

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S R C PRIMARY SCHOOL

Leyland

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119677

Headteacher: Mrs E McNamara

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Clark
25431

Dates of inspection: 27 – 30 January 2003

Inspection number: 248052

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Haig Avenue
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Hartley

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

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25431	Mrs L Clark Registered inspector	Design and technology Music Provision for children in the foundation stage.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1165	Mr P Dannheisser Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22291	Mr K Saltfleet Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18344	Mr D Earley Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
19041	Mr R Linstead Team inspector	English Art and design English as an additional language	How well are the pupils taught?
19120	Mr D Pattinson Team inspector	Science Educational inclusion Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Leyland St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school near to Chorley in Lancashire. It is larger than average with 330 pupils between the ages of three and 11, including 37 children who attend the nursery part-time. Set in the middle of extensive local authority housing, it serves a wide-spread parish; two-thirds of pupils come from areas of considerable social deprivation. Most pupils are of white British heritage; none is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is about average at 14 per cent. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above average because of the eighteen per cent identified as having special needs, 60 per cent require individual education or behaviour plans. Six pupils have statements of special need which is also an above average proportion. The range of special needs includes autism, moderate learning difficulties, and physical, behavioural and emotional problems. Most pupils attend the nursery before starting school. Their attainment on entry to the nursery is below average overall; their communication, language, literacy and personal, social and emotional development are well below average. There have been considerable changes in the teaching staff in the last year which has necessitated a major reorganisation of teaching groups and deployment of classroom assistants. Currently infant pupils are taught in small, single age groups in Years 1 and 2. Junior pupils are taught in six mixed age classes apart from literacy and numeracy when they are taught in seven groups according to their age and ability. At the time of the inspection, four teachers were newly qualified, (one on a temporary contract), and the deputy headteacher, seconded by the local education authority, had been in the school for only three weeks.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with considerable strengths and the potential to improve further, already seen in rising standards. The school is well led and managed. The quality of teaching is good, supported by a curriculum which is designed to interest pupils. The school's effectiveness is seen in its very strong commitment to pupils' personal development, based on a strong Catholic faith which permeates all that the school does. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in mathematics, physical education, art and music by the end of Year 6 and above average in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of Year 2.
- Very good relationships and very positive attitudes to learning result from the school's excellent provision for spiritual development and very good provision for pupils' personal, social and moral development.
- Teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes and good in all other classes and so pupils achieve well throughout their time in school.
- The school is well led and managed.
- The curriculum is good.

What could be improved

- Pupils' skills in speaking.
- The quality of marking and use of existing procedures to monitor pupils' progress so that pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve their work.
- Giving pupils of different abilities work which challenges them so they make the best possible progress.

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 good improvement since it was last inspected in November 1997 and the quality of education provided by the school is much better than it was. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is now at the level expected because of the improved provision of ICT equipment and the many opportunities pupils have to use the computers. The quality of teaching throughout the school has improved considerably as has the provision for pupils' personal development. The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues of the last inspection. This is seen in the continued improvement in pupils' results at the end of Year 2, particularly that of the more able pupils; and in the progress now being made in junior classes; and in the above average standards in some subjects.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Standards in English and mathematics in the national tests for 11-year-olds were broadly average in 2002. This shows improvement on national test results in 2001 and reflects the measures the school has put in place to raise standards. Standards compare favourably with those in similar schools. Standards were below average in science in the national tests in 2002 for 11-year-olds though similar to those achieved in similar schools. Standards in both science and English in the current Year 6 are broadly average; they are above average in mathematics. Although the trend in the school's results has been slightly below the national trend, pupils are now achieving well and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising at a good rate. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in science. Standards are at expected levels in all other subjects by the end of Year 6 apart from art, music and physical education where they are above the level expected of 11-year-olds. Pupils' performance in the junior classes has been affected by the many recent changes in staff and an unavoidable succession of temporary teachers. The school is now well placed to meet the challenging targets it has set in all three subjects. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2002 were above average and well above average compared to schools with a similar intake of pupils. Pupils' performance at age seven has improved considerably in the last two years. Pupils achieve well because they are taught well in small classes with a very good ratio of adults to children which means that they receive much individual attention.

By the end of the reception year, children attain standards that are broadly in line with the level expected in mathematics, literacy, personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development as well as in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve well. Standards in speaking and communication are below average, reflecting the well below average level of communication skills when children first start school. Pupils' skills in speaking are below average throughout the school, though pupils make good progress from an initial low base. Religious education is inspected in a different inspection.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils are very enthusiastic and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; while not all pupils find it easy to behave well, the school's very good provision ensures that behaviour is good both in classrooms and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; warm and friendly relationships between pupils and the adults in the school mean that pupils learn tolerance and co-operation. This contributes to a caring and happy school.
Attendance	Below average, in spite of the school's good procedures to improve it. Pupils do, however, come early to school in order to read for twenty minutes before lessons begin.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very 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 is good throughout the school and very good in the nursery and reception classes. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and a large proportion of teaching is very good. This has a good impact on pupils' learning. Literacy and numeracy are well taught and the skills of ICT are taught effectively. Teaching is good in most subjects. Children are very well prepared in the nursery and reception classes for their future learning. Teachers provide exciting resources and stimulating activities that appeal to children and so they want to learn. The additional provision for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to learn through play and through choosing their own activities helps lower attainers and those who are less mature to achieve well. The good quality support by classroom and special needs assistants is particularly beneficial to learning from the nursery through to Year 2 and in literacy and numeracy lessons throughout the school. Teachers throughout the school manage pupils very well and they use effective teaching methods. A major strength is the expectation that pupils will learn through investigation and practical activities; a weakness is that some tasks are less challenging in subjects such as science for higher attaining pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; the curriculum is broad and interesting and meets statutory requirements. The weekly personal, social, health and citizenship lessons give pupils opportunities to discuss matters of a wider educational nature and so benefit their personal development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; the good organisation and quality and range of individual education plans, together with the assistance given in the classrooms, enable pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; the school's very good provision for moral and social development has considerable impact on raising pupils' self-esteem, their sense of responsibility and their behaviour. The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual development means that pupils' work is undertaken in a context of prayer, reflection and joy. Pupils are well prepared for growing up in a culturally diverse society.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; the procedures for personal support and guidance are very good. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are good but they could be used more effectively to help pupils to understand what they need to learn next.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory; the school has good informal links with parents but information to parents, particularly about what their children are learning and the progress they are making could be fuller.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher's leadership is very good and is instrumental in enabling all staff to work as an effective team. The senior management team also gives a very clear lead to other staff. The school is well managed and subject co-ordinators contribute well overall to the running of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well; the governors give good quality support and have a good understanding of the school and its strengths and relative weaknesses. They fulfil their statutory duties well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; this aspect of the school's work is extremely well organised, enabling co-ordinators to monitor standards in a wide range of subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good; financial management is good and the school uses new technology satisfactorily to run the school efficiently. The school compares its performance with other schools and sets itself increasingly challenging targets. The systems set up by the local education authority are used well to ensure good value is obtained in relation to educational worth. Pupils are consulted and their views taken into account though their parents are consulted less often.

There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum and the accommodation is good as are many of the school's resources for learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has high expectations of their children and so they make good progress Their children are helped to become more mature and responsible Their children like school They feel comfortable to approach the school with any concerns or problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of activities outside lessons The amount of homework their children receive Communication with parents and opportunities to see their children's work at parents' evenings

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views and their overall view that this is a good school. The range of activities outside lessons, in the inspection team's view, is good and contributes well to providing a good curriculum. The amount of homework pupils receive is satisfactory but the school should give parents more information about it. The team agrees that the school could communicate more with parents and that arrangements should be made for parents of junior pupils to see their work during the course of the year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Standards in English and mathematics in the national tests for 11-year-olds were broadly average in 2002 and below average in science. Standards in the current Year 6 show a distinct improvement on these, confirming that the school does well compared to similar schools. Standards in the current Year 6 are broadly average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Although standards in reading and writing are about average, standards of speaking are below those expected. Standards in national tests compare favourably with those achieved in similar schools in English and mathematics and are close to those attained in similar schools in science. More than three-quarters of Year 6 pupils are in line to reach the standard expected for their ages in English and a higher proportion than this in mathematics by the end of the year. Girls achieve higher standards than boys in English, following the national pattern, although the school has narrowed this gap by improving boys' standards over the last four years. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics; they are below average in speaking. This is much better than in similar schools. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, building on the good foundation given in the nursery and reception classes. By the end of the reception year, children attain standards that are broadly in line with the level expected in literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world as well as in their personal, social, emotional, creative and physical development. They achieve well overall and particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development as well as in their ability to communicate though overall standards in speaking and communication are below average. This reflects the well below average level of communication skills when children first start school.

