

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY ROOD CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Barnsley

LEA area: Barnsley

Unique reference number: 106632

Headteacher: John Gregson

Lead inspector: J. Ann Sharpe

Dates of inspection: 4th – 6th November 2003

Inspection number: 256487

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	234
School address:	Shaw Street Barnsley
Postcode:	S70 6JL
Telephone number:	01226 281219
Fax number:	01226 770351
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Derek Skitt
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average sized school is close to the centre of Barnsley, although pupils are from the surrounding districts, as well as from the locality. The 234 pupils (121 girls and 113 boys between the ages of three and eleven) include 38 children in the nursery who attend part-time. When children start in the nursery, their attainment is typical for children of their age. The nursery and reception class are not full, and governors are trying to attract new pupils to the school. The school has a strong Catholic religious character, and most pupils are from Catholic families, but pupils from other religious backgrounds also attend. There are very strong links with the parish of Holy Rood. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion with special educational needs, including statements. Sixteen pupils have been identified as more able and talented. Almost all pupils are from English speaking families, although the school has started to take a few pupils from asylum seeking and refugee families who are still learning to speak English. Since the last inspection in 1998, there have been five changes of headteacher. The current headteacher and the deputy headteacher are both fairly new to their posts, but not new to the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18101	J. Ann Sharpe	Lead inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, music, English as an additional language.
1112	Peter Oldfield	Lay inspector	
15015	Michael Wehrmeyer	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology, Foundation Stage, special educational needs.
18505	David Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, history, physical education.

The inspection contractor was:

peakschoolhaus ltd

BPS Business Centre
Brake Lane
Boughton
Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG22 9HQ

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Holy Rood is a **good** school that has improved a lot in the last year or so. It is well led and managed, and pupils come happily, are well cared for and attend very regularly. Good teaching enables all pupils to achieve well, especially in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The school provides a **good quality of education** for its pupils and gives **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is improving because of the determination of the headteacher and governors to raise standards.
- Pupils achieve well in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy because they are well taught.
- Children in the nursery and in the reception class make a successful start to their education.
- Standards in writing, especially handwriting, could still be higher.
- Standards and teaching are improving in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance are very good because the school puts a lot of emphasis on their personal development.
- Pupils have too little guidance about how they could improve their work over time.
- Pupils have few opportunities to show initiative and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Parents and pupils think very highly of their school.

The school is better than when it was last inspected in March 1998. It has retained several previous strengths, and improved in a lot of other areas, despite a very turbulent period with several changes of headteacher. Leadership and management are much better than they were in 1998. The school has tackled the previous wide-ranging key issues, and improved the quality of pupils' education, although much of the improvement has been in fairly recent times. National test results at Year 6 are improving, and standards in ICT are higher than they were, owing to better provision.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

* The 2003 results have still to be verified.

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

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.

All pupils achieve well, and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. Children in the nursery and in the reception class achieve well across all the areas of learning. They exceed the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year. Pupils in all year groups are good listeners, confident speakers and increasingly fluent readers. They are now achieving well, from a low starting point in ICT because provision is improving, although standards are still average. Pupils' writing, especially handwriting, could be better, and the school is working to raise standards. More able and talented pupils, pupils with special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those whose mother tongue is not English usually achieve as well as other pupils in their year groups.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, are very good. Behaviour, attitudes, attendance and relationships are very good owing to the strong emphasis that the school places upon all these aspects of its work. Children in the nursery and reception class make good, and sometimes very good, progress in personal, social and emotional development, and this gives them a flying start with their future education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Good teaching throughout the school ensures that children in the nursery and the reception class make a successful start to their education, and that all pupils learn the basic skills of literacy and numeracy quickly. Governors and staff give equal attention to pupils' academic achievement and to their welfare and personal development. Very good links with parents and the church and good involvement in community life play an important part in pupils' education. All these factors make pupils happy, interested, confident and keen to learn.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and the work of the governing body are good. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when there were significant weaknesses. The headteacher gives a strong lead by making sure that everyone works together as a team. His clear vision for the future of the school is seen in the improvements he has initiated so far. Very supportive governors make sure that the school meets legal requirements. Their good knowledge of the school's main strengths and weaknesses is reflected in plans for improving provision and raising standards. Senior staff play a strong and successful part in leading and managing improvements. The influence of subject co-ordinators on raising standards and improving teaching varies, and it is most effective in subjects that have been recent priorities for improvement. The ICT co-ordinator, for example, is now taking the school forward and raising standards at a good pace.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils and their parents express a very good level of satisfaction with the school. Many parents make long journeys to bring their children because they like the strong Catholic education that the school offers, and also the very good links with the church and community. Parents are very pleased with most aspects of the school's work. They are still concerned about the road safety hazard at the school gates, but inspectors found that the school has done everything possible to minimise the dangers. Pupils like coming to school, and feel secure that an adult will be there for them if they are upset or worried. They like finding out new things, especially in subjects such as geography and history, but older pupils would like to be trusted to do more things by themselves.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in writing, including handwriting, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve arrangements for assessing pupils and making sure that they reach agreed targets.
- Provide more chances for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils achieve well, and standards are above average, especially in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and in the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test results in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 are consistently high or very high.
- National test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are improving.
- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well, and very well in knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Pupils are good listeners and confident speakers, and achieve high standards in reading.
- Pupils are now achieving well in ICT and standards have improved.
- Standards in writing, including handwriting, could be higher.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.0 (18.4)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.7 (17.0)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.7 (17.4)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.
The 2003 average point scores have not yet been validated*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.3 (27.8)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	28.5 (27.4)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.2 (28.6)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.
The 2003 average point scores have not yet been validated*

