' good class management and high expectations are reflected in the generally very good behaviour and attitude of the pupils seen in lessons. In the lessons where teaching was judged to be good or very good, pupils responded quickly to the mental starter and enjoyed the challenge of improving their own numeracy skills. Most pupils in Year 6 make good use of their knowledge of number and calculate accurately, drawing on a wide range of strategies. However, in a small number of lessons, opportunities were missed at the beginning of lessons to enhance pupils' skills in mental mathematics using quick-fire questions appropriate to the pupils' abilities. There is limited planning for pupils to take part in open-ended investigations and problem-solving activities. In addition, the marking of pupils' work is usually just with a tick or a few words of encouragement. There was very little evidence of marking that will give pupils knowledge of their own learning and what they should do to improve.
83. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons seen, teachers began with a lively mental starter giving all pupils the opportunity to succeed. This was in contrast to the few less successful lessons where the pace was slow and the lesson objectives were not shared with the pupils. The older pupils have a good understanding of number and use a variety of mental strategies to solve number problems. Higher attaining pupils are able to recall multiplication facts swiftly and use their number knowledge to calculate quickly and respond well to a variety of quick-fire questions. Teachers provide good opportunities for numeracy skills to be used and consolidated in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils use their numeracy skills to measure the distance travelled by small cars on different surfaces and communicate this information through a table of results. In design and technology, pupils practise their measuring skills when cutting wood or fabrics to make puppets and a variety of containers. In geography, Year 5 pupils use grid references to find locations on maps and Year 6 pupils have produced graphs showing the amount of traffic using the road adjacent to the school. They have also interpreted graphs showing temperature and rainfall in different countries. In history, pupils throughout the school are developing their skills in chronology by using timelines to place events within the context of past times. The use of ICT to support mathematics is satisfactory and the school recognises that this needs to be further developed.



84. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The school's analysis of last year's national test results identified areas of mathematics that could be improved and the subsequent action plan has identified a number of targets to raise standards of teaching and learning across the school. These, together with the support of the local education authority consultants, has highlighted areas for development. However, the co-ordinator is given very limited time to monitor planning or teaching of the subject so has little knowledge of improvements that may or may not have been made in response to these targets. The previous inspection highlighted an over-reliance on textbooks and workbooks from commercial schemes of work, particularly with the older pupils. This is still the case in a few classes, often restricting flexibility and occasionally providing pupils with work that is too easy or too hard. The headteacher has monitored mathematics lessons across the school and is aware of the need to discuss and agree any changes to the teaching of the subject with the curriculum co-ordinator. The school has yet to develop and implement individual target-setting for pupils in mathematics to ensure that lesson planning enables pupils to reach their predicted targets. However, assessment strategies are developing well and the school now has sufficient data to enable teachers to set and track individual pupils' targets in mathematics. The school has sufficient resources, including the excellent computer suite to support the subject. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development as many of the activities provide good opportunities for pupils to work in groups and evaluate their own progress.

## SCIENCE

85. Standards of attainment are average by the end of Year 2 and the achievement of all pupils in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. This represents a decline in standards since the previous inspection when standards were reported to be above average. The findings of the inspection are an improvement on the results of the 2002 teacher assessments, which showed that standards were well below the national average. The explanation for the decline in standards since the last inspection may be because work in science is seldom matched to the different abilities of the pupils. In addition, some teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to teach science is weaker than in other subjects. They rely too much on commercial schemes and worksheets.
86. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are average and are in line with the findings of the last inspection. They are also in line with the results of the national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2002. Standards in science by the end of Year 6 have improved over the last four years as, in 1999, standards were well below average. The achievement of all pupils is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
87. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are good when teachers are more secure in their knowledge and understanding of science and this was evident in an example of good teaching in a Year 2 class. The teacher's good subject knowledge ensured that pupils were given plenty of opportunities to discuss their findings and explain observations. As a result, pupils' learning was good and their understanding of what constitutes a fair test moved forward appropriately. However, from a scrutiny of work it is evident that teachers are, sometimes, too reliant on the use of worksheets. In addition, work is not often matched to individual pupils' needs or abilities and this presents potentially higher attaining pupils with a lack of challenge.
88. However, the curriculum in science is covered well in both year groups. Pupils in Year 1 have observed and compared reflections of light whilst Year 2 pupils have developed their understanding of plants and habitats as well as investigating the properties of materials. However, there is some evidence of all pupils copying chunks of text into their books and little evidence of them given regular opportunities to fully develop their investigative skills.
89. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and this is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection when some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. As in Years 1 and 2, it is evident from an analysis of pupils' work that too much reliance is placed on the use commercial schemes of work when planning for lessons. In most year groups there was little evidence of teachers checking pupil progress and previous understanding. As a result, work is not

