

INSPECTION REPORT

**BANKS ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
(VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Banks, Southport

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119384

Headteacher: Mr N. McMechan

Reporting inspector: Mrs P. A. Simpson
1515

Dates of inspection: 6th – 7th May 2003

Inspection number: 248010

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Greaves Hall Avenue Banks Southport
Postcode:	PR9 8BL
Telephone number:	01704 225332
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T. Abram
Date of previous inspection:	19 th January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Banks St Stephen's Church of England (VC) Primary School serves the community of Banks, a village to the north of Southport in Lancashire. The school was re-located to a new site in September 1998. The school is over subscribed. There are 223 pupils (111 girls and 112 boys) on roll ranging from four to eleven years of age. At the time of the inspection 31 children were under the age of six. There are eight classes of single age or mixed age ranges. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Ninety-eight per cent of the pupils of compulsory school age are of white British heritage and two per cent are of mixed backgrounds or from other ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils (8.5 per cent) eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs (13 per cent) due to moderate or other learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. Five pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The results of assessments conducted when children enter the school show that attainment was below that expected for children's ages, up to the Year 2000. More recent assessments show that attainment on entry is as would be expected for this age group but very few children are attaining above the expected standard in basic literacy and numeracy skills. The school was granted the School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills in 2003.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Banks St Stephen's is an effective school with some outstanding features. Pupils attained high standards in the 2002 Year 2 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics and above average standards in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Compared with their attainment when they entered the school, this represents very good achievement by this Year 2 group. The overall quality of teaching is very good and pupils are very well supported by the educational support staff. The school is very well led and this contributes substantially to its success and popularity. The school gives good value for the funding it receives.

What the school does well

- The standards attained in reading, writing and mathematics by the 2002 Year 2 group in the national tests were well above the national average.
- The leadership and management of the school are very effective.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good and, as a result, impacts very well on pupils' learning.
- The school promotes very positive attitudes to learning; pupil's behaviour and relationships are very good.
- The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

What could be improved

- The raising of standards in English by the end of Year 6 and to continue to develop and improve pupils' writing skills throughout the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good overall improvement since the school was last inspected in January 1998. All four of the key issues have been actioned successfully. Standards by the age of seven and eleven in art are now higher than those expected. The school has a structured monitoring and evaluation system in place which involves subject co-ordinators, senior staff and the governing body. In 1998 the school was re-located to a new site and school building in Banks. On transferring to the new site the admission number was set at 35. The school has attracted more than 30 pupils annually and has had to revert to mixed age classes. The quality of the accommodation including the provision of a school hall has improved the facilities for the teaching of physical education, whole-school assemblies and the

organisation of school meals. Staffing changes and teacher recruitment difficulties have affected some pupils' progress. In 1999 and 2000, the school's internal and the external monitoring of teaching and learning showed that this situation had distorted the typical good picture of teaching and learning in the school. The Years 3 and 4 groups did not progress at the same rate as they had in earlier years. Staffing appointments were made and posts taken up. In September 2001, nearly three-quarters of the staff were new to the school. Despite this, the relatively new staff is a productive and cohesive team whose main focus has been to sustain or improve standards, particularly in English, and the overall quality of teaching and learning. Information and communication technology is an ongoing school improvement priority as is the development of writing across the school. The commitment and willingness of the headteacher, staff and the governing body place the school in a very favourable position to continue to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Pupils reached above average standards in the 2002 Year 6 national tests in mathematics and science and standards in English were average. This was an improvement in English on the earlier two years when it was below average. Comparison with schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals shows that the standards in 2002 were well above average in mathematics and science and below average in English. This represents good achievement in mathematics and science given the below expected starting points when the children entered the school. English and mathematics targets set by the governing body for the 2002 Year 6 group were not met by eight and ten per cent respectively. This is attributed to an increase in pupil admissions in Year 6 in 2002 which made the targets unrealistic given the increased number of lower attaining pupils alongside the impact of the slower than expected rate of progress made by this group of pupils when they were in Years 3 and 4.

The school's national test results at the end of Year 2, in 2002, show that the standards attained were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. There have been improvements in the achievements by Year 2 pupils in both 2001 and 2002, in reading writing and mathematics when compared with the standards attained in 1999 and 2000. Comparison with schools of a similar type shows that standards were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2002.

