

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MATTHEW'S VA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 132793

Head teacher: Mrs Veronica McDonnell

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara E Doughty
22261

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th December 2002

Inspection number: 249004

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Queens Drive Liverpool
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D P Keane
Date of previous inspection:	NA

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Barbara E Doughty Registered inspector 22261	The Foundation Stage curriculum Design and technology Education inclusion English as an additional language	What sort of school it is and what it should do to improve further The school's results and pupils' achievements How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils are How well the school is led and managed
Mrs Lillian Brock Lay inspector 9952		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
Mr Andrew Scott Team inspector 27545	Mathematics Music	How well the pupils are taught
Mr Mike Wehrmeyer Team inspector 15015	Information and communication technology Geography Physical education	
Mrs Sue Macintosh Team inspector 20368	English History	
Mr Declan McCarthy Team inspector 23886	Science Art and design Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a newly amalgamated primary school for boys and girls aged four to eleven. There are 373 pupils on roll, with a fairly even number of boys and girls. There is a small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds other than white, mainly Chinese or of dual heritage; three of these pupils do not speak English as their mother tongue. The area the school serves is one of social deprivation, with over 40 per cent of the pupils taking up free school meals, which is well above average. There is a broadly average percentage of pupils with special needs, just over 22 per cent. Over a quarter of these pupils are receiving specialist support and four of them have statements of special need. Pupils' attainment on entry is below that typically found elsewhere; only about a fifth of the children have had any kind of pre-school education. Following the opening of the school on 23rd April 2001, there have been a number of staff changes, including two newly appointed Reception teachers and a newly qualified teacher in Key Stage 2.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Teaching is effective and because of this pupils make good progress. Standards are above average by the time the pupils leave the school, showing good achievement from a lower than average starting point. Effective leadership and management mean that the head teacher, senior managers and governing body have a very clear idea of what is happening in teaching and learning and what needs doing to bring about further improvement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- This school does well to attain good standards in English, mathematics, and science. Attainment is higher than the expected level in art by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils do well because teaching is good in the Key Stages 1 and 2 and very good in Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic learners because they enjoy lessons and the extra activities they do outside lessons, such as visits to places of educational value.
- Following the example of staff, pupils are kind and considerate and get on extremely well together.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who do not speak English as their mother tongue do exceptionally well at this school because of the effective support they have in lessons.
- The senior management team keep a close eye on what happens in lessons and on how well individual and different groups of pupils are doing. Because of this, they have already identified the issues for improvement below and have a clear idea about what to do to improve things further.

What could be improved

- The more able pupils do not always do as well as they should in Years 1, 3, 4, and 5 and the school relies too much on giving a boost to these pupils in Years 2 and 6.
- The lack of Foundation Stage expertise in the school means that the work of the Reception children is too directed and their learning is not based enough on observation and exploration. The Reception children's learning is sometimes slowed because teaching does not always encourage them to explore their ideas and use their initiative.
- There is insufficient rigour in the checking on the quality of teaching and learning in the non-core¹ subjects and this limits the rate of improvement in these subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is a newly amalgamated school. Therefore, this section is not relevant.

¹ Non-core subjects include design and technology, music, geography, physical education, history, art and design.

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	n/a	B	B	A*
Mathematics	n/a	C	B	A
Science	n/a	D	C	A

Key

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

This is a new school, which opened just before the national tests in April 2001, and trends in results over time are not yet established. However, on the evidence so far, standards are above average because a higher number of pupils than in most other schools attain the expected level and a broadly average number attain the higher level. Pupils make good progress and do well in both key stages to meet their targets by the end of Years 2 and 6. However, the work seen in the current English and mathematics workbooks is broadly as expected for seven and eleven year olds. But some of these pupils show signs of being able to do more advanced work than they are given and with the extra boost to their learning planned for in the spring and summer terms, like last year, they are likely to attain the higher level. However, these more able pupils should be doing better in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 rather than relying on a boost to their learning at the end of the Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards in science are broadly as expected at the end of Key Stage 1 and above the nationally expected level by the end of Key Stage 2. This is because the increased emphasis this year on science investigations is already bringing improvement to standards by making learning more meaningful and long lasting. Children achieve satisfactorily in the Reception classes where they have good phonic skills and their understanding of numbers for counting is as expected by the end of their first year in school. However, few children attain the early learning goals overall in each of the six areas of learning by the end of Reception, reflecting their below average attainment on entry. Their knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development are particularly weak because children have too few opportunities to find out for themselves or try out their ideas. Pupils with special needs learn very well, given their previous achievements; this rapid progress is brought about through effective support in lessons and work that is adapted to meet pupils' needs. Last year nearly all of these pupils attained the expected level by the end of Year 6. Boys and girls throughout the school do as well as each other. Pupils who do not speak English as their mother tongue do equally as well as their schoolmates because they are taught successfully; some of these pupils are in the highest attaining groups. Standards in art and design are above those expected in both key stages. Standards in all other subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT), are broadly as expected by the ages of seven and eleven.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic learners and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Pupils are kind and considerate and get on very well together.
Attendance	Satisfactory and rising.

Most pupils like school and are enthusiastic about it. They have very good attitudes to learning because teaching effectively involves them well in what is going on. Pupils take responsibility well, such as through their work with the school council. There is sometimes a lack of independence in lessons and the brighter pupils in particular do not have enough opportunity to show initiative in planning and organising their own studies.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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 teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills and subject knowledge in English, mathematics and science is good because it is clear and precise. This is because teachers' understanding of what should be taught is well informed by the national teaching guidelines and, consequently, pupils' learning is built well over time. Clear explanations mean that pupils know what is expected of them and effective praise makes them want to do well. Lessons are well planned and teachers make sure that pupils know what they are going to learn and why they are doing the work. Teaching assistants support pupils with special needs effectively, particularly during the activity sessions; this means that these pupils understand what is going on. However, teachers do not always make good use of the teaching assistants' time in the introductory sessions; these adults often waste valuable time listening to teachers' lengthy explanations and instructions. Boys and girls are treated equally and pupils from all ethnic groups and backgrounds and those who do not speak English as their mother tongue are fully included. Lessons are calm and purposeful, and effective control is brought about because teachers respect pupils' contributions to lessons and because of their encouraging manner and the very good relationships. Subject language is used and promoted well and this means that pupils can explain what they are doing. Teachers ask challenging questions and for most of the pupils most of the time, they have high expectations, particularly in Years 2 and 6 where the teaching is very good. However, the challenge for the brighter pupils is not always good enough in other years and the school relies on a sudden boost at the end of the Key Stages 1 and 2, and in Year 6 in particular, to get these pupils to the higher level. In the end sessions of lessons teachers are not always effective in going over what has been learnt and what pupils need to do next. Teaching in Reception is satisfactory, but teachers lack understanding about how young children learn through observation and exploration. Although they use the national teaching guidelines to plan work, they control activities too much and give children too much direction. Children's knowledge, as a result, is short lived and their understanding is insecure.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for infant and junior pupils, enriched well by visits, visitors and school clubs. Satisfactory for Reception children, but there is insufficient emphasis on learning through observation and exploration.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Most of these pupils do well to attain the expected level by the age of eleven.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. These pupils are taught effectively and do as well as their schoolmates by the time they leave the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Pupils understand right from wrong and have a high degree of respect for each other's views. Personal and social education (PSHE) sessions are well organised and sensitively handled.
How well the school cares	Very good. Staff know pupils very well and take very good care of them.

for its pupils	
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There is a strong sense in the school of the importance of pupils' well-being. Staff recognise pupils' personal and academic needs and mostly respond well to them. This is because assessment procedures in English, mathematics, science and ICT are good. However, they are not used well enough to set more challenging work for the brighter pupils in Years 1, 3, 4, and 5. Pupils' achievements in the other subjects are not recorded and because of this teachers are unsure about what pupils already know and can do. There is good provision for pupils' cultural development, with adequate teaching and learning about other cultures and faiths. The school works very well with parents, offering, for example, adult computer classes and sign language lessons.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good overall, with very good leadership by the head teacher and senior management team. The leadership of English, mathematics, science and ICT is good; these co-ordinators have a good idea of what is happening in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. They are well aware of what is going on and influence change through their involvement with school improvement planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. The head teacher, senior managers and governing body have worked hard to bring about improvements to standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Educational priorities are supported very well through the school's financial planning and governors keep a watchful eye on spending to ensure that they get good value for money.

There is a good number of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum and a good quantity and quality of learning resources. Whilst the accommodation is adequate, the lack of a sports field and a suitably equipped school hall means that the school does not have good enough facilities to enable pupils to reach high standards in physical education. Whilst the leaders of English, mathematics, science and ICT have a clear idea of what is going on, the other subject leaders do not observe teaching or keep an eye on what and how well pupils are learning. This means that they do not have a clear enough idea of what does and does not work, making it difficult to support colleagues effectively and bring about a rise in standards.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The standards their children achieve and the progress they make in both their academic and personal development. • The way the school expects children to work hard and helps them to become mature and responsible youngsters. • The good teaching and the friendliness and approachability of the staff. • The way the school is led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have very few concerns.