often matched to individual pupils' abilities. However, in a Year 6 lesson tasks were matched to the abilities of different groups of pupils and the pupils' learning of different animal habitats moved forward appropriately. The teacher displayed sound subject knowledge and the work challenged the majority of pupils. There is an inconsistency in the quality of teaching in different classes and across year groups and this affects both pupils' achievement and overall attainment in the subject.

90. The breadth of study in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. Pupils are given regular opportunities to continue to develop their understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. However, experimental and investigative work in some year groups tends to be prescriptive and contains limited evidence of teachers encouraging pupils to predict outcomes or devise their own investigations on a regular basis. As a result, their skills in investigative and experimental work are underdeveloped and there is limited evidence of pupils learning how to predict or to plan their own experiments. When Year 3 and Year 4 pupils investigated the effects of friction, pupils copied the teachers' writing from the board.
91. Leadership and management of science are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has attended recent courses in, for example, raising achievement in science, but other staff have not been given recent opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Not all teachers feel secure in their subject knowledge and this affects their confidence to teach science in an investigative or an adventurous way. This is further reflected by the school's dependency on commercial schemes for coverage in the subject. All classes follow the same programme of study although in some year groups the breadth and balance of curricular content varies between classes. The co-ordinator has monitored planning, examined the pupils' books and has had the opportunity to observe two of his colleagues teaching science. Detailed assessment procedures to monitor the progress of individual pupils in science have yet to be developed on a whole-school basis.
92. Resources for teaching science are appropriate and easily accessed. They cover all areas of study associated with the curriculum although opportunities and resources to link ICT to science are more limited. Links between science, literacy, numeracy and other subjects, such as design and technology, were evident during the inspection. The contribution of the subject to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

93. Standards of attainment in art and design are average by the end of Years 2 and 6 and have been maintained since the last inspection. The achievement of all pupils is sound. From two observations of lessons in Years 1 and 2 together with a scrutiny of displays and pupils' work, it is evident that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Effective planning has ensured that the pupils have been given opportunities to use a wide range of media since September 2002. In Year 1, pupils have experimented with different tie-dyeing techniques including beetroot and tea dyes as well as using dice, marbles and small cubes to create the patterns. They discovered that the fabric needed to be left in the tea dye for much longer than in the beetroot. The pupils' clay pots showed that they are developing good skills of joining and shaping clay.
94. Good links with history were evident in the Year 2 classrooms with lively displays showing *'The Fire of London'* spreading through the streets. The pupils had used strong colours in their paintings and the flames were very realistic. Good modelling by the teachers of the techniques of weaving had resulted in the pupils taking care to produce colourful and imaginative artwork from fabric. In an example of good teaching in Year 2, the lesson was well organised so that pupils had opportunities to try to create the colourful ceiling tiles (a metre square) in their own classroom. The ceiling tiles are in a variety of shades and the teacher's introduction included focused teaching points on looking at the ceiling tiles carefully, handling clay and using paints and pencils appropriately. The pupils used their sketchbooks for their drawings and were very careful to reproduce the patterns of the tiles. A very few pupils in this class with a higher proportion of lower attainment showed skill and creativity in their drawings and also in their designs on the clay tiles.

95. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall but within that judgement there are strengths. The good teamwork evident in the four classes in Years 5 and 6 has resulted in good planning and support this term for a very few colleagues who are less knowledgeable about how to teach art and design effectively. The project this term for these year groups focuses on a textile unit of work. Each class is designing and making a hessian picture (tapestry) based on specific habitats that will eventually form a wall hanging. Teachers ensured that good resources were available and most helped their pupils effectively with their designs, how to cut out their 'first fix' paper templates and how to pin them on fabric ready to be joined on to the large hessian square.
96. In an example of very good teaching in Year 5, the teacher was very well organised and emphasised the safety aspect when using pins and scissors. She also dwelt on the cost of materials and showed how to cut out from the edges of fabric to ensure no waste. Her knowledge and understanding of art and design are good and management and control of the pupils was of high quality. As a result, the relationships within the class were very good and pupils all responded with enthusiasm and care to her teaching. Pupils made very good progress within the lesson. The scrutiny of displays and the school portfolio of art and design throughout the year groups showed that, although achievement is sound overall, some groups of pupils do not make as much progress as others due to a very few teachers needing further training. This was evident in the claywork on display throughout the school. The artwork completed earlier in the school year by the Year 4 pupils, when they explored their ideas about relationships and used them to make a double portrait, was of a high quality. The majority of pupils in the class had shown good skills in their composition of the portrait and their use of paint and background. Most had managed to convey the relationship between the figures with sensitivity and the work showed above average standards.
97. The management of the subject is sound with several strengths. The co-ordinator's action plan shows a determination to improve the provision for art and design. She is a skilled teacher of art and design and has good qualifications. The co-ordinator manages her budget efficiently and it is noticeable that all classes are well equipped to support art and design lessons. Although the co-ordinator is given no time to monitor the subject in classrooms, she is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of throughout the school and in which year groups the weaknesses in teaching are affecting the progress of the pupils. Her portfolio of photographic evidence of artwork throughout the school shows the progress or otherwise of different groups of pupils. The use of ICT to support the development of art and design is satisfactory and there are good links with history and science. There are systems in place to record the progress of pupils in the subject. Although these are used consistently in Years 1 and 2, not all teachers in Years 3 to 6 complete the assessments at the end of units of work. There is a very good contribution to pupils' social development in art and design lessons when they work together in groups and need to make decisions collaboratively.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

98. It was not possible to observe any lessons in design and technology during the inspection week because of timetabling arrangements. The subject is blocked with art and design and is taught every other half term. Evidence was drawn from a scrutiny of pupils' work on display and in design folders, from discussions with pupils and pictorial records of pupils' work. Evidence indicates that pupils' standards of attainment are average in Year 2 and Year 6. The achievement of all pupils is sound. This is a similar finding to that of the previous inspection.
99. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is sound and this represents a slight decline since the previous inspection. Photographic evidence confirmed that pupils in both year groups are given regular opportunities to increase their overall understanding in the subject. They have designed and made moving pictures and glove puppets, and have baked cakes. The work on display indicated an appropriate development of knowledge, skills and understanding in the designing and making process.
100. Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are sound and this is in line with the findings of the last inspection. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their confidence and in Years 3 and 4

have designed, made and evaluated packaging, and have constructed 'moving monsters'. The finished products are of good quality. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made 'moving toys' and have designed, built and evaluated structures and bridges. They are able to discuss with confidence their work in making musical instruments and are proud of their models, many of which show a good awareness of function and a good quality finish. Pupils have continued to develop new skills and have been given opportunities to practise and refine their evaluation of products.