2 On the face of it, this would seem to indicate that pupils achieve less well in Years 3 - 6 than they do in the first two years of compulsory schooling and in the nursery and reception classes. There are several factors which help to explain this apparent discrepancy and which indicate that pupils have achieved satisfactorily over time and most are now achieving well in the junior classes. Standards are clearly improving in both English and mathematics; they are more erratic in science. It is undoubtedly true that the many recent changes in teaching staff affected the education of the older rather than younger pupils and that some junior classes had several temporary teachers in one term, for unavoidable reasons. This slowed pupils' progress at the time. The teaching now is good throughout the school and so pupils are achieving well and making progress at a good rate. Class sizes are much larger in Years 3 – 6 and although additional support is used effectively in literacy and numeracy, it is rarely available for other lessons such as science unless pupils have statements of special educational needs. Sixteen per cent of pupils enter and leave the school at times other than the usual. This can have a significant impact on individual classes and on pupils' results.

3 There are very good reasons why pupils are achieving well in the infant classes. Class sizes are considerably smaller in Years 1 and 2 and pupils are taught in single year groups. The high levels of classroom assistance enable younger pupils receive a great deal of individual attention from adults which helps them to make progress quickly, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. The provision of times when pupils in Years 1 and 2 can choose their own activities is beneficial in helping lower attainers to mature as they learn, like younger pupils, through play and so develop skills at a rate which is suited to their needs. This gives them a very good starting point when they begin in Year 3. Some lower attainers in Year 3 find the more formal teaching in the junior classes quite hard at first. The school is aware of this and through drama and working together in pairs in English is giving pupils greater freedom to learn through speaking and role-play.

4 The organisation of pupils into classes according to age and ability in both mathematics and English has a positive impact on standards. The school has implemented both the numeracy and literacy strategies well and uses its thorough assessment systems effectively in order to identify areas of weakness. The thorough checking of standards of planning, teaching and pupils' work help to give the school a clear idea of what needs to be done to further raise attainment. For example, the school has set up effective class libraries, and added private reading time to the

timetable to help raise standards in reading. In mathematics, similar measures such as improving pupils' problem solving skills and their use of mathematical language are proving to be successful. Literacy and numeracy are used well in other subjects, which is also helping to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. This is because work in English and mathematics is closely matched to their ability and the quality of teaching is good, which helps them to gain knowledge, develop skills and improve their understanding. Teachers track their progress satisfactorily to give them a chance to succeed. Relationships are very good throughout the school, and pupils' work is always valued which encourages them to try harder.

5 Standards in science are average rather than higher because not enough provision is made for higher attaining pupils to learn at the fast rate of which they are capable. Pupils, however, achieve well in planning and carrying out scientific investigations, reflecting the emphasis the school places on pupils discovering for themselves. Standards are in line with those expected nationally by the end of Year 6 in design and technology, geography, history and ICT. They are above expected standards in art, music and physical education, reflecting the good extra-curricular provision in the school to support the creative arts and sports and the good quality of teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6 Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Very important factors in the very high standards achieved in this aspect of the life of the school are its caring ethos and its excellent spiritual provision, which are clearly founded on the precepts of the Roman Catholic faith.

7 The school has worked hard and successfully to promote good behaviour. The behaviour of both boys and girls is generally good in lessons and as they move around school. This is because the school has a clear behaviour policy which is very well implemented and because in lessons and assemblies pupils learn to respect themselves and others. While not all pupils find it easy to behave well, the school's very well thought out strategies for managing behaviour are clearly successful. Break and lunch times are usually happy and relaxed occasions when pupils enjoy each others' company, play together and are confident to chat to visitors. This is largely because of the support provided by teaching and non-teaching staff, including lunchtime supervisors and by the very skilful way in which staff usually manage pupils. Most pupils are polite and courteous. They respect property and handle resources well. They stand back to let others pass and open doors for peers and adults without being prompted. Pupils clearly understand the consequences of unacceptable behaviour and are encouraged to behave well by the school's systems of rewards and its high expectations. Pupils are usually very keen to come to school. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and eagerly take part in the activities, visits and extra curricular opportunities organised by the school. Many pupils arrive early for school and sometimes they are reluctant to leave at the end of the school day.

8 Most pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude to their work. They are keen to make progress, eager to please and enjoy succeeding. They are well behaved, and respond well to the encouragement they receive, which helps to boost their confidence and enables them to take pride in their achievements. However, a small number of pupils lack concentration and this slows their progress.

9 Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are very good. Staff know pupils very well. Pupils know that their contributions are valued and respected. This helps them to improve their work. It gives them the confidence in mathematics, for example, to explain their calculations to teachers and peers. Work is usually interesting and well suited to their abilities. These factors are significant in the good progress made by most pupils, including those with special educational needs. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying, racist or sexist behaviour. The school has clear guidelines for dealing with these issues should they arise. Pupils generally respond very positively to the school's good provision for them to work independently and to co-operate with each other.

10 Most pupils respond very well to the systems provided by the school for promoting their personal development. A result of the excellent provision for spiritual development is that pupils

learn to respect each person's individuality and importance. During assemblies, for example, pupils' self esteem and their sensitivity to the feelings and values of others were enhanced when they took part in and watched performances combining music, drama and mime. They learn to celebrate the achievements of others and applaud warmly when pupils receive awards for work or for being helpful or for showing respect for others. Older pupils skilfully represented their feelings of friendship as part of their dance lessons and reception children are able to comment on what they like in a friend. Pupils are eager to accept responsibility. They help with the smooth running of the school and older pupils help to look after younger ones. For example, older pupils take on the positions of head and deputy boy and girl and have opportunities to become prefects. They have specific tasks to help around school and perform these very well. During lessons pupils are expected to be responsible for equipment and resources. Pupils took the initiative to organise a 'bring and buy' sale for charity. One pupil led others in initiating, organising and refereeing a football tournament. Pupils throughout the school are eager to help those less fortunate than themselves and take part in fundraising activities for local, national and international charities throughout the year, particularly during Lent.

11 As it is below the national average for primary schools, the level of attendance is unsatisfactory and has appeared to decline over the last few years. It is, however, very close to the average level and the school is aware of the reasons for absence, much of it caused by poor health. The absences also include a lower than usual proportion of those not adequately explained. The higher than average absence level is largely caused by a few pupils and their families as well as a minority of pupils with chronic health conditions. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12 The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning is good and is one of the main reasons for the school's success. Pupils say that it is teachers' friendliness, understanding of their learning needs, and skill in helping them that make the school a good one. Teachers' hard work, determination, enthusiasm and enjoyment of teaching make a strong foundation for learning in nearly all lessons. Teaching quality has improved a lot since the last inspection five years ago. There is no unsatisfactory teaching, and eight out of ten lessons are at least good with a large proportion of very good teaching. The quality of teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes -and good in Years 1-6. Both the expertise of the experienced teachers and the new ideas and recent training of the newly qualified teachers make important contributions to the good quality of learning which pupils often find both challenging and exciting. Experienced classroom assistants support learning well, particularly in infant classes.

13 The quality of learning falls below these usually good standards, although it is still satisfactory, in fewer than one lesson in five. This generally happens when pupils lose interest because they are not clear about what to do and do not have enough opportunities to contribute to lessons or to learn through discussion. Concentration also slackens when there is not enough for them to do. For example, lower attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 become restless during long spells of just listening to the teacher, and occasionally disrupt learning as a result.

14 All teachers use a wide range of strategies successfully to motivate, involve and challenge pupils, and regularly monitor the progress they are making. Most records are well maintained and regularly updated to enable teachers to carefully track progress. However, teachers sometimes do not match work well to pupils' abilities in subjects such as science, and this prevents them from making the best possible progress. The school is fully aware of the large proportion of its pupils experiencing a wide range of difficulties at home. All staff therefore work sensitively with them so as to lessen the impact of such difficulties on learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets in most lessons. This is because teachers match work to these needs and arrange effective help for pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is often good and individual education plans are used well to help pupils to learn. A few targets on individual education plans, however, are not precise enough and progress towards

targets not checked often enough to give pupils the best possible chance to succeed.

15 The very good quality of teaching and learning in the foundation stage is a strength of the school. As a result most children achieve expected standards by the end of their reception year, and are ready to start work on the National Curriculum. Staff arrange and organise activities very skilfully so that all pupils, whatever their backgrounds and achievements when they start school, make very good progress in attractive and stimulating learning environments. Very careful observation of each child's progress enables staff to teach the basic skills of all areas of learning very effectively through a wide range of play activities. The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and number is very good in the nursery and reception classes and good in the rest of the school. The national literacy and numeracy strategies develop these skills systematically in Years 1 to 6. However teachers do not consistently make the most of opportunities to develop pupils' speech after the good start in the foundation stage.

16 Teachers' good knowledge of National Curriculum subjects and topics ensures that learning has clear aims that pupils understand. Sound planning results in well prepared lessons. As teachers have good and detailed understanding of topics they quickly interest pupils in new work by making the key points very clear so as to simplify learning. Good knowledge of the topics also enables teachers to work confidently, using skilful questioning to take learning forward at a brisk pace. Teachers' very good relationships with their pupils help pupils to learn well for they want to please their teachers. This results in very good attitudes to learning.