There is strong parental satisfaction with this school and most parents are very happy to send their children here. The inspection team agree with all of the positive comments but none of the very few negative ones made by two or three parents through the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils do well at this school and very well in comparison with those in similar schools. Last year the school's junior test results were above the national average in English and mathematics and similar to it in science. This is very good given that the pupils' attainment on entry to school is below that typically found elsewhere.
2. Pupils do well in Key Stage 2 and standards are good overall. This is a newly amalgamated school so there is no pattern of attainment over time yet, but most of the current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain at least the expected level in English, mathematics and science by the end of the year. However, as happened last year, in order for the brighter pupils to get the higher level in English and mathematics the school relies on an extra boost to their learning during their final two terms in school. It looks like the special classes and focused teaching organised for the next two terms could be effective again this year because many pupils, through the ease with which they do their work and discussions with them, already show ability to work at a higher level. However, once again, the Year 6 teachers are going to have to work hard with these brighter pupils to enable them to catch up on what could have been taught earlier, in Years 3, 4 and 5 in particular. Nevertheless, many of the pupils are already very confident speakers. They talk very enthusiastically about their learning opportunities, such as the after-school clubs and the artist who showed them how to draw the shapes of animals and then add the detail. They read with fluency and accuracy, enjoying stories, poems and reports. They show a good level of understanding about what they read and most read a variety of material, including newspapers and magazines. Their work shows good understanding of the need to organise writing to suit a particular audience, such as reports for newspaper articles and stories for pleasure. Handwriting is legible and pupils take care to present their work neatly. Pupils' good ability to use calculation to solve problems is evident in their mathematics work. For example, pupils quickly turn fractions into decimals and decimals into percentages. Their scientific skills are equally as good and their investigation skills particularly well developed.
3. Last year, the infant pupils achieved satisfactorily. Although their test results were well below the national average, pupils did as well as could reasonably be expected from a low starting point on entry to school. As in Key Stage 2, it is too early to see an emerging trend over time. However, it seems that effective teaching in Years 1 and 2 is bringing about improvements to pupils' learning because the standards Year 2 pupils attain show that attainment looks set to be closer to the national picture in English, mathematics and science by the end of this year. Most Year 2 pupils speak confidently about their work and listen attentively to what others have to say. For example, they explain how they have learnt to sew in design and technology lessons, declaring, with appropriate hand gestures, "I know a running stitch is called that because you go up and down". This is because they are given lots of opportunities to talk to their classmates and are encouraged to ask each other questions, for example about the stories and poems they have read. Most pupils have a good knowledge of letter sounds and use this knowledge to read and spell unknown words. They write in sentences and use capital letters and full stops correctly. They sequence their stories and instructions correctly, developing events systematically. Most Year 2 pupils have a good grasp of number and use their skills to solve problems, explaining confidently how they have arrived at an answer. For instance, when adding together 6 and 3, one pupil explained that they held the largest number, six, in their head and then counted on three. Their scientific skills are equally as secure and most pupils are working within the expected level for their age.
4. Reception children make satisfactory progress overall. Not many attain the early learning goals for children of their age by the end of Reception; this reflects their low attainment on

entry. They do well in letter and number recognition. By the end of their first year, most children recognise most letter sounds. They name numbers at least to 10 and understand addition. However, there is an over-emphasis on teaching children about linking sounds and letters and number for counting, and insufficient focus on the other aspects of communication, language and literacy and mathematics. Children's creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world are not as good as they could be, particularly those of the least able, less mature children. The learning of these children is shaky because they do not have enough opportunity to learn through observation and exploration. Investigations are very adult led and children are unable to explore and discover things themselves. For example, they are told that spiders don't stick to their own webs and why, before they have had the chance to discover this and then work out why for themselves. They are all asked to draw and write about what they have been told before some of them have the skills to form letters correctly and draw recognisable pictures.

5. Pupils do well in ICT to attain expected levels by the ages of seven and eleven. Their computer skills are well enough developed to use in different situations. This means that pupils use computers well to support work in other subjects, such as to word process their writing in literacy lessons and organise information about the weather in geography. Standards in art and design are high and pupils do well over time, mainly because of effective teaching. Their drawings show good proportion and an understanding of perspective. Standards in all other subjects are as expected nationally by the ages of seven and eleven.
6. There is little difference in the way boys and girls perform in lessons; it is too early to plot any emerging trend over time. However, teaching focuses on pupils of both gender equally and they each do as well as the other. Pupils with special educational needs and those who do not speak English as their mother tongue do exceptionally well. This is because the English language teaching, of those pupils who do not speak English fluently when they start here, is good. Two of the three pupils are in the higher attaining groups and doing as well as their most able classmates. Pupils with special educational needs do equally as well because their individual learning targets are precise and teachers have good regard to them during lessons. Whilst a number of pupils who are particularly talented in one or more subjects have been identified, nothing has yet been done to increase their progress or enhance their achievements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. This school is totally committed to the view that the education of the whole person is at the centre of its work and its Catholic foundation. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Relationships are equally as good, helping the school to uphold its mission statement of "Working together to develop the whole person".
8. The school serves pupils well and gives them a clear vision of what they can achieve. Because of this, pupils are enthusiastic, interested in their work, concentrate well and respond promptly to their teachers. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, pupils enjoyed their 'hands-on' experience during a practical investigation about the forces of magnetism. All of them agreed that this practical approach to science made it fun and as a result, their learning was secure and they made very good progress.
9. Pupils' positive attitudes, promoted well by staff, make a very good contribution to learning and help to create a calm atmosphere in the school. Group work is well planned and organised to bring pupils together to agree, discuss and plan what to do, for example, when Year 1 pupils engaged in the democratic voting process. They negotiated and agreed what food and games they were going to have at their Christmas party. However, older, brighter pupils do not have enough responsibility for organising their own learning in lessons, and are not fully encouraged to show initiative.

10. There is a civilised and orderly environment in the school and this reflects the very good standards of behaviour that are found here. Pupils behave very well and respond positively to staff's high expectations. They move around the building in an orderly manner and behave well in assemblies, entering the hall quietly and waiting patiently for others to arrive. The orderly behaviour that predominates makes a good contribution to learning in the classroom. For example, Reception children behaved well as they sorted items into separate categories according to the initial letter. They were absorbed and interested in the task and made sound progress in learning. The school does not tolerate bullying or unkind behaviour and pupils respond well to this because, as one Year 6 pupils said, "We like each other too much". There have been no exclusions.
11. Relationships in the school are very good between pupils of different ages, and also between pupils and staff. From the youngest upwards, pupils like attending school and arrive happily each day. They are keen to chat to staff about events that are important to them and are also enthusiastic about taking part in the variety of after-school and lunchtime clubs on offer. They proudly show off their work on display and enjoy receiving rewards for good effort and achievement.
12. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their actions and to recognise that their actions affect others. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility for duties within the school community, for example as class and dinner monitors. The school council gives children a 'voice' in the school. Their meetings are slick and business-like and have a formal agenda. Issues raised by pupils are discussed, responsibilities are allocated and an action plan is drawn up. They negotiate and discuss with senior management the possibilities of their ideas being taken up.
13. Attendance has improved since last year and is now very close to the national average. Pupils like school and most attend regularly but the overall attendance rate is brought down by the poor attendance of a few pupils and by holidays taken in term time. Most pupils are punctual, allowing lessons to start promptly. Pupils look very happy as they line up to enter school, watched by their proud parents.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good. It is sound in the Foundation Stage, and good in Key Stages 1 and 2. It is consistently good, often very good and sometimes excellent in Years 2 and 6. In these year groups teachers' expectations are higher than elsewhere in the school. Teachers have very strong relationships with their pupils and they maximise every opportunity within lessons to develop pupils' learning. In an excellent Year 6 art and design lesson, for example, enthusiastic teaching inspired pupils to be highly disciplined in their development of skills and pupils achieved very well in the short time they had.
15. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but teachers lack the understanding of how young children learn through observation and exploration. Teachers make sure that children feel comfortable in the classroom and create a pleasant atmosphere for learning. This means that children behave well and want to learn. Teachers are sensitive towards the children. When one child could not give an answer to a question, the teacher simply said, "Do you want a little more time?" and moved on to someone else. As a result children are relaxed about taking part. Teachers explain new learning clearly so that children know what they have to do and they use good resources as motivation. For example, children were happy to discover which things are adhesive after being told that spiders do not stick to their own webs. However, teachers guide the children too much and do not allow them to think enough for themselves. For instance, their experiment to test adhesives was too adult led and children inevitably drew the same conclusions. Even when starting the experiment, an adult told the children what substances they would be using, rather than asking if they knew what oil and margarine were, for example, and how they are different. This means that children are not

always interested enough in their activities and so their pace of work is often too slow for them to make good progress.

16. In contrast, the teaching of basic skills in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils acquire good skills in English, mathematics and science. In English, teachers insist that spelling, punctuation and handwriting are good and they give pupils the opportunities to develop them in diverse writing, such as play scripts and biographies. In mathematics, teachers encourage pupils to learn their multiplication tables and develop methods of speedy calculation, although they do not always provide enough chances for pupils to develop their own strategies. In science, teachers plan experiments so that pupils improve their skills through trial and error and structure lessons so that pupils learn key facts, such as the vital organs of the human body. They introduce rich details to further interest pupils. In a Year 2 history lesson, for example, pupils made very good progress in explaining the reasons for the devastation of the Great Fire of London, because the teacher provided many 'eye-witness accounts'. Pupils not only develop a healthy interest in subjects but they also behave well, because teachers expect it. This helps lessons flow well and so learning is swifter.
17. Teachers plan lessons well. They stick closely to the subject teaching guidelines so that lessons are sensibly structured and pupils' learning is built on logically over time. Teachers make their intentions very clear so that pupils know what they are about to learn. In a Year 2 English lesson on poetry, for example, pupils knew that the whole point of the work was to develop listening skills when hearing the poems read, as well as their speaking skills when passing comment about the quality of the poems. Teachers plan lessons so that the learning is progressively harder. For example, in a Year 6 ICT lesson, pupils had to add hyperlinks to link up the previous work they had done on their multi-media presentation. Teachers of parallel classes plan together, which makes sure that all pupils receive the same curriculum.
18. A particular strength of teaching lies in the rapport between teachers and their pupils. Teachers clearly care about their pupils and value their contributions in lessons. As a result, pupils respect their teachers and respond eagerly, which helps good learning to take place. In most lessons, there is a healthy buzz of activity as pupils settle down to their independent tasks. Teachers develop a purposeful atmosphere of mutual trust. This results in pupils even in Year 1 being able to work fruitfully on their own without the need for constant supervision.
19. Teachers ask good questions of their pupils and this strengthens understanding. In a Year 5 science lesson on sound, for example, the teacher asked how the pitch in a recorder could be altered. This resulted in pupils appreciating quickly that pitch changes according to the length of columns of air. Questions are often open-ended so that pupils have to think carefully before answering. In mathematics lessons, for example, teachers often ask pupils how they might solve a problem. This gives pupils the opportunity to respond in different but equally good ways. Teachers are gentle when they ask questions, which puts pupils at ease and encourages them to take part.
20. Teachers involve pupils well in lessons. They go over previous work to make sure that the pupils will be able to cope with the new learning. They provide extra adult support for lower attaining pupils. This work by classroom assistants is very valuable because their sensitive guidance enables pupils to learn at a good pace and remain close to the rest of the class. However, teachers could make better use of the classroom assistants when the pupils are working as one whole group. On these occasions, classroom assistants do not consistently provide close support for individual pupils or check their understanding. Sometimes, teachers round off lessons skilfully by checking pupils' work altogether so that all pupils can see how well they have learned. Quite often, though, teachers spent too little time on this and missed good opportunities for pupils to firm up their new learning and earn praise for their efforts.
21. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can be expected to do and achieve are mostly good. For example, pupils in a Year 5 design and technology lesson were left in no doubt that their

