

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARK'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124786

Headteacher: Miss E J Slack

Reporting inspector: Mrs P Silcock
21261

Dates of inspection: 6th - 8th May 2003

Inspection number: 255004

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Stone Lodge Lane West Ipswich
Postcode:	IP2 9HN
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Darlow
Date of previous inspection:	July 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21261	Pauline Silcock	Registered inspector	English Music English as an additional language Education inclusion, including race equality	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
9079	Ann Moss	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
25429	Anne Currie	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Geography	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
10808	Alan Britton	Team inspector	Mathematics History Physical Education	How well is the school led and managed?
19817	Judith Dowsett	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Special Educational Needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mark's Roman Catholic School caters for pupils from four to 11, with 199 on roll (similar to other primary schools). They come from the immediate locality but also further afield because of the school's denominational status. There are significantly more girls than boys in Years 1 and 4. Children start in Reception either full-or part-time in September of the year in which they will be five, so the youngest became full-time at the start of the summer term. Attainment on entry varies year on year. In the main, this year's cohort falls below expectation (for their age) in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Approximately 13 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, below the national average. Around 25 per cent are of minority ethnic origin. Approximately three per cent have English as an additional language, with a small number of these (representing 0.5 per cent of the school population) at an early stage of English language acquisition. These figures are relatively low. Polish and Spanish are given as the main languages other than English. Twenty-three per cent of pupils have special educational needs, broadly average. One per cent has statements of special need, below average. Needs range from specific learning difficulties (with reading and writing) to emotional and behavioural difficulties: literacy problems arising from medical conditions represent by far the largest number. The school has identified around six per cent of pupils as very able in some subject or as being gifted and talented in English and mathematics. About 4.5 per cent of pupils joined the school during the last school year while a further six per cent left. Staffing is stable despite some turmoil over the past two years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mark's is a good school. All pupils participate in all aspects of school life in ways which raise their self-esteem and foster their desire to succeed, as intended by the school's Roman Catholic mission. Teaching is most frequently good or better, and standards are rising in English, mathematics and science. Pupils generally do well in subjects across the curriculum but especially in music. The headteacher, with her deputy and senior managers, provides good leadership and management. Governors work hard with staff towards common goals. All are firmly committed to continuing school improvement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is most frequently good or better. Teachers often organise stimulating activities in lessons so pupils want to be involved. Pupils develop good attitudes, behave well and make good gains in learning.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the educational direction of the school, shared by her deputy and senior managers, producing effective leadership and management.
- Pupils of all ages reach high standards in singing for assemblies and school performances and in their playing of instruments for such events. Music adds much to the quality and ethos of school life.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.
- The care and welfare of pupils are good. Staff know pupils really well and strive hard to make sure they succeed and feel valued.
- Provision for activities out of lesson time is good. Teachers and some parents give generously of their time. Members of the local community play an important role in supporting a mathematics club.
- Financial management is good. It ensures priorities identified for development are realistic and well managed.

What could be improved

- Provision in the Reception class.
- Standards in writing.
- Provision for information and communication technology and standards.
- The role of *all* subject co-ordinators.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the last inspection in July 1998. All issues identified for action have been dealt with successfully. Teaching is now greatly improved. Teachers have improved subject knowledge, and plan better for all subjects to ensure pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are built on successively. The assessment of pupils' learning is starting to be built into teachers' planning systematically. Strengths are seen in systems and assessment procedures for English and mathematics. Good use is made of teaching expertise in Years 5 and 6 for English, mathematics, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. A teacher's musical expertise also benefits pupils in Years 1 to 6. Pupils are withdrawn from lessons for specific purposes linked to ongoing classroom learning. The school is aware of the need to monitor closely how pupils are withdrawn from classrooms for instrumental tuition. Parents have good formal and informal opportunities to learn about their children's progress. The school has a very good capacity to move forward because of the very strong commitment of senior managers, staff and governors to improving provision.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

In last year's statutory tests, science results for 11-year-olds were particularly good. They were also good in English, compared to similar schools. Inspection evidence shows current Year 6 pupils are not likely to do so well except in mathematics, where standards remain average. Standards in science are also average. In English, pupils reach below levels expected (Level 4) overall. A significant number are below average ability, with some assessed as having special educational needs. Few are likely to achieve at higher than expected levels, which will impair overall standards. Many pupils are hampered by difficulties in writing and work does not reflect what otherwise appears to be good knowledge and understanding of a lesson's content. This showed especially in English and science. For example, in a lesson preparing them for a statutory test in writing, all pupils appeared to know what they had to do and how to organise their work. However, around a third could not complete a task meeting criteria they had discussed, and only a small number did so in the time given. Statutory targets for 11-year-olds (adjusted upwards in light of last year's test results) are very challenging for English, given the profile of the cohort. Pupils in Year 2 are also judged unlikely to do as well as last year's cohort. Inspection evidence shows they reach below Level 2 in English overall, but are broadly in line with this in mathematics. Standards in science are judged good, compared to teachers' assessments of very high standards last year. Approximately half the cohort is assessed as having special educational needs, mostly linked to difficulties with reading and writing. Relative to their age and ability, however, pupils across the age range do well in all three subjects. Indeed, pupils in Years 1 and 3 and, especially, in Years 4 and 5 reach better standards than expected.

Pupils' singing in assemblies and in school performances is of a very good standard. So is their accompanying, instrumental playing. A judgement is not made on standards in music in Years 2 and 6 because no lessons were seen. Pupils in other classes, though, do better than expected in many musical activities. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also do well relative to their ages and abilities in art and design and design and technology and reach good standards in these subjects by seven. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 also do well in design and technology, standards are judged average by 11. Learning by the oldest pupils is constrained by lack of time, since they cannot always finish products as intended. Similarly, standards in art and design are affected by timetabling. Standards reached by Year 6 are only satisfactory.

Standards in information and communication technology are below those expected in Years 2 and 6. They are satisfactory for the younger pupils but unsatisfactory by 11. Progress is adversely affected by a lack of computers, in terms of the development of skills and their application across the curriculum. Pupils' work is satisfactory in geography, history and physical education, relative to their age and abilities, and reaches expected standards by seven and 11. Reception children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning, but are judged unlikely to reach goals set in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy by Year 1 since they start from a relatively low base in these areas. However, learning across the curriculum for these youngest children is limited by their having insufficient choice in what they undertake and by the underdevelopment of outside areas.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy their lessons. Most work hard and want to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. In classrooms, pupils' behaviour is usually very good. It is exemplary in assemblies. In the playground, it can appear intimidating at times.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils co-operate well on tasks. They enjoy working with adults. They like to do jobs in classrooms and around the school and show good initiative.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall. Pupils mostly arrive promptly for lessons.

While behaviour is often very good in classrooms and about the building, some inappropriate behaviour was seen in the playground space for Years 3 to 6 during break times. Space is cramped and boys' football games sometimes dominate in ways potentially intimidating for younger or more nervous pupils. At lunchtimes, pupils benefit from being able to use a large, attractive field area and play is then seen as amicable across age groups.

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.

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is mostly good. Strengths are seen in Years 1 and 2 and, especially, in Years 3 to 6. In the better lessons, teachers organise a stimulating range of activities that intrigue pupils and hold their attention. For example, Year 5 pupils dressed up as Tudor monarchs to introduce important themes in a history lesson. So, 'Katherine of Aragon' and 'Anne of Cleves' told their audience why Henry VIII had divorced each of them, and 'Henry' came forward to defend his actions. All pupils made very good gains in learning through discussing the issues raised. Teaching in the Reception class is satisfactory. Teacher and nursery nurse work well together to provide a learning environment where children feel secure. Planning is suitably matched to the early learning goals. Yet, in a practical sense, limiting children's opportunities to choose what they do limits their development of important skills linked to self-initiated learning. Teachers generally have good skills in teaching literacy and numeracy. Teaching in English and mathematics is mostly good or even very good. Consequently, pupils across the age range regularly achieve better than might be expected relative to their age and abilities. A teacher with specialist skills enhances music teaching for pupils in Years 1 to 6. Pupils learning stringed or brass instruments similarly benefit from visiting music teachers. In all classes, teachers plan well for pupils with identified learning needs, including those with a statement of special need. So these pupils make good progress, especially where support from classroom assistants is most consistent, as in the Reception and Year 1 and 2 classes. Assistants and class teachers are good role models, with high expectations of pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 but unsatisfactory for children in the Reception class. Here, activities are limited in their scope and in the use of outdoor spaces.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Strengths are seen in Years 1 and 2 and for pupils with statements of special need because support from classroom assistants consistently aids pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are well provided for because staff know pupils well and make sure all are included in activities in ways matched appropriately to their learning needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop an understanding of such matters in assemblies and through teachers' planning for subjects across the curriculum. Music, especially, is used well. Pupils listen quietly in assembly and learn about different musical traditions in lessons and how to play instruments successfully in co-operation with others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	To good effect. All staff work hard at raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Procedures for child protection are good. Staff are suitably informed about them.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. The curriculum for Reception children is sufficiently broad and balanced. However, planning does not take sufficient account of the need for children to make choices about what they will do, or be engaged in practical activities of interest to them. Nor does planning across areas of learning promote movement between the classroom and outdoor spaces in ways aimed at meeting important educational goals. Provision in Years 1 to 6 meets statutory requirements. Planning in mathematics engages pupils in practical activities that benefit all pupils' learning. There are insufficient computers, limiting work in information and communication technology. Teachers take good account in their planning of making sure all pupils participate in lessons. When available, classroom assistants are used well to support pupils' learning needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. All senior managers work in partnership with the headteacher to achieve common goals. All are good role models, being skilled classroom practitioners. The head and deputy keep in touch daily, to ensure the smooth running of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. Many governors are new to their responsibilities. They bring good skills and expertise to the school and are strongly committed to moving it forward.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Senior managers monitor all aspects of provision systematically. Priorities for development are well aimed at raising standards in light of information gained.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management is good. It focuses on raising standards through developing staff skills. Funds are spent properly for designated purposes.

There are enough teachers and support staff to meet curricular demands. Teachers' expertise is well matched to subject responsibilities. The deputy head brings very relevant skills to mathematics, and also contributes strongly to other key areas. Not all co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning in classrooms. Some documents for parents have omissions and so do not fully meet statutory requirements. For example, the Governors' Annual Report to parents does not state arrangements for the admission of pupils with disabilities or explain how future policies will refer to better access to the school for those with disabilities. Resources for learning are frequently good. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The school now has a pleasant library. Principles of best value are applied to good effect. All options entailing expenditure are considered carefully by the headteacher and governors, as with the recent good improvements to the building.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. They enjoy their learning. • Good teaching means children make good progress. • The school has an 'open door' policy and the headteacher listens to parents' concerns. • Teachers are easily approached to talk about children's progress informally. • Staff know children well and care about their welfare. • There are good arrangements for children starting in Reception and transferring to secondary school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information given when parents raise concerns. • Behaviour and bad language in the playground. • The range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They find information given to parents is satisfactory overall but agree improvements could be made (for example, with regard to information about why the swimming pool is no longer used). They found no instances of bad language in the playground although senior managers are aware such instances happen at times. Appropriate action is taken to deal with such matters. Inspectors agree that behaviour in the playground is sometimes intimidating. In view of the school's size and the commitment of teachers and some parents to organising activities outside lessons, inspectors do not agree with parents' criticisms about this aspect of provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Inspection evidence shows pupils' abilities vary considerably between year groups. In the current Reception cohort, significant weaknesses are seen in personal, social and emotional development and in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in communication, language and literacy. Standards are generally below what might be expected for this age in these two areas. Accordingly, most children are judged unlikely to reach relevant early learning goals by the time they transfer to Year 1. At the same time, while they should attain these goals in other areas of the curriculum (mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development), their rate of learning is often affected by underdeveloped social skills and by their ability to listen to what is being said. Many children find it hard to attend to adults' instructions or to share toys and play together in ways showing they understand another's point of view. While progress in all areas of learning is satisfactory overall (including for those children with special educational needs), it is hampered by children having little choice in what they do, and by their having limited use of outdoor areas.
2. In the 2002 statutory tests, seven-year-olds achieved broadly average results in reading and writing compared to results in all schools. Their results in mathematics were well above average. When compared with peers in similar schools, pupils were below average in reading, average in writing and above average in mathematics. Teachers assessed pupils as above average in their speaking and listening skills at Level 2 or above and as managing very high results in science at this level (in the top five percentile in all schools). Inspection evidence shows the current Year 2 cohort does not do as well. Pupils' standards are below expectation in reading and writing although they generally have good speaking and listening skills. In mathematics, they reach average standards and in science are judged good. Half the cohort is assessed as benefiting from learning support and is on the school's code of practice register for special educational need. Most support is directed towards helping pupils develop skills in reading and writing. A small number receives regular support for very basic literacy skills. The emphasis given to practical activities in mathematics and science provides very good support for all pupils, hence the more positive picture compared to English.
3. In last year's statutory tests, 11-year-olds reached average standards in English and mathematics and well above average in science, compared to pupils in all schools. When comparisons are made with similar schools, they reached above average standards in English, broadly in line with the average in mathematics and well above the average in science. As with their younger peers, however, the current cohort in Year 6 presents a different picture. Evidence suggests standards in English are below expectation overall, although they are broadly as expected in mathematics and science. While a much smaller number of pupils than in Year 2 are assessed as having special educational needs, a significant number are below average for this age. For example, in a lesson preparing them for a statutory test in writing, all pupils appeared to know what they had to do and how to organise their work. In discussion, pupils of all abilities keenly participated, answering a teacher's questions confidently. However, around a third could not complete a task meeting criteria they had discussed, and only a small number did so in the time given. In science, pupils' workbooks together with observations made in the classroom suggest good standards, resulting from a teacher's skilled questioning and a careful structuring of tasks. When talking about their science outside the classroom, pupils have difficulty recalling what they have done and explaining key facts showing knowledge and understanding of practical work and scientific principles. Following assessments made of pupils' abilities, the cohort is split into two sets for mathematics. Activities are geared to meeting the learning needs of pupils in each set, with practical work stressed for those of lower ability. A teacher's subject expertise helps these pupils reach average standards in the main better than might be expected.
4. Over time, trends in results for the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science for 11-year-olds have risen in line with national trends. The statutory target set for English was exceeded in last year's tests and that for mathematics was not quite met. In light of results, current targets for

these subjects have been adjusted upwards, and are especially challenging in English, given the nature of the cohort. Inspectors found no notable difference in the performance of boys and girls.

5. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. At times, progress is better, as seen in classes where additional support is more readily available to ensure greater consistency in learning (for example, in Years 1 and 2). Pupils with statements of special need make good progress through the support they receive. Targets set are linked to pupils' individual education plans, where these are in place. The way pupils with identified learning needs are included in lesson activities benefits their progress in all subjects. The few pupils with English as an additional language progress in line with their peers. Their needs are well catered for in lessons because teachers and classroom assistants know pupils well. The school now picks out pupils believed to have particular abilities in subjects such as physical education and music or regarded as gifted and talented in English and mathematics. But this development is relatively new and the impact on pupils' achievement has not yet been assessed.
6. Pupils across the age-range do well in English, mathematics and science relative to their ages and abilities. In fact, pupils in Year 1 and Year 3 and, especially, in Years 4 and 5 often reach higher standards than expected. Pupils in Year 1, for example, can predict from the title and cover pictures what a story might be about. Most can work out the correct number of sounds in a word (recording that 'shoot' has three as in 'Sh oo t') and read from the 'big book' story as a teacher points to the words. By Year 6, higher-ability pupils tackle a demanding text confidently and guess the meaning of unknown words from their context. They enjoy discussing stories, as when a boy talked about the "rebels and brigands" in his reading book and what kinds of things they might do that would be unacceptable to most people. Year 4 pupils explain strategies for working out number problems in mathematics. The more able work out seven possibilities of how to reach 16 through using three different number cards. Those of below average ability know most number bonds to 20, with support, and are beginning to try out various ways of answering problems. By Year 6, such below average pupils can recognise square numbers and place numbers such as 100, 9, 25, 17 and 56 into the correct section of a Venn diagram when sorting numbers according to their properties. Year 3 pupils classify different samples of rock correctly using a simple key. They use vocabulary such as 'igneous' and 'layered' to describe rocks they handle. By Year 6, they suggest suitable answers to questions such as "Why is the top of the stigma sticky?" when revising work on parts of plants and their functions, in a science lesson.
7. Across the age range, pupils reach very good standards in singing in assemblies and when singing for such events as the school Christmas concert. Those accompanying singing on recorders, flute, string and brass instruments also reach high standards. In lessons in Years 3, 4 and 5, pupils acquit themselves well, showing very good achievement, given their age and abilities. They play a range of instruments and improvise rhythms and melodies quite quickly. A judgement on standards reached in music by seven and 11-year-olds is not made because lessons in these classes were not timetabled for the inspection period. In fact, music lessons for Year 6 pupils alternated with the teaching of French, which the school recognises has implications for the musical development of these oldest pupils. While pupils gain much from their learning of another language, it nevertheless impinges on music provision. Achievement in information and communication technology is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and standards by Year 2 are average. Unfortunately, both achievements and standards reached by Year 6, relative to age and abilities, are unsatisfactory. This is because, while provision has improved since the previous inspection, there are still too few computers for pupils to practise skills learned and apply them to other subjects. Teachers make good links across the curriculum for this purpose where possible, but there are practical limits to how such links can be developed. A visiting technician from a local High School aids the teaching of subject skills. Pupils are supervised in small groups in the computer suite and make good progress. This was seen in Year 2 when pupils were helped to produce block charts linked to data gathering in mathematics.
8. All pupils in Years 1 and 2 do well in art and design and design and technology. Standards in both subjects are better than expected by Year 2. For example, pupils create imaginative landscapes in art and design with a variety of media. This links usefully to work in geography. The achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 in art and design is satisfactory and standards, by Year 6, are broadly in line with those expected. The oldest pupils cannot build sufficiently well on key subject skills, knowledge and understanding because of timetabling demands from other subjects. Similarly, standards in

design and technology reached by Year 6 are kept broadly average by timetable pressures, affecting pupils' opportunities to see projects through, especially the making of products they have designed. Achievement in the subject across Years 3 to 6 is good, however, relative to pupils' ages and abilities. Achievement in geography, history and physical education is satisfactory across the age range and standards by Years 2 and 6 are also satisfactorily in line with expectation. By the time they transfer to secondary school, most pupils can swim at least the required 25 metres.

9. The picture is varied in relation to that given in the previous inspection report. In part, this is due to variations in ability within cohorts, year on year, from the Reception class upwards. Also, planning for children in the Reception year is now geared to quite different criteria than was the case before. Useful comparisons are difficult to make. Improvements are evident in rising standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, notwithstanding reservations about standards in the current Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in other subjects are broadly similar to judgements reached previously, although improvement is seen in music where standards reached are now judged very good. Improved standards in art and design and design and technology are also seen in Year 2 (where these are judged good). More general improvements in achievements relative to pupils' ages and abilities are also evident (for example, in design and technology for all classes and in art and design in Years 1 and 2).

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. As at the last inspection, pupils continue to have good attitudes to school and to their learning. Most parents say pupils enjoy coming to school and this ensures that most arrive on time each morning. Once in school, pupils are generally happy and look forward to their day. They are polite, cheerful and mostly eager to learn. Their positive approach to school means they try hard to meet teachers' expectations. For example, in a very good Year 4 music lesson, pupils worked hard at improvising a simple tune using a five-note scale. They answered questions and demonstrated their skills. Indeed, positive attitudes were seen in many lessons. The school's safe, welcoming and calm atmosphere encourages pupils to do their best. They respond well, developing good habits of working and settling quickly to tasks. Sustained levels of concentration were observed in a Year 1 science lesson when pupils studied plants through magnifying glasses to identify and name the different parts. They enjoyed the lesson, persisting well on the task set.
11. Behaviour in and around school is good overall. It was exemplary in the assemblies seen, including those attended by Reception children. Very good behaviour is also frequently seen in lessons, especially in Years 1 to 6. In a Year 6 personal, social and health education lesson, for example, pupils excelled themselves as they rehearsed how to receive a visitor. When they actually greeted him, they looked after his comfort in the agreed manner before listening with rapt attention to his talk. This excellent lesson promoted, well, pupils' awareness of self and how their behaviour and attitudes affect others. Personal, social and health education lessons are used throughout the school to help pupils learn to respect one another's feelings, values and beliefs. The youngest Reception children can find it hard to listen attentively to their teacher when sitting on the carpet for whole-class sessions. Often, they are fidgety and soon begin to chatter amongst themselves, paying little attention as their teacher explains the work they will be doing. Yet when absorbed in an activity they frequently show a good concentration and ability to work alongside one another and, at times, co-operate in their play. More generally, pupils move around their classrooms and the school building with a minimum of fuss and without wasting time.
12. Sometimes, incidents of inappropriate behaviour are seen in the playground. For example, believing themselves unobserved, a small group of Year 3 boys argued fiercely at the end of a morning break about the outcome of a football game in a way they knew to be unacceptable to adults. Some days, boys' football games dominate playground space available for Years 3 to 6 in ways potentially intimidating for the youngest pupils or those of a nervous disposition. The intensity of these games can verge on aggressive behaviour. The imminent, planned introduction of new playground games (organised through the work of the School Council) is set to address such problems in ways likely to benefit all pupils. Challenging behaviour itself is well managed by staff members both in and out of classrooms and pupils have a real grasp of adults' expectations in this regard. Taking into account playground behaviour noted above, there is no evidence of truly oppressive bullying, including racism.

The school's caring and supportive climate encourages pupils to get on well together. There is good racial harmony.

13. Good relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults across the age range lead to good co-operation and collaboration in many lessons. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils quickly organised themselves into groups of three for role-play. They were soon engaged in their tasks and worked very well together, taking turns to play each part. Pupils understand and follow school rules well and treat each other and adults with courtesy and respect. Although the hall during lunchtime is sometimes quite noisy, pupils socialise cheerfully together in mixed age groups, chatting at their tables. They talk to adults politely.
14. Pupils' personal development is good. They readily take responsibility for tasks around the school. For example, they set up the hall for assembly, making sure the overhead projector and CD player are ready for use. During the inspection, two older boys dealt with such equipment unobtrusively, helping the smooth running of each assembly. A number of pupils organise themselves equally well to play instruments such as recorders and violins to accompany hymns. They co-operate and play very well together. The recently formed School Council now meets regularly, involving pupils from all year groups, including the youngest children. Members are enthusiastic about their responsibilities and are supported well by the deputy headteacher and two governors.
15. Attendance levels remain satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. Most pupils arrive promptly for lessons at the start of the day. There have been no exclusions in the relevant period prior to inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is good in 35 per cent of lessons, very good in a further 20 per cent and excellent in five per cent. It is strong in Years 1 and 2 and, especially, in Years 3 to 6. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection when, although teaching was found good overall, a significant proportion of lessons was nevertheless judged unsatisfactory.
17. Teaching is satisfactory in the Reception class and all children, including those assessed as having special educational needs, make steady progress. Teacher and nursery nurse work well together to provide a caring environment where children feel secure. Children's learning needs are met through planned activities geared to teaching and learning goals. For example, when the nursery nurse worked with a group of younger children on the letter 'K', they learned successfully because they enjoyed the activities. A classroom assistant is deployed effectively, as are parents (for example, to help children on a computer). Planning is suitably linked to relevant early learning goals. A good feature of lessons is the way learning intentions are explained clearly to children and linked to previous learning. In practice, though, working strictly through lesson plans limits possibilities for self-initiated learning, both in the classroom and outside. Children routinely gather on the carpet while the teacher explains work to be done with some groups then sent off to tasks supervised by an adult. Others are similarly directed to activities such as role-play, while a small number "choose" from the remaining options (such as reading in the book corner or working on the classroom computer). Generally, children cannot choose to play outside. Staff know children well and directed learning is clearly meant to take account of individual needs in light of previous assessments on progress made. However, key learning opportunities arising from children making choices and working independently, in ways of interest to them as individuals, are missed. Moreover, a significant number of the youngest children and those who have underdeveloped social and personal skills become fidgety and restless, affecting the whole class, since 'carpet time' can be quite lengthy.
18. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. In Years 3 to 6, teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is also good overall. Teachers generally have high expectations of what pupils will achieve and how they will behave. They plan effectively for all levels of ability, setting appropriate challenges for high-achieving pupils. They frequently present pupils with stimulating practical activities. For example, Year 1 pupils progressed from experimenting with 'mark making' with pencils in art and design to working with paint and then making marks with other media for different effects. They made very good gains in learning because of skilled teaching and the way

activities were structured to build on established skills, knowledge and understanding. The good length of time given to the lesson contributed to its success.

