

INSPECTION REPORT

BOWER NORRIS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stafford

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124370

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Phillips

Lead inspector: Dr Colin Lee

Dates of inspection: 12th – 14th January 2004

Inspection number: 255570

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	137
School address:	Somerset Road Highfields Stafford
Postcode:	ST17 9UZ
Telephone number:	01785 356405
Fax number:	01785 356408
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Paul McGarrigle
Date of previous inspection:	30 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bower Norris is smaller than the average primary school. There are 137 pupils on roll. There has been a drop in numbers since the last inspection. Pupils are taught in single-age classes, with the exception of those in Years 3 and 4 who are taught together in one class. Pupils are from a wide range of backgrounds and, while the majority live in the area immediately surrounding the school, a significant number travel from villages outside Stafford. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school during the course of a school year. The level of this mobility is higher than in most primary schools. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is above average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs, which has risen steadily in recent years, is now above average. These needs cover a wide range of specific requirements including learning, speech and communication difficulties. There are two pupils with a statement of special educational needs. This is an average proportion for primary schools. Three pupils use English as an additional language and the school provides the support necessary to meet their specific needs. Children's overall attainment is close to the average for the local education authority when they start school, but their language development is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21854	Dr Colin Lee	Lead inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education
8971	Mrs Judith Hesslewood	Lay inspector	
22856	Mrs Kath Campbell	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music The Foundation Stage curriculum
20846	Mr Alan Wilson	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Personal, social and health education Geography History Special educational needs English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Criterion School Inspections

*Juniper House
23 Abbots View
Abbotswood
Cinderford
Gloucestershire
GL14 3EG*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8-11
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11-15
Teaching and learning The curriculum Care, guidance and support Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15-17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18-30
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bower Norris is a good school that provides good value for money. Good teaching helps pupils to attain standards that match national averages, overall, and this is good achievement in relation to their past attainment. The school's influence on pupils' personal development is a major strength. Staff work very effectively as a united team and are highly committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a high quality of education that fully meets their needs. The headteacher's good leadership and management are having a significant impact by driving forward the improvement in the school's overall effectiveness since her appointment.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good provision for pupils' personal development results in pupils behaving very well and having very good attitudes and values.
- Pupils' good achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Insufficient use of information and communication technology in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The high quality of the work of teaching assistants.
- The headteacher's good leadership and management.
- Insufficient monitoring of pupils' standards across the curriculum as a whole.

The school was previously inspected in June 1998. The areas then identified as weaknesses have now improved satisfactorily since the headteacher's appointment to the school. The good influence and support of the governing body and the determination of the whole school to succeed have also had good impact on improvement. This progress has been achieved during a period of changing characteristics of the school, with some turbulence in staffing alongside a sharp rise in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs. The quality of teaching has risen, with a significant improvement in the assessment of pupils' learning. Results in the national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have risen at a faster rate than has occurred nationally.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	B	C	E	D
Mathematics	C	D	D	E
Science	A	C	C	D

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

The numbers of pupils in each year group are comparatively small and it is, therefore, necessary to judge data with caution. The standards achieved by the pupils in Year 6, who took the national tests in 2003, had been consistently below average during their time in the school, due to the high proportion with special educational needs. This resulted in them failing to achieve the challenging targets that had been set for them in the tests. The picture is similar for pupils currently in Year 6; their targets are also very challenging. However, the effect of the good quality of teaching that they have experienced, and continue to receive, is such that they are not only achieving well, but are also on track to attain average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of the year. By the end of Year 2, the pupils' achievement is similarly good. Standards are above average in science and average in reading, writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, the pupils' standards are average in art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology and music. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in design and technology and physical education. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language

achieve well. The high quality of the support given to these pupils by an excellent group of teaching assistants is a major reason for the pupils' good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage¹ are also making good progress. They are on track to achieve all the goals children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year and, indeed, to exceed the goals in their personal, social and emotional development.

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, as are their attendance and punctuality. By the time they leave the school, pupils are impressively mature and responsible.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good, reflecting good teaching by teachers and teaching assistants, and a good breadth and balance of learning opportunities in the curriculum. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. It now results in good quality learning by pupils.

The school shows very good concern for the care, health and safety of pupils. There is a high level of quality support for pupils with special educational needs. The school works very well with parents, providing very good information about their children's education and about how they can help. Links with the community are satisfactory and those with other schools and colleges are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management is good overall. The headteacher leads the school well and the highly effective senior management team, together with several experienced co-ordinators, provide similarly good leadership. There is a strong focus on raising standards through improved quality of teaching and, most of all, through a commitment to teamwork involving all members of teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, parents and governors. The headteacher's management is good, but management is satisfactory, overall, as the co-ordination of several subjects has only recently been delegated. A good governing body maintains a rigorous overview of school developments and ensures that all statutory requirements are being met. Administrative staff make an excellent contribution to day-to-day management of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents particularly appreciate the high expectations that the school has of its pupils. They are pleased with levels of progress, the standard of behaviour and the fairness with which all pupils are treated. There is good appreciation of the ways in which the school has improved in recent years. Pupils are very positive about the school and enjoy their learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Develop the use of information and communication technology as a tool to help pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Ensure that there is regular monitoring and evaluation of pupils' standards in all subjects.

¹ The Foundation Stage caters for children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils are achieving well. Standards overall are at least in line with what is typical for their age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 are rising faster than in other schools.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' achievement is good in science, resulting in standards being above average.
- Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

Commentary

1. In recent years the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have shown good improvement. In the tests overall, there has been an upward trend for several years. Results over the last five years have improved more than the national trend. The results in reading, writing and mathematics now match those in all schools nationally and are above the levels being achieved in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. A particularly good improvement is evident in writing since 2001 when the test result placed the school in the lowest five per cent nationally. In 2003, the teachers' assessments showed pupils' attainment in science to be below the national average and average when compared with similar schools. The school is also successfully increasing the percentages of pupils gaining the higher-than-expected Level 3. In comparison with schools nationally in 2003, these percentages were well above average in writing, above average in reading and science and average in mathematics. Compared with similar schools, they were very high in writing, well above average in reading and science and above average in mathematics.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.5 (15.1)	15.9 (15.8)
Writing	14.6 (13.6)	14.8 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.6 (16.3)	16.4 (16.5)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The pupils now in Year 2 are maintaining overall standards at the level of the 2003 national tests but they are doing better in science, in which standards are above average. The standards overall represent good achievement by all pupils in the year group. Those with special educational needs benefit from the very good support of teaching assistants and those who are particularly able are having their specific needs met very well by the good teaching that they are receiving. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics, art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education are average. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in design and technology and music.
3. Good achievement is also evident in children in the Foundation Stage. On entry to the school, children's attainment is similar to others of their age, overall, although their language development is below average. The children in the current reception year are making good progress, due to consistently good teaching. Their language and literacy skills are progressing particularly well and this helps their achievement in other aspects of their development. They

are on track to exceed the early learning goals² in their personal, social and emotional development, which is now well above that usual for their age. They are also on track to achieve all the goals in language, mathematical, creative and physical development as well as in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

4. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have reflected pupils' past attainment very accurately. The groups of pupils taking the tests in 2000 and 2001 had high proportions of more able pupils and the above average test results reflected this. Results were broadly average in 2002, but they were below the national average overall in 2003. While the latter group had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the school was, nevertheless, rigorous in its analysis of pupils' performance and identified several measures that would contribute to a raising of standards in the future. The success of these initiatives is seen in the standards of pupils now in Year 6, which match national averages in English, mathematics and science; this is a group who were well below average when they took national tests in Year 2. This progress reflects the good teaching the pupils have received and their good achievement. As a result of very good support, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are matching the good achievement of their classmates throughout Years 3 to 6. Those in Year 5 had very low results when they were in Year 2, yet their performance now is consistently at the average levels for their age. This again reflects good teaching and the school's determination to raise all pupils' standards.
5. In Year 6, pupils' standards are typical of their age in art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology and music. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in design and technology or physical education.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.6 (27.0)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	25.8 (26.2)	27.0 (26.7)
Science	28.4 (28.8)	28.8 (28.3)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Provision for developing pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities is very good. Some aspects of provision are outstanding and hold the key to the success of the school. A strong Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life and creates a very powerful sense of community. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Attendance is well above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and works to achieve them with outstanding success.
- There is an excellent community spirit.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Children in the reception class develop very good personal and social skills.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very secure.
- Attendance is well above average.

² The early learning goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

Commentary

6. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. A very strong Catholic ethos and very secure relationships underpin all the work of the school. Pupils are valued and respected as individuals. Parents rightly identified a 'tangible and all embracing ethos that is uplifting'. The pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning are reflected in their attendance which is well above average.
7. Behaviour in the vast majority of lessons is very good. Pupils want to learn and there have been no exclusions. Pupils play together amicably. Older pupils enjoy the company of their younger friends and the 'Buddy' system works well. Incidents of bullying are rare. Conversations with pupils confirmed that such incidents are rare, but that those that do occur are dealt with very effectively. School Council members believe the introduction of 'bully monitors' has helped to solve most difficulties successfully. Staff treat pupils with respect and give them many opportunities to develop maturity. Relationships are very strong. Pupils enjoy the success of others. They clapped spontaneously, during one assembly, when the headteacher announced who had been chosen to join her at the special table for lunch. Older pupils look after younger ones well and handle responsibility with great maturity. The School Council has a very strong positive influence on the work of the school. One member stated with immense pride, 'This is a pretty good school'. Pupils' moral and social development is very good. The strong code of the school allows pupils to develop a very clear understanding of right and wrong. This positive approach successfully promotes high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers nurture social development particularly well. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in learning and decision making. Pupils are encouraged to express opinions. Collaboration and co-operation are strong features of provision. Residential visits for older pupils to Chasewater develop teamwork well. Good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and involvement in school concerts also foster good social co-operation. Pupils are encouraged to think of people outside their school community and they collect money for a wide range of charities.
8. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Pupils gain a very clear understanding of their own and other people's lives, beliefs and feelings, not only through their religious education work, but also through many initiatives designed to encourage greater understanding. Moments of reflection and prayer are set aside and discussion of feelings is openly encouraged. Older children gain greater spiritual insight from their visit to Alton Castle for reconciliation and retreat.
9. Provision for cultural development has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now very good. Pupils gain valuable knowledge about other beliefs in their study of world religions. A wealth of visits and visitors further enhance learning. The list is comprehensive and ranges from a play in English and Punjabi to a Juma steel band. Assemblies and Mass involve prayers and hymns from other countries and cultures. Class topic work is well supported by regular visits to places of local interest, such as the Coalport clay mask workshop in Ironbridge.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.4	School data	0.8
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

10. The level of attendance is well above average and punctuality is very good. The school's systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very thorough, although these do not

always identify potential unauthorised absences early enough. Holidays during term time are strongly discouraged and the vast majority of parents acknowledge the importance of good attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education through good teaching and a broad, balanced and well-planned curriculum.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching throughout the school is raising the pupils' levels of attainment and improving their achievement across the curriculum.
- Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning through good teaching and thorough knowledge of the pupils' with whom they work.
- Pupils enjoy learning and work hard.
- Information from assessment is used well in the planning of the next stage in pupils' learning.

Commentary

11. The quality of teaching shows improvement, when compared with the last inspection, with a higher proportion that is now good or better. Good, supportive monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by the headteacher, senior managers and the English co-ordinator have contributed to the improvement. The teaching in this school is almost always at least satisfactory and often better. This is due to the consistency between teachers in thoroughness of planning, insistence on high standards of behaviour, and the matching of tasks to pupils' interests and abilities. On rare occasions when one or more of these factors is absent, the quality of teaching and learning is not as high.
12. An impressive feature of the teaching at this school is the use and contribution of teaching assistants who provide very good guidance to the pupils with whom they work. This is a result of the thorough briefing they receive from the class teachers. In particular, such staff are vital to the progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. These knowledgeable staff are helping the pupils they support to make good progress, especially in English and mathematics. More able pupils are given appropriately challenging learning activities, most notably in English, and the above-average standards that they maintain reflect their good achievement. However, in a minority of classes there is not always enough challenge in the mathematics or science activities planned for more able pupils, who are capable of higher standards.
13. Where the teaching is at its best, it inspires the pupils to work harder than ever before and makes them want to achieve the high level of challenge that has been set for them. The excellent teaching of a science lesson seen in Year 2 was the product of the teacher's high levels of subject expertise combined with very good understanding of the methods and strategies that stimulate successful learning and close collaboration between teacher and teaching assistant. Crucially, the learning activities were imaginative and enjoyed by the pupils. This strongly motivated the pupils to want to learn. The brisk pace in the lesson was always controlled by continuous assessment, by both teacher and teaching assistant, of how well pupils were learning, with on-the-spot changes to the lesson plan if they were necessary for individuals or groups.
14. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is very evident and reflects the good quality of learning that quickly develops from their earliest days in the school. Those who start in the reception class

experience an impressively stimulating classroom in which the teacher's imaginative displays inspire the children to want to learn. At the same time, the children are aware that they have a responsibility to maintain the sense of order and they are also encouraged to celebrate the good work and efforts of others. Teachers throughout the school maintain these expectations and this has a very positive effect on the significant numbers of pupils who transfer to the school in later years. These pupils settle quickly, because the expectations of adults and pupils are consistent. Thus, pupils previously known to have behavioural or emotional difficulties strive to meet the expectations of well-ordered, busy classrooms in which the contributions of all are valued. The encouragement of pupils to help one another, to work independently, to work collaboratively and to show respect is both powerful and successful. Equality of opportunity is given high priority. For example, nearly all work with the pupils with special educational needs is planned as part of class lessons, enabling the pupils to be fully involved and rarely experiencing withdrawal from the class and the feeling of 'being different' that this might cause. Pupils with English as an additional language learn well. They settle all the more rapidly into their classes as a result of the displays with labels in their mother tongues that quickly appear on the walls.