Standards observed during the inspection and teacher projections for Year 2 and 6 pupils in 2003 are similar to those reported in the 2002 national tests. However, there is an increased number of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils that are working towards or who are achieving higher than expected levels in English for their ages when compared with the 2002 figures. The 2003 statutory targets set by the governing body for English (79 per cent) and mathematics (89 per cent) are lower than in 2002 for the current Year 6. This is informed by the fact that a quarter of the group are on the special educational needs register. Assessment information and pupil tracking show that the school is on target to exceed these targets due to 'booster' classes, additional literacy support and the organisational arrangements made where pupils are taught in smaller ability groupings for English and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that there is more to be done to improve writing including handwriting skills, punctuation, and improved

spelling, in particular for lower attaining pupils. The range of opportunities for pupils to extend and consolidate their writing skills in the other subjects of the curriculum is not wide enough. Children in the current Reception year are on course to meet the expected standards, but by the end of the Reception year most children will have exceeded the standard in their personal, social and emotional development. Achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) are developing well throughout the school, supported by ongoing staff training and the updating of teaching and learning resources for ICT. Pupils are interested in all aspects of ICT work; their concentration is very good, as is their knowledge of their own learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The school promotes very positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There have been no exclusions for many years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. Relationships are very constructive between pupils and they relate very well to staff and other adults in school. The school hopes that, by introducing a school council, younger pupils will exercise initiative and take on responsibility more actively.
Attendance	Well above the national average in 2001/2002. Most pupils are very keen to come to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is a great strength of the school being very good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The main strengths of the teaching and learning are:

- the secure knowledge of the framework for the teaching of both the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies;
- the management of time, educational support staff and the use of available resources are very good and pupils work productively;
- teaching and educational support staff are clear what they want different groups of pupils to learn and in the most effective lessons they assess what has been learned;
- improved learning due to the good attention given to using information and communication technology;
- teachers manage pupils very well and, as a result, standards of behaviour are very good.

Because of the quality of the teaching and support provided pupils with special educational needs make progress that is as good as that made by other pupils in the classes. Some of the lesson plans presented during the inspection were inconsistent with the school's planning policy. Homework is given in accordance with the school policy, as children get older the amount and variety increases; most parents agreed that their children are given the right amount of homework.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and it is enhanced by the provision of two extra-curricular modern foreign languages. Although outdoor play activity is planned for, extending young children's spontaneous play is limited due to the inadequacy of learning resources. This was reported as the case in 1998.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils are included in all aspects of school life; they are integrated well and benefit considerably from the individual support they receive.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains a strength of the school as it did in the last inspection report. Cultural development has improved; the provision is good and continues to be extended with regard to multicultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils' welfare and safety are reflected in the very good quality of care they receive. The procedures for promoting and monitoring good behaviour are exemplary.

A number of parents give support to the school through the Friends of the School Association and some parents give help regularly on a voluntary basis. Their presence is valued by staff, pupils and the governing body. School policy and arrangements for child protection are in accordance with the local procedures.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is a well-established climate for teaching and learning based on traditional Christian values. The headteacher provides thoughtful leadership and a clear direction for the work of the school. The dedicated staff work very well together as a team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are knowledgeable about the school and are committed to its success. They work hard on behalf of the school. The Inclusion and Race Equality Policy effectively builds upon the established Christian ethos. Information about the special educational needs policy and attendance percentages did not appear as required in the prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report to Parents (2002) respectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The established monitoring and evaluation programme enables the headteacher, governors and staff to have a clear idea of its strengths and those areas that need developing. Parents are consulted formally on an annual basis as to what they would like to see improved.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall. Funds are used to their best effect. The new site, building and accommodation are much improved since 1998. With the rising school roll, plans have been drawn up by the governing body to extend the building. Budget reserves have been set aside for this purpose. The library is used as a teaching base in the mornings; it is a comfortable learning environment, however, the reference stock is inadequate with some being obsolescent.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and they make good progress. • Behaviour is good; the children are helped to become mature and responsible. • The teaching is good and children are given the right amount of homework. • They are comfortable to approach teachers with suggestions or concerns. • The school has high expectations of the children and works closely to this end with parents. • The school is well managed and led. • They largely agree with the range of activities provided outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information that is provided about their children's progress.

Parents' views of the school are largely positive and well founded. Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. Some parents would like more information about their children's progress. Following parental consultation there are now three parent/teacher meetings. Opportunities are provided for parents to discuss their children's annual report. This report comprises all subjects of the National Curriculum; religious education, general comments and the next steps for learning are provided in the standardised word-processed report. Inspectors disagree with the adverse response in the light of all the initiatives that the school has implemented in this respect since the last inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The standards attained in reading, writing and mathematics by the Year 2002 Year 2 group in the national tests were well above the national average.