19. Teachers plan well together across year groups so pupils build successively on relevant skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject. Their knowledge of the National Curriculum subjects is secure and all have good skills in numeracy and literacy teaching. Setting arrangements for mathematics in place in Year 6 are geared to using teaching expertise to benefit pupils in Year 6 (for mathematics) and Year 5 (for English). More generally, teachers also provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning in English and mathematics by applying skills to other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 keep a mathematics journal, making a record of the targets they are set and the progress they make. This helps them assess their own learning. A specialist music teacher boosts provision in Years 1 to 6 with a notable impact on learning. Other exchanges between teachers are also beneficial. For example, the Year 6 teacher takes Year 5 for information and communication technology while the Year 5 teacher takes Year 6 pupils for personal, social and health education. Because of insufficient computers, teachers give pupils only limited opportunities to apply information and communication technology skills lessons to other subjects. This obviously hinders pupils' development of these skills.
20. Where teaching is good or better, teachers keep a good pace and retain pupils' interest through a judicious choice of activities. For example, in a very good literacy lesson in Year 2, activities were well matched to ability levels, and caught and held pupils' attention. Pupils moved from listening keenly to a story to a group task and then a spelling game. This reinforced previous learning and grabbed everyone's attention because of the fun way it was done. Although the lesson was quite long and pupils found the content demanding, they were alert and interested throughout. The teacher's skilled questioning made sure all pupils were drawn into all aspects of the lesson. A classroom assistant made sure pupils with learning difficulties participated fully. Skilled questioning and use of support are commonly seen in classes across the age-range. For example, in a good physical education lesson in Year 4, both the teacher and classroom assistant took part in activities for developing pupils' accuracy in throwing and striking a ball. They demonstrated good techniques and gave lower-ability pupils confidence to 'have a go'. All made good gains in learning. All teachers mark pupils' English and mathematics work really well. At times, such marking is exemplary, as seen in English in Years 4 and 5. Teachers make good use of information gathered through marking to plan work. While marking in other subjects is kept up to date, it is not so geared to informing pupils where they have succeeded and how they might improve. Inconsistent practices are also seen from class to class.
21. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers sometimes miss important teaching points and do not extend learning sufficiently. This was seen in physical education lessons in Years 3 and 5, when pupils were unsure about the effects of exercise on their bodies and the importance of 'warm-up' and 'cool-down' activities. There were also limited opportunities to improve on ball skills being taught by allowing time for pupils to appraise one another's performance. At times, Year 3 pupils were unnecessarily noisy. Anyone needing adult attention would have found it hard to make themselves heard.
22. Teachers in all classes plan well for different levels of ability especially in English and mathematics. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well catered for in ways enabling them to work happily alongside their peers. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special need, take full part in lessons, so they can achieve targets set out in their individual education plans. Planning takes appropriate account of these. Classroom assistants throughout the school know pupils well and give good personal and academic support. Such pupils can work successfully alongside their peers, maintaining their self-esteem. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for intensive instruction in basic skills, either individually or in small groups. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 4 work on aspects of literacy away from classrooms during parts of some literacy lessons. These sessions are guided by detailed schemes of work to ensure pupils build on success suitably in small steps. Communication between teachers and classroom assistants is better than at the last inspection, although formal recording of what pupils achieve is still not sufficiently stressed.

23. Teachers set homework in line with the school's policy, suitably emphasising reading across the age range. Other homework tasks are well aimed at reinforcing or extending classroom work. For example, Year 5 pupils were given a reading task with instructions to consider what different characters thought and how they reacted to their various situations, so continuing discussions in literacy lessons about the differing perspectives characters can have on events in a story.

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

24. Curricular planning in the Reception class follows national recommendations for children of this age and achieves satisfactory breadth and balance across all areas. There are, however, shortcomings in the way it is implemented, notably in making sure that planned activities meet the needs of children in the current cohort, and in the quality and range of activities offered. As already noted, many children have underdeveloped social and personal skills and find it hard to sit during whole-class sessions for any length of time, but little account is taken of this for planning purposes in the organisation and structure of activities. Children have too few opportunities to choose what they will do and follow their own interests. Also, the range of activities offered outside is limited, with an inadequate balance kept between learning indoors and out. There is only a small outside area. It is not well enough resourced and insufficient emphasis is placed on activities of a practical nature that many children need to capture their interest and to extend their learning.
25. Curricular provision for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall. It follows the latest guidance for all National Curriculum subjects and includes good provision for personal, social, citizenship and health education. This includes drugs awareness. The school has worked hard with parents and other Catholic schools in the area to introduce an agreed policy on sex education.
26. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is broad and generally well balanced – an improvement on the last inspection. Teachers plan to introduce new work in ways allowing pupils to build gradually on their skills in each subject and extend what they already know. The last inspection report identified the need for pupils to have more opportunities to carry out investigations in mathematics and this matter has been dealt with. However, pressures of time in Year 6 mean the oldest pupils are restricted in their opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in subjects such as art and design (most notably), design and technology and music. Indeed, pupils cannot recall when they last did art and design, whereas considerable stress is placed on science, albeit, understandably, to maintain the improved standards in this core subject. Teachers make good links between subjects, using time available to the full, enabling pupils to apply skills learned in purposeful ways. For example, in Year 4, pupils design a poster using a 'publishing' computer programme as part of work in literacy and so can apply information and communication technology skills to good effect. Provision for music enhances the whole curriculum and adds much to the quality of school life. The teaching of French in Year 6 by a teacher from a local High School is another valuable extension to pupils' learning although it currently affects planning for music, since the two subjects are taught alternately in order to fit them both in. The school is suitably aware of such difficulties and a review of timetabling for the next school year is in hand.
27. The National Numeracy Strategy is implemented well and is helping to raise standards. The National Literacy Strategy is also in place and standards have risen over time. However, the school has well-founded concerns about the impact of the Strategy on the development of pupils' extended writing skills and how these are best catered for, especially with regard to motivating pupils to write at length and letting them do this. Informal discussions with pupils as well as observations of them at work found a significant number in all classes who have difficulties with writing and do not settle easily to tasks. There are also insufficient computers, so pupils cannot develop their information and communication technology skills as they should. Pupils have very limited access to the Internet, restricting their independent research, although good use is made of library books for this purpose. For example, Year 6 pupils used books effectively to investigate various coastal features in their geography studies.
28. The school follows through the belief in its curriculum policy statement that each individual should be "understood, valued, encouraged" and "enabled to experience success" fully. All pupils have equal access to the full curriculum although there are problems at times with ensuring this. Pupils with

learning needs and those bringing different cultural and linguistic experiences into the school community are valued and integrated fully into school life. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons, teachers make every effort to stop them being disadvantaged when they return to ongoing classroom work. This was seen when a Year 3 teacher made sure pupils who had left the room to work on their reading with a classroom assistant during a literacy lesson carried on with the writing task when they returned. At times, though, withdrawing pupils from classrooms is more problematic. For example, two Year 6 girls left an information and communication technology lesson for tuition on the 'cello, a weekly occurrence. While the class teacher later organised some 'hands on' computer work, this was necessarily limited in what the two pupils could achieve. The school is aware of a need for continual review of arrangements for withdrawing pupils from ongoing work so that they do not always miss the same subject and can make up for experiences missed. The French club after school is popular and has been opened to pupils in Years 1 to 5 so as to meet demand and widen access to what is offered. The Deputy Head runs two clubs, one for younger and one for older pupils. Both boys and girls engage with all activities, in and outside lessons.

29. Provision for pupils with special educational needs varies but is at least satisfactory throughout the school. Provision is good in Years 1 and 2. Here, the early assessment of pupils giving cause for concern, sustained support from classroom assistants and the use of a range of strategies to help meet these pupils' needs secure their good and sometimes very good progress. Additional support is not so consistent in Years 3 to 6, especially for older pupils in Years 5 and 6. In all classes, however, where extra support is available, its deployment is well planned and all pupils take part in main activities. For example, those with problems of concentration are well supported in many lessons, so they take part fully in planned work. This was seen in a Year 6 geography lesson when a classroom assistant kept a group focused on a task, reaching a good standard. Individuals and small groups make good progress when they are withdrawn for regular intensive instruction in basic skills. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 leave part of some literacy lessons to work on letter sounds and spellings, as required to meet their identified learning needs. Setting in mathematics for Year 6 means those with special educational needs progress in line with their peers. The school now identifies the very able in subjects such as physical education and those deemed gifted and talented in English and mathematics, and seeks to extend provision aimed at meeting their needs. For example, able mathematicians from Years 4 to 6 have been involved in an initiative at a local teachers' centre. There are exciting plans for the development of mathematical puzzles produced in partnership with local business. It is expected that pupils throughout the school will benefit from using these puzzles.
30. Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with what is organised outside lesson times, but, given its size, the school has a good range of activities and works at involving pupils across the age range. Activities include football, netball, recorders, French and mathematics clubs. Some parents give good support by helping to run clubs. Where parents opt for the tuition, pupils who show some musical aptitude can also learn instruments such as guitar, violin or trumpet. The school is keen to promote this additional learning, and pupils have many opportunities to demonstrate and develop their instrumental skills as part of daily school life.
31. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. For example, three representatives from a local firm of accountants support the mathematics club. They visit during lunchtime once a week to play games with pupils and help develop mathematical skills. The school has links with several parishes, reflecting its wide catchment area. As well as linking with other Catholic schools in the diocese, the headteacher is also working with primary schools in the immediate area on curricular issues. The school is therefore reviewing how its provision can better match the needs of its particular intake, sharing advice with colleagues (as seen, for example, in its concerns with provision for English). A good range of visitors comes to the school and the local area is well exploited to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, Year 5 pupils visit Kentwell Hall as part of their study of the Tudor period in history. Strong, beneficial links are also developing with other educational establishments. A local High School teacher teaches French in Year 6 as said above and a technician from the High School gives valuable extra help in the computer suite, twice a week, to pupils across the age range.

32. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, significantly helping pupils to act responsibly and relate to each other well. The school meets its stated aim of ensuring that pupils gain a 'respect for all other people' and its religious ethos is integral to school life.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on the world around them. For example, in a recent assembly, they thought about those injured in the recent war with Iraq, especially about a child who had made headline news. Music makes a very special contribution to pupils' spiritual development. In an assembly, it was pointed out that singing hymns is another way of praying so everyone should sing the words to the best of their ability and thoughtfully. Pupils listen to music silently as they wait for assembly to begin, so developing a love of music. They also take pleasure in making their own music, when they sing or play musical instruments both in assemblies and in lessons. Staff value pupils' work, celebrating achievement and raising pupils' self-esteem, in lessons and in assemblies. 'Super stars' are selected for a wide range of achievements, in classrooms and around the school, and all pupils are proud to be picked out by the headteacher in assembly.
34. Provision for developing pupils' moral education is good. The school very effectively teaches pupils the principles for telling right from wrong. A whole-school approach to behaviour management is consistent. Pupils work together to devise rules for their class, ensuring classrooms are calm, friendly, orderly environments. In personal and social education lessons, pupils have a good understanding of moral issues. In Year 2, a teacher took time after lunch to discuss issues arising during the break and there was good emphasis on how pupils' actions affect others and how to improve relationships. All adults act as role models. The headteacher ensures that pupils who find it hard to relate to others can talk through their feelings and frustrations, and think about how to resolve these positively.
35. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Staff foster good relationships between pupils and between pupils and themselves. Through a personal, social and health education programme, pupils' social awareness and their concern and respect for others improve. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 6, pupils prepared for the visit of an assistant head groundsman from the local football club, showing in their discussion that they knew well how their attitudes and behaviour affect others. They realised they had to look a visitor in the eye during an exchange of questions and answers, to speak clearly and listen respectfully. When preparing for an assembly, Year 5 pupils talked about how people depend on each other. One pupil introduced the phrase 'Everyone is of equal worth in the eyes of God' to illustrate such interdependence to the audience. The School Council is a forum for all pupils to express their views. Class representatives take their responsibilities very seriously, influencing school life in ways everyone appreciates (for example, they are helping plan to improve playground facilities). Pupils in Year 6 have many responsibilities which they carry out conscientiously. These include setting up the hall for morning assemblies and switching off computers in the computer suite at the end of each day.
36. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils learn about life in other countries, such as India, through their work in geography. They also learn about other beliefs by studying major world religions. They listen to music from other countries as they enter assembly as well as studying such music in lessons. Such learning is extended through visits and visitors: for example, pupils go to see a Gamalan orchestra, and listen to a Samba band performing in school. Older pupils have also attended opera performances at the Royal Opera House. Visits to local places of interest, such as Mountfitchet Castle, alongside a study of famous people in history, give valuable insights into English culture. Parents expressed their appreciation of the way teachers plan visits, at a pre-inspection meeting. They saw these visits as ways their children could take their learning beyond the classroom, while developing their general cultural awareness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Pupils continue to be well cared for by staff, as at the last inspection. Parents and pupils appreciate this good provision. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. The senior management team ensures that all members of staff realise they need to promote the guidance given in the school's new behaviour policy consistently. This guidance is set out in a 'user-friendly' way.