17 Teachers use a very full range of methods to help pupils learn, often using many in a single lesson. These keep pupils very busy and interested. For example, in a very good drama lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, pupils made notes, talked over ideas in pairs, made tableaux, ran group discussions, spoke out characters' thoughts and feelings, mimed, "froze" and dramatised an imaginary incident. Teachers' very good management ensures that pupils are fully ready to learn at the start of each lesson. Good quality resources, often made by teachers and good team work with support staff then hold pupils' interest so that they continue to learn throughout the lesson. Teachers keep satisfactory records of pupils' progress in lessons. Marking is also satisfactory in assessing achievement but does not make enough contribution to improving pupils' progress or standards of presentation. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are appropriately high in most lessons, and are leading to better standards, which are now higher than those found in schools like St Mary's. But expectations are low in a number of activities. This often happens when teachers do not give pupils enough to do or tell them often enough how much time they have left. As a result they do not achieve as much as they could.

18 Parents and carers are not satisfied by the amount of homework pupils get. The inspection finds that teachers give adequate homework which supports the work being done in school. For example, pupils regularly learn spellings. Even the youngest children are encouraged to take home books to read and discuss. The demands of homework increase appropriately as pupils move up through the school. However, a big drop in the amount of reading that pupils do at home in Years 3 - 6 slows their progress in English.

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

19 The quality of the curriculum is good and shows clear improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is very good. All statutory requirements are met, and the curriculum for design and technology and information and communication technology is linked closely to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Long-term planning has been reviewed and is much more focussed in giving guidance to teachers on what to teach and when. Pupils are now offered a good range of extra curricular activities, including sports.

20 In the nursery and reception classes the curriculum is based on the guidance of the Early

Learning Goals with coverage of all the areas of learning. Literacy and numeracy are taught well through the appropriate strategies. Teachers plan a structured daily mathematics lesson in which oral and mental work feature strongly. In other subjects a range of resources is used to support planning including national guidelines and from the local education authority. The time allocated to subjects is sufficient but that allocated to science is a little low, particularly if the school's aspirations for higher standards are to be reached. Further development of information and communication technology is part of the school development plan as are planned links with other subjects. Other priorities include providing pupils with more opportunities to use e-mail, and control, for example monitoring and data logging using sensors. Teachers short term planning does not always take into account pupils' differing needs.

21 The school has an all inclusive approach for all activities; this is well supported by governors. Equality of access and opportunity is good and well illustrated in the opportunities for boys and girls to play football. Teachers are developing their awareness of pupils' varied learning styles using strategies and resources to ensure success. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good with a clear policy, based on national requirements. Pupils' needs are identified early and they are well looked after with classroom support linked to their requirements. Individual education plans are in place ensuring that work is focussed and relevant. Assessment data is analysed and used to determine how and where support is used for pupils not on the special needs register. However, the school recognises the need to further develop policy and provision for the most able pupils.

22 The school's extra-curricular provision provides additional opportunities for pupils to recognise and develop their talents. A good example is the targeting of an identified group of pupils through a range of sporting activities. This resulted in enhanced teamwork, a sense of belonging, loyalty, and increased respect for adults and other pupils. In addition to the sporting activities, there is a considerable range of other extra curricular activities including French, drama, and choir with cycling proficiency for older pupils. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education with a well-planned programme, including sex and drugs education running through the school. In particular, this good provision emphasises raising pupils' self-esteem. Planned discussion times such as 'Circle time' give pupils opportunities to discuss topical issues such as *'What can be done to save animals threatened with extinction?'* and older pupils learn life skills with *Operation Streetwise*.

23 Links with the wider community are important and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, for example, through visits to local museums. In turn the school joins in local activities such raising money for St Catherine's Hospice. There are very strong links with St Mary's Church, used as a resource for religious education and celebrating festivals such as Christingle. Links with other schools and educational establishments also usefully support pupils learning though currently there are no links with business. The school takes part in wider community events such as the 'Young Voices' at the G-Mex Centre when pupils from the school formed part of the 8,500 strong choir. A technician from the neighbouring comprehensive provides good support for information and communication technology. Students from local teacher training institutions and nursery nurses have placements in school. The school is popular with students for work experience and pupils in school benefit from contact with such a range of adults and young people.

24 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural is now a major strength of the school, a definite improvement on the last inspection. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The development of pupils' spirituality is firmly embedded into the school's everyday work with the intention of helping pupils to develop an understanding and tolerance of others, and raising their own self-esteem, based on a strong Catholic ethos. School assemblies are very well planned with a good balance of singing, activities, prayers and time for quiet reflection.

25 Pupils' moral development is very good. All staff and adults in the school work very hard to reinforce the school's high expectations of behaviour. Parents strongly agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. The school is keen on promoting the values of honesty and truth so that pupils know right from wrong and as they get older, pupils recognise that they are responsible for their own actions. A good example was seen in the nursery when the morning session began with a joyful prayer about 'Kindness'.

26 Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good and these play an important

part in pupils' social development and in their very good attitudes to learning. Pupils themselves get on well with each other, for example in the playground. It is very noticeable how the older pupils care for their younger schoolmates. Pupils in Year 6 with extra responsibility, such as the Head Boy and Girl, and prefects are good role models. Teachers provide good opportunities for collaborative and individual work during lessons. For example, the school's investigative approach to science encourages pupils to take responsibility and use their initiative. These good levels of co-operation and a willingness to join in all aspects of school life are important contributors to the improvement in standards.

27 There are good opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and those of others, and respect social differences and similarities in the wider world. In geography, they compare the lives of people in less prosperous countries in the developing world, with those of their own. The school has 'Fair Share' status and provides pupils with opportunities to become aware of the needs of other cultures, as in their rainforest studies, highlighting the need for coffee growers to get a fair price for their goods. Pupils cover Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and Islam in their religious education lessons, and celebrations of special occasions such as Eid and Ramadan enhance these aspects and bring them alive.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28 Staff provide good support and welfare for all pupils as they did at the time of the last inspection. Health and safety procedures are good. They include risk assessments undertaken by staff and governors. The school is clean and well cared for by the site staff. The school's procedures for child protection are in place. Many members of staff have had basic first aid training and take appropriate care of those who need it. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the classroom and around the school.

29 The school monitors individual attendance and works closely with the educational welfare officer to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. The school has a satisfactory range of strategies for encouraging good attendance, though it could do more such as offering individual or class awards. Registrations are efficient and pupils are welcomed into the classroom well before the start of the teaching day. They settle down very quickly and enjoy reading books of their own choosing from a new and popular collection in the classroom. They continue reading during the class registration and are sometimes encouraged to respond in a foreign language, thus helping to develop their confidence and their speaking skills and also to promote good attitudes to working.

30 Teachers throughout the school set good examples to pupils through their own behaviour and warm relationships. Their standards are clear and consistent, so that pupils know what to expect. Rewards and sanctions are fair, and pupils understand the systems. They are happy and feel cared for and always able to share any problems with the staff. Classroom strategies, learning assistants and visiting specialists help to maintain good behaviour. Personal development is fostered by a wide range of responsibilities given mostly to the older pupils, including looking after younger pupils at playtime. Older pupils also read with younger pupils once a week, they help to set up assemblies and keep the library well organised. All pupils are given tasks in classrooms. Older pupils undertake extended pieces of research in their own time and during the holidays which helps to reinforce their independence. Pupils in their last year at school say that they have enjoyed their time at the school, have respect and fondness for the staff and enjoy the responsibilities they are given.

31 Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for. Their work is regularly checked to ensure that they are making the progress towards the targets set for them, though sometimes these are not as precise as they could be. Regular reviews of pupils' progress helps to ensure that most work is suited to their needs. Outside agencies are involved as required to help meet their specific targets.

32 The school's arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. They

are very good for pupils under five who have personal targets to help them to learn. However, the use of personal targets does not yet form a part the rest of the school's work to help pupils to make the best possible gains in learning. For pupils in Years 1 to 6, there are regular assessments in English and mathematics using different approaches to help them make mostly good progress as they move through the school. Assessment of progress in other subjects is developing. For example, end-of-topic tests are used in science to help teachers learn what pupils know and understand. Some work in other subjects is matched against National Curriculum requirements, to help chart pupils' progress against national standards. In subjects, such as geography and physical education, skills, knowledge and understanding are assessed over time, which helps teachers to gain specific information about what pupils know and understand. However, there is a lack of consistency in the records teachers maintain over time, and no coherent, agreed approach to ensure that the process is manageable.