101. Management of the subject is satisfactory and the co-ordinator has ensured that design and technology is taught appropriately throughout the school even though she has had limited time to monitor teaching. Simple procedures are in place to assess the progress of pupils but these are very generalised and seldom used to inform planning. The subject contributes well to the pupils' social development when they work together in planning, making and evaluating. Resources are good overall and links with other subjects, such as science and mathematics, are evident. There was little evidence of the use of control technology or the use of computers to aid the design process.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

102. Standards of attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 are average and have improved since the last inspection. The criticism that there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to observe, question and express their views has been addressed successfully. The achievement of all pupils is sound. From a scrutiny of work it is clear that, by the end of Year 2, pupils understand how maps work. They can identify the characteristics of contrasting localities and use their own observations of their local area to make comparisons with a small Scottish island. In addition, they can list the kinds of business and jobs people do in each different place. Higher attaining pupils can identify the reasons for differences and are beginning to develop skills in problem solving.
103. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment continue to make satisfactory progress through Years 3 to 6. Their mapping skills have improved appropriately and, for example, the Year 3 pupils can identify the Equator on a globe and can name some hot countries. By Year 6 pupils have conducted searching traffic surveys of their neighbourhood. There are good links with literacy and a few pupils have written critical letters to local councillors. By the end of Year 6, pupils can predict the effect of weather on a landscape and they have a sound knowledge of subject-specific words such as avalanche, coniferous and deciduous. However, there was evidence of some unnecessary colouring in of maps.
104. No teaching was observed in Years 1 and 2 but from the work scrutiny and wall displays, it is evident that the quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and planning is thorough. In an example of good teaching in Year 4, the use of good resources included atlases, globes and an overhead projector. The introduction was lively and pupils were immediately interested and motivated to listen and work hard. Good learning about extreme climates took place and pupils were able to identify their holiday destinations in hot countries. By the end of the lesson, most had identified the Equator, the Tropics and the North Pole. The lesson in Year 6 on mountainous regions began with a good introduction using the projector and whiteboard to show pupils the difference between the windward and leeward side of mountains. Good questioning skills provoked the pupils into rethinking their answers and using more precise language. However, during the major part of the lesson the teacher's management and control skills were not in evidence and a few pupils continued their own private conversations during important teaching points. Planning included a challenge for the higher attaining pupils but, during the lesson, all the pupils carried out the same activity.
105. The subject co-ordinator provides sound leadership. She has a good perception of the future priorities for the subject, and is aware that she needs to adapt the national guidance to the school's needs in developing schemes of work. Assessment systems are in place for geography but they are generalised and do not give specific information of the progress the pupils are making in their skills and knowledge. The co-ordinator shares in planning for the subject, looks at the pupils' books but is not given any time to observe the development of geography in the classroom.

Resources for geography are good although the Instruments for weather measurement are in storage.

106. Pupils' literacy skills are promoted satisfactorily through the introduction of subject-specific words. In addition teachers emphasise the need for precision well, for example, the difference between weather and climate. There is evidence of pupils writing letters about aspects of the local environment to the local council. Numeracy skills are promoted in a range of aspects of geography: in land measurement, in grids and co-ordinates, scale, and in surveys. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development through the study of the ways people live and the world's needs, and a satisfactory contribution to cultural development when studying the reasons why different cultures develop. The use of ICT is insufficient.