musical instruments needed to be finished to a high standard. Consequently, they concentrated hard to complete stringed instruments that produced suitable sounds. However, teachers' expectations of more able pupils are not good enough. Usually, teachers give these pupils the same or very similar work as other pupils. Sometimes, this is acceptable, such as in the writing of a story in English where pupils work naturally at different levels of vocabulary and expression. In many subjects, however, such as mathematics, the more able pupils are not challenged enough. There are few mistakes in the work of these pupils, showing that they cope very comfortably with the level of their work. Discussions with them show that they are capable of doing more challenging work.

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

22. The rich and exciting learning opportunities give pupils an interest and enthusiasm for learning and contribute significantly to their very good attitudes towards school. The wide range of visits and visitors successfully interest pupils in their work and make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. For example, Year 6 pupils talked excitedly about the artist who visits them regularly, and about their outing to Chester museum where they learnt more about what life in Roman times was like. Teaching makes good use of the local environment to support pupils' geography studies and the residential visits for junior pupils enhance their physical education skills as well as developing their social skills. Attendance at the wide and varied range of lunchtime and after-school clubs is good and these are well supported by boys and girls of junior age. There are some clubs for infant pupils, but the head teacher is considering a request from the school council to put on more for the younger pupils in school. However, as she explained sensitively to the school member who put the idea to her, these children are very young and may not have the energy needed to stay longer at school. The respect she showed for pupils' views during this discussion is indicative of the kindness and sensitivity with which all pupils at this school are treated.
23. Pupils' personal development is given high priority and this is reflected in all that the school does. Staff take great care to make sure that all pupils are included, and plan learning opportunities that enable this to happen. The pupils who come to this school speaking very little English are taught the English language well and soon take full part in lessons. The work of the pupils with special needs is very well planned because it is based on their individual learning targets. Consequently, it is relevant to their needs and circumstances and these pupils do very well because of this. However, not enough regard is given, until late on in their school life, to how to meet the needs of the brighter pupils and those who are particularly gifted and talented. This is because not enough use is made of work from the higher levels in the teaching guidance. Too much catching up takes place in Year 6 because not enough regard is given to how these pupils' needs could be met more appropriately earlier on, in Years 1, 3, 4, and 5 for example.
24. The curriculum takes good account of the national teaching guidelines for all subjects and there is particularly good emphasis on the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Sex education is in place and pupils are taught about the dangers of drugs misuse. The work of the Reception children takes account of the Foundation Stage curriculum, but it is too directed and is not based enough on learning through observation and exploration. As a result, children's learning is often shaky, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In addition, some strands are given more emphasis than others so that children's progress across each area of learning is too uneven.
25. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good and in line with the school's mission statement and its Catholic ethos. The school successfully provides opportunities for personal prayer and reflection, for example in the school worship. Opportunities are provided for quiet reflection on the main messages of assemblies. Displays around the school show that teachers and classroom assistants are determined to raise the self-worth and self-esteem of pupils by showing of their work in its best light. There are opportunities for pupils to reflect on

the deeper meaning of spirituality, for example when Year 6 pupils wrote their own thoughts on gifts: "Love is a gift given to us by God. In return, we should love one another". During the family assemblies, both younger and older pupils acted out the nativity scene in a proud and sensitive way and captured the real spirit of Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Year 4 pupils visited a retreat centre and experienced a range of activities about making the right choices.

26. Provision for social and moral development is very good and helps the pupils to become mature and responsible. There is a well-understood whole school approach to behaviour management and a unity of purpose in everything the school does. Class rules are negotiated and displayed in classrooms. Effective incentive rewards are in place and success is recognised and celebrated in assemblies. Pupils have a social conscience as seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson when they wrote an article on the work of Amnesty International in recognition of the International Day of Human Rights. Pupils fill shoeboxes with gifts for children in a school in Kenya; a pupil wrote, "When I sent a shoebox for the appeal, I felt very proud". The school choir sings to elderly citizens in the community and collect for local and national charities. The skills and knowledge gained in personal, social and health education (PSHE) are raising pupils' awareness of what it is to be a good citizen.
27. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good but the multicultural aspect is under-emphasised. Music plays an important part in pupils' cultural development and they have a very good attitude to singing. This was seen in a Year 1 music lesson when pupils used sounds expressively to illustrate a story. The story came alive as these young pupils chose instruments that typified the sounds and then listened to a recording of their performance. In their history and geography lessons, pupils explore their own locality and study the lives of people in other lands. Pupils have written poems for entry into a competition and some of them were published. Whilst there are opportunities in religious education to discuss other faiths, there are insufficient planned opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to learn about and experience the diversity and richness of cultures other than their own.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The provision for child protection and for the welfare of pupils is excellent. The staff and governing body work together well to create a caring school where the personal needs of pupils are met extremely well. The head teacher leads well here by providing a strong and supportive role model for the pupils, staff and parents. There is a very positive atmosphere in school and teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue are well supported and fully involved in all activities. 'Looked after children' are very well supported and helped to gain self-confidence and self-esteem.
29. The designated teacher for child protection is well trained and shares her expertise with staff; she liaises with a range of support agencies on behalf of children. Adults working in school are alert to the medical needs of pupils and there is a very generous number of staff fully qualified to administer first aid. The school follows local authority guidelines for health and safety and all members of the school community are aware of their individual responsibilities in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. Risk assessments of the premises are undertaken by the local authority and appropriately recorded. Hazards are dealt with appropriately. The site manager is vigilant on a daily basis and ensures that the site is safe, clean and free from debris. All these excellent procedures add up to a school that puts the safety, protection and care of pupils at the top of its agenda.
30. The school's procedures for monitoring and supporting behaviour are very good and their success can be seen in the very good behaviour of pupils. The school has been concerned to involve pupils in setting their own rules of conduct and this has successfully fostered a good atmosphere in lessons. Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with appropriately and parents are involved at an early stage if there are problems. Good behaviour is rewarded and there are special assemblies when pupils celebrate each other's achievements. The anti-bullying policy

provides a framework for staff and pupils to follow and there are only a very few occasions when it is necessary to implement it.

31. The procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance are very good and have resulted in an improvement in attendance since the school first opened in April 2001. There is very little unauthorised absence due to the vigilance of staff in contacting parents when pupils do not arrive at school. The education welfare officer gives very good support to the school and together they are improving the attendance of pupils. Holidays taken in term time and the intermittent attendance of a significant number of pupils accounts for much of the authorised absence. To balance this, many pupils have good attendance and enjoy competing for the bronze, silver and gold attendance awards. All these very good procedures are having a positive effect on the overall attendance figures that are now close to the national average. The school is planning to purchase a computerised registration system that is intended to refine the procedures even further. Punctuality is well monitored and records kept of persistent latecomers. Teachers ensure that registration periods are calm and orderly and that lessons get off to a prompt start.
32. Assessment procedures in English, mathematics, science and ICT are good and are used effectively to track and identify the least able pupils who need an extra boost to their learning to enable them to attain at least the expected level. The procedures for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs are very good and are used very well to plan their learning. The school maintains good records of pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science and ICT that give a clear overview of pupils' attainment in these subjects. However, this information is not always used effectively enough in Key Stages 1 and 2 to set more challenging work for the brighter pupils and in Reception to set work for all children. Subject leaders analyse test results each year and adapt the curriculum well in order to help to close the gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils' progress in core subjects is tracked as they move through school and those needing an extra boost to their learning are taught in specially formed target groups in Years 2 and 6. This means that most attain the expected level by the end of school. No records of attainment are kept in the non-core subjects. At present, there is no check on the progress pupils make in the non-core subjects and teachers assume that pupils have learnt what has been taught from the teaching guidelines.
33. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in all activities and those pupils from an ethnic minority background are very well supported. The school provides a range of experiences that help pupils to mature into responsible and caring individuals. These include visits out of school to places of interest and residential experiences for older pupils. Very good personal support and guidance are given to pupils through the Rainbow Club. Here, trained counsellors work in partnership with pupils to offer help and support in times of crisis in their lives such as bereavement, family crises and separation. Pupils who attend the club say that this is a vital support system for them. Pupils can also discuss their thoughts and feelings in the regular PSHE lessons. The mature and sensible approach of the members of the school council is having an impact on facilities available for pupils. There is a comprehensive programme for PSHE that encourages pupils to become good citizens. Pupils accept responsibilities around the school willingly and Year 6 pupils confirm that they regard these as a privilege to be earned. Pupils nurture and grow into responsible young adults within the 'family' of St Matthew's school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Parents view the school as a very good school which their children enjoy attending and where they are expected to work hard and achieve well. They consider that the school promotes the attitudes and values they expect and develops an understanding of moral and social issues as set out in the mission statement. The information that parents receive and their involvement in their children's learning are good and have a positive impact on the partnership they have with the school.