1. National test results for Year 2 pupils in 2002 were well above average. This represents very good overall achievement by pupils. This is an improvement since the school was previously inspected when standards were reported as above average in English, and as average in mathematics.
2. Comparison with schools of a similar type (those with more than 8 per cent and up to 20 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals) shows that, by the end of Year 2, pupils' standards were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
3. Taking the performance of boys and girls over the three years 2000 to 2002 together, the average national curriculum points figures show that both girls and boys exceeded the national average in their age group in reading, writing and mathematics.
4. Teacher assessment for the current 2003 Year 2 group indicates that all pupils are on target to reach the expected Level 2 (the expected attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 is Level 2 and at the end of Year 6 Level 4). An increased number of pupils are attaining at the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics than in 2002. A small number of pupils are attaining Level 3 in writing; this is an improvement when compared with the previous year 2002.
5. Inspectors found standards to be similar to those recorded in last year's Year 2 national tests. The school is sustaining its high standards in Year 2, with pupils making the progress they are capable of in their English and mathematics work. The school makes a thorough assessment of children's basic literacy and numeracy skills when they enter the school and uses this to identify which children are likely to need additional support to meet their individual needs. Great emphasis is placed on reading by Reception staff. By the time the children are at the end of the Reception year they are likely to achieve the expected learning outcomes for this age group in their language and literacy work. The children worked independently during a session which involved them in writing about their monster. Although the spelling was not always accurate, they used words such as ugly, scary, and nasty. At the end of the lesson some of the children read out their writing to the mixed age Reception/Year 1 class; higher attaining children were confident and relaxed and read with accuracy, others participated in sharing their work but some were more hesitant in doing so. Year 1 pupils enjoyed the story about 'Arthur' and fully participated in the whole-class session of working out the missing words within the text. They shared words that were new and interesting to them. A puppet called 'Magic' was used by the teacher as a means of pronouncing words correctly prompted by the use of phonic sounds. Following the session, pupils in the Year 1/2 class applauded the puppet when he was successful in forming new words correctly. The handwriting of some lower attaining pupils was not consistent in size. Pupils in Year 2 worked independently on the start of book reviews and they showed an understanding of the main points of the stories and clearly have preferences about books and authors.
6. Children in the Reception group are on target to meet the expected learning outcomes in their mathematical development. They are secure in their counting skills at least to ten, with higher attaining children counting beyond ten. They are developing their

mathematical ideas and use the correct vocabulary when adding and subtracting in practical activities, such as the money game. Pupils in Year 1 counted accurately and confidently to 100 in multiples of 10. Good use was made of number cards in the work on addition with three numbers. Higher attaining Year 2 pupils demonstrated that they have a secure understanding of the place value of numbers, they use mental recall well when adding and subtracting number facts. They use ICT competently to communicate their findings alongside the completion of worksheets and the use of exercise books. Pupils of all ages are achieving well in mathematics; good attention is generally given to presentation, but on occasions there is crossing out of incorrect exercises by girls in Year 2.

7. Mathematics has been a priority area for school improvement planning following the drop in the 2000 Year 2 national test results. A major review including the analysis of performance data, the involvement of numeracy specialists from the local education authority advisory service and the appointment of one of the County's mathematics co-ordinators to the teaching staff, led to an action plan being put into place for improving standards in mathematics. Over the last three years the school has pursued a range of whole-school strategies to improve writing throughout the school. This has worked well in Reception and for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in Year 2 in 2002 attained standards which were well above the national average in their writing. The assessments conducted when children enter the school showed that attainment was below that expected for children's ages, up to 2000. More recent assessments show that attainment on entry is as would be expected for this age group but very few children are attaining above the expected standard in basic literacy and numeracy skills. The pupil tracking system that is in place and used during the time pupils are at this school shows that the majority of pupils achieve to their full capability by the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics.

The leadership and management of the school are very effective.

8. The headteacher, key staff and governors have established a clear direction for the work of the school and communicate this well to the school community. The school enjoys a very good reputation in the locality and the headteacher is highly regarded in the local community. The staff work very well together as a team. The staff handbook is very detailed; it provides details about the role of all staff, health and safety, routines and the organisational matters; as a result staff understand their role as well as those of others. The quality of such leadership and working relationships, the hard work and dedication of teaching and support staff led to the school been granted the School Achievement Award in May 2003 for their achievements in the 2001/2002 school year.
9. The Mission Statement of the school refers to the individuality of all its children. The school's values embrace the inclusion of different groups of pupils and it aims to give all the children who attend the school, opportunities to succeed and reach the highest level of personal achievement. The Inclusion Policy and Race Equality Policy effectively builds upon the Mission Statement, core values and the ethos of the whole-school community. The school is successful in providing a wide range of stimulating activities within its established Christian ethos.
10. The governing body are knowledgeable about the work of the school and they are committed to its success. They work hard on behalf of the school; for example, by actively monitoring subject action plans, the school improvement plan, policies and pupil achievements. Members of the governing body are linked to classes and subject areas. The school improvement plan contains a strategic overview of the longer-term development priorities. Its main priorities for the school year 2002/2003 include the improvement of the overall standards achieved by higher attainers in English, school