## HISTORY

107. In the school's last inspection, pupils' attainment in history was judged to be in line with national expectations. Since then, the school has improved standards and, by the end of Years 2 and 6, they are now above national expectations. Standards have improved as a result of pupils' own enthusiastic contribution to their own learning, led by good teaching. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, is good as a result of the effective support they receive from the teaching assistants.
108. Pupils in Year 2 show a well-developed knowledge and understanding of events in history. In one classroom a very lively wall decoration illustrated their understanding of the Great Fire of London, supported by work in their exercise books that plotted the course of the Fire from its starting point. Early work on Grace Darling showed their receptiveness to the idea of what makes historical figures great. Many pupils do not have clear ideas of the dates of events and personalities, but they can place them in relation to each other in a simple way. These factors indicate knowledge and understanding of history that is above what might be expected for pupils of this age.
109. Pupils' knowledge and understanding develop well in Years 3 to 6. In Year 4, the teacher's contagious enthusiasm engaged pupils in a lively study of Viking longships; they made suggestions as to how the ships were constructed and sailed, and showed good predictive skills based upon their earlier work on the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to draw upon information from different sources: for example, from atlases and from the Internet. In Year 6, pupils write in historical rôles, such as the diary of a Victorian child, showing vivid understanding and insight, underpinned by good detailed knowledge of social conditions of the period. There are a few outstanding examples of beautiful writing and presentation. The sensitivity of these pieces of work demonstrates that these pupils have an understanding of the human condition in the past that is better than most at their age.
110. Although no teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6, it is evident from the observations in other year groups, the work scrutiny and displays in classrooms that teaching generally is good throughout the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of how to teach history. In examples of very good teaching in Years 2 and 4, the teachers used inspiring and very good methods to ensure that history is interesting and entertaining. This impacted well upon the pupils' learning so that, together with the very good relationships in evidence, pupils moved forward very well in their learning. The resources prepared for lessons are interesting and motivate the pupils to want to find out more about the subject. Classroom displays on historical topics are attractive and informative and serve the learning process well. Teachers' planning is good and covers a wide curriculum, and pupils of all abilities are given every opportunity to succeed.
111. History is well led by an experienced co-ordinator. She gives high priority to further improving resources, and has identified a need to improve and increase the collections of historical artefacts and of books and, in particular, big books and sets of books for guided reading on historical topics. The subject policy currently exists only in draft form, and the national guidance has been adopted as a scheme of work. These are both waiting to be formalised, and national guidance needs to be adapted to suit the particular needs and rolling curricular pattern of the school. Although the co-

ordinator monitors planning and the work of pupils, she is not allocated any time to monitor the development of history in classrooms. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress are too generalised and need to be more focused and formalised. Marking is not well used and the comments do not always explain to pupils how they could improve further.

112. While a small number of higher attaining pupils undertake independent research on the Internet, no other examples of the use of ICT were seen. Pupils' literacy skills are well promoted, especially through the amount of writing required in producing factual and imaginative accounts of historical characters and events. Pupils' moral and social development is promoted well in history, through the examination of the reasons behind events and the human decisions that instigated them. Their spiritual development is also well supported through empathy with and understanding of others. Cultural understanding is developed through studies of the costumes, fashions and arts of the past.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

113. During the inspection it was only possible to observe direct teaching in Years 2 and in the Years 3 and 4 class. However, pupils were observed working with computers in groups, in pairs and individually. Therefore, judgements by the end of Years 2 and 6 are based on the above observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and displays, teachers' planning, assessment records and discussions with pupils and staff.
114. Standards are above national expectations by the end of Year 2 and in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, is good throughout the school due to the good provision and teaching support for ICT. Although standards by the end of Year 6 are average, the pupils are learning very quickly and the standards of next year's group will be above average by the time they leave the school. The improvement since the last inspection is due to staff training, the school's investment in a new computer suite and nine laptop computers for use in classrooms. The appointment of two ICT technicians plus a new scheme of work has provided the support needed to improve provision and standards.
115. By the end of Year 2 pupils can log on and select a program using screen icons. All pupils are competent in mouse control, being able to select, double click on their chosen aspect and use tools such as bold and underline. They are able to find letters and numbers on the computer keyboard and use drop-down menus to change, for example, colour and size of text. Pupils know that information can be obtained from computer, television, radio, video and audiotapes and CD Roms. Year 1 pupils make good use of ICT to practise and consolidate basic skills in numeracy and literacy, writing and printing, with support, labels and text to support their work in science and English. Year 2 pupils make use of their increasing computer skills to import pictures to illustrate their texts and use paint programs to produce colourful patterns and pictures including multicoloured coats as part of their work in religious education about the story of Joseph.
116. By the end of Year 6 pupils have moved forward in their skills and knowledge of what they can use ICT for. They are able to put together a presentation about the local traffic problems incorporating sound, text and graphics and demonstrating an awareness of the expected audience and the quality of presentation required. They are very confident and have the support of the skilled technician should anything go wrong. Pupils are aware of the need to organise work accurately when creating a sequence to control events. Pupils in Year 4, for example, were observed writing a program to control a screen turtle to draw two squares. In the work scrutiny there was evidence of using CD- Rom and the Internet to research facts associated with topics across the curriculum. Year 5 pupils were able to find and present information about Victorian buildings. Year 6 pupils make good use of ICT to present their creative writing and poems in attractive styles using different fonts and colours, often completing the effect with a border.
117. Although not all year groups were observed being taught, evidence from the lessons observed, work in books, the portfolio of work and work on display indicates that the quality of teaching and