15. Weaknesses in the procedures for assessment of pupils' learning were evident at the last inspection. The school has made good improvement in this area, establishing clear policy and practices and the teachers incorporate the information from assessment in their planning of pupils' future learning. This is now well developed in English throughout the school and, in mathematics in some, but not all classes. It is particularly successful in the mixed-age class of pupils in Years 3 and 4. Here, the teacher is constantly and very successfully assessing pupils' progress in their learning and ensuring in future planning that the changing needs of individuals and groups are being fully catered for in the learning activities being provided. However, despite the good progress in assessment, the school acknowledges the need for further development of assessment procedures within other subjects.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	5 (17%)	12 (40%)	11 (37%)	1 (3%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. There are strengths in a number of areas, balanced by a recognition of the need to review provision in others.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The arrangements for pupils' personal development are very good and are a strength of the school.
- The curriculum is enriched by good extra-curricular activities, especially by visits and visitors.
- Provision in English, mathematics and science is good.
- The school provides very effective help for pupils with special educational needs and good support for pupils in the early stages of learning English.

16. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum to support the academic and personal development of its pupils. A similar judgement was made during the last inspection, since when the school has worked hard at further improvement in the quality of learning opportunities and this has successfully raised standards in mathematics, English and science. It now recognises that there is a need to enable the co-ordinators for other subjects to monitor the standards being achieved in their area of responsibility. While standards in these areas are satisfactory, the depth of coverage and quality of work is inconsistent, varying from topic to topic and class to class.

17. There are two specific aspects of the curriculum that have the potential to ensure strong future development and rising achievement. First, the school's emphasis on personal development, through its programme for personal, social and health education, is having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to their work and to school life as a whole. This is reflected very strongly in the mature and responsible approach of pupils in Year 6, who have a clear sense that they are regarded as responsible citizens of the school community and respond accordingly. Second, the school enriches the curriculum very successfully, through a wide range of sports and clubs, and, significantly, by arranging visits to places of interest, including a residential trip for pupils in Years 5 and 6. There are also regular visits to the school, for example, by theatre and dance groups, and a wide range of representatives from the local community. This is further enhanced by strong links with local secondary schools, which enable the pupils to benefit from specialist teaching in dance and drama. The school places high priority on ensuring the full participation of all pupils in these activities, which have a very positive impact on their personal development and prepare them well for the next stage in their education.
18. All areas of the curriculum are adequately resourced and the school is working hard to improve the quality of fiction and non-fiction books for the library thanks to the generous support and co-operation of parents. The school building and grounds, which are well cared for by the caretaker and his staff, provide satisfactory accommodation overall for teaching and learning. However, governors, staff and pupils are continually striving for improvement, through initiatives such as the new entrance and the 'Secret Garden'. There have been considerable staffing changes in recent years which have been managed well by the headteacher and senior colleagues. All newly appointed teachers have been supported and familiarised well with the school's methods and organisation, ensuring that there is a suitably qualified teacher for each class and subject area. The school works hard to ensure that pupils with special educational needs, and those in the early stages of learning to use English, have full access to the curriculum and are supported well. There is a very effective team of capable teaching assistants who work very well with their teacher colleagues and make a positive impact on the progress of pupils with special educational needs.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides very good support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of achievements and personal development. The school is involving pupils very effectively in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care and welfare provision for all pupils is very good.
- There are very good procedures ensure that the pupils work in a safe and healthy environment.
- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with staff.
- There are very good induction arrangements for all pupils.
- There is very good support for, and monitoring of, pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are strongly encouraged to be fully involved in the school's work.

Commentary

19. As at the time of the last inspection, the school provides a very caring, supportive environment in which pupils can learn and develop to their full potential. Parents are very happy with the school's caring, welcoming ethos, particularly those parents who chose to move their children to this school. They talk about the school's ethos as tangible, with 'an inclusivity that is all embracing, that you can feel as you walk through the door, which is uplifting and conducive to good learning'.
20. Very good care and constant vigilance ensures pupils' welfare, health and safety. All health and safety procedures are fully in place and tested regularly. Healthy living is actively promoted.

The annual visit of the 'Life Education Centre' excites pupils and provides a very good contribution to their health, personal, social and moral education. Good attention is paid to fire drills, personal hygiene, pupils' medical needs and first aid. Lunchtime is supervised well. Good, simple, behaviour management strategies, which complement the school's existing house points system ensure a happy sociable break for all. Risk assessments for trips and residential visits are fully documented. Child protection procedures follow the recommendations of the Area Child Protection Committee. The school's approach to Internet safety and use of pupils' images and names is a good feature. Good working relationships exist between the school and welfare agencies for the benefit of the pupils. An example is the good, co-operative working between speech and language specialists and teachers. A successful after school care club, 'OSCARS', cares for up to 16 pupils on a daily basis.

21. Pupils' individual learning, social and physical needs are paid diligent and consistent care and attention to by all the staff. The pervading atmosphere of consistent support and encouragement in lessons, and during breaks and other activities, ensures that individual pupils have very good and trusting relationships with staff.
22. Induction arrangements when pupils enter school are very good. There is a well-planned programme of classroom visits prior to children joining the reception class. Very effective individually tailored induction arrangements are always made, in accordance with pupils' and parents' needs, when pupils join the school mid-term. This ensures that all pupils settle well. Parents agree that the induction process is very effective.
23. All pupils have the opportunity to take an active part in school life, through the school and class councils. Members of the council believe that they are improving a 'pretty good school'. In Year 6, pupils act as 'buddies' to the children in the reception class before school, during lunch and break times. Parents feel this initiative is beneficial to both age groups. Pupils also perform well and enjoy their responsibilities as monitors in the dining room.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good and links with the community are satisfactory. Links with other schools and further education colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of very good information about the school and about pupils' standards and progress.
- The school actively seeks, values and acts upon parents' views.
- The very positive views and strong support from parents.
- The good links with other Catholic schools and organisations and the receiving high school.