self-evaluation, the curriculum provision and resources for Reception children, educational inclusion and raising standards in writing throughout the school. Action plans for each subject which target areas for improvement are clearly prioritised and support the school's aims and values. The progress of the school improvement plan is monitored on a monthly basis and a regular update is given to the governing body. The established system for monitoring and evaluating school performance has produced effective developments in terms of the review and production of policies, a focus on raising standards in particular by the end of Year 2 in English. As a part of managing the performance of the school, joint staff and governor meetings take place so as to facilitate a shared vision for the future development and improvement of Banks St Stephen's. The special educational needs (SEN) policy was reviewed in 2002 to meet the requirements of the 2002 revised Code of Practice for SEN and to improve the provision for pupils with SEN. Information about the revised SEN policy did not, however, appear in the current school prospectus as required. Percentage rates of authorised and unauthorised absences were not given in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents (November 2002).

11. The school established a structured monitoring and evaluation programme following the 1998 inspection where it was reported that it needed to further develop the role of the headteacher in monitoring the curriculum and especially in classrooms and extend the monitoring of the curriculum by subject co-ordinators. An undated monitoring and evaluation policy lists a five-stage cycle for school improvement based on the national green paper 'Teaching Excellence'. The main focus is to enable each child to seek the highest level of personal achievement. A minimum of a half-day a week non-contact teaching time is given to enable monitoring, evaluation and curriculum development activities. All curriculum co-ordinators contribute to the programme by scrutinising pupil's work, planning and classroom observations. The literacy and numeracy governors have visited classes, as have senior staff. Members of the local education authority advisory service have supported developments related to the implementation and development of the National Numeracy Strategy and more recently the National Literacy Strategy. The outcomes of classroom visits are shared with staff and the governing body with a view to raising the quality of teaching and learning, where identified, and to share approaches that are working well. Assessment data based on each entry to the school is analysed as are the results of national tests, additional tests conducted by the school and the data that is provided by the local educational authority. The strategy for monitoring and evaluating performance means that there is an annual cycle of observing teachers and giving feedback to them. Targets are set and reviewed for teachers within the framework for all staff to agree and review priorities and objectives within the context of the school's improvement plan and their professional development needs. The review, planning and implementation of systems for checking how well the school is developing involving both staff and governors is an ongoing process.
12. The strategic use of resources is good. Decisions on spending are linked to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The November 2000 audit recommendations were acted upon as required. Efficient use is made of ICT as an administrative tool. The new site and building are a significant improvement to that reported in 1998. The school is over subscribed and its roll has risen from 167 pupils in 1998 to 223 pupils in 2003. Plans are being drawn up with a view to extending the accommodation and budget reserves have been set aside for this purpose. Funds have also been earmarked from the budget carry forward of 7.6 per cent from 2001/2002 to replace the outdated laptop computers. As a means of obtaining best value for money, the interests of pupils and staff are at the centre of the decision making process. The school provides good value for the income it receives.

The overall quality of teaching is very good and, as a result, impacts very well on pupils' learning.

13. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teaching has become a great strength of the school and it is now even better than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Over half of the lessons observed were judged to be very good or excellent. A further third of lessons were judged to be good with the remainder being satisfactory.
14. The overall strategy for teaching numeracy skills is working very well now. Following a drop in standards attained by the end of Year 2 and 6 in Mathematics and English in 2000 the school gave priority to improving its strategy for the teaching of numeracy. This worked well and in 2001, the Year 2 pupils attained above average standards with Year 6 gaining well above average results in the mathematics national tests. In 2002, similar high standards were achieved in mathematics. The quality of the teaching of basic literacy skills is good in Reception and by the end of Year 2, pupils make very good progress in reading and writing when compared with their prior attainment on entry to the school. More recently the teaching has improved in English in the junior part of the school. Staffing changes and teacher recruitment difficulties from 1999 to July 2001 distorted the typically good picture of teaching and learning in the school. The Year 3 and 4 groups did not progress at the same rate as they had in earlier years. New staffing appointments from September 2001, additional learning support and booster classes led to the 2002 Year 6 group achieving standards comparable with schools nationally. This was an improvement on the previous three years. The main focus of the school improvement plan is to continue to develop and improve the quality of teaching and learning in English. The school has been supported by local educational authority advisory staff who have assisted the headteacher in the evaluation of teaching and learning and identified what is working well and where improvements are still needed in this ongoing developmental process. Staff now have a secure knowledge of the framework for the teaching of both the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies.
15. The management of time, educational support staff and the use of available resources are in general very good and most pupils work productively. Pupils are told from the outset what they have to do and in literacy and numeracy sessions they know how long they have to complete the various tasks expected of them. On two occasions, the pace of teaching was too rapid for some lower attaining pupils in the junior part of the school and this inhibited their understanding of what was expected of them. Resources are generally planned to be used effectively so that the learning is improved. In a joint Reception/Year 1 class, a variety of resources were used well to sustain motivation, all the pupils were very interested in the 'shopping chart' used and the notion of being given 'change' when shopping for an ice cream! A 'money game' was introduced during group activities when adult support was withdrawn to enable independent learning; concentration levels remained high. Due to limited resources, children do not have sufficient outside opportunities to climb, pedal and steer using large equipment. This was reported as the case in the 1998 inspection. Worksheet activities were used well to reinforce and consolidate earlier learning during a Year 6 revision lesson on decimals, fractions and percentages. In Year 3 and Year 4 religious education lessons, a video was used meaningfully, to introduce the religious topics and as a prompt for the question and answer session. Learning was reinforced effectively as was reflective thinking.

16. Learning has been improved due to the good attention given to using information and communication technology. In 1998, few lessons were seen where information and communication was specifically taught. Now all pupils have access to computers and use them in all subjects of the curriculum as well as receiving whole-class timetabled ICT lessons each week. Opportunity to use control technology is provided in small groups across the age groups by a trained teaching assistant. Teachers and educational support staff set up very good opportunities for pupils to improve their ICT skills and for pupils to extend their learning. The provision for ICT has been enhanced due to the recent acquisition of two interactive 'whiteboards' and projectors, which were used confidently in Year 6 and in a joint Years 1 and 2 taught session. Skilful questioning, and secure subject knowledge, motivated pupils to want to use the 'whiteboard' in front of their friends. They are developing secure ICT vocabulary due to the very good attention given to this by the class teacher. In an introductory lesson on using the 'PowerPoint' program, higher attaining Year 6 pupils were familiar with this software and confidently used specialist vocabulary when sharing their ideas with others. Most pupils are confident when using computers for word processing and researching new information using CD-ROMs. The school has a website where pupils are able participate in the learning environment outside school. A parental survey is to be conducted by the school as a means of finding out parental awareness of the website and its usage.
17. Teachers manage pupils very well and, as a result, standards of behaviour are very good and learning is better. Most lessons start with question and answer session where teachers recap effectively from previous lessons. Pupils listen carefully and they are very willing to respond to teacher questioning. When pupils call out and do not adhere to the expected convention of putting a hand up before speaking, adults managed this situation very promptly. In a Year 3 science lesson, pupils clearly recalled investigations that they had carried out previously. Following enthusiastic albeit fairly loud discussions on green plants and planning to conduct a 'fair test' they eagerly spoke about their ideas. The very good relationships between the pupils and the class teacher and the challenging questions presented to the pupils made them think carefully about the next stages of their scientific enquiry on the role of tomato plant leaves. Year 5 were well involved and interested in their work on writing a story involving the first- and third-person. They demonstrated relaxed and happy relationships as they co-operated with each other, with the teacher and educational support staff, all of which made a positive impact on learning.
18. Teaching and educational support staff are clear what they want different groups of pupils to learn. The learning objectives are made known to the pupils at the start of the lesson and in the best lessons assessments are made as to what has been learned. Banks St Stephen's has five pupils with statements of SEN, staff work hard to support their physical, curricular and social inclusion. Because of the very good overall quality of the teaching and extra support provided by educational support assistants including signers, pupils with SEN generally achieve their potential as individuals and they are integrated well into all aspects of school life. The support provided for all pupils enhances learning and builds up their confidence. Despite the large class size in Year 4, all pupils were given a rich range of opportunities in an art and design lesson to explore and develop their ideas using different resources and materials; assessment opportunities were built well into the planning. Sketchbook drawings show very good achievements with regard to developing visual perception and the expression of ideas. This is an improvement on that reported in 1998.