1. The unconfirmed standards in national tests in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were well above average in reading, above average in writing, and well above similar schools in both reading and writing. Standards have remained consistently above, or well above, the national average in reading and writing since the last inspection. This is because teachers give priority to teaching basic literacy skills well in English lessons. In mathematics tests, standards have fluctuated more than they have in reading and writing tests, and in 2003, the unconfirmed standards dipped to only just above average and in line with similar schools. Nevertheless, when considering test results from the last three years together, standards in mathematics have been above average. Teachers concentrate on teaching basic numeracy skills in mathematics lessons, and standards are showing clear signs of matching the higher standards in reading and writing.

2. The unconfirmed standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were well above the national average, and a considerable improvement on the previous year. The school met and sometimes exceeded its own targets. Results suggest that pupils' performance was well above that of schools with a similar proportion of free school meals, and that pupils made much better progress since their tests when they were in Year 2 than was the case in 2002. This improvement is due to the determination of the headteacher, staff and governors to improve standards, particularly by helping more pupils to reach a National Curriculum level higher than expected for their age.
3. The above average standard of pupils' work by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and their mainly good achievement in English, mathematics and science, largely mirror the most recent test results. Although standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2 are average, good teaching and the school's strong focus on raising standards in mathematics suggest that standards are likely to improve in the near future. Pupils of all ages achieve particularly well in speaking, listening and reading. They become increasingly good listeners, confident speakers and fluent readers. This is because teachers give them plenty of opportunities to answer questions in detail and to learn the vocabulary that is specific to each subject. Pupils do so well in reading because teachers make sure that they know how to tackle reading new words and that they become interested in both fiction and reference books. Pupils' good literacy skills help them to make good progress in much of their work in other subjects. Pupils' competence in mathematics makes a satisfactory contribution to their progress in other subjects.
4. Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection, when they were below average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are now achieving well, from a low starting point, because of the strong focus that governors and staff have had recently on improving teaching and other provision. Standards are now typical for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' ICT skills make a satisfactory contribution to their progress in other subjects.
5. Governors and staff have also been concentrating their efforts on raising standards in writing, because they lag behind standards in reading, especially by the end of Year 6. These efforts are starting to pay dividends, in that pupils' writing in English lessons is improving over time, in all aspects except handwriting. A new handwriting scheme is designed to address the problem of poorer standards, but teachers do not use the scheme in a way that improves matters. Often, all pupils in a class have the same exercises, and they are not suitable for some pupils, especially the less able. On occasions, practising makes matters even worse because teachers move pupils on through the scheme too quickly. Pupils can write widely across many subjects, but they do not always achieve as well as they could because teachers do not set high enough standards. When pupils write in subjects such as science, geography and history, they sometimes copy out passages, and teachers give too little attention to how they can improve the quality of pupils' writing as an integral part of their work.
6. Children in the nursery and the reception class achieve well in all areas of their learning, and standards exceed the goals expected for this age group by the end of the reception year. They achieve very well in knowledge and understanding of the world, owing to very good teaching, interesting activities and opportunities to find things out by themselves. Children's good achievement in personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy and mathematical development provides a firm foundation of basic skills for teachers in Years 1 and 2 to build upon.
7. There are no significant differences in the achievement of girls and that of boys. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, the more able and talented pupils and those whose mother tongue is not English is mainly good, although there are occasions when they could achieve better with more careful attention to matching their work to their specific needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good because of the school's very effective provision for furthering their personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is very good, and the school has very good procedures for monitoring it.
- The very good relationships throughout the school ensure that behaviour is very good.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The very good opportunities for personal development, particularly for the older pupils, include a very effective School Council.