33 There are good procedures for assessing what pupils know and understand as they move through the school in English, mathematics and science, including the use of national and school-based tests and teacher assessments. The school analyses national test data to discover strengths and weaknesses. However, it has not yet begun to study and make comparisons about the performances of different groups to help ensure pupils are achieving as well as they can, to help teachers plan targets, which are personal to pupils' needs, and to inform future planning. Teachers do not involve pupils enough in setting their own targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34 The previous inspection found that the partnership was good – in particular the school's efforts which parents' appreciated. It is still the case that parents have positive views of the school and feel that it does a good job for their children. Many parents responded to the pre inspection survey and the great majority of these said that they their children like the school and became more responsible and mature and that the school expected a lot of them. Most felt their children were making good progress at school and agreed that they were well informed about their children's progress and that the school worked closely with them.

35 Inspection findings support the positive views held by parents. The school gives parents satisfactory information about the school and their children. Teachers provide parents with information about the topics their children will be covering during the term. There are termly meetings about pupils' progress, which are well attended. There is plenty of information sent home about the school. Parents are invited to class assemblies and strongly support the Christmas concerts, carol services and school productions.

36 The homework diaries and reading record sheets are used satisfactorily. Although there is no shortage of information, there is room for the school to develop styles of communication that are better geared to the needs of parents. At present some parents feel that homework is not set regularly, consistently and progressively throughout the school. The amount of homework pupils receive is satisfactory but the school should give parents more information about it. The school is planning to develop a web site but at present there are no regular newsletters and the type of material that parents see is not designed to encourage responses. Reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory. Some parents are disappointed that the complex arrangement for them to talk to all their junior children's teachers does not give them an opportunity to look at the work their children have done during the term. The team agrees that the school could communicate more with parents and that arrangements should be made for parents of junior pupils to see their work during the course of the year, rather than relying on parents to pop in at odd times. The school prospectus fulfils requirements but would benefit from a little more detail; for example items concerning child protection and complaints procedures are rather limited.

37 Staff are always accessible. The school has successfully forged strong and trusting relationships with parents and pupils alike. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed and involved at an early stage.

38 Parents' contribution to the work of the school and to their children's education is satisfactory. A few parents and friends of the school help out in classrooms. The school and parents work well together through the Friends of St Mary's School to raise additional funds and to help create a caring community atmosphere in which home and school may work together. A further valuable contribution to the school is given by two retired teachers; one who plays the piano in assembly and for the choir, and another who is qualified to help teach pupils swimming. They both give their time and expertise generously.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

39 The school is well led and managed under the assured leadership of the headteacher who gives a very good lead to both the academic and pastoral sides of education. The headteacher is a visible presence around the school, particularly at the start and end of school and at lunchtimes which means she is readily available for parents and pupils. There are good systems in place to ensure that management is both efficient and effective. There are very good systems for evaluating the work of the school. The governing body makes a good contribution to the running of the school and all teaching staff play a contributory part in the management. The school improvement plan is based on the aims of the school and is used effectively to plan future developments.

40 One of the powerful characteristics of the leadership of the school is the extent to which the management is delegated. The effect is to create strong management consisting of a team of people who individually have charge of the three stages of education and collectively cover all the wider areas such as the curriculum, assessment and record keeping, special needs, mentoring new teachers and staff development. The headteacher's management responsibility is therefore that of a co-ordinator, in terms of monitoring and evaluation and deciding strategic action, in addition to her prime responsibility for pastoral care and pupils' welfare. This works very well and its success can be seen in the very successful integration of staff new to the school as well as the notable strengths in the provision for pupils' personal development.

41 The system of subject co-ordination is similarly thoughtfully conceived. Co-ordinators meet together once a month to discuss issues related to their subject. Each subject is led by two co-ordinators and all teachers share responsibility for more than one subject. The benefit of this was seen recently with the many staff changes, enabling newly qualified teachers to join a subject team without assuming overall responsibility as well as maintaining some continuity. The subject co-ordination of ICT benefits enormously from the interest and expertise of the newly qualified teachers. The recent staff changes, however, also highlighted drawbacks in the system as currently design and technology has no co-ordinator and the literacy co-ordinator also has joint responsibility for science. The workload therefore is rather unbalanced.

42 Issues relating to special educational needs are managed well by the two people responsible for its co-ordination to ensure that the approach is effective, and that pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. For example, there are clear plans for further development, with realistic time scales for their completion. The special educational needs register is well maintained and regularly updated. Classroom assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. They work well, have clear responsibilities, and are valued. Most are well informed about the nature and range of disability, which helps pupils make mostly good gains in learning.

43 The school's system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning is very good. It is well thought out and is very effective and is one of the main reasons why the quality of teaching has improved. Two co-ordinators are freed from teaching one day each week according to the subject and need identified in the school improvement plan. They have a specified focus such as looking at planning or resources or a specific aspect of the teaching. This is carefully planned so that

sometimes these are issues that concern the whole school and at other times elements of individual subjects such as 'shared writing', for example. As a result, co-ordinators have monitored both teaching and learning in a wide range of subjects; for example, in literacy, numeracy, history, geography, music and physical education. The impact can be seen in the above average standards in several of these subjects. The headteacher takes one of the co-ordinator's classes for that particular day each week and so gains an insight into how each teacher plans lessons and organises the class and resources as well as providing a means of discussing with individuals what makes effective teaching and learning. In addition the headteacher and senior management team monitor lessons formally, each term, providing a written evaluation which is discussed with the teacher. The school improvement plan is used very well to determine the programme of monitoring and the results of any monitoring are used effectively to determine the next stage of planned improvement.

44 The link between the school and the governors is also well-organised. The benefit is seen in the swift way in which a relatively new governing body has been able to contribute positively to the running of the school. It has evolved partly as a means of training the newly appointed chair of governors and partly as a means of ensuring that governors are fully involved and so can make informed decisions. The headteacher and chair of governors meet regularly to agree agendas and to prepare the necessary information in advance so as to ensure that governors have a full understanding of all the documentation they need before committee meetings. The result is a governing body which is well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, governors who know the questions to ask and who through additional training are discovering other aspects of their responsibilities. Though reliant to a certain extent on the headteacher to synthesise information, governors look closely and critically at issues such as the recent national test results in science and the impact of the recently introduced additional strategies to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

45 Day-today-management and financial administration are good. The school makes good use of the local education authority's systems for its financial management which include comparing and competing for the best prices. This leaves the school's management free to concentrate on using resources well and evaluating their efficiency in terms of educational as well as financial value.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46 In order to improve further, the headteacher, other staff and governors should:

(1) plan opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills and monitor the progress they make;

(See paragraphs 1, 15, 56, 57, 63, 66)

(2) make more use of existing procedures for monitoring pupils' progress including marking pupils' work systematically so that pupils know exactly what to do in order to improve their work;

(See paragraphs 14, 17, 32, 33)

(3) ensure that in all subjects teachers give pupils of different abilities work which challenges them so they make the best possible progress.

(See paragraphs 5, 14, 17, 73, 74)

In addition, the following minor point for improvement should be considered:

- Strengthen links and communication with parents. (see paragraph 38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	27	28	15	0	0	0
Percentage	0	40	41	19	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 one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR –Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	37	311
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		44

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR –Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		55

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	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	21	20	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	20	20	20
	Total	39	38	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (98)	93 (98)	95 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	19	18
	Girls	20	20	18
	Total	38	39	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (95)	95 (98)	88 (93)
	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	28	29	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	20	24
	Girls	21	17	22
	Total	42	37	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (67)	65 (63)	81 (88)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	21	22
	Girls	22	19	23
	Total	41	40	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72 (58)	70 (65)	79 (85)
	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	306	0	0
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian			
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

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)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR –Y6

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	269

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	760,862
Total expenditure	759,321
Expenditure per pupil	2,301
Balance brought forward from previous year	53,805
Balance carried forward to next year	55,346

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32
Number of pupils per FTE adult	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	330
Number of questionnaires returned	128

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	46	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	45	1	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	48	8	3	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	50	12	6	2
The teaching is good.	47	45	4	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	52	11	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	29	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	42	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	40	46	13	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	47	39	6	6	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	43	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	39	13	3	20

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

47 Children attend the nursery part-time from when they are three and join one of the two reception classes at the start of the year in which they are five. They are very well taught and make particularly good progress in language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. They achieve well in all other areas of learning. The very good systems for assessing children's progress help teachers to plan activities which are exactly suited to the children's needs and so children learn very well, acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a very good rate. The small number of higher attaining pupils comfortably exceed the levels of attainment expected of their age while most others attain expected standards by the end of the reception year.

Personal, social and emotional development

48 When children enter the nursery initially they move silently from one task to another, showing little of the 'spark' or enthusiasm usually shown by children of this age, particularly those of higher ability. The well-thought out nursery routines help children to establish their identity as they learn to select their name to place on the registration board when they have hung up their coats. Even after a term, children tend to play in isolation, in ways that are more reminiscent of pupils a year or so younger than they. The teacher and nursery nurse are very skilled at talking to children and at creating a warm, secure and caring atmosphere, developing very good relationships with the children. They know the children well and this helps to give children confidence to talk to adults and to make choices in their selection of activities. The very good teaching in the reception classes builds successfully on this. There are excellent links between the school and nursery, even though they are in different buildings, and so nursery children are used to older pupils coming in every day to help them and to spending time in the reception class before they start school. As a result, reception children learn rapidly, growing in confidence and independence. Because relationships are very good, children happily sit in a circle, confidently talking about their friends when it is their turn to speak when they hold the teddy bear. As in the nursery, the morning and afternoon lessons are framed by prayers, times which are also used effectively, and unobtrusively, to reflect on personal and social issues. Children's attainment at the end of the reception year is at the level expected nationally; they have achieved very well.