19. Lesson planning is carried out on a weekly basis. Lesson plans presented during the inspection showed inconsistencies in their format and content, despite the detailed school policy on planning. The best daily plans seen gave very good attention to meeting the individual learning needs of the pupils by modifying and adapting tasks to suit pupils with different prior knowledge as well as giving careful attention to the age related objectives of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. This was particularly pertinent to the mixed age classes which comprise Reception/Year 1 pupils and Year 1/Year 2 pupils. Assessment did not always feature in the short-term plans observed.
20. Homework is given in accordance with the school policy. As children get older the amount and variety increases and most of the parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their children are given the right amount of homework.
21. As a means of improving teaching and learning, the school recently made a bid in partnership with six other Lancashire Primary schools to The National College for School Leadership to become a Networked Learning Community. The focus of the joint proposal is 'Thinking Skills'. If successful, the school hopes that this inter-school teacher liaison project will focus on best teaching and learning and how teaching and learning styles and preferences impact on each other.

The school promotes very positive attitudes to learning; pupils' behaviour and relationships are very good.

22. The school enables its pupils to learn effectively to appreciate qualities such as courtesy, good manners and consideration for others as it prepares them for adult life. They are encouraged to develop self-respect, self-reliance, self-confidence and self-discipline to enable them to take responsibility and learn to stand on their own two feet. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning, their very good behaviour and very good relationships throughout the school are outstanding strengths of its work. This is a very similar picture to that identified in the last inspection. Nearly every parent who returned the parental questionnaire agreed that their child likes school with two-thirds of parents strongly supporting this view. Pupils are very interested in their lessons, they follow instructions as requested and willingly share their ideas and work with others. In a joint Reception/ Year 1 class the children listened attentively, then joined in role play activities and their self-esteem was raised when they acted out being in a Baker's Shop. Pupils in a Year 1/2 class collaborated together when using the laptop computers in a numeracy session. The quality of the teaching in a Year 3 lesson about the Sikh religion and the effective use of resources impacted positively on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. The management of the Year 4 class and the good organisational arrangements were conducive to the reflective climate for learning which was promoted in a religious education lesson about Buddhism. Praise was used well in a Year 5 literacy session and this encouraged pupils to work productively and to the best of their abilities. Year 6 pupils are motivated by humour within the teaching, for example in a mathematics session, and they like to be consulted about their views. In a Year 6 literacy group, the intellectual effort put into this revision work was evident, as was the enjoyment in preparing for reading the questions in future national tests.
23. Overall pupils' behaviour is very good. This is the view of nearly all the parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaires and at the pre-inspection parents meeting. The behaviour policy is firmly underpinned by the Christian principles and the school Mission Statement. The school has created an ethos that celebrates and reinforces

achievement. The behaviour policy attempts to balance rewards and sanctions and the school has continued to maintain conditions which enable teaching and learning to take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect despite the unprecedented number of staffing changes and the relocation to a new site and building on the outskirts of the village of Banks in 1998. There have been no exclusions over the last two decades.

24. There are very good relationships throughout the school. Older pupils mentor younger pupils, pupils willingly talk to adults and they automatically open doors for each other and for adults. At all times pupils are polite, respectful and it is noticeable that they like coming to school. This is borne out by the well above average attendance rates. The school is working towards introducing a school council as a means of consulting pupils about their views on all aspects of school life. It is hoped that this will contribute further to the personal and social development of younger pupils in particular, who do not have as many opportunities as the older ones, to take on responsibilities. It will give pupils of all ages the opportunity to make choices in real situations, as well as preparing them to play an active role as citizens.

The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

25. The Mission Statement of the school aims to provide '... a wide range of stimulating and enjoyable activities within a Christian ethos'. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and it is a significant strength of its work. This is very similar to the judgement made in the last inspection.
26. School assemblies are a key focus for spiritual development. Pupils are given very good opportunities to explore values and beliefs including religious beliefs and the ways these impact on people's lives. In a role play input in a Year 1 and 2 assembly, pupils conveyed the message of being brave through the story of David and Goliath. They thoroughly enjoyed the sound effects of Goliath's loud voice, yet remained very well behaved. A Years 3 to 6 assembly recalled the characteristics of St Stephen and of others who had displayed personal courage, for example Father Damien from Belgium and his valuable work in a Leper Colony. Pupils expressed the view that they like assemblies 'as you learn new things about Jesus'. Occasionally there was too little time given at the end to reflect on the theme of the assembly and the development of self-knowledge. Staff show pupils how they value the intellectual, physical and creative effort that pupils put into their work by displaying completed work to its full advantage, for example in art, ICT, literacy, numeracy and science. Very good attention is given to the presentation of displayed work which enhances both the teaching and learning environment.
27. The provision for moral development is very good and is fostered successfully through the traditional Christian values that the school promotes. Nearly all the parents who responded to the survey conducted by the school in 2002, and to the pre-inspection questionnaire, reported that their children are keen to come to school and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. There is a clear code of conduct and the school's 'Golden Rules' are displayed throughout and they are well known to pupils of all ages. A system of rewards and celebration assemblies take place. Birthdays are celebrated in assemblies. Pupils of all ages were proud to share their birthday plans with the whole assembly. The school's personal, social and health education policy and teaching programme enables pupils to discuss openly the positive aspects of their learning and any issues that concern them.