Commentary

24. The prospectus and governors' report to parents provide high quality, well presented, useful and interesting information. In the Governors' report to parents, support and provision for the pupils with special educational needs is explained well as is the process of assessment and testing, describing the school's results effectively in context. The attractive prospectus, enhanced with photographs of activities, gives comprehensive information about the school, its vision and commitment to the Catholic faith as central to its work. The school acknowledges that its aims can only be achieved effectively in real partnership with parents.
25. Good quality curriculum information is provided termly. Regular, numbered, newsletters are sent to parents. These provide good information, not only about school events, but also give plenty of advanced notice about termly dates. There is a good emphasis on team working and co-operation and a clear expectation of parents about noting information and replying promptly as applicable. Reports for pupils at the end of the 2002/03 school year are very good. Pupils' annual reports come in A4 booklet format, with space for pupils and parents comments. In the

Foundation Stage teachers report against the Early Learning Goals and from Year 1 against curriculum 'statements of achievement'. This reporting format is consistent with the school's aims; each report is about an individual child, parents can follow the progress their child is making and discuss confidently the effort made and targets agreed and met. Further information on pupils' progress is given at termly parents' meetings, when the school makes every effort to communicate with all parents. Parents are also welcome to contact the school at any time if they have concerns or need further information.

26. Parents' views are regularly sought through a questionnaire. They were consulted extensively over proposed changes to the uniform and changes made were in accordance with the results. Their views were also sort on changes to the format of parental consultation evenings. Further involvement and consultation on parts of the curriculum is featured within the school development plan. Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems and that any concerns would be dealt with quickly and fairly. However, strong views were expressed by some parents on the decision by the governors not to hold an annual meeting this year, even though the correct procedures had been followed.
27. Parents are very supportive of the school and its work; they particularly value its caring attention to the individual needs of each pupil. Many parents regularly attend and share the celebration of Mass with the school community. The parents' and teachers' group, (PTA), is a very active and dynamic group. It supports and organises many events in school and raises substantial funds for the benefit of pupils, most recently equipping the new school library and learning centre.
28. Effective arrangements for transfer to the receiving Catholic High School ensure a smooth transition for pupils in Year 6. Visits for pupils to and by secondary staff help ensure continuity in welfare and curriculum support. Other shared events tend to be with the local cluster of Catholic primary schools. However, the teacher in the Foundation Stage is working with colleagues from all other local schools and good informal communication takes place between the headteachers of the three neighbouring primary schools. Good links with Stafford College ensure educational and training links for support staff and by having students on work placements, and the pupils benefit from the extra staff and their original ideas.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher leads the school well. The leadership of other key staff and the governance of the school are also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision, a strong sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school.
- The senior management team is a very effective group that takes decisive action in order to raise standards.
- Apart from English, mathematics and science, subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently aware of pupils' standards across the school.
- A good governing body works successfully with staff to secure school improvement.

Commentary

29. The headteacher's leadership of the school has, to date, been one of many successes in challenging circumstances. The school is experiencing a gradual fall in the numbers of pupils and efficient deployment of staff is a priority that demands much of the headteacher's and the governing body's time. In striving to ensure stability and continuity for pupils, the present organisation of the school with single-age classes for most pupils, and only two year groups having to be combined in one class, is the best solution for the current numbers of pupils in year groups and the combination of full- and part-time teachers that are currently in post. The

headteacher's success at focusing staff on the priority of raising standards has been achieved, while the characteristics of the school population are constantly changing. This is seen in the rising proportions of pupils with special educational needs, now higher than in most schools, and the above average levels of pupil mobility that result in significant numbers joining or leaving the school at times other than the start or end of a school year.

30. The headteacher has achieved a very strong sense of teamwork amongst all staff. The senior management team works very effectively at developing this collective determination to succeed. The monitoring of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is very effective. The information from this monitoring, including rigorous analysis of data from pupils' performance in annual tests, is used very constructively for determining action needed to raise standards. This features prominently in the good school improvement planning in respect of English, mathematics and science. Annual action plans for all other subjects are also included. These, however, do not have the monitoring of standards as a high enough priority and, even though the co-ordination of several subjects is a new responsibility for the staff concerned, awareness of pupils' standards across the school has not been seen as of prime importance. The result is that management as a whole is satisfactory, although there are particular successes in management of whole-school developments that are very good models to which all can aspire. The very good co-ordination of assessment, combining rigour with practicality, has fully addressed weaknesses found at the last inspection, and has led to this aspect being a strength. The joint co-ordination of personal, social and health education is similarly very good and is further strengthened by the support of a very knowledgeable governor. The high quality of the school's work in this area is recognised by the local education authority as a source of expertise and best practice that should be made available to other schools. Despite this undoubted success, it is inspiring that the co-ordinators see much further work to be necessary, leading to a very demanding action plan for improvement that will soon place the school in the category of outstanding practice.
31. The governance of the school is good with many individual governors demonstrating a high level of commitment to the school's work and direction. They have a well-defined structure of committees and individual responsibilities that are carried out conscientiously. Many governors bring considerable experience and talent to the governing body and there is a strong collective will to see the school succeed. Another area of strength of the governance of the school is the continuity that governors provide, through steady membership, with many visiting the school regularly to assist with monitoring tasks and contributing fully to the life of the school. Such commitment enables the governing body to achieve a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors work tirelessly at initiatives to heighten the school's profile within the community and constantly seek to attract new pupils to the school. There is little more that can be done in this respect. Additionally, the governors ensure that the school fully meets statutory requirements.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	363,388	Balance from previous year	4,902
Total expenditure	387,369	Balance carried forward to the next	7,349
Expenditure per pupil	2653		

32. The school's approach to financial management includes rigorous evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of financial decisions in terms of the educational benefits to pupils. Appropriate balances are carried forward each year that, although low, are necessary for the school's maintenance of staffing levels and the good quality of education. The principles of best value are applied effectively to management and the use of resources, through appropriate consultation, comparisons of performance, the school challenging itself, and ensuring the best possible service through competition. Through carefully controlled expenditure, the school is currently able to maintain appropriate staffing levels and target its funds to secure

improvement in the quality of education for pupils. However, the governing body is realistically aware of the need for constant review of staffing in relation to levels of funding. In comparison with other primary schools, income per pupil is comparatively low and the good levels of achievement evident in pupils, the very good outcomes in pupils' personal development, the good quality of teaching, and good leadership and management of the school, mean that the school gives good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good** and has improved since the previous inspection.

33. Children enter the reception class in the September before they are five. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 children in the class. Just over half had received some pre-school experience. There is a good ratio of adults to children, ensuring that the needs of all, including those with special educational needs, are met well. Children who use English as an additional language make very good progress because adults take every opportunity to develop their skills on a one-to-one basis.
34. The attainment of children when they start school is broadly similar to others of their age, though wide ranging. Children have well-developed personal and social skills, but their early literacy and language skills are less developed than other children. Teaching is of a consistently good standard. Planning is very good and adheres to the six areas of learning for children of this age. Activities are prepared with great care and teamwork between adults is developing well. Children receive a balanced range of activities. Assessment procedures are good and staff are starting to use information effectively to provide greater challenge for more able children.
35. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well; the co-ordinator sets high standards and has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses.
36. Accommodation is spacious and display is vibrant. Resources are of good quality and the school makes very effective use of its separate outdoor area to extend learning opportunities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very good and children achieve very well.
- Staff's total commitment towards providing the best for children in their care permeates all their work.
- Children know they are part of a highly caring community.
- Relationships are very secure.