Communication, language and literacy

49 Much of the very good teaching in the nursery is devoted to developing children's skills in communication. When they start in the nursery, many children know few words, lacking knowledge of names of common articles, for example. They speak in isolated words and phrases, prefacing requests with 'Me' or 'My'. Only the very small number of higher attainers speak in sentences. Through telling stories and having very high expectations, the teaching draws children in, making them curious, engrossing them by using exaggerated tones and gestures. For example, children's attention was caught by the change in the teacher's voice as she read the part of the fox in *The Gingerbread Man* and they were open-mouthed with shock at the end of the tale. They drew closer and closer to the teacher as they retold the story in their own words, wanting to verbalise what they had just heard. Children have many opportunities to write their own stories which they are encouraged to read back to the teacher. Their writing at this stage is largely shapes and pictures, lines and circles. This style of teaching is replicated in the reception classes and so children's learning comes on apace. Although overall their speech is below average at the end of the year, their literacy skills are broadly at the level expected. Dramatic story telling engages children's attention so that they want to learn to read the words with the teacher. Higher attainers begin to read simple texts and average attainers tell plausible stories based on pictures and isolated words that they recognise. The very good teaching constantly feeds children vocabulary, encouraging them, for example, to think of new words and not to repeat the ones they have just heard to describe the animals they have read about in a story. They confidently read their own writing to each other at the end of the lesson. Registration time is used excellently to develop children's listening skills and also their pronunciation, for children learn to respond in French, German and

Spanish and can answer several questions about themselves in French with more facility than most are able to in English. Children clearly think this is fun and view it with their teacher as a shared and secret activity which makes it very special.

Mathematical development

50 Throughout their time in the nursery and reception classes, most children make good progress from a low base and achieve well, so that the majority reach the standards expected by the end of the reception year. This is because provision for mathematical development is good overall and teachers plan lively and interesting activities to develop children's understanding of number, shape, space and measurement. A strength of the mathematics teaching is that it is based on practical activities designed to extend children's vocabulary and understanding. For example, in the nursery pupils watched a video based on the number 3. They listened to the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and were challenged by the staff to recognise and match the number 3 in their work with shapes and objects and in their cutting and sticking activities. The teaching has high expectations and offers ample opportunity for children to work at their own level and make progress. For example, children sorted out different pasta shapes in their own way while the nursery nurse recorded the method of sorting each one used. This varied from lower attainers who selected just one shape to higher attainers who could sort several different types of pasta distinguishing between shape and colour. The children learn very well because the teacher and nursery nurse take advantage of every opportunity to reinforce the appropriate language. Teachers plan tasks that are lively and interesting so that children want to learn. In the reception class, for example, children began to understand the sequence of days of the week and their importance, through the teacher's very effective story telling which brought this alive for them. Outside, children hunted for numbers hidden earlier by the staff, excitedly spotting where they were concealed. The children were very enthusiastic, making ticks on their record sheet against each number that they found. Teachers understand very well how to teach the basic skills of mathematics. Engrossed by building towers of different sizes, children imperceptibly absorbed mathematical vocabulary relating to relative size, as the very good teaching linked language with mathematical ideas.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

51 All children achieve well in this area and by the end of the year reach expected standards. In the nursery they find out about the world around them by using small toys and through imaginative role-play. Children develop a familiarity with the computer and by the time they reach the reception classes they are very confident with technology. They have good co-ordination and use the computer mouse confidently to move the cursor around the screen and to select a colour from the palette in an art program. They are given opportunities to develop the skills to solve problems and to make decisions when controlling the movement of the floor robot. Stories such as 'Jasper's Beanstalk' are used well to consolidate children's understanding, for example, of the order of the days of the week. They learn practically about the properties of materials when baking with the help of a support assistant, by mixing and rolling out the ingredients. Children develop a simple understanding of belief and learn about important events in the Bible through listening to stories both in the classroom and during assembly. Outside visits are made from time to time within the immediate locality. The quality of teaching and learning in both classes is very good. There are very good relationships between teachers and the nursery nurse and other classroom support staff. They have a clear understanding of the needs of the children and teachers plan lessons with a very clear structure based on giving them practical opportunities to find out for themselves.

Physical development

52 From a cautious start, when children are physically uncertain, children make good progress and achieve well in this area of their learning in both the nursery and reception classes. The very good teaching expects children to do things for themselves and so children become increasingly skilled at putting on their coats or changing their clothes for physical education or dipping the paintbrush into the right pot. In the nursery, the children learn how to use pens, pencils and scissors though they find it hard, for example, to print patterns on a gingerbread man without adult assistance. Their level of concentration varies: some move on to a different activity after five minutes; most concentrate best when they are close to an adult. Children enjoy activities outside, planting bulbs, moving earth with toy diggers or pushing wheelbarrows and pushchairs. They begin

to learn to play together. These skills are further developed in the reception classes and many children attain above average standards as they become much more physically adept and dextrous with small implements. The favourable ratio of adults to children means that they are quickly helped to become independent. A similar confidence is noticeable when children co-operate well either outside or in the hall, using the space well, enthusiastically exchanging colourful and attractively shaped balls and other objects with some skill. Their sense of balance and their ability to control whether they move at speed or stop suddenly are a little above average for their age.

Creative development

53 Most of the activities that children undertake in both the nursery and reception classes have a strong creative element. The quality of teaching is very good and stimulates children's imaginations. The environment for learning is very attractive and stimulating and activities and materials are very well planned, prepared and organised. Children reach expected standards by the end of the reception year. In the nursery, most children are unable to distinguish one colour from another initially, and even after a term a sizeable proportion find it hard to identify different colours by name. The café invites children to don a chef's hat or apron and the resources and adults' questioning helps children to begin to play imaginatively together. From this firm foundation, the very good teaching in the reception classes enables children to make rapid progress in this area of learning. Children learn how to make many different colours from red, yellow and blue and paint a picture of a bowl of fruit with some skill, having mixed purple and orange, for example. Meanwhile in the 'pizzeria' children construct their own pizzas using coloured scraps of paper which they stick on to white paper circles while others busily flatten out play dough. The children play together well; for example, one boy explained as he sat outside the restaurant in his 'car' that he was 'driving round the roundabout till my dinner is ready'. By the end of the reception year, children have clearly achieved well, learning much in a short time.

ENGLISH

54 Pupils make good overall progress in English, given the low language standards of most children when they start school. They achieve higher standards in reading and writing than pupils in schools like St Mary's.

55 In Year 6 standards in reading and writing are as expected for pupils' ages. This is a satisfactory achievement, given these pupils' broadly average standards at the end of Year 2 in 1999. Standards of speaking are below those expected, mainly because pupils use, recognise and understand fewer words than in most primary schools. The decline in the amount of reading pupils do at home also limits their speech development. The school has identified these weaknesses and has begun to address them effectively. In Year 2 standards in reading and writing are higher than those expected for pupils' ages. This is a good achievement, and these standards are much higher than those in schools like St Mary's. This is because good teaching of basic skills in Years 1 and 2 builds well on pupils' very good progress in language in the nursery and reception classes. These standards are also higher than those reported at the last inspection. The quality of pupils' speaking also improves in the infant classes, but is still lower than expected for pupils' ages in Year 2.

56 Speaking and listening skills do not improve enough in Years 1 and 2. This is mainly because teachers concentrate on literacy. Most pupils are good listeners, largely because teachers talk and read to them very expressively and listen carefully to what they say. However lower attaining pupils still find it difficult to listen carefully all the time to their teachers and each other's answers and questions. When they lose interest they get restless and disrupt learning at times. However, nearly all pupils gain just enough words and confidence to express adequately what they think, notice, feel, see and want to ask.

57 Year 6 pupils speak confidently to adults and are keen to talk to visitors about the school and their work. For example, groups of eleven-year-olds described clearly how they had designed torches, studied the work of famous artists and improved their writing. In a Year 6 literacy lesson pupils listened attentively and made notes as the teacher read the class novel for 20 minutes. However, junior pupils are occasionally at a loss for words and often use only simple sentences. Speech is not always fluent and grammatical enough. For example Year 4 pupils described split pins as "them clippy things". Teachers are beginning to address these shortcomings by providing

drama lessons at the beginning of Year 3 and encouraging pupils throughout the school to talk in pairs about what they are learning; in these situations.