35. The quantity and quality of information that parents receive are good. Regular, attractive newsletters inform them of events and activities taking place in the school. There is an induction meeting for parents of children new to the school and helpful written information about how they can prepare their children for school. Parents of children in the Reception classes engage in paired reading with their children and are appreciative of this opportunity. There is a consultation evening each term for parents to meet with teachers and gain up-to-date information on the progress their children are making. The language and information in the school prospectus and the annual report of the governing body is accessible to parents and gives them useful information on the facilities in school and the plans for future development. The reports that parents receive on pupils' progress give good information on what children know, understand and can do. Most set targets for improvement but some of these could be a little more specific on what children need to do in order to make even better progress.
36. Parental involvement in the work of the school is good. The school reaches out to parents and is meeting with success. A questionnaire was sent out to parents by the school and their views and suggestions evaluated. Some of the changes suggested now feature in the school development plan as priorities for improvement. Twenty parents help regularly in school and more can be called upon for events and activities taking place. For example, parents escorted children on their recent visit to the Cathedral for a performance of *Baboushka*. Teachers are in the playground each morning and parents can speak to them if they have a pressing concern. Parents say that they find staff approachable and can make an appointment with them if they have a problem.
37. The Parent Teacher Association is a newly formed, enthusiastic group of parents who have some exciting ideas for fund raising to enhance pupils' learning and experiences. Over 120 parents came into school to see their children participate in the Christmas assemblies and looked very proud as their children performed. Parents enjoy seeing their children line up ready for entry to school and well over 50 parents were seen waiting to see their children march proudly into school. Most parents support children's learning at home as seen in pupils' reading records and homework projects. With the support of the Educational and Lifelong Learning Service, the school offers a range of courses to parents, for example ICT and sign language courses. With more suitable accommodation available in school, the tutor confirms that a wider range of courses could be offered which would then have an impact on pupils' learning. Parents and grandparents were seen enjoying and taking advantage of the teaching.
38. The level of involvement of parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. Learning targets are shared at parent consultation evenings and communication with individual parents and carers is good. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning and values their unique contribution to the life of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

39. The school is led and managed well. There is very good leadership by the headteacher. Over the last 18 months, the senior managers have had to work extremely hard to bring together the staff from the infant and junior schools. The task has not been easy and changes have inevitably taken place, with some new appointments being made, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, where four of the six teachers are new to post. However, the amalgamation has brought with it a new beginning and has given the governing body, also newly formed, a good opportunity to implement new systems and procedures. A good team spirit has been established and the way forward is clear and, most importantly, being approached with commitment and enthusiasm. Staff, governors and pupils share the aims of the school; as one Year 6 pupil said, "This school is all about working together".
40. The head teacher, supported by an extremely able senior management team, has a very clear idea of what is and is not working and what needs doing to make the school even more successful than it already is. She has established this, with the help of the English,

mathematics, science and ICT subject leaders, by checking up on teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Through watching lessons and carefully scrutinising plans and pupils' workbooks they have identified what needs improving. They have put in motion strategies to bring about relevant improvements to, for example, the provision for the brighter pupils and the curriculum for Reception children. This means that school improvement planning is very effective and is the most significant way by which improvements are brought about. Staff and governors together identify the way forward, making improvement a partnership. For example, they have already identified the need for training for the teachers in the Reception classes. They know that insufficient checks are made on the learning in the non-core subjects and have identified the need to increase the responsibilities of leaders of these subjects. They recognise the need to empower these people so that they can find out what is going on in their subjects and plan more effectively for rising standards.

41. The governing body works very well to ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities and influences the future of the school. Governors are totally committed to achieving excellence. They have a wealth of experience and expertise between them. Many visit the school regularly and observe lessons, talk with class teachers, and chat to pupils. They manage the school's finances expertly and with determination to achieving value for money by comparing their spending with that of other schools and keeping a watchful eye on what is spent. They measure the effectiveness of their spending, such as the money spent on physical education specialist coaching.
42. Education inclusion is embedded in the work of the school. Staff and governors work hard to meet the needs in particular of the lower attaining pupils, those with special needs and the few pupils who do not speak English as their mother tongue. They know that now is the time to turn their attention to meeting the needs more effectively of the brighter pupils in school and those who are gifted and talented in some subjects.
43. The number of teachers and support staff is good and effectively meets the demands of the curriculum. Support staff are well trained and make a positive impact on the learning of the least able pupils in particular. However, the way teachers deploy them within classrooms varies between passive participation during the lesson introduction to preparing resources and supporting pupils.
44. Performance management is up and running and there is very good support for newly qualified teachers and for teachers new to the school. They are encouraged to attend training courses, and they receive good guidance and support from their mentors. As a result, they are reflective about their teaching and confident in the support the school provides. The administration officers are very pleasant and efficient and make a very good contribution to the organisation of the school. They use technology well for record keeping purposes and presenting information. The caretaker takes pride in providing pupils and staff with a clean and comfortable school.
45. Accommodation, though cramped, is satisfactory overall. Staff are well aware of the difficulties caused by the lack of spacious accommodation and they work hard to address the issues through effective curriculum planning. However, pupils are prevented from reaching high standards in physical education by the lack of yard provision and a sports field. Pupils also have to cross the yard to use the hall; this causes problems in inclement weather. Building improvements are a feature of the school development plan. The very good behaviour of pupils means that they use the accommodation with care. Resources for learning are very good in mathematics, and good in English, science, ICT, art and for pupils with special educational needs. This is reflected in the good progress pupils make and the standards they reach in these subjects. They are satisfactory in design and technology, history, geography and music and for children in Reception. Whilst resources for physical education are satisfactory, the lack of larger equipment inhibits pupils' progress. The library has a satisfactory range of books and pupils have good access to it.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. The head teacher, governing body and staff should now:

(1) Make sure that the brighter pupils are always suitably challenged by:

- a. ensuring that teachers make appropriate use of work from the higher levels;
- b. using the records of what pupils already know to set the brighter ones suitably challenging work;
- c. enhancing the teaching and learning of those pupils who the school has identified as gifted and talented in particular subjects.

(Paragraphs 2, 11, 21, 23, 32, 60, 75-77)

(2) Ensure that the children in Reception make as much progress as possible by:

- a. ensuring that children have sufficient opportunities to learn through observation and exploration;
- b. ensuring the different aspects of each area of learning are taught in equal depth so that children's progress across them is even;
- c. making effective use of what children already know, understand and can do;
- d. making sure that all of the activities have a specific purpose;
- e. checking on children's learning in all of the activities, not just those being supervised by adults.

(Paragraphs 4, 15, 24, 47-58)

(3) make sure that priorities for improvement in the non-core subjects focus on raising standards by:

- a. checking on what does and does not work in teaching, and identifying what needs improving;
- b. making sure that records are kept of how well pupils do in each subject in order to identify and deal with gaps in their learning.

(Paragraphs 32, 40, 89, 92, 96, 101, 109, 113)

In addition to the issues above, the governing body should have regard to the following minor areas for improvement in their action plan:

1. The sessions at the end of lessons are sometimes ineffective in pointing the way towards what pupils have done well and what they need to do next (paragraphs 20, 78).
2. The use of teaching assistants is variable, particularly in the lesson introductory sessions (paragraphs 20, 48, 78).
3. The accommodation inhibits above average standards in physical education (paragraphs 45, 112).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	84
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	14	30	35	2	0	0
Percentage	2	17	36	42	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	373
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	146

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	83

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
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	28	49

		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	17
	Girls	24	25	28
	Total	37	40	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (84)	82 (88)	92 (86)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	16	14
	Girls	24	28	24
	Total	37	44	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (86)	90 (88)	78 (89)
	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	29	30	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	23	28
	Girls	27	27	29
	Total	52	50	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (86)	85 (68)	97 (86)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	23	28
	Girls	26	27	28
	Total	49	50	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (78)	85 (70)	95 (89)
	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	368	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.3
Average class size	26.6

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	298

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	963673
Total expenditure	882373
Expenditure per pupil	2275
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	81300

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	373
Number of questionnaires returned	53

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	87	9	0	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	77	19	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	28	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	32	6	0	0
The teaching is good.	75	23	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	23	4	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	21	0	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	13	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	66	26	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	28	0	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	28	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	64	23	8	2	4

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 are taught in two Reception classes where the teaching and learning are, on balance, satisfactory overall. Children do not attain the early learning goals in any of the areas of learning below, but are well on their way in some aspects of communication, language and literacy and mathematics, such as knowledge of letters and numbers. This reflects children's below average attainment on entry, and means that their overall progress is sound.
48. Both Reception teachers work hard and prepare lessons well, so that they start promptly and run smoothly. The classroom assistants support teaching effectively during the work sessions, but sometimes during the lesson introductions, they tend to sit and listen rather than support individuals or make sure that the least able children understand what the teacher is saying. One of the class teachers is new to teaching this age group. The permanent class teacher returns from maternity leave in the spring term. The teachers have sufficient expertise to do a sound job but the school has recognised that there are some gaps in understanding and knowledge of how young children learn and is already planning training for the staff next term.

Personal, social and emotional development

49. This area of learning is taught satisfactorily and children's learning is sound. Children are confident and secure learners because the adults treat them with respect and sensitivity. For example, when some children did not want to say anything in a class discussion about what makes them feel excited, the teacher calmly suggested, "Think about it and we'll come back to you". In this session, the adults modelled typical responses when they talked about how they get excited when Manchester United win and when it is their birthday. This meant that children knew how they were expected to respond and most participated well when it came to their turn.
50. Children enjoy their year in Reception because teachers praise them constantly for their efforts. This raises self-esteem and results in children not being afraid to 'have a go'. For example, in one lesson, children were asked to come out to the front of the class and write words on the board beginning with 'ch'. The teacher was never short of volunteers because she persuaded them that they could do it and guided those that were less sure, increasing their confidence well.
51. Children's behaviour is extremely good, even when the work is very formal and they are told what to do next. They sit patiently waiting their turn, for example, to dip the cotton wool into the sugar and see if it sticks to the sticky tape. They sit quietly through lesson introductions and persevere with writing things down, even though some struggle to form letters correctly. However, some of the activities are too structured and children do not have enough freedom to try new things, initiate ideas, ask questions, and find answers through exploration. There are usually a number of activities going on in each lesson that do not have any adult support and there are no specific aims for children's learning in activities other than the adult-directed ones. For example, when one group was given the task of fishing soaked spaghetti out of bowls of water, no one checked on their learning or asked them questions about what they were doing and what they had discovered. This meant that any learning that did take place was incidental.