Commentary

37. Children enter the school at various stages of development. They all make very good progress through high quality provision. By the time they reach Year 1, good teaching and learning results in most children exceeding the early learning goals for this area. Children treat each other with care and kindness. A good example of this was observed when one boy gave the model crocodile he had just made to his friend. The friend responded with a beaming smile and replied, 'You are very kind'. Children behave very well at all times because they love coming to school. They work and play together amicably and value the success of others. There is a strong commitment towards developing independence. Children respond with impressive speed when asked to tidy up or finish their work.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well through good teaching and reach similar standards to others of their age.
- Staff develop children's speaking and listening skills well through good quality discussion.

Commentary

38. The vast majority of children make good progress and attain the early learning goals in this area of learning. They are taught well and receive numerous opportunities to talk and listen, which contribute to the good overall quality of learning.
39. Reading is made to be fun and children of all abilities love books. Routines for reading with adults at school and at home are well established and parents make a strong positive contribution towards children's learning. One child with English as an additional language displayed considerable confidence and maturity, as she read during the inspection. Her level of understanding was impressive.
40. Children make good progress with developing writing skills. Their letters inviting 'Hungry Harold' to a party demonstrated good letter formation and a developing understanding of spelling. Some children made recognisable marks; others wrote in sentences, with an awareness of punctuation.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy their work and the staff make activities fun.
- Varied practical activities make a purposeful contribution towards learning.

Commentary

41. Children make good progress in this area of learning because they are taught well. Although there is a wide range of ability, most have sound basic skills. The vast majority attain the early learning goals by the time they reach Year 1, achieving standards typical of the age. Activities stimulate great interest and enthusiasm. During one lesson, children displayed secure understanding as they excitedly tried to group 5, 10 or 20 dinosaurs. When they moved on to other activities, more able children effectively developed their understanding of addition as they played the 'Passengers on the bus' game. One child expressed great delight as she realised that five and five made ten. All staff extend mathematical vocabulary well and use discussion in small groups, very effectively, to promote speaking and listening. Some children talk about counting forwards and backwards and others confidently explain their thinking as they order numbers to ten.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well through good teaching.

- Children have ample opportunities to explore and experiment with tools and materials of their choice.

Commentary

42. Children make good progress and are on course to move into Year 1 with a secure knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live. Teaching and learning are good and result in children's good achievement. Standards are at least in line with what is expected for this age group. During one lesson, using the story of 'Handa's Surprise, children of all abilities showed impressive knowledge as they identified animals and fruits such as antelopes, zebras, pineapples and mangoes. Lessons often involve opportunities for children to experiment with construction toys and develop secure computer skills. Children were frequently observed clicking on the mouse independently and using tape recorders, totally unaided.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and children receive a good variety of purposeful activities.
- The school makes good use of the separate outdoor play area to develop skills further.

Commentary

43. Children's physical development when they start school is similar to others of this age. Children achieve well through good teaching and learning. Most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the year. Children handle pencils and glue spreaders competently and use scissors with a good degree of accuracy. In one physical education lesson, the teacher and support assistant constantly praised and encouraged children as they developed their 'animal' movements through floor work and on apparatus. Children responded by moving confidently as they jumped, ran and stepped. The lesson was successful because activities were very well planned and instructions were clear and simple.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because they receive a rich variety of opportunities to develop their creative skills.
- Children gain in confidence because staff constantly encourage them to do their best.

Commentary

44. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Standards are similar to those expected for their age, and most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals. Staff successfully create an atmosphere of fun. Activities are frequently linked to topics or stories. A very good example of this occurred when children were engaged in a range of activities linked to the story of the 'Selfish Giant'. The wealth of activities, ranging from cutting out giraffes to making moving crocodiles totally captured everyone's interest. Consequently, every child made good progress, whether working with an adult or independently.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
 - By Year 6, the quality of pupils' handwriting is good.
 - Teachers work hard, and successfully, to promote pupils' enjoyment of literature, poetry and drama.
 - The co-ordinator provides strong leadership.
45. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are similar to the national average. This reflects good achievement for both sets of pupils, each of which came into school with literacy skills that were lower than usual for their age. This good achievement is the result of a consistent approach to the planning and teaching of English, throughout the school, and also of the strong leadership of the co-ordinator. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well, because of the high quality of support that they receive in reaching the targets in their individual education plans. The school has also taken appropriate steps to support recently arrived pupils who are in the early stages of learning English and they are now achieving as well as their classmates. Standards were also judged to be average in the previous inspection, but the school's results have risen at a slightly faster rate, overall, than in most schools, representing good improvement since the last inspection. Results in Year 6 rose sharply to well above the national average in 2001 and 2002, for which the school justifiably received achievement awards. However, they fell sharply in 2003 when they were well below the national average, but the school was quick to react by analysing the weaknesses in the pupils' performance for that year and has successfully addressed the situation. The pupils in the current Year 6 class are securely on track to achieve standards typical for their age in the 2004 tests and the quality of work produced by pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 suggests that the upward trend is likely to continue.
46. Standards in speaking and listening are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Teachers in the vast majority of lessons provide good opportunities for developing these skills. This occurs through sharply focused question and answer techniques, by encouraging pupils to take a lead in speaking, or listening and responding to others in a variety of situations during the school day. It is common practice, for example, during the introductory session of lessons across the curriculum, for teachers to say, 'Discuss this with the person next to you for a minute', then to encourage them to feed back ideas clearly to the rest of the class. As a result, by Year 2, the capacity of most pupils to listen closely to what others are saying, and to express their own ideas clearly and confidently meets the expectations for their age. Some more confident speakers talk fluently and at greater length, for example, about the book they are reading, reflecting standards above expectations for their age, while a minority at this stage use single-word answers and need regular support, which is below expectations. Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 clearly benefit from the continued emphasis placed on the development of speaking and listening skills from an early age and are keen to contribute to discussions. Pupils from all year groups are encouraged to address large groups, for example in assemblies, or during school council meetings. Consequently, most reach the standards expected for their age, with only a minority of exceptions.
47. Standards of reading are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. The school establishes secure reading skills in Years 1 and 2, by carefully structured teaching of letter sounds and blends. This is supported by regular guided reading sessions, with additional help ensured for pupils with special educational needs who, as a consequence, achieve well. Most pupils in Year 2 read familiar stories confidently and without help. A minority of more capable pupils read with expression and are beginning to take an interest in a favourite author. Some, on the other hand, need regular help from adults because they do not have the skills to tackle new words.

The majority of pupils in Year 6 are attaining standards typical for their age group and this is chiefly because of the healthy attitudes they are developing towards reading. For example, they talk enthusiastically about a visit to the school by the author Sally Marsh and the majority are familiar with books by at least two authors. Some higher-attaining pupils make clear and sophisticated comparisons between the different styles of writing. Research skills are well developed at this stage and pupils are used to finding information on the Internet or from reference books in the school's rapidly developing library.