Commentary

8. The school has maintained the very good provision found at the last inspection, and attendance has improved. Governors and staff place strong emphasis upon pupils' personal development. This is reflected very well in the school's mission statement, and the school aims are seen in day-to-day practice. The school encourages pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well through both the formal curriculum and the life of the school. It is a very orderly and welcoming community, in which all pupils are highly valued and feel secure. The headteacher has a good knowledge of the life of the school and he meets with parents at any time to deal with queries. Children quickly settle well into school and build very good relationships with others. The school stimulates a desire to learn, and offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including residential visits. Older pupils especially are willing to take on additional responsibilities, such as providing a 'healthy eating' shop at break times. The School Council helps pupils to learn to take responsibilities, and prepares them very well for their next stage of education. Staff and governors take pupils' perceptive suggestions seriously, such as allowing a fish tank to be installed in the Year 6 classroom.
9. Behaviour throughout the school is very good. The introduction of a 'buddying system' enables older pupils to give very good support to younger pupils, so that everyone feels they have a close friend when playing outside. Pupils are polite to visitors and helpful to one another, and they rise to the school's high expectations of them.
10. Attendance levels are very high – well above national averages. This is because pupils want to come to school and because of good contact with parents, particularly upon the first day of an absence.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 97%

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.0	School data	0
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils of compulsory school age

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	183	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Good teaching and learning throughout the school ensure that children in the nursery and the reception class make a successful start to their education, and that pupils in other classes learn the basic skills of literacy and numeracy quickly. The school puts a lot of emphasis on pupils' academic achievement and raising standards, but gives equal attention to their welfare, safety and personal development. As a result, pupils become happy, interested, confident and thoughtful individuals, who enjoy school and want to play a full part in activities. Although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, it is enriched well by extra-curricular activities, educational visits and visitors. The very good links with the church and good links with the community play an important part in pupils' education, as do the very positive links with parents. Parents think very highly of the school, and this encourages pupils to want to do their best. The school could do more to take advantage of pupils' very good attitudes, by involving them more closely in their own learning and progress, and by giving them more opportunities to show what they can do.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning throughout the school are good, overall, but especially in the basic skills and in the Foundation Stage. Assessment, although satisfactory, is still developing and there is further work to do.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers give a lot of attention to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in English and mathematics lessons.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the nursery and the reception class were consistently good or very good in lessons during the inspection.
- Pupils do not know what they have to do to improve their work over time (targets).
- Teaching and learning in ICT are improving as teachers become more informed and confident.
- Pupils' work does not always give them enough opportunities to show what they can do.
- Teachers question pupils well and help them to learn and use the vocabulary of each subject.
- Teachers set high expectations for behaviour in lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	3 (9%)	21(64%)	9 (27%)	0	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.