38. Child protection procedures are good, the headteacher being the designated person in charge. The personal and academic progress of children currently in the local authority's care is closely monitored. The school nurse and social workers from the Catholic Children's Society visit regularly to give good support to pupils and parents with particular needs. Staff are suitably trained and kept up to date with aspects of first aid and child protection. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and a recently appointed member of the governing body has expertise in matters of health and safety, so regular risk assessments are carried out. A race equality policy is also of good quality, although systems for monitoring its impact are not, yet, secure. The school rightly sees this as an area for further work.
39. Teachers and classroom assistants significantly contribute to a caring, safe and calm environment. The way good behaviour is encouraged makes sense to pupils. Playtimes and lunchtimes are well supervised, although there is little interaction between supervisors and pupils during lunchtime so as to improve play activities. The occasional outbreaks of immature, attention-seeking behaviour by a few pupils are well handled. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson, the class teacher and classroom assistant worked in complementary ways to help a pupil get on with a task. Pupils who find it hard to communicate ideas and share their understanding are helped to participate in lessons to the best of their ability through sensitive support.
40. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are also good. Although no formal profiles for the personal development of each pupil are kept, pupils' personal development is effectively monitored. Staff members know pupils well and respond sympathetically to them, taking good account of personal circumstances and individual well-being. Teachers give good praise and encouragement during lessons, and achievements, large and small, are celebrated. The school lets all pupils take some responsibility. For example, they may organise equipment for physical education lessons and tidy up after its use. Across the age range, pupil representatives eagerly and confidently join in School Council meetings.
41. In the Reception class, staff have good knowledge and understanding of children informally. Procedures for assessing learning are appropriate but they are not used systematically and do not sufficiently guide planning in ways ensuring that children's learning needs are properly met. The new baseline assessment for Reception children had just arrived in school at the time of the inspection. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are good in Years 1 to 6. In addition to statutory tests at seven and 11, teachers use standardised tests in English and mathematics. 'Tracking' sheets follow the progress of individuals and cohorts. These are monitored systematically and their use continues to be developed (for example, to monitor the performance of particular groups of pupils). Papers from past Year 6 statutory tests have been analysed to pinpoint weaknesses and to inform targets set for individuals, groups and classes. As noted earlier, this year, the school decided to 'set' for mathematics in Year 6, forming two teaching groups, so as to address concerns about this cohort in light of assessment information.
42. Pupils are set targets relative to their ability in reading and writing, which are written in their books and when achieved, stamped with new targets set. An exceptional feature is the use of mathematics journals in Years 3 to 6, charting progress for each pupil. Assessment and recording systems for science, history, geography, art and design, music and physical education follow the latest guidance for these subjects and pupils' progress is judged at the end of each unit of work. This initiative is fairly recent and its impact is not yet clear in all subjects. Similar procedures are planned for design and technology and for information and communication technology but have yet to be implemented. Using assessment information to inform planning is well developed for English and mathematics in all classes but not for other subjects.
43. Effective strategies allow the early identification of pupils with learning difficulties. Once pupils are on the register for special educational needs, careful records are kept of their progress, together with individual education plans. Usually, these are reviewed each term, with new targets set as necessary, so pupils make progress at least consistent with their peers. Targets are clear and achievable, working alongside other strategies to assist pupils. They mainly deal with difficulties of behaviour, spelling or reading. A strong point is the way support for pupils with behavioural and emotional needs from classroom assistants does not disrupt other pupils' learning. Pupils with a statement of special

need receive their full entitlement of support. There are regular meetings with outside agencies. The school makes good use of available professional help for all pupils with identified needs. Provision for special needs now includes picking out those who are gifted and talented in English and mathematics. For example, pupils with a Spanish linguistic background (and assessed as linguistically able) are to have lessons in Spanish so they can build on their knowledge and understanding of a home language. The school is strongly committed to this aspect of its work and there are plans to extend provision to include science next year and other subjects over time. The progress of these pupils is assessed through the whole school assessment procedure.

44. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Attendance rates remain broadly in line with the national average. The school has stringent and appropriate methods for registering pupils each day and authorised and unauthorised absences are recorded correctly. Clear procedures follow up any absences and parents are expected to fill in the application forms provided for holidays in term-time. Such holidays are actively discouraged and parents are well aware of the school's stance on this matter.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. Overall, the school's links with parents are satisfactory, as is its approach to fostering parents' understanding of its work. There were mixed reactions from parents at the meeting prior to inspection regarding a number of things. Most parents warmly praised what the school does but a few were quite critical. This division of view is also reflected in parents' questionnaire responses and in one or two written responses. Notwithstanding the criticisms, most parents by far value the school's caring attitude and all believe that their children are making good progress.
46. Most express confidence in the headteacher. They like the 'open door' policy whereby they can approach her if they wish to discuss a child or even their own personal problems. They speak highly of the good informal links with teachers, too. Such links are seen as two-way, with teachers ready to approach parents where a matter needs airing, putting pupils' interests to the fore.
47. Parents of pupils with a statement of special educational need are invited to annual reviews and kept properly informed throughout the year of their child's progress. More generally, parents of children with individual education plans are told when new targets are set rather than being involved in the actual review process with the class teacher and co-ordinator for special needs. Neither parents nor their children are greatly involved in the reviewing and setting of targets. Still, the school does listen to parents' views and gives support where possible. For example, extra mathematics classes were set up for a small group of pupils following a parent expressing a concern for his child's slow progress. The parent now feels the problem has been fully addressed. Parents have been well informed about arrangements for identifying children thought to be very able or as gifted and talented in English and mathematics. Also, they had opportunities to join a workshop aimed at explaining the kinds of work these children might do. Those whose children have been identified in Years 1 to 3 as very able, or as gifted and talented in Years 4 to 6, know about the opportunities provided.
48. Some parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed concerns about the quality of communication from school to home and, with one or two exceptions, there was general agreement about the need for improvement in this. Inspectors nonetheless judge communication systems to be generally satisfactory, although they agree that on some issues where concerns have been expressed by parents these could be improved. For example, the closure of the school swimming pool and information about what happens when particular issues are raised by parents (as with behaviour matters, for instance) could have been better reported. Some parents also highlighted the lack of activities available outside lessons as something of concern (also in the questionnaire responses). Yet inspectors judge provision in this area to be good: staff members actually give generously of their time with very limited resources. With the help of some parents, they offer a good range of activities, as noted earlier. The headteacher is committed to further improving relationships between home and school and to ensuring parents are informed about its work in so far as this is feasible.
49. The school provides relevant information about achievements in English, mathematics and science in annual progress reports at the end of the school year. This year, parents will also be informed about progress in other subjects and what a pupil has to do in order to improve. Parents have suitable opportunities to talk to teachers at parent/teacher consultation evenings and can also informally

arrange to meet teachers at other times, which is greatly appreciated. Information about the curriculum and the topics that children will study in each class is sent out and there are regular newsletters.

50. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents and the School Prospectus have some omissions and therefore do not meet statutory requirements. For example, the Report does not state arrangements for the admission of pupils with disabilities or explain how future policies will refer to better access to the school for those with disabilities. In addition, the professional development undertaken by teachers is not mentioned. The Prospectus does not give rates of pupils' authorised and unauthorised absence during the school year or parents' right to withdraw their children from assembly and/or acts of collective worship. The school also knows it needs to ensure parents are informed of its recently instituted race equality policy and how it plans to monitor the impact of this on the school's work. Parents were consulted about the school's recently revised behaviour policy. Many took the opportunity offered to give their opinions and suggest improvement at different points in the course of its development.
51. Several parents expressed concerns about attitudes in the playground (especially in areas used by Years 3 to 6) and the use of bad language by a very small number of children. There was no evidence of bad language during the inspection but staff admit this does occasionally occur. Relevant incidents are followed through in accordance with school procedures. Inspectors observed that sometimes boys playing football dominated the Years 3 to 6 playground area and judged this could prove threatening to more nervous children. Rapid actions are taken if there are any instances of inappropriate behaviour. The introduction of the new outdoor games at play times is well aimed at improving the choice of activities and should positively affect playground life. Inspectors also observed that using the field during lunchtimes when weather permits improves the quality of play, with pupils mixing together across the age range amicably and enjoying the much larger space.
52. Parents value the school's caring attitudes and say that their children like school and are keen to attend. They say their children are expected to work hard and do their best and are becoming as a consequence more mature and responsible. A few parents help in the classroom with, for example, reading and information and communication technology, and many have helped write the new behaviour policy. A number say they enjoy attending the celebration of Mass. Many agree that behaviour in assemblies is good and that assemblies are enjoyed by everyone. Parents like to attend their child's class assembly when possible. The contribution made by parents to their children's learning at home is good. They hear their children read and many fill in reading diaries conscientiously. The Parents' Association is being reconstituted. In the meantime, parents still organise fund-raising and social events, but not as a structured committee. They have given money towards, for example, football kits, white-boards for use in lessons and the computer suite. Parent governors contribute valuably to school life.
53. Induction procedures for children entering the Reception class are good. Parents are pleased at how their children settle in and enjoy school. They also like the care taken when the oldest pupils transfer to secondary school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The headteacher, together with her deputy and senior managers, gives good leadership to the school. She is well supported by staff and governors, who are all committed to school improvement and shared values. Together, they have succeeded in a number of ways. They have raised standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, developed the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects, radically overhauled the school's way of assessing its performance and improved curricular planning, especially in Years 1 to 6. The headteacher's vision is based in respect for persons and the need to cherish every individual's contribution to the school community. Integral is a belief that pupils should achieve to the best of their abilities. The school's mission statement makes this vision explicit in terms of values important to the Roman Catholic faith.
55. The headteacher has been in post since the previous inspection and all issues highlighted for action then have been dealt with. A difficult interim period (resulting from the lack of a deputy head for some considerable time because of recruitment problems as well as more general staff changes) hampered

her attempts to move the school forward, but these problems have been successfully overcome. Indeed, the headteacher has been very well supported by her deputy headteacher since her appointment a year ago. As an effective team, they pursue common goals of improving the pastoral care of pupils and catering for their academic needs. As well as improved statutory test results, rising standards have become evident through internal tests in Years 1 to 6 in core subjects. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of all the school's work and pupils' learning outcomes inform school improvement planning. For example, priority areas include raising standards in information and communication technology and writing in English, together with better monitoring of systems meant to deliver value for money. A programme of school-based in-service training aids teachers' professional development in line with priorities, to very good effect. Also, teachers attend out-of-school sessions when they can. Some subject co-ordinators meet with their peers from local schools to stay up to date in their specialist areas and make sure relevant information is fed back to school colleagues. The school liaises with a local Beacon School for professional development purposes. Teachers are keen to try out new ideas and learn from each other by sharing practice. The school supports such work fully.

56. School management is good. The headteacher and deputy are in daily contact to ensure its smooth running. The deputy head oversees and co-ordinates teachers' work in Years 3 to 6 and another senior manager works, similarly, with teachers in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2. This management structure means senior managers keep a good hold on ongoing classroom work as well as gaining information through the school's planned programme of monitoring teaching and learning practices. Subject co-ordinators usually meet class teachers formally during the week so that any problems linked to planning in their subjects are dealt with at an early stage. At the time of the inspection, co-ordinators worked more informally, since these meetings were kept in abeyance because of in-service training in mathematics. Overall, systems in place generally meet the needs of a smaller than average school and staff report they run smoothly. They put a lot of faith in being part of a team and working together to improve pupils' learning opportunities.
57. While subject co-ordinators have a clear idea of their roles and responsibilities, not all have yet been able to observe teachers and pupils in classrooms. So they do not all know at first hand where strengths lie or improvements can be made to teaching and learning in their subject. This is especially true for non-core subjects such as geography, history and physical education. However, a programme of classroom monitoring covers each academic year from September 2002 onwards and includes all subjects over a three-year period, emphasising especially English and mathematics each year. The comprehensive programme shows how pupils' views are sought as part of information collected for development work. Co-ordinators are well supported by the school's use of expertise available within the local education authority. For example, they have been trained in how to monitor their subjects using many strategies, and subject specialists are brought in when a subject is picked out for development.
58. In addition to responsibilities outlined and those integral to her role as deputy, the deputy headteacher contributes strongly to school life. She co-ordinates mathematics and her expertise has been pivotal in raising standards throughout the school. With a colleague, she co-ordinates religious education and has implemented work linked to provision for more able pupils and those who are gifted and talented. Her role in the senior management team makes sure this new, important dimension of the school's work is well represented. Moreover, she has initiated a number of ways for supporting these high achievers. For example, she secured additional funding for the mathematical puzzle project undertaken with a local business (already discussed). At meetings of the School Council, which she herself introduced to school life, the Deputy Head represents the teaching staff.
59. The headteacher and senior managers systematically check teaching and learning practices through classroom observation, as part of well-established performance management. All are skilled classroom practitioners. For example, to facilitate the setting of mathematics for the current cohort in Year 6, the headteacher teaches literacy to Year 5 each day.
60. Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are well informed about all aspects of the school's work through detailed reports from the headteacher, senior staff and co-ordinators with subject or other responsibilities. The chairperson and vice-chair of the governing body keep in touch with each other and the headteacher, and support her work well. Although, as already stated, some

statutory requirements are not fully met, the governing body is well organised. Most governors have only been in post for a short time. Introducing members with skills and interests in various aspects of school life has noticeably helped develop governors' ability to see the school's strengths and where improvements are needed, and to deal with priority areas. Committees have been appointed to facilitate the governing body's work and members now have responsibility for core subjects as well as for information and communication technology and special educational needs. These governors meet regularly with co-ordinators and some have observed lessons. More generally, governors visit the school regularly and keep good contacts with parents. Two (including the vice-chair) attend School Council meetings. In a short time, governors have merged well together as a team. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's daily work, are committed to the school and determined to work hard on its behalf.