28. The provision for social development is very good. The school has fostered a sense of community with common inclusive values; it is very effective at promoting racial, religious and other forms of equality. Relationships are formed on mutual respect. Staff and visitors provide good role models. As a result, both boys and girls are comfortable in contributing to discussions in class and to school life. Year 6 pupils are trained 'Buddies' under the local education authority 'Making Lunch-times Positive' project. They willingly lead games and activities in the playground. Older pupils are responsible for taking young children back to their classrooms at the end of each break-time; they also listen to the Infants read. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities outside of lessons; they include extra-curricular activities such as sport, dance, drama, music, art, French, Spanish and using the school's ICT website. In September 2002 the school introduced an after school care club known as 'The Kool Club'. It has proved to be extremely popular with parents and children. Several visits are provided locally and further afield, such as to the Lowry Arts Centre, Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, Jodrell Bank, as well as local studies in Southport. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 go on a three-day visit to York and to the Lancashire Outdoor Education Centre at Borwick Hall, Cumbria. Virtually all the staff contribute to the school's extra-curricular provision. The school has contributed to several charities, including Sefton and West Lancashire Deaf Children's Society, and Katie's Ski Tracks Holidays of a Lifetime. All these opportunities make a significant contribution to the well-being and personal and social development of pupils.
29. The overall provision for pupils' cultural development is good. This is an improvement on that reported in the 1998 inspection. Cultural development has improved and continues to be extended with regard to multicultural education. Banks St Stephen's has established links with a primary school in Prestwich, Manchester, where the majority of the pupils are from a range of different faiths and cultures. As a part of this liaison, pen friends have been set up and three exchange visits have taken place. The school makes good use of the locality; class visits include to a Primary School in Prestwich, Formby Nature Reserve, and Ormskirk Chapel Gallery. The school works in partnership with its local schools and the local church. It is working on extending links with the adjacent leisure centre. The school's cultural values are reinforced through displays, posters and photographic records which are sited in the foyer of the school as are its whole school policies which are available for parents to see at any time. The school, through its Education for All Policy and the more recently formulated Race Equality Policy (2002) clearly highlights the school's long-standing commitment to educational inclusion. The school seeks to value all cultures, religions and languages and to draw on the diversity they offer for curriculum enrichment.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The raising of standards in English by the end of Year 6 and to continue to develop and improve pupils' writing skills throughout the school.

30. The 1998 inspection reported that standards attained by the end of Year 6 in English were above average with good progress being made in reading. From 1999 to 2001 in comparison with all schools nationally the results of the English national curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds dropped to below average. Standards of attainment also dropped to below average in mathematics in 1999 and to well below average in science. Although there have been fluctuations over the last four years in the Year 6 mathematics and science results they were both above average in 2002. The English results in 2002 in comparison with all schools nationally are average. The percentage (20 per cent) of pupils who exceeded the expected level for their age group in English was below the national average (29 per cent). Comparison with schools of a similar

type (those with more than 8 per cent and up to 20 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals) shows that, by the end of Year 6, pupils' standards were below average. Comparison with the national averages by gender shows that boys' results were not as high as girls in English in 2002. This is consistent with the national pattern of attainment in English.