11. Although the above sample of lessons covered most subjects, inspectors' judgements give emphasis to English, mathematics, science and ICT. As well as lessons, judgements take account of pupils' current and previous work, and the discussions with them about it. All the evidence was set within the context of how well pupils are achieving as a result of teaching now and in the recent past. No overall judgements were made in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music or physical education because there was too little direct evidence.
12. Since the last inspection, the good quality of teaching throughout the school has been maintained in English, mathematics and science. There have also been several improvements, including eliminating weak teaching that was significantly limiting pupils' progress over time. Parents are right to think that good teaching enables their children to make good progress. Teachers have adjusted their teaching well in response to the national guidance about how best to teach literacy and numeracy. They have taken part in training, and worked with subject co-ordinators in order to find out how good their teaching is and to take steps to improve it if necessary. Literacy and numeracy co-ordinators are very good role models for other teachers. Teachers plan English and mathematics lessons carefully and focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills to make sure that pupils learn these basic skills quickly and successfully. Teachers deploy the supportive and knowledgeable classroom assistants thoughtfully, giving pupils extra help when they need it. As a result, standards are showing clear signs of improving, especially by the end of Year 6. An exception is seen in handwriting, where teaching is not yet effective enough to contribute towards raising standards in writing. A consistently good feature of teaching in all subjects is that teachers regularly ask their pupils probing questions, and encourage them to learn and use new vocabulary in their answers. This contributes strongly to the school's high standards in speaking and listening. Teaching in ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection, owing to the increased confidence, knowledge and understanding of teachers and to the informed leadership of the subject co-ordinator. Consequently, pupils are now achieving well.
13. Teaching and learning are good across all the areas of learning in the nursery and in the reception class. During the inspection, lessons were consistently good or very good. Teachers know and use well the national guidance about teaching younger children. They plan interesting and stimulating lessons and activities that provide opportunities for children to achieve well during both play and more formal learning sessions. Staff work together with a strong sense of teamwork in order to give children as many chances as possible to have conversations with adults and other children. Staff also observe children at work and play regularly, know how well they are doing, find out what they need to learn next, and then plan the right opportunities for them to do so. This good teaching and learning gives children a happy and successful start to their education.
14. Teachers forge very good relationships with pupils, who, in turn, respect teachers' friendly, but firm, insistence on good behaviour. This means that lesson time is rarely wasted dealing with problems, and pupils usually listen very well to their teachers and to other adults. Pupils listen and take notice when teachers give them feedback about their work in lessons. Teachers have started to set some pupils learning goals to aim for over time (targets), but the picture is

inconsistent and patchy across the school and between subjects. In mathematics, for example, some older pupils are very clear about where they are in relation to the levels set by the National Curriculum, and know what they need to do to attain a higher level, but this is not the case in English. Although many pupils have written reading and writing targets into their individual 'personal journals', the targets are often too vague to be of any use at all in improving standards by helping pupils to attain increasingly higher levels. This weakness often means that pupils have too little knowledge about how they need to improve, and teachers do not take full advantage of lesson time to help pupils to reach their targets. A golden opportunity to raise standards by giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning and progress is missed. Although teachers often challenge pupils to think deeply and try harder, especially in English and mathematics lessons, they do not do so consistently across all the subjects. In science and geography, for example, pupils' learning is sometimes restricted when they are given mundane work where they have too few opportunities to respond to increasingly difficult challenges and to show what they are capable of.

15. Teachers are keen to meet the differing needs of all their pupils and are frequently successful. They work together closely with classroom assistants, for example to pass on information about the learning of pupils with special educational needs. There are times, however, when pupils' work is too easy or too difficult for them, and the new co-ordinator for special educational needs and for more able and talented pupils is reviewing arrangements for assessing pupils so that this problem can be overcome.

The curriculum

The broad, increasingly inclusive and well-enriched curriculum is satisfactory, overall. The accommodation and resources make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good.
- A strong emphasis on the basic skills in English and mathematics lessons is helping to raise standards.
- The curriculum is enriched well by extra-curricular activities, educational visits and visitors to the school.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to further their writing skills through well-planned work in other subjects.
- The curriculum in ICT has improved and is balanced well between the important aspects.
- The curriculum for science includes few opportunities for pupils to learn to investigate as an integral part of all their work.
- Pupils have few planned opportunities to show independence and initiative in lessons.
- Making curriculum links between subjects limits pupils' achievement when teachers do not give equal attention to teaching the skills of each of the subjects being taught.

Commentary

16. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has improved in terms of its breadth and its emphasis on the basic skills in English and mathematics. This is because governors and staff have tackled the previous key issue satisfactorily. Teachers have put the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy firmly into place. They pay good attention to this guidance when planning lessons, and as a result, standards are improving. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is particularly well planned to help them to quickly achieve the early learning goals identified nationally as expected for children of their ages. It gives proper priority to children's personal, social and emotional development, and to the development of their communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. Children learn both indoors and outdoors, even though the outdoor facilities need improvement.