58 Pupils make good progress in reading in Years 1 and 2. This is because good quality literacy lessons develop pupils' very good start in phonics in the reception classes. A few higher attaining pupils are reading by themselves by the end of Year 1. Average and lower attaining pupils also make good progress because teachers read stories interestingly, and provide attractive reading books. Parents' and carers support for reading at home also helps, but there are big variations in the amount of such support. Pupils' skill in finding information using dictionaries, indexes and contents pages is as expected for their ages. Higher attaining pupils read fluently. Average and lower attaining pupils read with less expression and understanding. Most need some help, and lower attaining pupils rely too much on pictures and guessing. Higher attaining pupils read back their own writing so as to check and correct it.

59 Reading standards are as expected for pupils' ages in Years 4-6 and above average in Year 3. Most pupils reach the expected standard by the end of Year 6. However, many average and lower attaining pupils lose interest in reading by themselves, preferring to use time at home on computers and electronic games. Progress in language development slows down as a result. For example, pupils' vocabularies do not grow, and they have difficulty spotting meanings which are suggested rather than stated. To address these problems the school has set up effective class libraries, involved pupils in choosing the books and added private reading time to the timetable. Teachers also use literacy lessons well to improve the shortcomings in the reading skills of pupils of all abilities. In Year 6 higher attaining pupils do a lot of reading by themselves, often of favourite writers. This ensures that nearly all pupils read their own and other pupils' writing accurately by the age of 11, and use dictionaries effectively to improve the quality of their work. They use indexes to find information in books. However, library skills are below the expectations for their ages. For example, pupils do not know how to use catalogues and numerical systems to find information. There is no programme to develop library skills further each year.

60 Pupils make good progress in writing. As teachers closely link reading and writing work, pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn to link the shapes of letters to their sounds. Average and higher attaining pupils retell stories in sentences with capital letters and full stops. However, shortcomings in speech and reading limit the ranges of words that pupils use in stories.

61 In Years 3-6, teachers use literacy lessons well to build up pupils' experience of writing in a wide range of forms. For example, they write stories, letters, brochures, drama scripts and poems. Teachers develop writing skills effectively in other subjects. Standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation are satisfactory. However marking does not make enough impact on raising standards in these areas. The school encourages pupils to describe their experience and feelings. As a result pupils' writing develops a personal voice. Year 2 pupils described how stories they read were "lovely" or "made me feel afraid". Year 6 pupils discovered how to use simple language and personification to good effect in poems about winter: "my blustery breath blows you away" and "See you next year. Maybe even sooner."

62 The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning are good. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and, in four out of five lessons, it is good or very good. Teachers use the literacy strategy well, but the school does not do enough to improve speech and drama skills. The main strengths of teaching are: very good relationships which encourage pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to contribute well to learning in class; and teachers' good knowledge and use of the National Literacy Strategy which results in confident teaching and effective learning. A further effective strength of the teaching of writing is the good match and challenge of tasks to each pupil's needs. For example teachers get Year 6 pupils to try out simple shorthand to speed up note making skills.

63 The main areas for improvement in teaching and learning are: more planned work to develop pupils' speech, drama and library skills; more speech work and reading aloud in all subjects; and greater care in matching text levels to pupils' developing skills in individual reading in junior classes so as to maintain challenge and interest.

64 In the best lessons teachers ensure that all pupils are fully involved all the time in speaking, reading and writing. For example pupils in Years 3 and 4 made very good progress in

understanding and creating story settings. This was because the teacher spoke quickly and very clearly, gave pupils a lot of opportunities to contribute and discuss learning, and used high quality text as a model. Because the challenge was to draw the scene presented in the written text, pupils read it very closely. Pupils' enjoyment of learning was the secret of success in a very good Year 2 phonics lesson when the teacher used many challenging activities to involve all pupils. They spoke words with sad, happy or angry voices, discussed ideas in twos and copied the teacher's dramatic reading of a story. There was also time for spelling games and carefully supervised writing practice to fix new skills.

65 Skilled support staff significantly improve the standards of pupils with particular language difficulties in small groups and one to one. They also raise morale and stop pupils falling behind. The effectiveness of this work shows in the good progress and achievement of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.

66 Good leadership and management maintained standards in Years 3 - 6 through a time of considerable staff changes and disruption and have kept them higher than those in most schools by the end of Year 2 for the last three years. The school has intelligently addressed the effects of a decline in individual reading for junior pupils and significantly improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teachers have established the literacy hour well and are improving the quality and effectiveness of assessment. The school is now well placed to improve standards further, particularly in speech and drama.

MATHEMATICS

67 Standards are above average by the end of Year 6. The school has worked very hard to improve standards in mathematics, although there has not yet been sufficient time for this to have a full impact on the work of the older pupils. A significant factor in the high standards of attainment is the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. This enables most pupils to achieve well as they move through the school. There are other factors which also make important contributions to the high standards. Relationships are very good and this gives pupils the confidence to ask questions which help them to learn; and the good behaviour expected by the school helps them to concentrate on their work. The school has implemented the numeracy strategy well and uses its thorough assessment systems effectively in order to identify areas of weakness. The subject is very well co-ordinated and so the teaching of mathematics is very well organised. Staff are fully supported and the thorough checking of standards of planning, teaching and pupils' work help to give the school a clear idea of what needs to be done to further raise attainment.

68 Following its analysis of pupils' performance in national tests and non-statutory tests teachers now provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their problem solving skills and their use of mathematical language. One approach to this has been to use classroom displays throughout the school to challenge pupils to investigate numbers and to learn the words linked with mathematical ideas. Teachers make very good use of their knowledge of how to teach the basic skills of numeracy in order to challenge pupils to extend their skills in recognising the steps needed to solve problems. For example, higher achieving pupils in Year 2 confidently solved problems because the teacher had a thorough knowledge of the process and had explained it clearly. The pupils of average ability were similarly competent in approaching their tasks, although their skills in computation were not as consistently accurate. Lower achieving pupils worked at a more practical level reinforcing their understanding of number. Because the teacher used the appropriate language, pupils' understanding of such terms as 'most expensive' and 'cheapest' was deepened as was their vocabulary. Teachers make very good use of their comprehensive subject knowledge to help pupils as they grow older to build on their increasing understanding of mathematical language and computational skills to solve more varied and complex problems. By Year 6, for example, most pupils accurately solved problems involving money and time and provided accurate solutions to tasks involving decimals and percentages. Higher achieving pupils worked rigorously to devise their own problems to match given answers and used appropriate language to describe their methods. Although the work of lower achieving pupils did not show the same firm grasp of mathematical ideas, in work on problems involving money they showed a growing understanding of methods of division.

69 Lessons in mathematics are usually lively and interesting and so pupils concentrate well. In a Year 3/4 class for example, the teacher's enthusiastic approach had pupils bubbling to share their ideas on different methods of calculation. Devices such as a "feely bag" made identifying unknown shapes fun as well as educational. Pupils in Year 2 enjoyed learning about time when they made their own clock faces. Because teachers are committed to providing work which is stimulating and rigorous most pupils are keen and enthusiastic and this helps them to work hard and achieve well. Teachers show that they respect and value pupils' contributions and so pupils are generally eager to explain their methods of calculation. This helps to reinforce and clarify their understanding. A strength in the teaching of mathematics throughout the school is the care taken by teachers to ensure that work is suitable for pupils of different abilities. This helps to challenge them to make progress at their own levels. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are divided into classes according to their abilities for mathematics. Work within these classes is very well suited to the pupils in them so that they achieve well. For example, in a higher ability Year 3/4 class pupils' understanding of the measurement of area was enhanced because the teacher planned work of different levels of ability and provided appropriate support from herself and the classroom support assistant. Year 6 pupils with particular strengths in mathematics are further challenged when they work for a period in the week with other pupils from primary schools at the local secondary school.

70 The school makes good use of support staff, with pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. This enables a brisk rate of learning in which teachers promote and clarify pupils' understanding. Pupils' learning is further reinforced when they apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in other subjects. In Year 2, for example, higher achieving pupils used computers to develop their understanding of right angles and the use of different types of graphs. Teachers make good use of assessment during lessons so that they can adjust the planning of subsequent lessons to address pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers mark pupils work regularly and often provide comments which are supportive and help pupils to improve their learning though the use of marking in this way is inconsistent throughout the school. Although the school makes good use of its assessment data in order to identify areas for development in the teaching of mathematics it does not yet use this to provide groups or individuals with precise targets for improvement. Although teachers usually have high expectations concerning the presentation of pupils' work, this is not consistent throughout the school and sometimes weak presentation inhibits the accuracy of pupils' calculations, for example, in place value.

SCIENCE

71 Standards are close to national levels at the end of Years 2 and 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Progress for most pupils is satisfactory because teaching is at least satisfactory, with many good features evident. Pupils show positive attitudes to the subject, especially when carrying out scientific investigations. All areas of the subject are given good emphasis, including investigative science, which is given a high profile. This is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection, which found that the skills of scientific enquiry were not well developed. The analysis of test data is starting to help identify and overcome weaknesses. Teachers place good emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and a scientific vocabulary. The subject is soundly led, with clear plans for its further development.