Communication, language and literacy

52. Children make sound progress in all aspects of this area of learning, and particularly good progress in linking sounds and letters. This is because teachers have high expectations for this aspect of learning and expect a lot from children, who respond enthusiastically by attempting to learn letters and word lists at home. Work on linking sounds and letters dominates teaching and learning at the moment. This means that most children can already name some letters and say words that begin with them, such as 'b' for 'big' and 'ch' for 'church'. Reading skills are developing satisfactorily. The teachers share books with children regularly and this means that many children enjoy books and understand how they are structured, starting at the beginning and turning the pages in sequence. Writing skills are taught satisfactorily and most children draw fairly recognisable pictures and attempt to copy over the teachers' writing with increasing accuracy, although the least able children are asked to write letters before they have the necessary skills to do so.
53. Because talk is encouraged, most children already speak in sentences and talk with increasing confidence about what they are doing or have done. However, there are insufficient activities planned, for example, to develop children's negotiation skills, or to get them to take account of each other's views. For example, in one lesson, children played in the Santa's Grotto. They talked excitedly with each other about the costumes, took turns and shared the resources. However, neither of the adults joined them in their play, so they soon lost interest in what others were doing and played alone.

Mathematical development

54. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Mathematics lessons are planned well, and most of the time children work at an appropriate level and learn satisfactorily. The opening sessions where the teachers talk to the children on the carpet are particularly effective. This is because the teachers are clear about what they are doing and are confident about teaching numbers to 10 and beyond. Teaching makes learning interesting by, for example, getting children to count cones in and out of a basket and asking the brighter ones to count sweets into bags with different numbers on them ready for a party. Consequently, by the time the children start in Year 1, many can count up to and beyond 20 and add and subtract up to at least 10. They recognise two and three-dimensional shapes, copy and continue patterns correctly, and know what symmetry is.
55. However, there is a lot of emphasis on formal number recognition, and less on using calculation to solve problems and informal learning about numbers through play. Activities in, for example, the sand, water and role-play areas lack specific mathematical challenge and opportunities are missed to promote mathematical ideas or develop children's mathematical understanding through play.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

56. This area of learning is taught satisfactorily overall, but there are some weaknesses that need dealing with. These weaknesses slow children's learning unnecessarily and come about mainly because of the inexperience of the teachers. Teachers make appropriate reference to the Foundation Stage teaching guidelines and give children opportunities to learn about aspects of nature and scientific facts, such as how living things grow and change over time and noticing things about the place in which they live, like local landmarks, such as particular shops, when out walking. Because of this, many children by the end of Reception talk about features of their local environment; they name and label parts of the human body and plants correctly, and use the computer confidently to support their work in mathematics, language and literacy.

57. However, teachers often miss opportunities to engage children in meaningful discussion about their work and to excite them to ask why things happen and how things work and to discover possible answers through investigation and exploration. Instead, most of the work is very formal and based on teaching and learning facts. For example, teachers tell children that spiders do not stick to their own webs because of the oil on their legs, rather than let children watch and observe real spiders on real webs, ask questions about why flies stick to the webs and spiders do not, suggest answers from their observations and then explore if their answers are right or wrong.

Physical development

58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in this area of learning and because of this, children move with increasing confidence around the classrooms and in larger spaces, such as the playground. Good use is made by teachers of the outdoor learning area, where children manoeuvre wheeled toys well without bumping into others and recreate the pattern of the school wall by piling up crates. Children hold pencils with developing control, move the cursor around the computer screen very well, and paint with good brush control. The children's learning opportunities are good because teaching makes effective use of the curriculum guidelines to get ideas of appropriate activities for children of this age. However, as in the other areas of learning, these activities sometimes lack effect because teaching lacks direction. This is because, whilst each lesson has a broad purpose such as, "To develop children's gross and fine motor skills", the skills that particular children need and how these are to be achieved is unclear. Particular children are not directed to particular activities because, whilst teachers keep detailed enough notes on children's learning, they do not use the information to plan what individual children need to learn next.

Creative development

59. Again, as in the other areas of learning, on balance, teaching is satisfactory in this area. Teachers encourage children to enjoy playing musical instruments and singing. By the end of Reception, most children sing songs from memory and move well to music. They play taped stories, encouraged by the teachers to operate the tape machines themselves, enjoying following the stories in the books, giggling as they listen to the tales. They enjoy role-play in, for example, 'Santa's Grotto', and are given different materials and equipment to use to make models and pictures. However, sometimes their creativity is stifled because they are given too much direction and told what to do and how to do it. For example, the spiders they made one afternoon during the inspection week were all the same. This is because children were given the materials to work with, which had been pre-cut and put out ready for them.

ENGLISH

60. The 2002 English test results were above average. This is because effective support for the least able pupils, and those with special needs in particular, meant that a good number of pupils attained the expected level; a broadly average number attained above it. This year, the standards eleven year olds are currently attaining are broadly in line with the expected level for pupils of this age. However, it is likely that more pupils will reach the higher level between now and the time they take their tests at the end of the year. This is due to the good teaching in Year 6, which stimulates pupils to work hard and achieve, reflected in the already good progress they have made this year so far. An additional boost to their learning is planned next term through special lessons and work drawn from the higher level. However, more could be done earlier on to challenge the brighter pupils in ordinary lessons, particularly in Years 3 and 4, lessening the reliance on the Year 6 teachers.
61. Although last year infant pupils did not do very well in comparison with other pupils nationally, this year standards are close to the expected level for seven year olds. This is because of good teaching in Years 1 and 2, and particularly effective teaching in Year 2. Pupils respond

- very well to the exciting learning opportunities and make good progress as a result. They achieve well during their time in Key Stage 1 to reach, by the end of Year 2, at least expected standards from a low starting point on entry to school.
62. Pupils with special educational needs receive additional adult support which matches their level of need very closely in literacy lessons, as outlined in their individual education plans. As a result, many of these pupils make very good progress over time given the standard of their previous learning, and many achieve the expected level by the age of eleven. Pupils' progress in English is tracked effectively as they move through the school. A group of pupils in each year has been identified as being able to achieve better than they are doing. To ensure they have every opportunity of achieving at least the expected level, teaching assistants work with these groups on activities planned by the teacher that explain and reinforce the main points of the lesson. Although variable from lesson to lesson, effective use is sometimes made of teaching assistants who explain, ask questions and generally encourage targeted pupils and those with special educational needs to participate successfully. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language make very good progress in English so they achieve as well as their peers. This is because teachers take great care to involve these pupils and to make sure that they understand what to do and how to do it.
63. Girls and boys sit in mixed groups and work very well together. Both contribute well to class discussions and answering teachers' questions. In English tests in 2002 for seven year olds, boys achieved less well than girls in reading and slightly better than girls in writing, but there was little difference in tests at the age of eleven. As seen during the inspection, however, there is no significant difference in their overall achievement, or in their participation in lessons. Recently the school has purchased more reading books that appeal particularly to boys to encourage them to read.
64. Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well by the age of seven due to the many and varied opportunities teachers plan in lessons for pupils to talk and listen. Consequently, many pupils achieve the expected level by the age of seven. For example, Year 2 pupils regularly read a favourite poem to the class while others listen attentively. Pupils learn to read slowly and clearly so all can hear. They ask each other questions relating to the poems such as "Do you like cats?" This develops their confidence in speaking in formal situations very effectively. In history, pupils explain to the class the facts of the Great Fire of London, extending their responses by linking them with the causes, such as the fire spreading because the houses were made of wood and were close together.
65. By the age of eleven, many pupils' speaking and listening skills continue to develop well, again because teachers give them plenty of opportunities to talk and listen in formal and informal situations. Most achieve the expected level with a minority above. Many pupils talk at length on topics that interest them, and explain coherently, for example how the expression 'Back to square one' came about. Many had the opportunity to take part in a drama performance of *Baboushka*, before a full audience at the cathedral. They spent additional English lessons practising and developing their roles for this production and performed well as a result. Teachers encourage pupils to express their opinions and feelings, with good results. For example, in Year 5, pupils respond sensitively to a concrete poem in the shape of a flower growing from its roots. "It's like being born", said one pupil; "It reminds me of spring", said another. Teachers use and explain key words in topics effectively so pupils have a clear understanding and use them to describe what they are learning, as with magnetism in science in Year 3. These varied opportunities help pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills very effectively.
66. By the age of seven, pupils' reading is developing well and standards are close to the expected level. Many activities in Year 1 reinforce the good teaching so pupils' knowledge of sounds, letters and simple word building develops well. This is developed further by the very good opportunities in Year 2. For example, the majority of pupils spot which instructions are not in the right sequence because they read and understand them. When reading individually, most pupils have enough strategies to be able to read, for example, the unfamiliar name