17. The overall curriculum plan and the plans for individual subjects for all other year groups provide useful, broad guidelines for teachers, so as to avoid unnecessary repetition of work. There is still some variation between subjects, however, for example between the curriculum for ICT and that for science. In ICT, the clear guidance about planning means that pupils cover all the required work in a balanced way, and this is a major improvement since the last inspection. The science curriculum for older pupils, however, covers some aspects more thoroughly than others, and there is too little emphasis on investigating as an integral part of pupils' learning across the areas of science.
18. Where teachers plan lessons to make links between the subjects they teach as part of topics, for example, art and design, design and technology, geography and history, they do not always give sufficient attention to teaching the key skills of individual subjects. Consequently, pupils' achievement suffers. When pupils in Year 4 sew Viking purses, for example, the teacher gives most attention to work in history, and largely overlooks the need to focus on teaching very specific design and technology skills. Also, much of pupils' current work in art and design provides opportunities for them to produce pictures to support work in subjects, such as history and religious education. The school has plans to put this weakness right by identifying the key skills that pupils should learn in each subject.
19. The curriculum includes many sound opportunities for pupils to apply and practise numeracy skills in other subjects, such as by measuring in science and in design and technology. It does not include many opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills in other subjects, for example in science, when they sometimes copy out passages rather than writing down their own ideas about the experiments they carry out. Although there are some good examples of opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn to take responsibility for their own learning, there are not enough. In some lessons, teachers direct pupils too much, and they become passive learners. The school is keen to put this right, however, and has adopted a published approach to teaching (Accelerated Learning). This approach is designed to ensure that pupils learn to use their own initiative and become independent in their learning. For example, they learn to be independent by planning their own investigations and deciding how to follow them through and record their findings. Pupils are keen to be trusted and want more opportunities to do things for themselves.
20. Curriculum provision for pupils with special education needs is satisfactory, overall, and they often have good support from classroom assistants in lessons. Pupils' individual education plans include specific targets for their future learning, but some targets are too vague to be useful to teachers in terms of checking on their progress. Also, pupils' work in some class lessons does not take enough account of their agreed targets. Nevertheless, the school provides an inclusive curriculum. There is often plenty of challenge for more able and talented pupils – another improvement since the last inspection. Additional support outside normal classroom lessons for the increasing number of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is satisfactory. Parents are, rightly, very pleased with the way that the school gives equal consideration to the needs of children from all religious and ethnic backgrounds.
21. A good programme of educational visits helps to make learning in the classroom more purposeful and relevant. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 look forward eagerly to their residential visits, because, they say, "Teachers let us do exciting things". There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting, artistic and musical activities both in and out of normal school hours. These encourage pupils to develop a wider range of interests, and help them to draw on their experiences as part of work in the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

The school caters well for pupils' care, welfare and safety. Pupils receive satisfactory support, advice and guidance, although staff and governors involve them in the school's work and development to good effect.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Trusting relationships exist between adults and pupils.
- Procedures for ensuring pupils' well-being are good.
- Children quickly settle into the nursery and full-time school.
- Pupils have a 'voice' in running their school.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough guidance about how they need to improve their work over time (learning targets).

Commentary

22. Holy Rood is a caring school where all pupils are safe and secure. The school's welcoming approach means that everyone feels at home, regardless of their religious or ethnic background. Pupils befriend children from refugee families and from families seeking asylum, and staff make them feel valued members of the school community. Staff know pupils well, as individuals, and they nurture their personal development successfully. As a result of good relationships, pupils trust adults and they grow in self-esteem and confidence. Almost all pupils who returned the inspection questionnaire or spoke with inspectors said that they have an adult to go to with worries or concerns. Adults set good examples, and they encourage pupils to learn to become good citizens. Staff work hard to promote pupils' well-being; for example, the 'buddying system' makes sure that pupils never feel unsure, unhappy or lonely in the playground.
23. Governors and staff strive successfully to make sure that pupils are looked after well, for example by watching out carefully for potential physical risks and hazards. They share parental concerns about the continuing road safety problem at the school gates, which was also reported at the last inspection. They have taken determined and appropriate steps to do everything possible to limit the risks to both pupils and adults at the beginning and end of the school day, including taking external advice and working closely with road traffic police. Procedures for child protection are effective, although the headteacher is currently taking steps to ensure that the school benefits from updating his training. The school has good procedures for safeguarding pupils' use of the Internet.
24. Governors and staff seek and value pupils' views of the school, and give them good opportunities to have a say in how the school is run. The School Council gives pupils good opportunities to offer their opinions, and staff act upon the outcome, for example, when deciding how to spend the profit from the 'healthy eating' shop. Teachers often give pupils helpful feedback during lessons and sometimes when marking their work. This helps pupils to know something about how well they are doing at school. Teachers have started to set pupils learning targets to aim for over time, but the pattern is inconsistent across the school and between subjects. Some pupils have too little knowledge, incentive or opportunities to work hard to achieve clear learning targets linked to their progress in the National Curriculum.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents and good links with the community, including the well-developed links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in very high regard, and are very supportive.
- The school's website provides an excellent range and quality of information for parents and the community.
- The strong links with the community include very good links with the church.
- There are well-developed links with other local schools, including the secondary school.