48. Standards in writing in Years 2 and 6 are average. For example, many pupils in Year 2 place events in their correct sequence and write them as clear, recognisable sentences, with capital letters and full stops. Higher-attaining pupils write clear consecutive sentences for a range of audiences. Some, on the other hand, still need regular help from teaching assistants or their teachers to space words correctly and build sentences in order to achieve the expected standards of writing. By Year 6, many pupils write stories independently, organising their work into paragraphs and are familiar with writing for different audiences, through book reviews, play scripts, or poetry. Less able pupils, though achieving standards below the expected level for their age group, need only limited support from adults, whilst some more able pupils write accurately, at length, introducing tension and atmosphere to their work. The majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of their writing. As a result, pupils always try their best and the standard of handwriting is above average, overall, by the end of Year 6.
49. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, throughout the school, ranging from satisfactory to very good. The most significant strength of teaching is the quality of planning in all year groups. Teachers use the National Literacy Strategy well to plan lively and carefully structured lessons. More significantly, they work very closely with teaching assistants to provide work at precisely the right level of difficulty to meet the different needs of individuals and groups within the class. Careful analysis of results in various tests enables them to build a clear picture of individual strengths and weaknesses and set targets for improvement. Additionally, teachers mark work conscientiously and constructively and fully involve pupils in the evaluation of their own work, adding comments such as, 'Come and talk to me about this'. The best features of teaching were exemplified in a very good lesson seen in Year 6, where the teacher drew on her own enthusiasm for literature to fire pupils' interest and engage the attention of the whole class. She had already clearly established excellent relationships with her class, a feature of many classes throughout the school. Her efforts were rewarded by wholehearted enjoyment and appreciation by pupils of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky', and they achieved well. Teaching is only occasionally less successful where the teacher's strategies for ensuring that pupils are paying full attention are inconsistent and this slows the pace of teaching and learning.
50. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. This is because, during a period of numerous staffing changes, the co-ordinator has maintained a consistency of approach to planning by monitoring the quality of teaching and learning regularly throughout the school and ensuring that newly arrived teachers are supported and guided. She has also enriched provision considerably, by initiatives such as entering poetry competitions, publishing pupils' work and organising visits by theatre groups, all of which has had a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to literature and their enjoyment of writing. She has made significant strides in improving the school library since the last inspection, and this is creating a strong platform for raising standards in reading. In order to further raise standards in this area, the school is working to involve parents more fully in helping their children with reading, both through the existing home-reading scheme and by providing voluntary support in school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. To raise standards in writing, the main area for development is to ensure that opportunities to produce high quality writing are provided in all subjects. This is satisfactory at present, as it is already done well in science, for example, and is often present in other subjects, but needs to be consistent from subject to subject, and year to year. Similarly, teachers throughout the

school are very conscientious about providing opportunities for speaking and listening on a regular basis and could raise standards further by ensuring that these are securely embedded in the planning for all subjects as they come under review.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen since the previous inspection.
- Not enough pupils achieve higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2³.
- Leadership and management of mathematics are very good.
- The school has used test analysis data very effectively to target areas in most need.

Commentary

52. Results of the national tests in 2003 indicated that standards in Year 2 were average when compared to schools nationally, and above average when compared with similar schools. Standards are on an upward trend. Inspection findings confirm that pupils currently in Year 2 achieve well and are on course to reach similar standards. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as their classmates, because they receive a good level of high quality support.
53. On the surface, test results of pupils in Year 6 are not as encouraging. Standards in 2003 were below national averages and well below those of similar schools. There has been a downward trend since 2001. However, examination of further evidence reveals that these groups of pupils entered school with poor early numeracy skills. Pupils currently in Year 6 also started school with weak mathematical understanding, but are now achieving well. Most will reach average standards, although not enough will reach higher levels. The school is aware of the need to target its more able pupils in order to ensure they achieve standards in line with their ability.
54. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully raised standards overall, particularly in Year 2. Through focused monitoring, the quality of teaching has also improved. As a consequence of the meticulous analysis of test information, there is a more cohesive approach towards overcoming identified weaknesses. Greater emphasis on mental arithmetic and problem-solving skills has resulted in deeper understanding. However, evidence taken from pupils' previous work reveals that the approach of individual teachers towards developing pupils' strategies for applying mathematical knowledge is not consistent, particularly in Key Stage 2. Some teachers build opportunities into their everyday work; others offer opportunities less frequently.
55. By Year 2, most pupils are working within the expected range. The vast majority develop good mental recall and think mathematically. They are well equipped for work in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 6 multiply two-digit numbers mentally and have an increasing grasp of co-ordinates and grids. All year groups regularly use computers to develop numeracy skills. There are many good examples of information and communication technology being used well to support mathematical understanding.
56. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The subject co-ordinator is a skilled practitioner, who provides best practice for others to follow. In her lesson on problem solving, the quality of teamwork between teacher and support assistant was exemplary. It is not

³ Key Stage 2, sometimes referred to as the juniors, caters for pupils aged between 7 and 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6.

surprising that pupils of all abilities made very swift progress with such a rich variety of fun, learning activities.

57. In all lessons, teachers build well on the very secure relationships that exist. Pupils are interested and want to learn. Teachers plan well and have very clear expectations of work and behaviour. In some lessons, however, pupils with special educational needs and those of average ability make progress at the expense of more able pupils, who do not always receive enough to challenge them. Occasionally, activities are uninspiring and the pace is a little too leisurely.
58. Very strong subject co-ordination has successfully moved the subject forward and there is good capacity for further improvement. Procedures for tracking the progress made by individual pupils are developing well, as part of the good procedures for assessment that have been developed. Lesson observations have also gone some way towards identifying the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, but they do not yet focus, with enough precision, on the standards achieved or the rate of progress of individual pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Pupils use their skills in mathematics satisfactorily, as part of their work in other subjects. They draw temperature graphs in their science work and develop measuring skills when designing, for example, a catamaran during their residential visit to Chasewater. However, opportunities tend to occur incidentally, rather than as part of systematic planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards are above average by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils generally achieve well in relation to their previous attainment.
- There is good emphasis on practical investigations that is improving pupils' understanding of science.
- Teaching is good overall, but not all teachers are consistently planning learning activities that are appropriately matched to the needs of groups of pupils of different abilities.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently as a tool to extend pupils' learning in science.
- The subject is led and managed well.