61. Whole-school self-evaluation and development planning are good. Planning covers key aspects of the school's daily work as well as other matters, such as improvements to the accommodation, suitably setting out any costs involved. The views of governors, staff and parents (where practicable) are taken into account before plans are finalised. Financial planning is good. It focuses on raising standards through building on the skills of staff members and by achieving stability in staffing. Goals are set realistically in light of developments to date. The governing body spends carefully, keeping a good hold on finances in order to extend the learning of all pupils. This was well illustrated recently when a potential budget deficit was turned into a surplus through stringent monitoring and prudent decisions. The finance committee, led by a well-qualified governor, monitors all spending closely so that the school can use any additional funds quickly. This is why extra funding for mathematics and additional finance for pupils with special educational needs has recently been allocated. However, monitoring in relation to value for money and the success criteria associated with spending are still relatively under developed. The school acknowledges this is as an area for development.
62. Budgetary constraints resulted in the headteacher taking on the role of co-ordinator for special educational needs about a year ago. She has a good grasp of all the work done and has recently started to improve provision. But the pressure of her many responsibilities has led to delays in timetabling some events, such as the formal review of arrangements for some older pupils. While there has been no loss of support for these pupils and arrangements are in hand to address the matter urgently, it is not an ideal state of affairs. The governing body is aware that the co-ordinator's role is demanding, especially in light of the headteacher's other work, and the situation is kept under review. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is spent well for their benefit. The school employs a good number of learning support assistants. They are dedicated to helping pupils and making sure targets set in individual education plans are reached. Yet these staff members have not had any recent training for the work they do. There is a small, well-resourced room for group work and a number of other areas around the school suitable for teaching individuals or small groups away from the bustle of a classroom, where appropriate.
63. The headteacher and governors apply principles of best value well, especially concerning the professional development of all staff and the recent employment of the deputy headteacher. Decisions are taken only when all options have been carefully considered and governors consulted – as with the recently completed building project to enlarge classrooms and office space, which has considerably enhanced school life. Day-to-day financial administration is carried out appropriately. There has been no recent audit but reported minor weaknesses in the school's administrative systems in the existing report have all been resolved.
64. Staffing meets curricular demands. Teachers bring good expertise to the school, well matched to the subjects they manage. There is one teacher with an overseas qualification. Classroom assistants are valued. All job descriptions are clearly set out. Newly qualified teachers are well supported by mentors assigned to them. Staff new to the school are also inducted in ways ensuring they know and understand the school's expectations and ways of working. Such staff value being included as members of a team and engaging in informal discussions with colleagues.
65. Accommodation is satisfactory. It has benefited from the recent building programme. There is now a pleasant, well-stocked library area and nearby computer suite. This is rather small and placed in a passage way to some classrooms and the school hall, which poses potential problems. All internal and external areas are tidy and well maintained. However, the hard-surface playground areas are very

cramped. There is now a secure area designated for the youngest children in the Reception class, but this is very small and currently under developed. There is insufficient outside play equipment for these children.

66. The quality and quantity of learning resources are good overall, especially for English, mathematics and music, improving on the situation at the previous report. However, resources for information and communication technology are unsatisfactory since there are not enough computers. This matter is well in hand and the school looks forward to improving its stock of computers, helped by a governor with an information technology business link.
67. In view of rising standards, improved teaching and learning in all subjects, good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpinning a positive school ethos where all pupils feel valued and of worth, and good financial management, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. The headteacher, staff and governors should ensure that:

(i) The quality of teaching is further improved, to bring it consistently in line with the best practice seen, so that teachers:

- Improve the quality and range of the curriculum for children in the Reception class, so that it caters better for their particular needs;
- give children in the Reception class opportunities to choose what they do and develop independent learning skills;
- emphasise, more, planning for outdoor, practical activities in the Reception class with a better range of resources;
- make sure planning for Reception children gives parity to outside relative to indoor activities across all areas of learning; and
- help raise standards in writing in Years 1 to 6 in line with school improvement planning so that pupils have more opportunities to:
 - ◆ write in their own words in ways that have meaning for them in subjects across the curriculum;
 - ◆ write about things that motivate them personally when engaged in extended writing activities.

(Paragraphs: 2, 17, 24, 27, 41, 65, 69, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 84, 94)

(ii) Provision in information and communication technology is improved in line with school improvement planning to raise standards so that:

- pupils of all ages have access to more computers; and
- related skills are applied to subjects across the curriculum more consistently.

(Paragraphs: 7, 19, 27, 66, 74, 83, 117, 118, 119, 120)

(iii) All subject co-ordinators develop their roles in line with school improvement planning so that curricular demands are met and standards raised in their subjects by:

- monitoring classroom teaching and learning to gain informed views of where strengths lie and improvements can be made; and
- emphasising the proper development of skills, knowledge and understanding for subjects such as art and design, design and technology and music.

(Paragraphs: 7, 8, 21, 26, 28, 42, 56, 57, 80, 81, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111, 112, 116, 117, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 132)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues* should be considered for inclusion in an action plan:

- Ensure statutory requirements are fully met in documents where omissions are identified.
- Playground behaviour, especially in the area used by Years 3 to 6.
- Information given to parents when concerns are raised.

(Paragraphs: 12, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 60)

* It is recognised that some of these are not less important but the school is well aware of the need to address matters promptly (for example, with regard to governors' statutory duties as outlined earlier).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

40

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	8	14	16	0	0	0
Percentage	5	20	35	40	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	199
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	26

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	46

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	15	14	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	13	15
	Girls	12	13	13
	Total	23	26	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (81)	90 (85)	97 (85)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	15
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	25	25	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (85)	86 (85)	100 (85)
	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	18	13	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	16	18
	Girls	9	8	10
	Total	25	24	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (73)	77 (55)	90 (94)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	18
	Girls	8	8	10
	Total	23	23	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (76)	74 (82)	90 (70)
	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	136	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	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	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	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)	8.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	130

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
	£
Total income	449,003
Total expenditure	449,003
Expenditure per pupil	2,190
Balance brought forward from previous year	4,000
Balance carried forward to next year	14,092

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5

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	198
Number of questionnaires returned	37

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	24	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	43	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	43	8	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	68	8	0	0
The teaching is good.	54	41	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	43	8	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	27	3	5	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	49	35	5	8	3
The school is well led and managed.	43	38	5	5	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	46	0	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	38	22	5	11

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

Personal, social and emotional development

69. A significant number of children are unlikely to reach the expected goals by the end of the Reception year, although most make steady progress as a result of sound teaching. All adults take very good care of children, ensuring they feel safe and secure. As a result, most grow in self-confidence. Staff are good role models and children know what is expected of them. Routines, such as changing for physical activities, are well established. Children learn to be independent and most try to fold their clothes neatly on their tables and put their shoes under their chairs. About a third of the class find it hard to share equipment or toys during play. On occasions, a few children show inappropriate behaviour, which, although it is controlled appropriately, can disrupt the flow of lessons and slow the pace of learning for others. Children's concentration spans vary and they can be easily distracted. Some cannot concentrate when in a large group for longer than a few minutes (as when they listen to an adult explaining what they are to do). However, they become absorbed for acceptable periods of time during practical work such as painting, or during activities that they have chosen for themselves or when they work closely with an adult. Children with special educational needs are supported well by staff. Consulting with outside agencies makes staff increasingly aware of how particular needs can be catered for in school.

Communication, language and literacy

70. Children progress steadily in this area of their learning but a wide range of ability is evident in the class. A significant minority are unlikely to reach the expected goals by the end of the Reception year. Generally, children have adequate opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Adults engage them in conversations purposefully, stimulating them to talk about their experiences. For example, pictures of a teacher's garden provoked children to talk about and describe their own gardens. During such discussions, children are keen to contribute.
71. Older and more able children speak clearly and confidently in sentences. They enjoy listening to stories. All take home a 'reading' book and adults regularly make time to share books with them. Most realise that print carries meaning and they look through books with interest. Some recognise commonly used words and tell a story from pictures. They are developing their listening skills and some can pick out words that rhyme. However, one activity designed to extend this learning was not really suitable: children found it hard to identify rhymes on an audiotape. More successful was their picking out rhyming words in familiar nursery rhymes. Children are introduced to the letters of the alphabet gradually and they learn to write these as well as learning sounds associated with them. A nursery nurse introduced the youngest children to the letter 'K' very effectively. She used a collection of familiar objects to raise awareness of items beginning with the letter, as well as a picture containing several items starting with a 'K' she wanted the children to identify. They then practised writing the letter, starting by joining a series of dots before graduating to writing the letter independently. Although all members of her group benefited, several revealed poor hand control and at least one did not hold a pencil correctly. All children have regular opportunities to write their names, as when they label work they have done. So their hand control gradually improves. The oldest, more able pupils are starting to write their own sentences. Some dictate sentences to an adult who writes for them. They then copy the words, with some letters correctly formed. A few are attempting to write for themselves, using a string of letter shapes, and one or two can write words independently using their knowledge of letter sounds to spell simple words.
72. The teaching of language and literacy is generally satisfactory for most children, including those with special educational needs. However, on occasion, inappropriate planning gives rise to problems that might have been predicted, as seen in the timing of some activities. For example, children were asked to sit and listen to their teacher on a carpet for too long after they had already been sitting for some time during assembly. Several became disruptive and the learning of others was interrupted. A considerable proportion of the class does not interact properly with others in role-play as many

children lack the necessary social and verbal skills. During the inspection, adults were not seen to take part in such activities. They did not guide children through a range of possibilities, encouraging them to share and take turns. Opportunities for children to write for many purposes with meaning for them are similarly limited. There is a writing area but it is somewhat uninviting. Children are given only a narrow range of writing implements and of paper and card of different colours, sizes and shapes to intrigue and motivate them in wanting to write.

Mathematical development

73. Most children should reach the expected goals in this area by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is sound and children make steady progress. They benefit from the practical activities, songs and games which help them acquire an early understanding of terms like 'more' and 'less' and to count with increasing accuracy. Most count up to 10 reliably and some beyond this. Several grasp a number sequence securely and can accurately say what comes before or after a given number. Through sand and water play, children are developing an early understanding of capacity, using correctly terms such as 'full' and 'empty'. They recreate simple patterns and name simple two-dimensional shapes, such as circles and squares. Opportunities for younger, less mature children to explore mathematical ideas through play are limited (for example, through building with blocks of various sizes and shapes in order to explore concepts such as taller and shorter, as well as experimenting to see how shapes fit together).

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. Most children should achieve the expected goals by the time they leave the Reception class. They extend their knowledge steadily as a result of sound teaching. Topics and themes are planned so children learn about the world around them. Currently, the role-play area is organised as a garden centre and children are learning about gardening and plants. They are aware of seasonal changes as a result of walks they have taken in the immediate locality. They talk about features in their own gardens at home and then recreate this in an imaginary garden inside a shoe box using twigs and tissue paper of various colours. Children learn that some items float and others sink in the water tray. They learn to operate their aged classroom computer and to use the keyboard for a number of programmes. A parent works very successfully with groups in the computer suite, helping them to use the mouse and work through different programmes suited to their needs. Good use was made of a programme with headphones, so children could listen and reinforce literacy work on rhyming words.
75. While provision in this area of learning is sound, children have too few opportunities to work outside as well as indoors in ways fostering their curiosity and interest, so that they learn through self-chosen, first-hand experiences. For example, they could use construction kits, tools and a wider range of materials to help them extend their designing and making skills. Such activities would also encourage their creative play, their ability to share and to work alongside others, and give them valuable opportunities to talk about their work in ways of interest to them.

Physical development

76. Most children are likely to attain expected standards by the time they leave the Reception class. They make steady progress as a result of satisfactory teaching, although there are shortcomings in provision. The dedicated outside area is too small to give children good daily opportunities to extend their physical skills, and resources for this purpose are also limited. However, children have regular physical education lessons in the hall and some have opportunities to use a larger playground at times. For example, the playground, along with extra adult support, is used effectively to throw and kick balls for children who need time out of the classroom when they find it difficult to concentrate. The hall is used by all children as a large space for them to move around. Most move confidently, beginning to find and maintain a space around them to work on skills. They listen quite well to instructions on a taped programme and most move appropriately to the music. Most skip successfully, stopping and starting as instructed. Yet some of the material on the taped programme is inappropriate for the youngest and least able children as, even though the adults model the expected actions, children do not understand what is required. Also, the programme is too long and children cannot concentrate for the whole session. Adults arrange for children to develop manipulative skills to good effect. Scissors, pencils, crayons and paintbrushes are used with increasing precision

and control. Children happily shape play-dough into many shapes, and scrunch tissue paper to make flowers for their imaginary gardens.

Creative development

77. Sound teaching ensures children make satisfactory progress. Most are likely to achieve the expected goals by the time they move on from the Reception class. They are given appropriate opportunities to develop creative skills such as painting, making models, drawing pictures on the computer and engaging in role-play. They work with a range of textures and shapes in some of their creative work although activities are restricted by limited materials. Children do not usually make their own decisions about what they are going to use and how they will work. This was seen when a drawing and painting activity was set up. Children were instructed first to draw branches and twigs and then print blossom on them with their fingertips with paint already mixed. They were interested and wanted to talk about the apple blossom the teacher showed. Older children had many pertinent questions (such as “where are the apples?”). Most, directed to the drawing table, worked hard handling media competently, although they paid little attention to the shapes and forms of the twigs they ‘studied’. In any case, such efforts were largely lost when some enthusiastically covered their work with fingerprinted blossom! An older boy was also directed by a teacher to make blossom by rolling play-dough into balls and adding them to real twigs. He explained that each ball represented blossom at a different stage in its growth, from very small to quite large (and therefore fully-grown). Although he moulded the dough expertly, he again paid little attention to the shape and size of the blossom shown earlier. Some children find it difficult to join in role-play activities, as they do not relate readily to others, although they can engage in this for parts of each day. Most enjoy singing and can recall songs such as ‘One man went to mow’ and ‘Five little speckled frogs’. They sing tunefully, keeping time with the adults singing along with them. In assembly, children work at learning the words of hymns so they can sing along with their older peers.