31. English targets set by the governing body for the 2002 Year 6 group were not met by eight per cent; this is attributed to an increase in pupil admissions in Year 6 in 2002 which made the targets unrealistic given the increased number of lower attaining pupils admitted to this Year 6 group. There has been an unprecedented number of staff changes at the school and the school has experienced recruitment problems. In 1999 and 2000, the school's internal and the external monitoring of teaching and learning showed that this situation had distorted the typical good picture of teaching and learning in the school. The Year 3 and 4 groups did not progress at the same rate as they had in earlier years in English. All the Junior School (Years 3 to 6) teaching staff left at the same time in July 2001. Staffing appointments were made and posts taken up from September 2001 with nearly three-quarters of the staff new to the school. Despite this, the relatively new staff is a productive and cohesive team whose main focus has been to sustain or improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English.
32. Inspectors found overall standards in the current Year 6 group in English to be average and similar to those recorded in last year's tests when compared with all schools nationally. Higher attaining Year 6 pupils read a poem by Judith Nicholls fluently and with expression and they took good account of punctuation marks. In discussion they listened attentively and took account of the views of others. The majority of the group has made very good progress as this revision session for the national tests demonstrated. Lower attaining pupils read fluently and with accuracy, but their writing was not always well formed and some familiar words were spelt incorrectly. The number of Year 6 pupils who are working at the expected Level 4 is increasing, and assessments indicate that more pupils will achieve the above the average Level 4 in 2003.
33. The 2003 statutory targets set by the governing body for English (79 per cent) and mathematics (89 per cent) are lower than in 2002 for the current Year 6. This is informed by the fact that a quarter of the group are on the special educational needs register. Assessment information and pupil tracking shows that the school is on target to exceed these, due to 'booster' classes, additional literacy support and the organisational arrangements made where pupils are taught in smaller ability groupings for English and mathematics. The library doubles as a classroom in the mornings for Year 6 pupils which means that it cannot be used as a library at these times. Book stock is limited in its range; in particular access to reference books and pupils cannot borrow books. The potential of the library is unrealised.
34. The raising of standards in writing is a whole-school priority for improvement with all pupils being given a target aimed at improving writing. Parents are informed of the targets and encouraged to work together with the school to achieve the individual targets set. Since 2001 a whole range of strategies have been put into place to improve writing throughout the school and these are ongoing. They include the establishment of a rigorous and structured monitoring and self-evaluation programme. Pupils' work is regularly analysed, formal classroom observations take place where strengths are shared and areas for development put into place, visits are made to classes by the literacy governor, and feedback on developments is given to the governing body. Information and communication technology is used to consolidate

basic literacy skills and reinforce the importance of tidy presentation so that meaning is effectively communicated. The writing audit conducted in spring 2003 identified strengths in writing and areas for development under three aspects:

- purpose, organisation and processes of writing;
- style, language effects and sentence construction;
- phonics, spelling, handwriting and punctuation.

35. Inspection evidence shows that there is more to be done with regard to handwriting skills, punctuation, and improved spelling in particular for lower attaining pupils. Extended English writing lessons have been timetabled in Years 3 to 6 in addition to the literacy sessions as it was felt that the National Literacy Strategy gave few opportunities to write for different purposes. The range of opportunities for pupils to extend and consolidate their writing skills in the other subjects of the curriculum is not wide enough. The school does not have a whole-school cross-curricular writing policy which identifies opportunities to write for a range of different purposes and different styles across the curriculum, given that language is the prime medium through which pupils learn and express themselves in all subjects. The school is actively working on its writing action plan which features all year groups and is supported by whole-staff training on the three key aspects of writing which have been in need of development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. In order to sustain the many notable qualities that are a part of the school, to raise standards further, to ensure that all pupils achieve to their full potential and be an improving school, the headteacher, governors and staff should focus on:
- (1) Raising standards in English by the time pupils are at the end of Year 6, by:
 - a) ensuring that the work planned is pitched at the right level for the range of ability present in all classes so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable;
 - b) improving the library stock of books and use of the library as a resource for learning.
(Paragraphs 30 to 33)
 - (2) Continuing to develop and improve pupils' writing skills throughout the school as planned by:
 - a) implementing the school's writing action plan, supported by appropriate staff training;
 - b) monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning and using the strengths of the best teaching and support to influence the rest;
 - c) improving the opportunities for a wider range of cross-curricular writing.
(Paragraphs 34 and 35)

The school has recognised in its improvement planning the need to continue to improve English by the end of Year 6 based on the national performance data comparisons made since the last inspection and more recently the analysis of the achievements of its 2002 Year 6 group. Improving writing standards is a whole-school priority; all children have been set individual writing targets and they are known to pupils and parents.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	9	6	2	0	0	0
Percentage	5.5	50	33.5	11	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	223
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	29

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	11	17	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (97)	100 (97)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (97)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	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	14	16	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	14
	Girls	14	14	16
	Total	24	25	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (88)	83 (100)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	12	12
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	25	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (87)	90 (96)	90 (100)
	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	185	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	27.8

Education support staff: Y6 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	167

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	442,943
Total expenditure	437,779
Expenditure per pupil	2075
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,657
Balance carried forward to next year	65,820

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.5
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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	222
Number of questionnaires returned	170

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	29	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	61	36	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	36	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	38	9	0	0
The teaching is good.	65	34	0	1	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	38	15	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	26	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	52	38	8	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	24	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	28	6	2	2