72 Progress is sound for all pupils in the development of many of the skills of scientific enquiry. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to most other pupils, especially when directly supported by the good classroom assistants. However, their progress slows in large classes when they are not directly supported during investigations. By the end of Year 2, pupils learn that exercising and eating the right types of food help us to stay healthy, and consider the properties of common materials, such as whether they are magnetic and if they float. They discover through investigation how the shape of some materials can be altered by various means, such as squashing, bending, twisting and stretching. They are starting to use simple equipment, make observations and record their findings using pictures or simple diagrams, as required for them to reach national standards. By the end of Year 6 pupils clearly understand that scientific ideas are based on evidence and plan, implement, evaluate, and draw conclusions from simple investigations as when they discover that if a switch is open a circuit is incomplete. They learn that sound travels through solids, liquids and gases and use scientific vocabulary for organs of the

human body.

73 However, some pupils, mostly the higher attainers, do not make the best possible progress, especially in investigative science in junior classes. This is because all pupils in the mixed age classes usually carry out the same investigation, which is often not challenging enough for more able pupils. Older more able pupils sometimes spend unnecessary time consolidating work, such as on sources of light, which they already understand. In one lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were asked to prove that light travels in straight lines though higher attainers clearly understood this concept already for in the initial discussion they said that 'light travels in straight lines but can turn corners if mirrors are used.' Teachers tend to plan more work for higher attainers rather than suitably different tasks; for example, higher attainers who quickly understood the difference between translucent, opaque and transparent materials could have been given fewer to test than the average and lower attainers so they would then have had time to consider their different uses. Pupils sometimes copy out questions, which wastes time and does not extend their scientific understanding. Because of changes in teaching staff, the co-ordinators have not yet monitored teaching and learning through regular lesson observations. At present, pupils do not present their findings to investigations in a wide enough range of ways, using ICT and a range of tables and charts.

74 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to undertake scientific investigation and acquire knowledge and understanding. Good features of teaching include strong relationships with pupils, much enthusiasm, good choice and use of resources to reinforce learning, purposeful and regular questioning, good links with other subjects, such as with mathematics and physical education. They try to ensure that when pupils record their investigations, work is matched to their different abilities. These strengths help to make learning relevant and ensure that pupils are interested and achieving well. Where teaching is less successful, expectations are not high enough and lesson organisation does not enable all pupils to make the best possible progress, such as when all pupils carry out planned activities, which are all at the same level of difficulty. Teachers sometimes do not use time to best effect or know how to challenge pupils of higher ability. They sometimes give important information before all pupils are listening carefully. These relative weaknesses slow the progress of some pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

75 By the end of Year 6 standards are above those expected for pupils' ages. This is an improvement since the last inspection and a good achievement. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress.

76 The strengths in Year 6 pupils' work are the accuracy of their observational drawing, investigative skill, careful and expressive use of paint and pastel, and understanding of the styles of great artists. Fuller routine use of sketchbooks remains a key area for development. However, notebooks are making useful contributions to pupils' composition work. Year 2 pupils' work shows good first steps in the careful development of key skills. For example, pupils observed trees around the school, examined tree pictures in books and studied winter colours before producing a sensitive "Trees in Winter" display. Pupils make original three-dimensional sculptures using natural materials, weave with paper, card and straws, and make effective collages to illustrate world news headlines.

77 The quality of teaching is good mainly because of teachers' enthusiasm and good knowledge of art and design. Pupils appreciate this expertise, and enjoy learning new skills thoroughly. In well-taught lessons teachers let pupils investigate, and carefully demonstrate basic skills before practical work. For example, in an effective Year 1 lesson introducing pupils to weaving, the teacher began by getting pupils to examine closely two oriental rugs. Pupils then used magnifying glasses to see the pattern of woven threads in samples of material. The teacher then gave a clear example of weaving paper strips and guided pupils' first attempts carefully. In a good Year 6 painting lesson teacher and pupils worked carefully on colour mixing techniques, using only the three primary colours and water so as to make and replicate exactly shades in a Monet flower painting. The lesson included making an artist's palette and understanding the meaning in art of

terms such as “dabbing”, “rubbing” and “depth”. Higher attaining pupils achieved realistic 3 D effects and two thirds of the pupils produced very subtly shaded paintings. Lower attaining pupils also achieved some very good results. The lesson concluded with a thoughtful discussion of successful and unsuccessful techniques in which pupils learned nicely from mature appraisal of their own work.

78 Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinators have improved the curriculum effectively by following the latest national plans and guidance. The quality of assessment is good and gives teachers precise views of each pupil’s developing skills. Resources are satisfactory but do not consistently give pupils opportunities to use good quality equipment or a wide enough choice of media and materials.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

79 Standards are broadly at the level expected of eleven-year-olds by the end of Year 6. Because of the way the curriculum is organised, pupils alternate between doing design and technology and art and design. It was only possible therefore to see lessons in the Year 3/4 classes. From talking to pupils and looking at their work it is clear that they enjoy design and technology and take pride in their finished products. Although standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection, the quality of pupils’ learning has plainly improved since then. There is currently no co-ordinator for design and technology because of changes in the teaching staff which in part explains why standards at present are above average by the end of Year 4 though not at the end of Year 6.

80 The quality of pupils’ work by the age of seven indicates above average standards at this age. Pupils are clearly expected to make individual decisions when designing and the finished products show originality. Teachers’ planning and notes on how well the lessons went clearly indicate pupils who became frustrated with what they were trying to do as well as pupils who noticed many details which they then tried to incorporate into their own designs. The work is adapted well to suit the different abilities in the class; for example, higher attaining pupils designed their own specification sheets whereas lower attainers had one to fill in; this ensured that all pupils made good progress from their respective starting points. From talking to pupils in Year 2 it is evident that pupils understand the process of construction, including evaluation, very well. One explained how he made a stunt car and pointed out refinements in an aeroplane another had constructed, explaining that ‘the wheels were very close to the vehicle’. This good practice was seen in lessons in the Year 3/4 classes. There was terrific excitement as pupils examined different torches to understand their different uses. Their own designs reflected the close attention they had paid and the consequent inventiveness of their own. These included details such as a magnet or a tiny clock face or a timer, to make them multi-purpose products. Their designs showed a good understanding of proportion and scale and the thoughtfully designed specification sheets for lower attainers gave them enough help as well as leeway to be inventive. The lessons were well prepared and pupils had a lot of information to consult. The quality of the musical instruments made by pupils in Years 5 and 6 are broadly average though they have been well finished. Using a mixture of materials, some of which were found and some adapted, pupils made an unusual selection of instruments.

GEOGRAPHY

81 Pupils attain the standards expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. There were no opportunities to see geography taught during the inspection as history was the focus this term therefore conclusions are based on a scrutiny of pupils’ completed work. There is insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.

82 In the infant classes, pupil’s first hand experiences are used effectively as an important resource to develop their early geographical enquiry skills. They use the school grounds and the immediate locality for environmental investigation and mapwork. For example, pupils look at their

own homes, make simple plans of each room, and map their journey to school. Moving to a wider perspective, pupils study the village of Croston and compare its amenities with those of Preston, for example, the village shops with department stores in the shopping centre. In their mapwork they look at the location of the countries that constitute the British Isles.

83 Pupils in the lower juniors use two figure co-ordinates to locate places on a map and look at the differences in their lives with those of children in an Indian village. In their mapwork they use atlases to locate features such as the continents, major oceans and rivers. Older juniors understand the importance of location and recognise and describe human and physical processes. For example, they study man's effect on the environment and explore issues such as the destruction of the rain forest through logging and gold mining. Pupils learn more about the poorer countries in the World and in their individual research they find out more about the effects of fossil fuels on the environment and renewable energy sources.

84 There are some good links with other subjects, for example, in mathematics when exploring the shapes in houses, and in science, researching the habitats of animals in the canopy layer of the rain forest. Although standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained there have been some improvements. Planning ensures that pupils develop their geographical skills as they move through the school and resources are now good. However, work is not always planned to meet pupils' differing needs. Information and communication technology is making an increasing contribution to pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding although the co-ordinator recognises that there is a need to develop it further. Indeed the co-ordination of geography is good with planned opportunities to visit classrooms and monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment of pupils' progress is a recent development and linked to the National Curriculum levels through teachers' planning. Visits out of school are very useful in enhancing pupils' understanding through providing them with first hand experiences. Geography makes a useful contribution to pupils' cultural development.

HISTORY

85 Pupils' attainment in history is in line with standards expected at the end of Years 2 and 6. Achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. History is closely related, particularly in the infant classes with pupils' growing awareness of themselves as individuals and they develop a growing sense of time.