Commentary

60. The standards being achieved by pupils in Year 2 are above average and an improvement on, both the standards at the time of the last inspection, and the teachers' assessments carried out at the end of Year 2 in recent years. The high quality of teaching in Year 2 is the major reason for this improvement. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the science topics covered since they started in Year 1.
61. Past assessments of pupils in Year 2 have placed standards at below average levels. This was so in 2003 and the pupils concerned, who are now in Year 3, have made good progress in improving standards to expected levels. Such good progress is also particularly evident in pupils in Year 6. They are now up to average standards. This represents good achievement, by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are more able. The standards of the more able pupils are reflected in the proportions of pupils gaining higher-than-expected levels at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. In 2003, the proportion of pupils in Year 2 assessed at Level 3 was above the average for all schools and well above the average for similar schools. In 2003, pupils in Year 6, while well below average in the national tests

overall, achieved well in science, matching the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 5.

62. Teaching and learning are good overall and there are particular strengths in Years 2 and 6. Teachers of these pupils are paying very good attention to the differing needs of different ability groups and planning learning activities with just the right amount of challenge to move learning forward. There is good emphasis on practical investigation, as there is also in the mixed-age class of pupils in Years 3 and 4. Pupils learn successfully how to ensure that a test is fair. This is well-established by the end of Year 2. They understand the need to hypothesise about what might happen in an investigation and explain this well in terms of their existing knowledge. They record results clearly and, by Year 6, are using scientific vocabulary confidently and correctly in their writing about what has been proved. Teachers are using pupils' written work well as an opportunity to apply and extend literacy skills. On the other hand, there is far less use of information and communication technology as a tool to extend pupils' learning. There is little evidence of pupils' creating tables for results or representing results in computer-generated charts and graphs.
63. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well, combining this with several other major areas of responsibility. This is excellent commitment by a part-time teacher. She has a determination to ensure that science has a status within the school on a par with English and mathematics. Consequently, activities such as the analysis of data from national tests lead to clear priorities for the future in order that weaknesses are fully addressed and strengths are developed further. She provides an exemplary model of marking of pupils' work, always including guidance on what pupils can do to improve. She is also very successfully promoting practical scientific investigations through inclusion of her class in a special project on this type of activity.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning of lessons for use in the computer suite is good.
- The planning for the use of information and communication technology in the classroom is still rather limited in many subjects across the curriculum.
- There is insufficient use of control technology.

Commentary

64. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are similar to those found in most schools and the pupils throughout the school are achieving satisfactorily overall. They often achieve well in the lessons taken in the computer suite. This is because the teachers make good use of the resources to provide opportunities for them to develop the necessary skills and confidence to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. This was reflected in the lessons seen, where pupils developed confidence as the lesson progressed. There was good support from teachers and support staff, which ensured that less able pupils, those with special educational needs, and pupils in the early stages of learning to use English achieved as well as their classmates. However, the overall rate of progress is slower and the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory over time, because pupils do not have enough opportunities to further develop skills and confidence on a regular basis in subjects across the curriculum.
65. The majority of pupils in Year 1 log on to computers without help and use the mouse to click on to the icons they need from the tool bar. By Year 2, more able pupils find their way quickly through instructions for loading and operating programs, which is better than expected for their age. However, a small minority have not yet mastered the basic keyboard skills well enough and look for help from work partners or grown ups. By Year 6, most pupils are becoming increasingly aware of the wider uses of technology and their standards, overall, are typical of

the age. More able pupils are quick to see alternative solutions or try different ways of completing a task and are not afraid to try new approaches. This was seen in a good Year 6 lesson, where the teacher was quick to realise that two capable members of her class had found a more efficient way of calculating perimeter and asked them to demonstrate it to the rest of the class using the data projector. This helped the rest of the class to improve more quickly and led to good overall achievement by the end of the lesson. Older pupils are also given good opportunities to use other forms of information and communication technology such as digital and video cameras. They readily take responsibility for using, sharing and taking care of equipment, have very mature attitudes and are able to work independently.

66. There has been satisfactory progress in the development of the subject since the last inspection and the co-ordinator is providing sound leadership. She is a good source of guidance for colleagues on their planning of lessons in the new computer suite and this is having a positive impact on achievement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. The use of computers across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and pupils do not use them as an integral part of their day-to-day learning in the classroom. Better use is made of classroom equipment for some subjects than for others. Computers are used more often in mathematics, for instance to create graphs or rotate shapes. However, there is insufficient planning of the use of information and communication technology in other subjects. The school recognises this and has already identified it as a focus for attention in the current development plan.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of field trips to develop learning.
- There is no strategy for monitoring standards throughout the school.
- Technical skills are not taught in sufficient depth.

Commentary

68. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are similar to those seen in most schools and pupils throughout the school are achieving satisfactorily. These standards are the same as reported in the last inspection and the school has made reasonable progress since then.
69. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils have developed their understanding of their place in the world around them through activities which teachers plan for them, such as making simple plans of the school and leading to an examination of faraway places, such as Dublin through the travels of Barnaby Bear. By the end of Year 6, most pupils have adequate understanding of climatic changes in their own country, compare their lifestyles with those of places in their own country, such as Bristol, or as far afield as Kenya and identify the principal features of rivers.
70. In the lesson seen in the Years 3 and 4 class, teaching was satisfactory and the teacher made appropriate use of the computer suite to enable her class to find information about Kenya using the Internet. The use of computers successfully stimulated pupils' interest and they responded well to their teacher's very positive approach. Pupils' previous work reflects adequate appreciation by teachers of the requirements of the National Curriculum and they plan a suitable range of topics to ensure that these are met. There is some variation, on the other hand, in their expectation of the quality and range of the work that is produced. For example,

the work in Years 3 and 4 on seasons is well written and makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills, whereas, some of the work in Year 5, on the contrasting location of Bristol, has simply been downloaded from the Internet. There is also variation in the attention given to the teaching of technical skills and knowledge. The coverage of work in Year 6 on rivers, for example, shows good attention to specific vocabulary and there is also evidence that older pupils have opportunities to develop map reading skills. However, these technical aspects of the subject are not developed in sufficient depth, step-by-step, as pupils grow older. There is insufficient consistency and balance in teaching and learning across the school, due to lack of opportunities, at present, for the co-ordinator to monitor the work being done throughout the school in relation to National Curriculum requirements and the standards achieved in other schools. The school makes good use of field trips within the local area and interesting places such as Chasewater which contribute well to teaching and learning.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of visits to places of interest to promote learning.
- There are no arrangements for monitoring and improving standards throughout the school.