learning is good. The ICT technicians provide very good support in all lessons in the computer suite, and in some lessons in classrooms. In an example of very good teaching in Year 2, very effective use of ICT to support work in mathematics was evident and pupils used the skills learned in mathematics to write a route for a screen robot. In a Years 3 and 4 lesson, the teacher challenged pupils well to write more complex programs associated with control. Very good organisation and planning ensured that pupils of all abilities made very good progress. The challenge for higher attaining pupils to command the computer to draw shapes on the screen resulted in pupils becoming very motivated and engrossed in their task. They worked enthusiastically and unaided to achieve a good result. The effective use of the school laptops was seen in a number of lessons including a Year 4 mathematics lesson. Nine pupils were able to work with the ICT technician to log on and select and use the interactive program designed to extend their knowledge of division. Although this was only the second time the new equipment had been used with this group, the interest and concentration of the pupils showed how the program reinforces and records their progress. Year 6 pupils used the Internet during an English lesson to find information on the poet Michael Rosen and began to evaluate one of his poems using their developing word processing skills.

118. The subject is well managed. The curriculum co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has produced a long-term development plan to raise standards further by encouraging the use of ICT across the curriculum, including further use of the Internet and e-mail for research and communication. She has already set up a lunchtime ICT club for pupils as well as a computer workshop for parents. The quality of computers in the new suite and on the laptop trolley is very good and with the stand-alone class-based computers the ratio of computers to pupils is good. Effective use is made of overhead projectors for direct teaching sessions in several subjects. The school has a digital camera ~~but there was little and there was~~ evidence of it being used during the inspection by pupils or staff. However, the new computer suite is used by all classes and, with the very effective support of the technicians, is having a positive impact on the pupils' ICT skills and overall progress. Assessment of pupils' achievement in the subject is underdeveloped although the co-ordinator has initiated a school portfolio of pupils' work and assessment is a priority for development as part of the ICT development plan. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development as pupils share computers very amicably and support one another if problems are encountered.

## MUSIC

119. During the inspection week it was not possible to see a wide range of music being taught and only one lesson was observed with a qualified member of staff teaching singing and the use of percussion in Year 2. The school has employed a specialist musician this year for one day a week and she works closely with the school's co-ordinator in preparing lessons for Years 3 to 6 pupils. The lessons were based mainly on listening skills with the musician taking the major role. There were no appropriate lesson plans. However, during the day, it was possible to observe the specialist musician teaching singing to pupils in Years 3 to 6 as well as, during the lunchtime period, taking the choir through their repertoire. Two students, supported by the class teachers and visiting musician, were observed taking music lessons in Years 5 and 6 that were planned to teach rhythm and pulse.
120. Although a judgement cannot be made on standards attained in music overall, it is very evident that the pupils' singing skills in Years 2 to 6 are above average and this is a strength of the school. In assemblies and in the singing practice session, pupils showed very good control of pitch, dynamics and rhythm as well as sensitivity to particular songs or hymns, such as, '*God's Greatest Gift*'. In this session, the school's recorder group played part of the melody in between verses and it is clear their skills are above average standards. One group of pupils sang the descant proficiently in '*Come and Join The Circle*', and a few pupils from the choir sang verses alone or in small groups. This was an above average performance from Years 4 to 6 and was good evidence to show that their performing skills in singing are better than expected.
121. No judgement can be made on the quality of teaching and learning in the music curriculum across the school. However, in an example of good teaching in Year 2, the obvious pleasure and