- 'Drusilla' successfully. However, many Year 2 pupils do not have enough access to non-fiction books to be familiar with their purpose and layout.
67. By the age of eleven, standards in reading are in line with the expected level. Many pupils read with increasing fluency and appropriate expression. For example, when they read an article from Amnesty International together in class, they used clues from the text to help them understand and explain words such as 'violate' and 'opposition'. Of the term 'political prisoners', one pupil suggested appropriately, "Is this a person who opposes the government?" This is a good standard for pupils at this stage in Year 6. Many pupils read non-fiction books from the school and local library. This supports their research and learning in other subjects, such as science, history and geography. They know to scan and read round the key word to find out the information they need. Pupils have a reading diary, which they fill in themselves, and most read at home, including newspapers. Effective planned opportunities to teach reading in groups, and pupils reading regularly in class and to adults, increase pupils' progress in reading throughout the school.
 68. By the age of seven, standards in writing are close to the expected level. Many pupils in Year 1 know the difference between writing a story and writing instructions. "Do I write 'Once upon a time I made a sandwich',?" the teacher asked. "No, because it's not a story", answered the pupils. Many know to use 'first', 'then' and 'next' to sequence their writing of instructions. In Year 2, when pupils wrote words from their spelling lists, most pupils' writing was of a good standard, regular and neat, and most of their spellings were correct due to good teaching. Most pupils are starting to show an awareness of structure in their story writing. Their stories have a beginning, middle and end, with appropriate openings such as, "One sunny day I went..." They use full stops and capital letters, for names as well. Their spellings are mainly correct or recognisable and handwriting mainly accurate with letters of consistent size. More able writers start to join their writing. Less able writers achieve well at tasks matched to their level of ability. Teachers' helpful comments in their books praise pupils' efforts and tell them how to improve.
 69. Standards in writing are broadly at the expected level by the age of eleven. Teachers provide interesting materials and stimuli that enthuse and involve pupils and give them a real reason to write. For example, prompted by an Amnesty International article, pupils wrote to the Russian ambassador appealing for information about two young people and they rewrote the article for a younger audience. A visit to the Maritime Museum provided a good stimulus for a range of writing from the point of view of an emigrant sailing to a new life on the 'Princess Victoria' in the 1850s. Pupils do a good range and variety of writing based around Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. These good opportunities help to improve pupils' writing, and in many pupils' work their writing reflects the purpose well. More able writers create excitement and interest for the reader in their writing, and are able to use language to create effect. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is thorough but not yet consistent in concentrating on improvements needed to meet pupils' targets. As a consequence some pupils make similar errors repeatedly. Handwriting is taught systematically throughout the school and generally is neat and legible.
 70. Pupils use dictionaries and thesauri effectively throughout Key Stage 2. This helps them increase the range and understanding of vocabulary in their reading and writing, as well as their spelling. Throughout the school, homework is regularly given for literacy, which supports what pupils are learning in school effectively, in addition to reading and spellings. Pupils' language and literacy skills are well supported in other subjects where pupils have many opportunities to talk, discuss in pairs and groups, read for research and write for different purposes. Teachers make good use of computers to develop pupils' basic skills in English.
 71. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is due to this, particularly in Years 2 and 6, that pupils make the good progress that they do from starting school to leaving. Teachers in these classes in particular are knowledgeable about the requirements of the national teaching guidance and their detailed planning shows they have a good understanding of the literacy strategy. They make use of every available opportunity to reinforce learning with the result that pupils make good progress within lessons and over time. Teachers employ a range of

interesting strategies that, together with a lively style, good pace and challenging activities, keep pupils interested and keen to learn. They ask probing questions, giving pupils time to reflect and expand on their answers, and share the learning intentions of the lesson with the pupils at the beginning, so pupils know why they are doing the work.

72. In all year groups throughout the school, teachers establish very good relationships with pupils so they behave well and are keen to learn and please their teachers. Pupils work well together, including the youngest; for example in Year 1 pupils take turns working independently, playing a word game. In Year 2 pupils work well in pairs, taking it in turns to write words on their shared whiteboard. Pupils' knowledge of their own learning in Year 6 is good. They know how well they achieved in optional tests last year and what they hope to achieve this and what they need to do to improve, supported by their targets. Some of them, through being given extra and more challenging work to do, have already improved and changed groups.
73. There are many effective systems in place that contribute to the overall good teaching of English. Pupils' progress is tracked as they move through the school with groups identified for additional support so they catch up, and many achieve expected levels by the age of eleven. Teachers assess pupils' writing regularly and reading annually, and set individual, group and class targets so pupils know what they need to do to improve. Support and guidance from the local authority have helped teachers to improve their assessment of pupils' writing, and therefore to know how to move pupils on.
74. Subject leadership is good. The English co-ordinators monitor teachers' planning, scrutinise pupils' work and observe particular aspects of teaching, such as use of resources, time and the national guidelines. Inconsistencies in teachers' marking of spellings brought about a new system. This is now in place. Pupils enter and copy misspelt words corrected by the teacher in a spelling journal, which helps them to remember. Pupils have additional opportunities to develop their speaking and listening and literacy skills through writing poetry and choral speaking, drama workshops, a book fair and taking part in services in the church. ICT is used well to support teaching and learning in English. For example, pupils word process their stories and poems and read information on screen after having accessed the Internet.

MATHEMATICS

75. Pupils do well in mathematics to attain above average standards by the time they leave the school. This is because of good teaching. From a low starting point on entry to school, most of the Year 2 pupils are on course to attain the expected level by the end of the year, but few are working within the higher level. The vast majority of Year 6 pupils are attaining the expected level for their age, but with the extra boost to their learning planned for next term, just like last year, a good number of them are likely to attain above the expected level. However, more could be done earlier, in Key Stage 2 in particular, to make sure that the brighter pupils are always doing suitably challenging work. Boys and girls are focused on equally and do as well as each other in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and those who do not have English as their first language make very good progress because of very effective support from teachers and teaching assistants.
76. Year 2 pupils have a sound grasp of number. Pupils quickly understand new learning, because teachers are good at explaining new mathematical ideas and build pupils' learning systematically in lessons and over time. For instance, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils rapidly strengthened their ability to add three numbers mentally before going on to add two- and one-digit numbers. Teachers plan lessons skilfully so that pupils of all abilities, particularly the least able, are well provided for. For example, in the same lesson, pupils with special educational needs worked on very simple addition, such as 3+1, while the more able pupils calculated amounts up to £2. However, teachers do not always demand enough of the brighter pupils. For example, all pupils know the two and ten times tables, but teachers do not expect the more able pupils to know more than this. Pupils have satisfactory skills in using mathematics to solve problems. This is because, for example, in a Year 1 lesson, the teacher insisted that

pupils should not just be able to add $6+1$, but explain how they had done it quickly, such as by starting with the larger number first and counting on the smaller number. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding of shape and space. They know the names of common two- and three-dimensional shapes and can describe them by the number of their corners and edges. Similarly, pupils measure lines accurately in centimetres. They concentrate hard and learn effectively because lessons are usually interesting. For example, one teacher in a Year 1 lesson captured pupils' interest by brandishing three chocolates and asking them to name their favourite. This resulted in the pupils soon understanding how to sort objects.

77. By Year 6, pupils are good at calculation. They work comfortably with decimal numbers to two points and can convert fractions into percentages, knowing, for example, that 28 per cent equals 0.28. Pupils' basic mathematical skills are good. Multiplication tables are securely learned, for example, because teachers give pupils regular tests to encourage them to learn them. Teachers help to strengthen pupils' learning by using thoughtful resources like a line of decimal numbers with flaps to cover numbers that the pupils then had to identify. This encourages pupils to participate fully and so understand the idea of sequences. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils had to think hard to define shapes like trapeziums and kites that the teacher had partially hidden. Expectations are good for lower attaining pupils, because teachers expect them to attempt the work of other pupils, although extra adult support is often on hand. However, as in Key Stage 1, the more able pupils do similar work to other pupils, which does not enable them to progress as fast as they might.
78. A real strength of teaching is the positive working atmosphere in classrooms, brought about by the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils really appreciate being valued by teachers. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, one pupil was not keen to accept a number card for some reason. The teacher simply said, "But I made it specially for you", and the pupil's resistance evaporated. Classroom assistants also play an important role in supporting pupils, especially less confident pupils and those with special educational needs. However, teachers do not always make good enough use of them when the class is working as a whole. For example, assistants do not always explain new learning quietly to pupils who need it or record contributions of pupils so that the teachers know how well they have learned. In addition, teachers do not use the final session of lessons to reinforce learning from the lesson by giving pupils the opportunity to show what they have done.
79. Through effective subject leadership, the school is developing the subject well. Standards are rising in Key Stage 1 and likely to remain above average by the end of Key Stage 2 because the school has made teaching and learning in mathematics a priority. The school has established very good systems for checking pupils' progress from year to year. From this they have analysed precisely what pupils need to do to improve further and teachers are beginning to use this information in their planning. This is all quite recent but early indications are that is starting to have an increasingly positive impact on learning. Teaching makes effective use of ICT to support pupils' learning in mathematics. Pupils record information, for example, in a variety of ways including spreadsheets, graphs and charts.

SCIENCE

80. The work pupils are doing shows that standards are broadly as expected nationally by the age of seven, and good by the age of eleven. Pupils achieve well against their prior attainment. This is because teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. In both key stages, pupils enjoy science and they behave very well. The curriculum now has a greater emphasis on investigation work and developing pupils' scientific language, which enables pupils to develop greater understanding of scientific ideas. All staff enjoy very good relationships with pupils and this effectively promotes pupils' positive attitudes and their very good behaviour. As a result, pupils learn effectively and work very well together, listen to staff and follow instructions immediately, pay very good attention to safety, handle scientific equipment safely, try hard, concentrate well and persist with difficult tasks.