Commentary

25. Provision for forging a strong partnership with parents and links with other schools and the community has improved since the last inspection. It is now very good because of the positive impact that it has on pupils' social and academic achievement. The inspection questionnaire, the views of parents at the inspection meeting and the outcome of the school's own questionnaire indicate the extent of parental satisfaction with, and praise for, their school. It was described as 'the very best'. There were no significant concerns raised at all. The very good relationships and the partnership with parents contribute very well to pupils' learning. Staff and governors work hard to involve parents in their children's learning. Parents are very supportive in many ways, and the Friends Association provides a good range of social and fund-raising events. The generous financial donations help the school in many ways, including being able to plan refurbishments to the building.
26. Parents receive their weekly newsletters with much satisfaction. A very few parents do not feel so well informed about how well their children are getting on at school. Parents' evenings held in the autumn and summer terms are very well attended, however, and annual written reports are satisfactory. The school has developed an excellent website, and the very high number of recorded enquiries shows that parents and the wider community take a very keen interest in the full life of the school. Parents oversee pupils' work at home and the recent introduction of 'personal journals', for individual pupils to use both at home and at school, means that communication with parents about their children's day-to-day learning and homework has improved and is now good. A fairly small number of parents or grandparents help out in school on a regular basis, for example by helping pupils to bake, and parents are always pleased to be asked to help out with educational visits. The school's good efforts to involve parents even more fully in their children's learning include offering a series of workshops on literacy and ICT. These have been organised in conjunction with a local college.
27. The school has established good links with the wider community, and parents are particularly pleased that a sense of 'community and citizenship' permeates the life of the school. The support for a large number of charities, 13 in the last year alone, has made a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Parents are very pleased too about the extent of the school's links with the local Catholic Church and with the parish. They welcome the fact that home, school and church work together to help children to grow into happy and confident individuals, with a strong sense of belonging to a community. Community members also get involved with the work of the Friends Association. The school has good links with other local schools, including thoughtful arrangements for helping pupils to transfer smoothly to their new schools, especially local Catholic secondary schools. Staff recently joined the staff of other local Catholic schools to take part in a training day that they found very helpful in catering for pupils' spiritual development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is improving owing to good governance and to good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management have improved a lot since the last inspection.
- The headteacher's style of leadership encourages everyone to work together as a team.
- There is an increasing commitment to the inclusion of all pupils in all aspects of the school's work.
- Co-ordinators often make a strong contribution to improving teaching and raising standards.
- Governors watch over the school's development carefully and are active in securing improvements.

- Arrangements for subject co-ordinators to check pupils' work do not always lead to weaknesses being spotted and dealt with quickly.
- Leadership by co-ordinators is more effective in some subjects than it is in others.