Commentary

71. The teaching is satisfactory overall and ensures satisfactory learning. Pupils steadily acquire skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are typical for those age groups. In Years 1 and 2, pupils gain a sense of the passage of time by talking and writing about their lives since they were babies and have reasonable recall of important events in history such as the Great Fire of London. From Year 3 to Year 6, appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to carry out research and gather information on topics such as the Ancient Egyptians, or to draw conclusions by studying pictorial evidence or artefacts such as clothing from the period. Teaching and learning were good in the two lessons seen. The main strengths in the lesson in Year 2 were the lively and imaginative teaching supported by well-organised activities for groups of different abilities, with teacher and teaching assistant working well together to ensure good progress. The main feature of the lesson seen in Year 5 was that the teacher brought the subject to life for pupils by getting one of them to dress up in a period costume from Tudor times, and then provided good quality resources which helped to develop research skills. This was not typical of the work seen in pupils' books, which reflected varying standards of teaching and learning throughout the school. Some work, for example, the research done by pupils in the Years 3 and 4 class on the Egyptians, was well written and made a positive contribution to the development of literacy skills. Some of the work seen in all years, on the other hand, reflected varying expectations as to the quality and depth of pupils' writing and in some cases, pupils of all abilities had copied the same piece of writing.
72. There has been satisfactory progress in the subject since the last inspection, when standards were also judged as satisfactory. Teachers have stimulated pupils' enthusiasm by planning a good range of visits to places of interest such as Shugborough Museum and Stafford Castle. Good use has been made of resources in school, such as video tapes and imaginative initiatives, such as a theme lunch dedicated to Guy Fawkes. On the other hand, there have been too few opportunities for the co-ordinator to regularly monitor the effects of these initiatives and compare the quality of work being produced throughout the school against nationally agreed standards.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology and physical education were not identified as areas of focus for the inspection and, therefore, no judgements have been made on provision in these subjects.

73. In **design and technology** no lessons took place during the inspection and little evidence of pupils' work was available. The past work of pupils in Year 5 on the design and production of musical instruments, inspired by aboriginal art, is of good quality. Drums and panpipes were constructed carefully and very good decoration of the instruments enhanced the overall quality very successfully. This very successful project is a reflection of the teacher's very good subject knowledge. The detailed planning of all designing and making activities and the guidance obviously provided to pupils, as they worked, has resulted in good acquisition of skills by pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language.
74. The long-term planning indicates that there is full coverage of the National Curriculum programme of study. However, the absence of evidence of pupils' learning, in either designing or making, in most classes, raises questions about the extent to which pupils' progress over time, or the standards being achieved, can be monitored and evaluated. The new co-ordinator's action plan for subject development includes a target of ensuring that pupils' attainment is in line with national standards. The inspection has established that this is, indeed, the most urgent priority.
75. In **physical education**, pupils achieved standards that were average for their ages in the two lessons observed. This was the case in a gymnastics lesson in Year 5, and a dance lesson in Year 2. The latter was taught by a visiting dance teacher. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in both cases. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided and is enhanced by a small range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for sporting competition against other schools are plentiful.
76. In **art and design** no lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. The evidence taken from a small sample of work, pupils' sketchbooks, displays and teachers' planning, indicates that pupils attain average standards and experience an adequate range of media. Standards are not as high at the end of Key Stage 2, as they were at the time of the previous inspection, because art has not been a high profile subject, as the school has concentrated its attention on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. The school is aware of the need to raise standards and has appointed an art specialist to co-ordinate the subject. The school has recognised the need to raise the profile of art and is working towards achieving 'Artsmark' status.
77. Topics are linked well to other subjects such as design and technology. Literacy skills are developed satisfactorily through regular opportunities for discussion and computers are starting to be used effectively in, for example, design work.
78. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate average skills when exploring footwear designs in preparation for further work on making footwear for the theatre. Pupils in Year 5 use an interesting range of artefacts from other cultures as a stimulus for their observational drawings.
79. In the small number of lessons observed, teaching and learning were always satisfactory and pupils produced carefully detailed sketches appropriate to their age. However, teachers do not always use opportunities to develop skills further by using a wide enough range of media. Activities sometimes tend to expand to fill the available time during long lessons.
80. Displays celebrate work across the whole curriculum. They are attractive and well presented, but do not always contain enough of pupils' artwork.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are not as high as they were at the last inspection, because the school has lost staff with musical expertise.
- Non-specialist class teachers teach music well.
- Music makes a very strong contribution towards pupils' personal development.

Commentary

81. It is not possible to make a judgement on standards or the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 as too few lessons were observed.
82. Music is a subject that staff and pupils enjoy. It is taught in a relaxed atmosphere, with a sense of fun and enjoyment, because relationships between adults and pupils are outstanding in many classrooms. Despite some lack of musical expertise, class teachers often provide pupils with good quality learning experiences. Activities are innovative and exciting and lessons are good social occasions. Occasionally, however, younger pupils become restless when music lessons take place at the end of the day and when, in one lesson observed, one activity lasted too long.
83. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 is always at least good. In a very good lesson in Year 6, pupils responded with maturity as they listened to music played by a Bamboo Orchestra. There was much good quality discussion. Pupils were keen to find out more about unfamiliar instruments and compared, in impressive detail, the sound of the Chinese music with that of the Manchester Camerata during a recent visit. In a lesson for Years 3 and 4, pupils demonstrated a good understanding of group music making, as they successfully created a realistic representation of a snowstorm in 'Ivan's Forest'. The work was linked very effectively to their literacy topic. Mixed-ability groups worked with total co-operation. They read the story with each other and ensured a pupil with English as an additional language understood. Older pupils had their arms round younger ones, as they experimented and refined their original compositions. Once again, high quality relationships and very good support enabled pupils to succeed.
84. Work is satisfactorily linked to other subjects, when appropriate, and teachers develop language and literacy skills well, particularly through discussion. Pupils' numeracy skills are not as strongly developed, and information and communication technology does not yet make a strong contribution towards pupils' learning.
85. Pupils receive a rich variety of multi-cultural experiences in music, ranging from a visit by the Juma steel band to a South Asian dance. Celebrations of Mass also include an interesting mixture of hymns and music from other cultures. Singing in assemblies is used very effectively to cement the strong sense of community. When singing 'My God is a Great Big God, boys and girls of every age participated fully. They enjoyed the sense of occasion and, consequently, produced some good quality singing. Concerts, such as the recent 'Christmas around the World' also enrich pupils' musical understanding and develop their performing skills well.
86. Music is a subject that has suffered from losing its skilled musicians. The school has started to address the issue, by appointing a co-ordinator with musical expertise, who has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. The school is well placed to improve provision in the future.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This area of the curriculum is very well led and is a strength of the school.

Commentary

87. Personal, social and health education plays a very successful role in the school's aim to raise pupils' achievement by building confidence and self-esteem and has a positive impact on pupils' personal development overall. This is because the two co-ordinators, with excellent support from a governor, lead this area very well and have developed a clear strategy that is best suited to the school's particular needs. Consequently, pupils are given opportunities through personal and social education sessions, closely linked to assembly themes, to explore moral and social issues such as friendship, resolving conflict, bullying and drugs awareness. To this end, the school has enlisted the support of the 'Life Education Bus', a mobile initiative that is run by a very capable team who help to build on pupils' understanding of important health issues, year on year, as they grow older. The school nurse also comes into school to enable older pupils to discuss and understand their own sexual development. The school has also successfully developed the school council, which has quickly become a genuine platform for enabling all pupils to influence the future direction of the school and makes a significant contribution to their understanding of responsibility and citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).