ENGLISH

78. Standards reached by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are below those expected for seven and 11-year-olds overall, which means they achieve levels below the results gained by the equivalent cohorts in statutory tests last year. A significant proportion of both year groups (although especially in Year 2) is having difficulties with reading and, particularly, writing, while a substantial number (again, most notably in Year 2) is on the school’s register of special educational need. Inspection evidence shows that approximately half of Year 2 pupils benefit from support in literacy lessons when engaged on independent writing tasks and can find it hard to complete work without support. While older pupils in Year 6 manage better with their writing, around a third of the class tend not to apply learned skills in order to organise ideas independently or to produce extended pieces of writing of a quality generally expected at this age. Of the rest, most reach expected standard with a small number likely to do better. The impact of low-ability pupils on overall achievement undoubtedly affects standards. Nevertheless, across Years 1 to 6, all pupils generally make good gains in learning and do well relative to their age and abilities. Such progress and achievement mark an improvement since the last inspection, even though standards at 11 are not as good as was then judged to be the case. A scrutiny of pupils’ work and assessment information, discussion with teachers and the subject co-ordinator together with lesson observations, show distinct differences between classes, year on year. Standards in Year 3, for example (that is, of pupils who took statutory tests last year), are average overall, with more able pupils doing better than this.
79. Year 2 pupils are delighted to start their work for the week by listening to the ‘big book’ story chosen by the teacher. Collectively, they can read the title and familiar, simple, words in the text. They listen keenly to a teacher’s questions and name the main character. No one explains what “proud” means but they come to see that this character’s behaviour was thought ‘snooty’ by others, through a teacher’s skilled questioning. Pupils realise he is unpopular because of this. They settle quickly to a writing task linked to the story, organising themselves at tables. A group of average ability shows it knows what to do and can read with assurance from a worksheet. Pupils explain what they will write in answer to each question. Most get on quite quickly, although two boys prefer to chat about the work rather than do it. Four pupils of below average ability also explain that they have to put words in a correct order in a simple sentence. Only one (a girl) does so unaided. Others need help to read

some of the words, not realising their sentences do not make sense given the way words are ordered. Another below average group works with the teacher on a role-play activity and this extends their understanding of the story really well. They take on the parts of different characters by making up their own words to express their ideas. Later, all enjoy games aimed at reinforcing knowledge and understanding of sounds in words. For example, according to the word they are given, they position themselves behind the pupil showing cards with such sounds as 'au', 'ir' or 'ar'. An element of fun is introduced which helps pupils listen and want to succeed.

80. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils listen to their teacher intently because they know the revision work they are to do is important preparation for a statutory test. When discussing features of writing, pupils across the ability range show they know how their work will be marked. Collectively, they say they must have a clear introduction (and can explain what this means), think how 'connectives' (such as 'and' and 'but') are used and know they must check work for correct punctuation. They know they should use interesting vocabulary to involve a reader and explain what 'nouns', 'adjectives', 'verbs' and 'adverbs' are, illustrating what they say ("a *rusty* table"). Similarly, they know they must use a plan to outline their ideas and sequence these as a framework for their writing. Most settle quickly to work. While class discussion reveals an apparently firm grasp of the work in hand, only three or four pupils manage to write a coherent piece showing a reasonable ability to apply rehearsed criteria, in the time given. Of the rest, perhaps half achieve expected standards within the parameters set, although they do not finish. Others do not write enough or take sufficient account of agreed 'rules'. These pupils find it hard to assess one another's efforts, in pairs, with a view to improving what they do. Approximately a third use their planning sheets constructively but most clearly find this part of the task hard. A scrutiny of pupils' writing books shows similarly varied abilities. Most manage work linked to exercises for literacy lessons better than extended writing. In the main, pupils answer structured questions, following up lessons on grammar correctly. Work is suitably matched to different abilities and so supports what pupils do well. Above average pupils, and some of average ability, generally do much more interesting work when they are experimenting and trying out ideas using grammar and plot (for example, in introductions to stories) than when they work on extended pieces, although these are frequently handled competently.
81. In the lessons seen, teaching varies from satisfactory to very good and is good overall, which reveals a good improvement since the previous inspection. The National Literacy Strategy is in place and planning in each class generally reflects its structure and content. Teachers always explain the work to be done and make very good links with previous learning. They explore pupils' recall of this effectively. They strive hard with work and develop themes in ways likely to catch pupils' imaginations and hold their interest. For example, the Year 2 teacher chose the 'big book' discussed above to explore the concept of 'character' and the special words used to describe story characters because she knew the story was familiar and well loved by pupils. This allowed her to focus on new ideas and a different way of working with a group requiring adult support. Hence, the role-play activity, which was hugely enjoyed by participants and, later, the rest of the class. In these better lessons, teachers keep a good pace and unfailingly make their high expectations clear. Year 5 pupils remained fully engaged throughout a lesson, enjoying the many planned activities and the chance to participate in practical ways. They worked in threes, taking turns to be 'critical friends' appraising the other two, who acted out part of a story. This activity reinforced important teaching points in the initial discussion about understanding others' points of view, and gained further impetus when some pupils recounted events from different perspectives in the 'hot' seat. By the time they came to writing, pupils had a clear sense of what they were to do and how to set about the task. Subsequently, however, (as seen also in Year 6), they found planning for writing hard, and were much happier developing ideas immediately through a story. In fact, pupils in Year 5 have a real grasp of this and reach standards frequently better than might be expected for their age. Above average pupils write in a lively manner, giving careful thought to their choice of words and applying literary conventions to keep the reader's interest (for example, exclamation marks, capital letters for emphasis and good use of speech). There is evidence of equally good quality work in Year 4.
82. Across classes, teachers mark pupils' work very effectively. At times, marking is exemplary, as in Year 5 where objectives (as given at the start of lessons) are placed at the end of a piece of extended writing and marked by the teacher as having been achieved (or not). Helpful comments underline what has worked well and what needs to be done to improve. On occasion, though, there is insufficient time for pupils to make corrections in ways suggested. Information gained from such ongoing assessment is used well by teachers for future planning. They also monitor the targets set

for pupils regularly. These, which are recorded in the front of pupils' workbooks are marked off when achieved, with new ones given.

83. Relative to their ages and abilities, pupils in all classes reach good standards in speaking and listening. This is evident in many lessons and was seen to advantage in a Year 6 personal, social and health education lesson when pupils questioned a visitor about his work. They listened really well to his introductory talk and picked out points they wanted to know more about, putting their questions clearly. As well as guided reading planned as part of literacy provision, and reading purposefully in subjects across the curriculum, pupils also have good opportunities to apply their writing skills. For example, Year 2 pupils made 'little books' linked to learning about the Great Fire of London in history. Year 6 pupils made notes to cover main discussion points in a personal, social and health education lesson when a visitor was coming to talk to them. More generally, pupils learn how to write down what they do in science in a structured way, reflecting the sequence of experiments they do. At times, pupils use computers for word processing, as when they copy a poem they have written or produce a piece of writing. A really good use of computers was seen in a Year 4 lesson when pupils worked either in the suite or on laptop machines in the nearby library space on a literacy task, making good use of information and communication technology skills. However, computer use is limited. Frequently good quality displays in classrooms and around the school serve to emphasise the importance of literacy learning. For example, key mathematical vocabulary is displayed in classrooms, giving useful reminders of correct spellings as well as the concepts being taught. The library is well used by classes across the school.
84. The subject is very well led and managed by the co-ordinator. She brings enthusiasm, commitment and a determination to raise standards to her role. She works closely with a local education authority adviser. Through monitoring (including the monitoring of teaching and learning) and as a senior manager, she has gained a good idea of standards and where improvements might be made. She knows what challenges have to be met to achieve goals (for example, the need to motivate older pupils to write in ways they see have meaning for them). Her discussions with pupils, about literacy, have revealed a lack of interest in the subject as they grow older, of concern to senior managers and teachers alike. Inspection evidence, gained through talking to pupils in Years 3 to 6 informally, also finds many not highly motivated as learners, whatever may be observed in lessons. When listening to readers and talking to them about books, it is also clear that only the most able and some of average ability are enthusiastic about the activity. Many though, show delight in lessons when listening to stories. A Year 5 girl stated "I don't like reading much myself but I love listening to a story" and peers sitting round the table in the dining room nodded in agreement.

MATHEMATICS

85. Overall, standards in Year 6 are in line with those expected for this age but a significant minority are succeeding at a higher-than-expected level. This is broadly in line with last year's statutory test results for 11 year olds and the findings of the previous inspection report. Pupils' work builds well on previous learning, becoming more demanding as they move through the school. Pupils across the ability range gradually increase their knowledge, skills and understanding in all aspects of the subject. Their ability to explain their mathematical thinking is improving and their use of this skill for investigation and problem solving is already well developed by Year 6.
86. Standards in Year 2 are also in line with expectations, as at the previous inspection, but are below last year's national test results, owing to the large number of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. All pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well relative to their age and abilities. They are acquiring a good capacity to explain their methods of problem solving and to use a mathematical vocabulary.
87. Year 1 pupils understand the operations of addition and subtraction up to ten. By Year 2, they calculate the required change when buying items for less than 20 pence. A few can give change from a pound. Year 4 pupils use addition and subtraction facts to 20 and above to solve simple numeracy problems like finding as many numbered cards as possible that will add up to 20. Year 5 pupils identify prime numbers and the factors of a number. They calculate the area and perimeter of a shape like a rectangle and some higher-ability pupils have a good grasp of alternate, supplementary and corresponding angles. Most Year 6 pupils know the properties of numbers. They use this

knowledge well to solve problems, such as for calculating the cheapest way of buying a meal in a pizza restaurant. More able pupils understand well the properties of various triangles and quadrilaterals and can name and describe their characteristics. In their work on data handling, most show a secure ability to interpret data. They can look at a scattergram and diagram of a bus queue to work out ages and heights.

88. Pupils with special educational needs progress well in learning because they are set appropriate work in lessons and, when it is available, may have additional support from teaching assistants. Pupils of minority ethnic origin and those with English as an additional language perform in line with their peers. A number were observed in higher-ability groups throughout the school.
89. Pupils in Year 6 are organised into two ability-related groups of relatively small numbers. A significant group is assessed as of low ability and these are taught by the mathematics co-ordinator, the deputy headteacher. Class teachers plan lessons with an appropriate degree of difficulty for the more able pupils. Challenging activities are used routinely with everyone, to promote investigation and problem-solving skills.
90. In the four mathematics lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was at least satisfactory. It was very good in one lesson, good in two and satisfactory in one. Where teaching was good or better, lessons were well paced and challenging and teachers had high expectations for pupils' performance. Support assistants helped less able pupils in classes with a relatively high number of pupils with special educational needs. In a very good Year 6 lesson, a wide range of resources relevant to pupils' everyday life was used (like pizza menus and materials linked to 'the Simpson's'). Pupils in most classes are managed very well. Teachers, who organise relevant and interesting activities, keep them on task. On going, day to day assessment of pupils' progress is effective. Teachers encourage all pupils to explain their methods of working. They react well to this encouragement using correct mathematical vocabulary. An emphasis on the using and applying element of mathematics throughout the school is resulting in higher standards, especially in Years 4 and 5. Analyses of pupils' work in several year groups also show a good emphasis on investigative work. Teachers mark work very regularly, making helpful comments about where pupils have succeeded and what is needed to improve. Practice similar to that used in English is in place in some classes (for example, a Year 5 teacher used a lesson's learning objectives to show what has been achieved and where improvement is needed). Matching work to pupils' abilities is particularly effective in Years 5 and 6. This overall picture represents an improvement since the previous inspection.
91. The mathematics co-ordinator gives excellent leadership and educational direction to the subject. As deputy head, she can promote the subject across the school. She is very well qualified and experienced. Raising standards in mathematics is a high priority and there is good evidence of higher than expected standards, especially in Years 4 and 5. All teachers and support staff have benefited from recent (and still ongoing) in-service training. A member of the governing body with responsibility for mathematics works closely with the co-ordinator. Comprehensive, individual tracking documents are in place. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 keep a mathematics journal containing personal targets and self-assessments of their progress. Resources for the teaching of mathematics are very good. A large activity area in a corridor considerably enhances provision. This contains mathematical resources, including a well-stocked shop and post office. These are very well used by pupils from all classes, including those with special educational needs. Mathematical games are attractively packaged for loan and for homework. Community contributions to pupils' learning in mathematics include a team of accountants from a local firm who are involved in weekly, lunchtime mathematics games sessions. A local quantity surveyor is scheduled to work with Year 5 and 6 pupils on a building and decorating project in conjunction with a national do-it-yourself store. Links between mathematics and other subjects are good but the use of computers is relatively underdeveloped owing to the limited number of machines available.

SCIENCE

92. Pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 2, including the standard of scientific enquiry. This marks a good improvement on the previous inspection when standards were below average by the end of Year 2 and scientific enquiry was weak. Pupils reach average standards by the

end of Year 6, maintaining standards found at the previous inspection. All pupils have positive attitudes to science. They particularly enjoy practical work, behave well in lessons and sustain concentration.