Commentary

28. At the time of the last inspection in March 1998, there was an acting headteacher, and management and efficiency were requiring improvement because there were several significant weaknesses. Since then, the school has gone through a turbulent period, with several changes of headteacher and the consequent uncertainty associated with frequent upheavals. The current headteacher has been in post for only a year, and the deputy headteacher for only a few months. The headteacher has a clearly expressed vision for the school's future that is shared by governors, and he is a very good role model for everyone. In a very short time, he has gained the confidence and trust of governors, staff, parents and pupils because of his supportive, approachable and positive style of leadership. Almost all parents who returned the questionnaire and those who attended the meeting think that the school is led and managed well. Consequently, very good relationships at all levels encourage staff to work together as a team and to undertake their special responsibilities with commitment and dedication. The headteacher is well aware of the importance of securing high academic standards, at the same time as promoting pupils' personal and social skills within a strong Catholic ethos. Already, standards and national test results are showing clear signs of improving, and the school's aims are met in day-to-day practice. This represents a good amount of improvement since the last inspection, especially when taking account of the unusual problems that the school has had to face in recent years. The school is well placed to continue to improve in the future.
29. The headteacher involves the deputy headteacher well in managing the school and leading other staff, for example in raising standards in literacy. Although she is fairly new to the post, the school development plan sets her proposed training plan clearly within the context of continuing to raise standards in the school. The headteacher allocates responsibilities to teaching staff carefully, and co-ordinators for the Foundation Stage, literacy, numeracy, ICT and assessment are effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision and acting upon the findings. The school development plan often allocates time away from teaching classes to enable staff to meet their responsibilities. Although the role of subject co-ordinators has extended considerably since the last inspection, it is still more effective in those subjects that are the main priorities for school improvement than it is in other subjects. Also, even in subjects where leadership is at its strongest, weaknesses in teaching and pupils' work are still not always spotted and dealt with quickly. Examples of this are found in the teaching of handwriting, and in the fact that pupils spend too much time copying out passages in subjects such as science and geography.
30. The school's increasing commitment to inclusion is evident in the appointment of a new co-ordinator for special educational needs and more able and talented pupils, and in making provision for pupils whose mother tongue is not English. Parents at the meeting commented on the fact that all children are accepted and encouraged to attend the school, whether from Catholic families or not. Governors are keen for the school to be so inclusive, and they see themselves as 'pursuers of excellence' and 'a driving force'. They are concerned, for example, to make sure that more able and talented pupils are challenged sufficiently in lessons, and they know that they must keep a close eye on standards and national test results to make sure that they improve and are high enough. They consult parents and pupils about their satisfaction with the school, and act upon the findings. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and make difficult decisions when they have to, especially when the quality of pupils' education is at stake. When managing the finances, for example, governors take action to spend money wisely and to avoid a deficit budget. They take steps to make sure that the school is treated fairly when funding is allocated to them, and know their rights and responsibilities with regard to additional funding available to them. Governors apply best value principles well when managing the budget.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	579,004
Total expenditure	578,902
Expenditure per pupil	2,128

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	12,961
Balance carried forward to the next	13,063

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

31. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. It has improved since the last inspection because staff have successfully introduced the National Curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is based firmly upon children taking an active part in carefully planned play. This gives them increasing challenges and opportunities for more formal learning when they are ready for it. The new procedures for assessing children give staff a good picture of their attainment and progress and help them to plan a curriculum that meets children's individual needs precisely. The close teamwork and cheerful enthusiasm of staff shine out, creating a happy environment where children thrive. Consequently, children love to learn and to explore their surroundings. The good teaching helps them to make good progress and achieve well, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The school development plan includes exciting plans to extend the outdoor provision into a secure play area to be used as a resource to raise attainment across all the areas of learning. Children start nursery, and therefore also in the reception class, at three points in the year. The very sensitive, welcoming and thoughtful arrangements for when children start nursery and transfer to the reception class and later to Year 1 ease their passage through this stage of their education. Staff create very good relationships with parents and carers, who are delighted with the provision, and with the inspirational leadership of the co-ordinator.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well, owing to good teaching and secure routines.
- Teachers grasp every opportunity to build on children's learning.
- The reception children are very good role models for children in the nursery.

Commentary

32. Staff use all opportunities to encourage children to understand class routines, for example, by using quiet signals when they want all children to listen to adults. They encourage children to share toys and equipment and to work together co-operatively. When children start nursery, their attainment is typical for children of their age. They soon respond to the high expectations of staff and make good progress, so that by the time they transfer to the reception class, their attainment is above that expected for their age. Children's good achievement helps them to make a successful start to full-time school. During the first few weeks in the reception class, children are quietly prepared for the formal work of English and mathematics lessons where key literacy and numeracy skills are developed well. They relish this opportunity, and learn to concentrate for increasing lengths of time. The nursery is not full in the afternoons, and twice weekly, children return to work alongside the younger children. Here, they act as superb 'grown up' examples for the little ones. They are busy, friendly and confident and enjoy warm relationships in happy surroundings with both other children and adults. When reception children join older pupils, for example for assemblies, their behaviour is impeccable. The new assessment system is based on regular and close observations of children. It allows staff to track their increasing maturity, and to plan additional input by adults if necessary. Consequently, children start Year 1 having reached, and sometimes exceeded, the learning goals that are expected for children of their age, and standards are above average.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and attain above average standards.
- Provision for learning to speak, listen, read and write is balanced well.
- Staff use opportunities across all areas of learning well to develop and assess children's language skills.
- On some occasions, staff do not give children time to answer questions in full sentences.