81. There are no significant differences between the attainment and achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those who do not speak English as their mother tongue achieve very well in science because they receive very good support from support assistants. Teachers also make very good use of pupils' particular learning difficulties to provide different tasks or use different resources to ensure these pupils are fully included in the lesson and make the same progress as other pupils. Higher attaining pupils also achieve equally well because teachers extend and challenge their learning. For example, in a Year 1 lesson pupils investigated the use of different materials for drying dishes and higher attaining pupils were challenged to use the scientific term 'absorption'. As a result, they concluded that a drying towel was the most suitable material for drying dishes as it absorbed water most effectively.
82. With greater emphasis on practical investigations in science, pupils throughout the school make good progress in observation skills. By the age of seven, pupils develop a good understanding of human variation, through their investigation of relative hand sizes of pupils in their class. They understand the characteristics of living things and group them into plants and animals. Pupils also develop a good understanding of the properties of materials and they know how to construct simple electrical circuits. By the age of eleven, pupils build on their prior learning. They have a good understanding of the structure of the human skeleton and the names and functions of various types of teeth. Year 6 pupils improve their skills of scientific enquiry, through, for example, investigating reversible and irreversible reactions. They have a good understanding of fair testing and know that only one variable must be used to draw accurate conclusions from their investigations. For example, in an experiment to determine the rate of dissolving, they concluded accurately that heat, the volume of water, particle size and the rate of stirring all affect the speed at which sugar dissolves in water.
83. Overall the quality of science teaching is very good. Teachers and support assistants effectively promote pupils' literacy skills within the subject, particularly speaking and listening, the development of scientific vocabulary and writing for different purposes. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on magnetism, pupils were encouraged to talk about forces of attraction and repulsion. They were challenged to make links with their prior learning on pushing and pulling forces and the teacher used the display of key words in magnetism to promote learning. As a result pupils knew that magnetic attraction is a pulling force whereas magnetic repulsion is a pushing force, using the terms accurately. Numeracy skills are equally well promoted in lessons and teachers also make good use of ICT to enable pupils to record their data from scientific experiments.
84. Pupils' learning is very good and enables pupils to make very good progress in lessons. Their learning is considerably enhanced by the very good use of well-chosen practical resources. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils investigated sound by varying the length of a column of air using recorders and milk bottles filled with different amounts of water. They focused on their investigation throughout, tried hard, and shared ideas. As a result they understood that the pitch varies according to the length of a column of air. Teachers maintain very good relationships with pupils so that they show respect for staff and one another and are always well behaved and well motivated to do their best.
85. The curriculum is very good, and fully meets legal requirements. Basic skills are very well promoted in science. There is a very good science club for pupils in Year 6 which is very well run by an enthusiastic support assistant and there are very good extra learning opportunities to enhance pupils' learning in science. There is a range of well-conceived visits to local museums and visits from a local theatre group to motivate pupils and enrich their learning in science. Science resources are good and computers are used well to support pupils' learning. Science is well led by the co-ordinator who has produced a good action plan to improve the subject and raise standards of achievement. The co-ordinator has also reviewed the curriculum to ensure that more opportunities are provided for investigative work, and monitored teaching and learning, and regularly checks teachers' planning. There are very good

systems for assessing pupils' progress in science, and this information is used well for planning.

ART AND DESIGN

86. Although few art lessons were seen during the inspection, there was sufficient evidence from pupils' work and discussions with pupils and teachers to make secure judgements, for example from the high quality displays of pupils' artwork in classrooms. Attainment in art and design is above the expected level throughout the school, Pupils develop good skills in sketching, painting and using textiles because they are encouraged and expected to use sketchbooks to develop their skills of observation. Pupils achieve well in art because the quality of teaching is at least good. In lessons seen, all pupils enjoyed their work and behaved very well and this had a positive impact on their learning and progress.
87. Pupils in Key Stage 1 explore the use of different media in different activities to develop their understanding of colour and shape. By the age of eleven, pupils have further consolidated their knowledge and use a variety of materials, textures and techniques to produce artwork in the style of artists such as Klee and Magritte. For example, pupils produced very good stick figures using pipe cleaners and paint to illustrate various sporting and dance movements closely following the style of Giacometti.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school and in one lesson seen it was excellent. Teachers know their subject well because they are well trained and supported by the art co-ordinator. As a result, pupils develop good artistic skills. In the excellent lesson seen, teaching was dynamic as the teacher constantly moved around groups encouraging pupils to observe the different shades of blues and greens in Magritte's work on landscapes. Relationships were also excellent so pupils tried their best and learned new techniques extremely well. Resources are well used to enhance teaching and learning, although not enough use is made of ICT to generate computer artwork. Teachers use pupils' artistic skills very well to enhance learning in other subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils produced attractive displays of tessellating patterns in mathematics, and Year 6 pupils produced pictures of Ancient Greek vases and models of Medusa masks in history.
89. Art is satisfactorily led and managed by an enthusiastic and hardworking co-ordinator who has developed an action plan for the subject. The action plan focuses mainly on the new policy and scheme of work. However, it does not include the development of the use of ICT, improvements to teaching and learning, or priorities for raising standards and pupils' achievements. The curriculum, however, is good and well enhanced by an after-school needlework club and good links with a Japanese school for exchanging pupils' artwork. The co-ordinator has identified gifted and talented pupils, but nothing has yet been done to improve the teaching and learning of these pupils, and the systems for recording pupils' attainments and progress are insufficiently developed. This means that receiving teachers do not have a clear enough idea of what pupils already know, understand and can do and have to make assumptions that they have learnt what they have supposedly been taught.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. Standards are broadly as expected nationally by the ages of seven and eleven and pupils make sound progress because teaching builds their skills systematically. Year 2 pupils understand the need to make things for a particular purpose through, for example, designing and making a dress for Cinderella that reflected in car headlights and made it safer to wear in the dark. Before designing the puppets they are currently making, they looked at a selection of puppets to see how they were made and what their features were. They rose well to the challenge and talked excitedly about how they used blanket stitch to sew together the templates. They practised sewing first on card with holes punched in it to make sure that their work was good enough. They know that different fasteners are used to join different materials,

such as glue and sticky tape for paper and nails and screws for wood. They have learnt from their past mistakes and talked sensibly about the need to draw first before using sticky tape, "because you can't draw over shiny sticky tape".

91. Likewise, pupils in Key Stage 2 show excitement for their work in design and technology. They particularly enjoyed the challenge to make a clown mobile in 45 minutes. In that time they had to work together with three of their classmates to plan what to do, select the resources and make the mobile. "I enjoyed the task because it was fun to make and was a good team effort", wrote one pupil afterwards. They chose to work with bright colours so that it would attract the attention of young children for whom it was intended, declaring that to choose dull colours "would be a waste of money". The pupils had to draw on skills they had learnt in other subjects such as mathematics and art. For example, they had to 'purchase' the materials from a budget of £3 and draw a poster to advertise it. Similarly, when making a flying machine last year, they used their scientific knowledge about electricity to make a motor and to put headlights on a shoebox buggy.
92. Teaching is satisfactory because the subject teaching guidelines support it effectively. However, no one checks that the plans come to fruition and the lack of records to show pupils' achievements means that teachers have to assume that pupils have learnt what is supposed to have been taught. The subject leader focuses on improving resources but does not give enough thought to what or how improvements can be made to standards. This is because he does not have the opportunity to observe teaching in the subject and his monitoring of pupils' work is limited to informal checks on things they have made. He has limited influence on bringing about changes to the subject provision because he does not have a secure enough idea of standards or how well pupils do in lessons and over time. There is no evidence of pupils making use of ICT to support their work in design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

93. Standards are in line with those expected for the pupils aged seven and eleven. Progress in geography is satisfactory overall, and in Year 6 it accelerates as the teachers raise the expectation of how pupils use literacy, numeracy and ICT as tools for learning. Pupils who have special educational needs are usually well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, they often make good progress in their work, having the benefit of additional explanation and help with how to phrase their writing.
94. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 1, and only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2. However, teaching is satisfactory in both key stages, a judgement based on teachers' planning, and work on display and in pupils' books. Teachers take their planning from the comprehensive new teaching guidelines. This builds the progression of pupils' skills and knowledge well through the years. Year 2 pupils learn about maps, transport and working conditions through the study of an imaginary island, which is taken from one of their literacy stories. This linking of subjects makes their work more interesting. The pupils learn about land use by making comparisons between rural and urban communities.
95. The one lesson observed in Key Stage 2 was very good because the teacher had created favourable learning conditions. In their study of mountainous regions, the pupils had to select the region they were most interested in, research the information to enable them to write a report about it and find out about weather patterns. They used literacy skills well in interpreting information in their own words and numeracy skills successfully to reproduce the weather data in easy to understand tables and graphs. They used ICT well to access the Internet to find information, and employed a data-handling program effectively to construct their graphs. Teaching encouraged the pupils to question the data. For instance, based on their new knowledge, pupils were asked where they would like to live. Many boys felt they would like to live in the Rockies and explained why. This style of learning promotes very strong involvement

and, consequently, pupils have a very positive attitude to their work, concentrate hard on it and take pride in the outcome.

96. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall. The action plan for moving the subject forward emphasises the need to organise and upgrade the resources, which are satisfactory overall. However, there is no reference made to raising standards and how this can be brought about. This is because the subject leader, who writes the plan, does not check on the quality of teaching and learning, or on the standards pupils achieve. Coupled with the lack of a system for assessing pupils' work, this means that the subject leader has a limited view of what is happening in the subject and what needs doing to improve things further.