93. Pupils in Year 1 work co-operatively making detailed observations of flowering plants. They name the main parts and know that the roots help plants to grow. Pupils know that different plants have different shapes and sizes of leaves and flowers. They recognise buds and dying flowers. In Year 2, pupils classify foods in their main groups (as fruit and vegetables, dairy products, meat and fish, pasta, rice, bread and potatoes, sweets and sugary foods). On pie charts, they relate the size of the section to whether a food group contains food that is healthy to eat, realising that foods in small sections should only be eaten in small quantities or as 'treats'. They interpret a block graph of favourite foods and create their own block graph from collected data. Work in pupils' books reveals a balance of activities, sufficiently teacher-structured to support pupils with poor writing skills, enabling them to express their scientific knowledge and understanding successfully. Pupils have suitable first-hand practical experiences. All, including those with special educational needs, make generally good progress and achieve well.
94. Pupils in Year 3 apply their knowledge of 'rock types' to the identification of different samples. Using their observational skills, they follow a complex key to identify igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks, recording their results in a table. In Year 5, pupils understand what a healthy diet is and know that exercise maintains health. They are also aware that tobacco and drugs can be harmful. They identify the food constituents of a range of groceries (such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, fibre and salt). They know that many packaged foods contain high levels of carbohydrates or fats, which can upset a healthy, balanced diet. In a Year 6 revision lesson, skilful questioning and use of resources by the teacher enabled pupils to match parts of plants to their functions and explain the processes of pollination, germination and seed dispersal, demonstrating above average standards for the work involved. This standard is mirrored in pupils' books. However, whilst teacher-structured work sheets support those pupils who find independent writing hard, they mask underlying lower standards in knowledge and scientific enquiry. So, discussion with pupils from Year 6 shows them as less secure in scientific knowledge, skills and understanding than might be expected from an analysis of their recorded work. They required a lot of prompting to recall basic facts, including recent work on pollination and seed dispersal (leading to the judgement of average standards). Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and do well. Younger pupils in Years 3 and 4, for instance, have appropriate opportunities for first-hand practical experiences, but these are underdeveloped in Year 6.
95. Teaching and learning are good across the school. This is a marked improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers explain the learning intentions behind each lesson clearly, so pupils know what they are required to find out. Good use is made of higher order questions, challenging and motivating pupils. For example, in Year 6 a teacher labelled the drawing of a giant flower with questions such as 'Why is the top of the stigma sticky?' and 'How does the pollen get to the stigma?' to engage pupils in an intensive revision session. Teachers plan, structure and organise lessons well and provide different activities or recording formats to meet pupils' varied literacy needs. Learning support assistants work effectively with pupils with special educational needs, helping them when work is written up. Teachers have high expectations of the level of work and the amount to be completed. The most effective marking of work includes supportive comments, identifies inaccuracies and makes evident how work can be improved. This is an area for further development, though, as there are inconsistencies from teacher to teacher. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills often occur during practical work (for example, when using data collection to make bar charts about favourite foods). Good use is also made of information and communication technology at times, as when pupils in Year 2 make block graphs about favourite drinks.
96. The subject leader has been in post since the previous inspection and has taken appropriate steps to address the issues raised at that time, and to continue to raise standards and the quality of teaching. The scheme of work, based on national guidelines and linked to a published scheme, supports teachers well in their planning. However, while there is generally a balance of independent tasks and worksheets throughout the school, opportunities for first-hand practical work are insufficiently well monitored. Assessment tasks have been introduced at the end of each unit of work and these are recorded helpfully to chart the progress of individual pupils. A new 'tracking' system will provide

information on the progress of individuals and classes over time. Targets have generally been set in pupils' books although, again, there is some inconsistency here. Assessment and recording initiatives are relatively new and their impact is, as yet, unknown with regard to raising standards. There are sufficient resources to meet curriculum demands and these are organised for easy access. Teachers have received useful training to improve their subject knowledge and the science action plan identifies activities meant to continue to raise standards and improve teaching. Environmental study visits and visiting theatre companies enhance the curriculum, and there are plans to revive a previously successful science fair.

ART AND DESIGN

97. Owing to the arrangement of the school's timetable, only two art lessons were observed; one in Year 1 and one in Year 4. From these, from discussion with pupils and analysis of pupils' work on display in classrooms and around the school, standards reached by Year 2 are judged better than might be expected at this age. This judgement marks an improvement on the last inspection when standards were average. Good attention is now given to teaching and developing appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding. All pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs, do well in art relative to their age and different abilities. By the end of Year 6, however, pupils reach average standards, similar to those identified in the previous inspection report. Time for art and design for these oldest pupils is limited, affecting standards. Across the school, there are good links with other subjects such as religious education, geography, mathematics and design and technology. Displays throughout the school enhance the learning environment.
98. Year 1 pupils use different grades of pencil and describe them in terms of soft or hard, and light or dark. They can explain what they have done when comparing their marks with those they study in pen and ink drawings by Vincent van Gogh. An analysis of their work indicates an imaginative range of activities and techniques together with good teaching, fostering good skills in using materials such as fabrics, pulses, pasta, textured papers, clay, dyes, paints and pencils. During a unit on printing, pupils created their own printing blocks by making marks in clay. They then created a 3D sculpture from the blocks once printing was complete. In Year 2, work on display and in sketchbooks is evidence of good teaching. Pupils use fabric, paper, wool and paint to create landscapes linked to their work in geography. They record observations of line, shape, colour and texture when they explore ideas for a design. They study examples of work by Matisse and collaborate to create an image in the same style. They learn to experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques such as basic running stitch, gluing, taping, stapling, hole punching and dyeing. Planning shows that appropriate emphasis is placed on evaluating pupils' work. Good use is made of sketchbooks in both these classes for pupils to experiment and record their ideas.
99. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. Pupils can observe and reflect on the work of famous artists and the techniques they use. Frequently, such work arouses pupils' interest and imagination and inspires their own work. Year 3 pupils have used rollers and foam blocks to operate a variety of printing techniques, with pleasing results. Year 4 pupils studied impressionist painters and used their ideas to good effect by extending the original picture with oil pastels. Work on the artist Matisse has resulted in some satisfactorily effective moving newspaper figures and has been developed to create coloured groups of figures. In Year 5, pupils use fabrics, papers and the computer to create mathematical patterns and charcoal to represent 2D figures in the style of the sculptor Alberto Giacometti. Year 6 made their own very satisfactory fabric designs based on those of Gustav Klimt. The use of the new sketchbooks to record and ascertain pupils' development is good overall, but is underdeveloped in Year 6. Pupils show interest and enjoyment in their art and design work.
100. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are good overall. While only a limited amount of teaching was observed in Year 1, classroom display and the use of sketchbooks indicate teaching is good in both year groups. Teachers plan lessons well, place a suitable emphasis on the teaching of skills and techniques and build in good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work. In Years 3 to 6, evidence indicates that teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers attend appropriately to art appreciation, self-expression and the practising of skills. Resources are used well and there is good provision in this area.

101. Currently, the headteacher is 'caretaking' the subject as co-ordinator but a post-holder with specialist skills is already named for next academic year. For now, the co-ordinator supports teachers in planning their work effectively. A new scheme of work also gives good guidance for this purpose. The end-of-unit assessment procedures and use of sketchbooks are new initiatives and their effect on standards has yet to be evaluated. Evidence shows that the study of the work of artists from non-European backgrounds is under-represented and too little attention is also paid to three-dimensional work. The co-ordinator has a clear action plan meant to identify appropriate activities to raise standards and address such weaknesses. For example, she is aware that many teachers are not secure in developing their pupils' skills in three-dimensional work, and makes this a priority for in-service training. While time for teaching art and design is appropriate overall, timetabling shows Year 6 pupils have few opportunities to build on their prior knowledge, understanding and practical skills. In discussion, pupils find it hard to recall what they did last in the subject and when they participated in such work. In spite of some deficiencies, art and design contributes well to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It encourages pupils' self-expression, helps them collaborate with others through sharing ideas and reflecting on how art can communicate thoughts and feelings and different places. The co-ordinator has not formally observed teaching and learning in the subject but such monitoring is included in school improvement planning for the future.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. From the inspection of pupils' work, photographic evidence, discussion with pupils and from the small number of lessons observed, standards by the end of Year 2 are judged above average and by the end of Year 6 as average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, generally make good progress. However, the progress of pupils in Year 6 is hindered by time constraints.
103. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use scoring, folding, cutting and sewing techniques well. In Year 2, pupils co-operate well on a winding mechanism for a model. They use a saw to cut wood safely and with good accuracy and finish, making an axle and a handle. They apply their knowledge from a previous activity of making wheeled vehicles to the current task. Their well-presented written work illustrates well the complete investigation, design, make and evaluation process.
104. In Years 3 to 6, standards are variable but average overall. In Year 3, pupils use a pneumatic system to create a monster with a moving mouth. Discussion with pupils and the quality of these 'rough' monsters show them to have above-average skills and understanding. In Year 4, pupils have undertaken a detailed investigation of torches, culminating in the making and good evaluation of imaginative designs. Year 5 pupils have made musical instruments with a range of resources, including reclaimed items, and a satisfactory range of joining techniques. They used materials such as foil, feathers and sequins to give a decorative finish to their products. In Year 6, pupils have investigated shelters and designed their own, paying suitable attention to the product's purpose. Opportunities for them to realise their designs by making the shelters were limited by time. Pupils examined a number of purses and wallets prior to designing and making their own. They created generally undecorated, simple, but well-made, lined purses. Some were completed at home using sewing machines, making it difficult to judge pupils' own work, and some pupils did not have time to finish their purse. When discussing their work, pupils are enthusiastic about design and show average knowledge and understanding of techniques and processes.
105. From the limited number of lessons observed and the inspection of pupils' work, the teaching of design and technology is judged to be satisfactory overall. Teachers use a scheme of work that supports them well in their planning and focuses on basic skills throughout the school. They suitably emphasise the whole design and make process. Overall, this has led to rising standards, especially in Years 1 and 2, and pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in acquiring 'making' skills. An exception to this is in Year 6, where the timetable and pressure of other subjects in the curriculum restrict the number of hours spent on design and technology, and on 'making' in particular.
106. The experienced subject leader has implemented a scheme of work since the last inspection. Design diaries are good records of pupils' written work and there is some photographic evidence of pupils' practical work. However, assessment and record keeping are at an early stage of development. The resources for the subject are satisfactory and of good quality and there are just sufficient tools to implement the new scheme of work fully. Teachers store resources to make them easily accessible,

which is an improvement on the previous inspection. There is no food technology area and no school cooker, but teachers successfully carry out projects about food within their classrooms, making other arrangements to cook where necessary. The subject leader has not yet had the opportunity to see what takes place in design and technology lessons to improve teaching and learning further and therefore improve standards.

GEOGRAPHY

107. Pupils are on course to reach standards in line with those expected nationally by the end of Years 2 and 6. They make steady progress throughout the school. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls, or of pupils with special educational needs.
108. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn that the world extends beyond their immediate locality. They contrast their local area with the seaside town of Felixstowe and the area around Sedbergh in the Yorkshire Dales. For example, Year 1 pupils looked at photographs of Felixstowe and talked about what they saw. They included words like 'promenade' and 'pier' in their vocabularies. Some extended the lesson by sharing their experiences of trips to other seaside towns both in this country and abroad.
109. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn about the water cycle and the journey of water from high ground to the sea. Year 4 pupils learn the meaning of terms such as 'deposition' and 'erosion' applied to the way streams and rivers affect the earth's surface. A good feature of the lesson concerned was the way in which the teacher used a visual aid to help pupils understand the process. She had a clear bottle containing water and fine sand. When the bottle was shaken to imitate the fast moving streams it was easy to see particles being carried along by the water, but when the bottle was only moving gently they settled at the bottom. Year 6 pupils realised how headlands are eroded over time. They linked, directly, their science knowledge of how water expands as it freezes to explanations of how water, penetrating rocks, can lead to pieces breaking off. They also drew on information about acid rain, gained from a text they had used in literacy. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported so that they could participate fully in this lesson and more able pupils moved on to use books to carry out their own research into coastal features such as stacks.
110. Teaching is good overall, with teachers making full use of the time available. They capture pupils' interest and pupils respond well. Pupils' learning is at least sound and often good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and lesson planning is appropriate. A good strategy employed by teachers is to use visual aids. For example, in Year 4, pupils watched water running down a hill outside the classroom to exemplify how rivulets join up to make "rivers" and how the flow of water slows as it reaches a flat area. In Year 6, a teacher put a piece of chalk in a jar of vinegar to show the impact of acid on the rock. Insufficient use is made of computers to support learning because of the limited number available. The study of places in other parts of the world, such as a village in India and of France, makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of other cultures.
111. The co-ordinator has not been able to observe lessons or scrutinise pupils' work, thus limiting her influence, but opportunities are planned for this in the future. Resources have improved recently, giving valuable support for the study of distant localities. Displays around school show good use of photographs and books to reinforce pupils' learning. There is now suitable emphasis on the development of geographical skills, representing an improvement since the last inspection.

HISTORY

112. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection because of alternate timetabling with geography. However, a thorough scrutiny and analysis of pupils' work, classroom displays and teachers' planning indicate that pupils in Years 2 and 6 are reaching average standards overall (as at the previous inspection). Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress as they move through the year groups.
113. Pupils in Year 2 become aware of how passing time affects people through their work on life in Norman times. Pupils' understanding and factual knowledge of major events and people of the past in this period are growing, and they use their writing skills to record events they have learned about. In

their geographical work comparing different localities, town, country and seaside, they look at the historical aspects of the different localities.