86 Pupils' acquisition of historical knowledge is satisfactory. In year 1, pupils are encouraged to use their own experiences as a starting point. Devices such as 'timelines' help them to put the passage of time in context as when they look at the toys children used to play with. By Year 2, pupils can sequence events and use common terms to describe how time passes. Pupils in the juniors increasingly understand about chronology, using more detailed timelines to put dates into context. They build on their earlier work and deepen their understanding of history in its wider world context, in particular, the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. By the end of year 6 pupils are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of aspects of British history and can describe some changes, events and people using information from a range of different sources.

87 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The best teaching is typified when pupils are given 'hands on' opportunities to develop their historical enquiry skills by using artefacts, photographs and written sources to draw conclusions about life in the past. For example, when using the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, one Year 3 pupil wrote about the Viking invasion of Lindisfarne: "The monks dropped their spades and hoes, tucked up their robes and ran." Pupils clearly enjoy this approach to exploring the past and this stems from the teachers' preparation of lessons designed to capture their interest. This contrasts with when pupils are required to fill in gaps on a commercially produced worksheet and when work is not always planned to meet pupils' differing needs. This can slow the progress of higher attaining pupils. History is well managed with the co-ordinator visiting classrooms to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly. Increasing use is being made of the internet for research although

it is recognised that currently its potential is not used to simulate, and immerse them in the past. Visits out of school, for example to Ribchester roman museum, and visitors to school such as the 'Viking sagas' make a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

88 Standards of attainment for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with what is expected of pupils of these ages although there are some areas in which they can be improved. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make sound progress. Pupils in Years 1 are confident when using computers. They develop their word processing skills through using a word bank to choose an ending to their sentences. The most able can import clip art to illustrate their work. They control the mouse accurately when using art packages to create pictures. Older pupils can input and edit text when word-processing their stories, use the keyboard to delete mistakes and the most able change the font and its size. When using art packages they use the toolbox to change colour and use flood fill to make visual effects. By the age of seven, pupils confidently program a floor robot to move forward, backward and turn through a right angle.

89 By the time they move into the junior classes, pupils have built up a good vocabulary and can discuss information technology in everyday life. They further develop their use of art packages and when word processing, alter the type, colour and size of font so their work is well presented and cut, paste and use the spellchecker to edit text. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, enter facts into a prepared database, and use their understanding of records and fields to find information. They are developing an understanding of how simulations are used to explore situations such as the rainforest and research information on the Internet about the Vikings. Older pupils understand the concept of multi-media presentations and apply their skills to make linked pages incorporating pictures and photographs, animation, and sounds from a variety of sources including the Internet. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can use a spreadsheet, for example, as a Zoo cost planner, adding formulae to find out the weekly cost of feeding the lions.

90 The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and sometimes very good in the juniors. This good teaching leads to high standards because all teachers have completed their training in information and communication technology, are confident in using the good resources at their disposal and have the knowledgeable support of classroom assistants. They explain new work very clearly and make it relevant so that all pupils understand. In addition planning is good, based on the Lancashire LEA guidance. It ensures that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are built on as they move through the school. There are also very effective procedures for assessing pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy working with computers. They work well, independently and in pairs with good concentration and are not put off when things go wrong. Some pupils have access to a computer at home and this has a good impact on standards.

91 There has been a considerable improvement in the school's resources since the last inspection and particularly the last year. Planned expenditure from the school's budget and grants from the National Grid for Learning has enabled the school to renew its provision, particularly computers and software. There is a ratio of one computer to every nine pupils. These are of good quality and twenty of these are situated in the refurbished computer suite and several more in classrooms. Their impact is reflected in pupils' progress in such a short space of time. In the near future a second computer suite will be in place. The co-ordinators, although inexperienced, are very enthusiastic and are keen to drive up standards. The potential is undoubtedly there.

92 The school has identified areas for further development. Priorities include making more use of databases and e-mail in all classes and in the junior classes providing pupils with more opportunities to use control, for example, monitoring and data logging using sensors, and control technology. Planned links with other subjects are developing and when fully in place will bring pupils' work alive and deepen their understanding. When operational, the school's website will be an effective way of making pupils' work available to a larger audience and promoting

communication. Internet access is linked directly to the Lancashire County website, thereby assuring pupils can work in safety.

MUSIC

93 Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and reflect the way in which music permeates much of the work of the school. At the start of each day, when pupils come in early to read, or before assemblies, music infiltrates the school and induces an atmosphere of quiet and calm which aids reflection. These planned moments of spirituality heighten pupils' appreciation and awareness of music as they learn to be receptive through music to words and meaning. Often, music is used to provide a commentary to words and through drama and dance pupils learn to be responsive to rhythm and mood. On one occasion, older pupils quietly broke into song, unprompted, putting the words to the tune being played softly on the piano as they left the hall.

94 Standards are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. This reflects the work put in by the co-ordinator to implement a new curriculum which is accessible to teachers who feel their lack of musical expertise inhibits their teaching. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 1 explored how sound is produced on a flute by first blowing across the tops of bottles and then trying to get a sound from the instrument that the teacher had borrowed. Although the teacher herself could not play the flute, the principle was well understood and pupils' curiosity was aroused. As a result, they all identified the flute in Tippett's March and fluttered their fingers appropriately as it played. The curriculum is well chosen and the choice of music appeals to both pupils and teachers alike. The structure ensures that pupils cover the required elements of study, thus redressing the shortcomings outlined in the last report. The quality of teaching is good, reflected in the above average standards and the good achievement of pupils in this subject. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can follow conventional notation, understanding the conventions to denote time and rhythm. Boys as well as girls respond enthusiastically and provide rhythmically accurate accompaniments using pitched percussion. They are able to evaluate the quality of sound and to suggest alternatives. The choice of music, including computerised sounds, appeals greatly to pupils of this age. Further links between music and ICT, however, have not been explored.

95 The quality of pupils' singing throughout the school is very good and pupils of all ages show themselves to be adept at learning new tunes quickly. They are used to singing different types of music and modulate the tone and volume expertly. They sing in parts and easily maintain tunes and rhythms against each other.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

96 During the inspection it was possible to see only a limited number of lessons. These lessons focused mainly on dance. Attainment by the end of Year 2 in the dance lessons seen is in line with what would be expected for pupils aged seven. By the end of Year 6 attainment in dance is above average for pupils aged eleven. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 2 is satisfactory. The high standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 are linked with the very good quality of teaching and learning. The subject is well co-ordinated. The newly appointed co-ordinators have a good understanding of the subject. They check on teaching and learning and teachers' planning in order to help to raise standards. The co-ordinators are helping to develop useful systems of assessment in order to support pupils in improving their performance. They are keen and enthusiastic and have a good understanding of how the subject is to develop in order to further raise standards.

97 Pupils in Year 2 know about the importance of warming up at the beginning of lessons and because the teacher shares the lesson objectives with them they have a clear understanding of what is expected. Learning support assistants are used effectively in order to support pupils with special educational needs. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils listen carefully so

that, for example, some pupils did not follow instructions about pushing and pulling tasks and did not perform in time with the taped music. When taped programmes are used teachers sometimes try to talk over the instructions from the tape so that instructions are not always clear. Teachers often interrupt the taped programme to clarify the meaning so that the continuity of the lesson is impeded. When the teacher gives her own instructions and explanations they are clearer than the taped programme and pupils' learning is enhanced. Because teachers manage pupils well most behave well and work effectively in their contact work. When teachers give clear instructions and use their own and pupils' demonstrations clearly pupils respond imaginatively and develop sound skills in building and holding shapes.

98 Older pupils generally make very good progress because teachers revise previous work very carefully and share lesson objectives with them so that they build up a very wide repertoire of movement skills. For example, in their friendship dances Year 6 pupils made fluid transitions between movements and retained their 8 beat timing because they remembered skills from previous lessons and knew very clearly what was expected of them. Because relationships are very good pupils are confident to demonstrate their performance in front of others and collaborate very well together. In Year 4 pupils worked well together in pairs with good awareness of rhythmic and expressive qualities. Because the teacher very skilfully linked their performance work on the heart and circulation they increased their understanding of science and extended their imaginative responses. Teachers control pupils very well so that they behave well and sustain their concentration. In Year 5, for example, pupils discussed how they might improve their shared performances and because the teacher moved around the groups, assessing and advising, they worked hard to refine their work and were very eager to improve. Teachers generally use their very good subject knowledge through careful explanations and demonstrations to help pupils to improve their performance. For example, in a Year 5/6 class the teacher explained the music and movement pattern clearly and then challenged them to observe the movements of others and use this to improve their own performance.

99 In the one swimming lesson seen, pupils made good progress because the teacher and instructors managed them well and challenged them with work well suited to their abilities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive regular swimming lessons in a local pool and achieve well. The school makes good provision for pupils to take part in extra curricular sporting activities. These include rugby, football, netball, cross-country, cricket and rounders. In their sporting activities the school places great emphasis on fair play and sporting behaviour. Pupils receive training from local sporting clubs and achieve well in local competitions.