HISTORY

97. By the ages of seven and eleven, standards are broadly typical for pupils of those ages. Pupils acquire a sound understanding of the past and the differences between past and present by the age of seven. Their research and enquiry skills, understanding of chronology, and knowledge of the past develop well through their time in Key Stage 2. The subject guidelines have been updated recently in the light of new national guidance and this means that teachers build systematically on pupils' learning year by year. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the lessons and are very effectively supported by teaching assistants so they achieve well.
98. By the age of seven, most pupils have a secure understanding of the past and how things change over time. They have some knowledge of important people in history, such as Charles II and Samuel Pepys. Through good teaching, pupils develop a good understanding of the causes of the Great Fire of London as well as the facts. They know the date of the fire, the sequence of events, and that Charles II was king at the time. To explain the role of Samuel Pepys, one pupil clarifies, "Samuel Pepys was an eye witness to the fire", demonstrating a developing historical vocabulary. Many pupils show they understand the differences between then and now, for example, "There were no fire engines in those days", and can suggest what the king might have done to stop such a fire happening again.
99. By the age of eleven, the majority of pupils have a satisfactory understanding of chronology. They place different periods studied in correct sequence and some of them in appropriate centuries. They have adequate opportunities to develop their research and enquiry skills in lessons from a variety of sources such as the Internet, photographs and artefacts, as well as books. A visitor, a war-time evacuee, provides good opportunities for pupils to learn, and the study of artefacts of the period seal their understanding. In Year 6 pupils enjoy learning from their research about the Ancient Greeks, "the games, the gods, the wars", and acquire a good understanding and knowledge of the period. Pupils increase their understanding of the past by finding out about the lives of children in Victorian times and World War II. Pupils in Year 4 develop a good understanding of aspects of life in World War II, particularly those involving children, such as evacuation. They show empathy in their writing: "I would feel very sad and I would miss my mum and I would not want to go." They learn about Anne Frank and write their own diary entries: "I am terrified because there is a war going on". More able pupils also understand the causes of World War II. In Year 5, pupils research many aspects of life in Victorian times. These include the lives of working children and education at that time. They compile diary entries of a Victorian working child and their routines, their meagre diets and their treatment. This increases pupils' understanding of children's lives in those times and their own lives now.
100. The quality of teaching over time is good as pupils reach national expectations by the ages of seven and eleven. This is supported by evidence from discussion with pupils, their work, teachers' planning and three lessons seen during the inspection. Pupils learn well due to the thorough teaching which covers many aspects of the periods studied. A feature of the most effective teaching is the very appropriate questioning, which takes pupils' learning further. Where topics include artefacts or a visitor, pupils are very enthusiastic and learn and remember more. Good relationships in classes mean that pupils listen attentively, are very

involved and so learn well. Teachers often supply a framework for pupils' writing, which helps them to know what to write and they achieve well as a result. However, where all pupils do similar writing on a topic, less able pupils write little at times in their books because they need more support to complete it. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to link the new learning with what pupils already know, which would increase their understanding. Many history topics provide good opportunities for links with other subjects, particularly design and technology and art, which add to pupils' understanding of the period and their enjoyment. Pupils develop their literacy skills effectively, for example by taking notes when an evacuee talks to the class. They make satisfactory use of ICT, for example when they locate some useful information about World War II on a history website.

101. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall. However, the subject leader does not check on the quality of teaching and learning in the subject and this means that the action plan for improvement focuses mainly on enhancing resources and devising the teaching guidelines. There are no effective procedures for recording pupils' achievements, which means that teachers have to assume pupils have learnt what they have been taught from the teaching guidelines. Some new resources have been purchased and more are to be ordered as teachers work their way through the relatively new subject guidelines. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum where they occur, such as the Dewa Roman Experience in Chester in Year 3, and the World War II evacuee in Year 4. This enhances pupils' learning by bringing the subject alive and making it meaningful.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

102. Standards are as expected nationally by the ages of seven and eleven. The school has worked with determination to make ICT an effective tool for pupils' learning in the classroom. The pupils spend a good amount of time working on the computers. As a result all groups, throughout the school, make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs are particularly well supported and often make very good progress.
103. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The teachers make good use of the subject teaching guidelines well, which lay out the pupils' learning steps clearly. The teachers build up the pupils' skills in sequence, building well on previous learning and avoiding unnecessary repetition. The teachers' expertise in using computers has been built up steadily by means of a valuable training programme. Their good partnership with the classroom support assistants enables teachers who are still slightly hesitant to deliver effective lessons. The teachers mostly use the strategy of introducing pupils to the next stage of skills on one day, in readiness for applying them the following day in the literacy or numeracy lessons. This strategy is usually very effective, and computer skills are becoming embedded in learning in many subjects. For example, the process of using mathematical formulae fascinated Year 5 pupils when they were learning how to put their data of favourite foods for a class party onto a spreadsheet. All pupils like working with the computers and because of this behave and concentrate well.
104. Teachers give brief and clear introductions so that pupils get to work on the computers quickly. Because the learning is so 'hands-on' it is memorable and therefore long lasting. The teachers use the large interactive whiteboards well to enable the pupils to see clearly. What happens on the large screen is exactly what the pupils work at on their own smaller screens. Year 2 pupils, for instance, were amazed to see simple instructions fill the large screen, and the shapes on it, with colour. They easily remembered the instructions and were quickly able to master the skill for themselves. The small number of computers in the two suites means that only half a class can work on them at a time. The other half of the class is occupied with a pencil and paper task elsewhere. Occasionally these tasks are not well matched to the abilities of the brightest pupils. Year 6 pupils enjoy adding to their multi-media skills. They are already above average at this strand of computing, where they merge many skills and knowledge such as their historical knowledge of the Ancient Greeks, design skills for sequencing their frames, and art skills as they select appropriate illustrations. Half of the class

were usefully writing an analysis of the advantages of computer presentations. They missed the opportunity of exploring their own ideas of issues for development in their learning. Teachers make sure the pupils get equal time on the computers.

105. The success of the computer provision is due to the strong management of the subject. The scrutiny of teachers' planning ensures that the full programme of study is taught. The subject action plan includes developing the assessment system as a tool to track the pupils' progress in greater detail, and also extending the monitoring of teaching to achieve a still greater consistency over the years.

MUSIC

106. The quality of music seen during the inspection was satisfactory throughout the school. Not enough music lessons were seen to judge whether all aspects of music are as good as they should be, but pupils' attainment in performance meets expectations, especially in singing. Good use is made of video and tape recorders to record pupils' singing and musical performances so that they can be evaluated later.

107. By Year 2, pupils sing in reasonable tune but are not very expressive. They sustain a beat well, as when singing *Jingle Bells*, and keep together as a group. However, their skills are no better than satisfactory because teachers do not correct their singing much. Pupils tend, therefore, to practise existing skills. Not all teachers have confident enough skills themselves and so cannot give suitable guidance. Nevertheless, teachers create a happy atmosphere in lessons and so pupils enjoy singing and playing. This helps them to concentrate, as when pupils in a Year 2 lesson, kept up a steady beat using simple percussion instruments. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils really enjoyed the music as they moved their bodies to the rhythm of the song, *You are my brother, as are one*.

108. Junior pupils sing well in tune and show some expression, especially when singing in two parts. Their rendition of *Rejoice in the Lord Always* in a school assembly was good because pupils really appreciated the need for a crescendo to sing out the words 'Rejoice, Rejoice'. Pupils are satisfactory when composing music, but not very creative. Pupils in a Year 4 lesson struggled to come up with a variety of sounds to represent a dragon, using glockenspiels. As a result, their performances were quite similar and other pupils had difficulty in guessing what the dragon was supposed to be doing. Pupils who sing in the choir, though, have very good skills. They sing sensitively and melodically, with due regard for the tempo and expression. They are precise when ending phrases and work hard to sing as one.

109. The school values music. Many junior pupils benefit from a range of tuition on instruments such as violins, clarinets and French horns. The Director of Music of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral visits periodically to teach and assess the choir. One classroom assistant has good musical skills and supports teachers well in Years 2, 3 and 4. This shows, however, that some teachers' skills are insecure. Whilst subject leadership is satisfactory overall, there is very little checking of how well teachers teach in lessons and so the subject co-ordinator is not fully clear what needs to be done to improve the subject. Nevertheless, the school seizes opportunities for the pupils to perform in public as, for example, in a joint schools' performance of *Baboushka* in the cathedral.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

110. Most pupils reach at least the standards expected for their age at seven and eleven. Particular pupils have strengths in particular aspects of the subjects. For example, some of the Year 2 pupils are already above average in gymnastics. A number of Key Stage 2 pupils are above average in games, swimming and athletics, and their contribution to competitive events accounts for the successes of school teams. An important development is the links that the school enjoys with several local senior schools. The level of expertise that this brings into the

school is clearly helping to raise standards quite rapidly. As a result, pupils overall are making good progress. The extra support means that the school is able to look at particularly talented pupils and bring them on well. Staff are firmly committed to supporting weaker pupils, and in physical education lessons these pupils often make very good progress. They often outshine their peers, and this is a valuable boost for their confidence and self-esteem.

111. Overall, teaching school is good. Teachers teach pupils about the link between health and physical exercise. Staff and pupils usually wear suitable clothing. In lessons the teachers give clear instructions and expect a quick response from pupils. They are clear about what pupils are to learn by the end of each lesson and, because they share this with the pupils, pupils understand the need to work hard. In most lessons the pupils engage in appropriate periods of sustained energetic activity to warm up. In one lesson, the teacher asked, "How do I know this is doing you good?" and the pupils answered, "You can hear us breathless." Well-planned lessons move at a rapid pace. In the cold weather the pupils are kept moving, and their skills developed systematically. The simple throwing, catching and tactics learned by Year 1, for example, become much more complex by Year 5. With the good progress made the Year 5 pupils are above average in ball control and fielding, and have developed a good positional sense for intercepting. Year 2 pupils benefit from particularly challenging lessons. The teachers give the pupils the responsibility for planning, practising and performing their own gymnastic routines. The pupils not only have to meet the teachers' exacting standards, they also have to pass their classmates' scrutiny. The young judges check each other off against a diagram of how a balance or a roll should look. The pupils therefore are determined to show the best standards, with poise, very precise control and quality finish. They lack only the extended technical vocabulary to describe articulately what they are doing, to achieve excellence.
112. The impact of some specialist teaching in Key Stage 2 is raising teachers' view of what pupils can achieve and, because of this, teachers' expectations are high. The accommodation is adequate to meet nationally expected standards, and sometimes even above those for team players. The governors and staff are now aiming for excellence. The lack of a school field for athletics and the limited availability and facilities in the school hall and yard inhibits the objective to achieve well above average standards for all pupils.
113. The management of the subject is sound. The action plan for further improvement includes some staff training, but does not include the monitoring and evaluation of teaching to iron out inconsistency. A simple form of assessment is in place but this is not robust enough to track pupils' attainment in a rigorous way. Consequently, the subject leader does not have a good enough idea of what works well and not so well and is unclear about which standards need raising and how to go about it.