114. A scrutiny of pupils' work books and classroom displays indicates that pupils in Year 6 use their factual knowledge and understanding of the history of Britain to develop their awareness of life in Victorian times. They examine similarities and differences between their own school life and that of Victorian children. Most can select and link information from sources like books, pictures and artefacts, but their use of information and communication technology is limited by the small number of computers in the school. However, a display area reveals a good use of such technology by this age group in their work and research on Victorian inventions, like telephones, cameras, cars and vacuum cleaners. The display also records research into the development of railways and steam engines during the Victorian period.
115. Indications are that teaching and learning are at least satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils' work indicates that teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of appropriate strategies, including outside visits, to develop pupils' historical knowledge and understanding as well as enquiry skills. In an excellent Year 5 lesson, a teacher's very secure knowledge and understanding of her subject matter had a very good effect on learning. The lesson was well paced and challenging and the teacher had high expectations for pupils' achievement. It was very well linked to music and to the pupils' study of Tudor times. For example, the rather difficult concept of Henry VIII's relationship with the Church was explained well by the teacher, resulting in an above-average standard of discussion by nearly all pupils.
116. The co-ordinator has only had responsibility for the subject for two terms. She has a personal interest in history and uses the expertise of the local authority advisor to help develop the subject. Currently, monitoring includes looking at teachers' planning and pupils' work. Opportunities to extend this work by observing teaching and learning in the classroom are highlighted on the history action plan for later this term. The subject policy has been revised recently and a scheme of work follows the latest national guidance linked to that of the local education authority. So all pupils build on important skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through year groups. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and there are useful small exhibitions in some classrooms. All year groups make visits to historical places of interest to enhance the history curriculum. For example, Year 1 pupils visited the Toy Museum in Colchester, Year 2 went to Mountfitchet Castle for their Norman studies and Year 6's residential visit in the summer term has links with history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below those expected nationally. In the lesson seen, Year 2 pupils achieved broadly in line with what can be expected at this age in the task set for data collection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress in Years 1 and 2. However, pupils are not really able to consolidate and extend the skills they are taught, so there is less progress between Years 3 to 6. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects is restricted. No judgement was made about standards at the time of the last inspection because of insufficient evidence.
118. Resources are very limited for the number of pupils in the school. There is a computer suite equipped with eight computers and, apart from an old machine in the Reception class, there are no computers permanently set up in classrooms. This is unsatisfactory. There are a few laptop computers, sometimes used in the suite or in classrooms. Each class has the opportunity to work in the suite once a week, but the computer shortage means that classes are often split into two or even smaller groups. As a result, the time pupils have to work on a computer each week is very short. This means that all pupils, and especially those who do not have computers at home, do not achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported and, as a result, they play a full part in all activities. Pupils are keen and usually show good attitudes to their work. Year 3 pupils were especially excited by the prospect of playing an adventure simulation game, and several went out to the playground very reluctantly at the end of their all too short session. Pupils willingly share with others in their group, often in cramped conditions, and listen to what others have to say. For example, when Year 4 pupils created a poster, they had to work with at least one other person when deciding how to put together their ideas.

119. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to good and is mainly good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They give clear explanations and demonstration of skills and techniques pupils are asked to learn. With training from the subject leader, staff members are gaining confidence in using a laptop to project images on to the classroom whiteboard. This means that procedures can be demonstrated in classrooms prior to using the suite and pupils can see what they have to do. Good use is made of a visiting technician from a local High School. She gives groups valuable support, so they can practise skills they have seen demonstrated. For example, she worked with Year 2 pupils helping them to show data they had collected in the form of a block graph. Pupils gradually extend their word-processing skills as they move through the school (for example, by manipulating text for effect and adding pictures to their work). But the little time they have to practise means their keyboard skills are not well developed, and this affects their speed at completing other tasks. A discussion with Year 6 pupils indicated that throughout their time in school, their use of computers had been very limited. They could not recall sending emails or controlling a programmable floor robot with a computer. The way computers are gathered in the suite also limits the use made of them in other subjects, for example, to carry out research, further restricting pupils' experiences.
120. The enthusiastic subject leader gives good leadership. She has produced plans for each teacher, ensuring the curriculum is covered and skills are steadily built up, addressing an issue raised by the last inspection report. An assessment system has also been introduced to let staff put together a full record of what has been achieved. There is a development plan, aiming steadily at increasing resources, but its implementation is being held up by budget constraints. The school is currently exploring links with a local firm with a view to obtaining more computers.

MUSIC

121. No lessons were seen in Years 2 or 6 because of timetabling so a judgement on standards for seven and 11-year-olds is not made. However, all pupils were seen singing in assemblies, and lessons in Years 3, 4 and 5 were observed. Video material was viewed and an audiotape of short pieces by pupils in Years 3 to 6 was heard. A discussion was also held with the co-ordinator. Evidence shows pupils reach standards well above those expected for their age and abilities in singing. Pupils with extra instrumental tuition on stringed and brass instruments and who learn recorder skills in clubs also reach high standards of playing.
122. All pupils make very good progress in the lessons seen because of consistently very good teaching from a specialist, part-time teacher. She insists on high levels of attention from pupils although she has to work hard at this on occasion. For example, a small number of pupils in a Year 3 lesson became occasionally distracted, wanting to chat, even though they eagerly took part at other times. Much more generally, pupils are highly motivated. They have very good subject knowledge and understanding. For example, a boy in this same Year 3 lesson recalled they had learned about "pulse" previously and showed this by tapping a finger on his palm to a steady beat of four. Thinking hard in response to the teacher's questions about differences between "pulse" and "rhythm", another boy sang a "da da da dey da" rhythm and tapped it out to illustrate what the teacher might mean. A girl subsequently offered a different example. By the end of the lesson, pupils had begun to grasp the meaning of the musical term (new to them) "ostinato" and so had established a sound base for later work. Year 4 pupils already understand this term, making very good gains in learning when improvising tunes on a five note (pentatonic) scale. They really like listening to each other's efforts when groups play their compositions on instruments or sing. All members of an audience eventually joined in with the melody when a group repeated its composition four times on instruments, achieving an ostinato effect.
123. A video shows how pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to learn songs linked to a story for performance purposes in the summer term. Across the age range, all participate in the school's Christmas concert, singing songs to celebrate the birth of Christ. As heard in assemblies, pupils sing tunefully, with clear diction. They know when to come in after the introduction and keep time with a piano accompaniment. They know they have to sit up straight, so they can breathe properly for singing. Such singing is greatly enhanced by the accompaniment of pupils playing violins, cellos and recorders. At times, brass instruments such as the French horn and trumpets are also played. A good feature of assemblies is the way these instrumentalists volunteer to play and get themselves ready each morning. All pupils in Year 3 are taught the recorder although time constraints for

lessons means time for this is limited. Pupils who are interested can join a recorder club and a significant number of older pupils continue to develop their skills in this way. Most instrumentalists are girls, whether for club activities taken by the music teacher or for lessons from visiting teachers. These visiting teachers teach very good skills, which form a basis for pupils' general musical development.

124. The teacher follows a scheme of work linked to the latest guidance for music to make sure pupils build on important skills, knowledge and understanding incrementally. In addition, she checks with class teachers what topics are being pursued so that links with these can be made where practicable. For example, Year 5 pupils learned about ballads sung in Tudor times, connecting with their history studies. Pupils knew the instruments played on a taped ballad telling the story of the Armada. They enjoyed learning about the 'bum' fiddle and playing a home-made version to keep time with the tape. The lesson served well to develop pupils' musical understanding of how to improvise tunes for singing and playing based on ideas picked up from the Tudor music. Notwithstanding problems seen in Year 3, most pupils obviously love music lessons. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have one short weekly lesson now also taken by the music specialist. Given time constraints, the fact that pupils in these classes make good progress overall is evidently due to her subject skills. Similarly, taking account of music alternating with French in Year 6, she works hard to make sure the oldest pupils cover all required subject elements to an acceptable standard. To some extent, the alternating arrangement is offset by work in the summer term when the end-of-year production is under way after statutory tests are finished. Also, the teacher taking the 'Praise and Prayer' assembly each week takes every opportunity to extend pupils' musical knowledge. For example, she asks pupils if they can answer 'the questions of the week' regarding the composer whose music is played each day at the start of assembly. It says much for pupils' interest that they are keen to answer and many hands are raised, showing they have noted the information given on a hall display board as well as listening to the music.
125. Class teachers do not stay for music lessons but use non-contact time for other purposes. While this arrangement is clearly of value to them, it can create some difficulties for the music teacher at times, as seen in the Year 3 lesson. Also, it means class teachers do not benefit from watching a highly skilled practitioner, thereby extending their own subject knowledge and confidence. Nor can they build on a lesson's content during the intervening week even by spending a little time practising a skill with their class. Some teachers nonetheless have good music skills and some express enthusiasm for doing musical activities with their pupils, given the opportunity.
126. The music specialist co-ordinates the subject well. She gives generously of her own time, even coming in to school on a 'non-teaching' day to take a recorder club. She keeps a check on resources and makes sure the policy is up to date and that planning meets curriculum requirements. She monitors and records pupils' progress systematically as part of ongoing classroom work (as with the audio tape heard prior to inspection). Resources are very good and sufficient for curricular purposes. The co-ordinator has a 'wish list' of instruments pupils would find musically stimulating as additions to their repertoire, should finances permit. Instruments are well stored for ease of access in the room designated for music. This is a 'dismantlable' classroom, reaching the end of its useful life. The school is looking at other accommodation options for the teaching of music but this is unlikely to be an easy matter to resolve. The school is rightly proud of its achievements in music and is anxious to ensure the very good quality provision. The subject adds much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It offers opportunities for them to extend their understanding of different cultural traditions and to gain real pleasure from involvement in a worthwhile activity where expectations are high and each individual is judged capable of striving to reach these.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. Pupils reach standards expected for their age in both Years 2 and 5 in the games activities observed during the inspection. This judgement is similar to findings of the previous inspection. No Year 6 lessons were observed because of timetabling for this year group, which meant lessons took place outside the inspection period. However, swimming records for the present Year 6 pupils indicate that over 90 per cent are able to swim for at least 25 metres. The school's policy of making sure all pupils are included in planned work gives them (including those with special educational needs) the chance to participate in all aspects of physical education, including activities out of lesson times. This results in there being no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls. At least two

girls in the school are believed 'gifted' in their soccer-playing ability and one Year 6 girl plays for the school football team.

128. In Year 2, pupils use their games skills to dribble a large ball, with a developing ability for ball control. They show skills at passing and receiving a ball when carrying out an activity with a partner. All can plan and perform a simple series of actions, for example, when using a hoop to roll, spin and control it. They are all able to practise individually and with a partner to improve their own performance. When collecting and returning small equipment for their games lessons, they behave safely and sensibly. However, their ability to discuss what they and others have done is relatively underdeveloped, and there is little evidence that they recognise and can discuss the effect of exercise on their bodies.
129. Year 5 pupils were also observed during a games lesson. They participated well in the initial 'warm-up' activity of 'touch chase' showing a good awareness of safe behaviour in a limited playground space. They do not seem, however, to understand why they 'warm up' and 'cool down' for activities. In the main activity, pupils showed good skill at catching and throwing small balls, working with a partner and then in fours. All pupils showed well-developed social skills during this activity. Nearly all can practise and improve their own catching and throwing, but their ability to criticise their own and others' performances, to improve in quality and accuracy, is limited. They play simple games devised by the teacher and know why rules are part of any competitive games.
130. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall. Of the five lessons observed, two were of good quality and three satisfactory. Teachers always use 'warm-up' and 'cool-down' sessions during lessons but they seldom ask pupils the reason for these. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are well aware of the safety aspects of physical education. They are actively involved in most lessons, giving pupils encouragement and promoting good practice. However, the chance for pupils to observe and comment on classmates' performance is usually missed. Support is used well, when available, to give lower ability pupils the confidence to participate equally with their peers. Good use is made of plentiful resources to give all pupils the opportunity to use and practise with various items of equipment to develop games' skills.
131. The physical education curriculum is broad and balanced and is supplemented by a wide range of activities outside lessons, including soccer and netball clubs run by teachers and parents, several evenings each week. The subject is allocated a generous length of time every week (pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are given a term each year for swimming). Sporting activities are included in the Year 6 residential study week held in the summer term. The school also has friendly matches with neighbouring schools in soccer and netball.
132. The subject co-ordinator has only had responsibility for physical education for a short time and is also responsible for the co-ordination of science. She has monitored teachers' planning but has not been able to monitor lessons to judge teaching and learning in the subject. There is a good range of indoor and outdoor apparatus and equipment used by all pupils throughout the school. A large hall is available for all aspects of physical education and there are two small, hard-surface playgrounds. The school also has access to an adjoining playing field, especially well used in the summer term. Although there is an empty, shallow swimming pool in the central quadrangle, it is not now used owing to the cost of upkeep and maintenance. Alternative arrangements (always in place for older pupils) nonetheless effectively ensure pupils learn key water skills before they transfer to secondary school.