enthusiasm of the teacher transferred to the pupils, who sang '*Skeleton Stomp*' with energy and lively body movements. The pupils moved and sang expressively to the rhythms of the song and showed that they have memorised the words. All pupils had the opportunity to play an untuned percussion instrument and most pupils were able to follow the teacher's rhythm. This was a well-organised lesson with pupils sitting in a circle and all taking part. The teacher's good management and control ensured that all pupils behaved very well despite the potentially noisy activity and responded immediately to her commands. The visiting musician's teaching of singing is very good and pupils respond to her very well.

122. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and eager to ensure that the music curriculum is covered well. She is a sound manager and takes a key role in music in the school. She is an effective leader of assemblies and leads the singing, playing her guitar. She teaches the recorder group in a lunchtime club and, in addition, spends another lunchtime supporting the visiting musician with the choir organisation. The co-ordinator is aware that there is a lack of breadth in the music curriculum. The policy for music has been reviewed recently but has not yet been approved by the governing body. Although it is the school's intention to use the national scheme of work, this was not evident in the planning documents available during the inspection. A very few teachers were observed writing assessment notes of their pupils' responses during the lessons led by the visiting musician but this is not consistent practice. Parents are very supportive and eager to watch their children sing and act in productions at Christmas, and on other occasions during the year. Resources in music are just adequate and insufficient use is made of ICT to widen the pupils' knowledge. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils. Music enables the pupils to feel the joy of making music together and helps pupils to become more familiar with music from contrasting traditions and countries.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. Owing to difficulties with both the weather and accommodation for physical education, it was only possible to observe two lessons in physical education during the inspection, one featuring dance and the other a games activity. No lessons in swimming or gymnastics were observed. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on standards of attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 or on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Findings of the last inspection judged that attainment in both year groups was in line with national expectations.
124. The dance lesson observed in Year 2 was linked to the forthcoming 'multicultural' day. The quality of teaching and learning was very good. A brisk pace to the lesson ensured that the very effective warm-up activities at the beginning led to good interpretation of ~~Irish~~ country dances. The pupils responded very well, showed much energy and enjoyed the dancing. Their performance improved in quality as the lesson progressed. The cool-down activities at the end of the lesson were appropriate.
125. The quality of teaching and learning in an outdoor games lesson observed in Year 6 was satisfactory. Pupils were encouraged to practise and develop the ball and racquet skills needed to play tennis. The teacher moved among pupils, appropriately commenting on good practice and giving advice and help when needed. The lesson met the pupils' needs well but the pace was slow. Several pupils became inattentive towards the end of the lesson and this affected their overall progress.
126. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and the co-ordinator has a clear view of how the subject should develop and of the need to improve resources and accommodation. The quality of resources is good but they do not adequately cover all the areas of the programme of study for the delivery of the subject. The school has not yet purchased any apparatus for teaching gymnastics in the school hall but is aware of the need to place an order quickly. There are, for example, no wall-bars or climbing equipment. Furthermore, the school playing field is presently unsafe and locked up. A very large hole has appeared in the field due to geological disturbances and the playing surface is covered with flints and other sharp stones. Although the school uses the field of the adjacent secondary school in order to play games, such as football, this is not wholly satisfactory as the pupils are required to carry all their kit and equipment with them. In addition,



the school's netball court is too small and is not suitable for playing competitive games. All these factors adversely affect the provision of the subject within the school. However, the older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are provided with extra-curricular activities including netball, football and cricket that, fortunately, help to fill the gap and also contribute appropriately to the pupils' social and cultural development. Assessment of the progress the pupils make in physical education is inconsistent.