Commentary

33. Teaching and learning are good. The main strength is that staff draw out children's language in virtually every activity. As ideas are talked about, staff model orally the sounds represented by letters of the alphabet, and show children what letters look like and how they are written. Nursery children are intrigued by this idea, and love making marks on paper or whiteboards to imitate adult writing. They become more and more accurate in doing this, and by the time they transfer to the reception class, they write 'strings' of letters by themselves, and the more able children attempt to write words, such as 'umbrella'. This represents good achievement from their average attainment when they started nursery. It also means that most children reach or exceed the goals expected for their age by the end of the reception year and standards are above average. Staff are careful to encourage children to hold pencils properly and write letters correctly, and even in a single lesson, staff expect children to improve by measurable amounts. The new assessment system makes it clear to staff what children need to learn next, and they plan good opportunities for them to do so. Children's listening skills develop well, because of the lively range of stories that staff tell in an animated way to engage their interest. Similarly, staff listen to children's ideas as often as they want to offer them. Occasionally, in their enthusiasm, staff move conversations on before children have had chance to respond fully. The co-ordinator has spotted this, and has initiated a programme and training for staff that is devoted to tackling the weakness.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and standards are above average.
- Staff use all available opportunities to extend children's understanding of mathematical ideas.
- Staff use assessment information well to help children to make progress.

Commentary

34. Teaching and learning are good. Staff plan their teaching and children's learning very effectively, and there is a good balance between sessions when they gather children together for particular work, and times when children can take part in any of the activities available indoors or outdoors. Children listen well to adults, and those in the nursery enjoy reciting number rhymes enormously. This helps to fix the names, shapes and value of numbers in their memories. When pretending to be fire fighters outside, for example, children have to remember the shape of the numbers on their helmets, because this is the order in which they line up to go on the fire engine. When they start nursery, their attainment is average, and they make good progress, so that they transfer to the reception class ahead of the level expected for their age. They continue to make good progress in the reception class, and at the end of the year, standards are above

those expected for their age. The more formal approach to work in the reception class suits the children well because they are ready for further challenges. They concentrate on 'big' numbers of 20 and beyond, and most can already count, write and recognise numbers at least to 13. Children also enjoy the carefully planned play in the afternoons, when they explore numbers and shapes in practical activities.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's very good achievement helps them to attain above average standards.
- Staff use resources well as part of their very good teaching.
- There is an exciting and creative environment that encourages children to want to find things out.

Commentary

35. Teaching and learning are very good. Staff use the accommodation and resources creatively to provide a particularly stimulating learning environment. They plan very good practical opportunities for children to feel and handle materials, both inside and outside the classroom, for example topics on 'warm winter clothing' and 'fireworks'. Staff explain things very clearly and build well on children's own experiences. The activities are interesting, engage children's curiosity and allow them to investigate ideas for themselves. Teaching is very good because lesson planning is very thorough, and it makes sure that aspects of geography, history, science and technology are given equal consideration. When children start in the nursery, their attainment is typical for their age. They make good progress and are well towards attaining many of the early learning goals by the time they transfer to the reception class, and exceed them by the end of the reception year. This represents very good achievement in relation to their starting points. Nursery children love to work on computers, and using the new computer suite is of particular benefit to children in the reception class, who make good progress with learning ICT skills. The new assessment system gives staff increasingly helpful information and guidance when planning how to help individual children to move forward with their learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good planning and teaching make the most of limited facilities.
- The outside play area needs more permanent fixtures and a more interesting natural environment.

Commentary

36. Teaching and learning are good. Staff make the most of the outdoor play area, and do so successfully. Children enjoy playing outside, and the resources enable them to extend most of their learning from the classroom to outdoors. There is a limited amount of large or permanent equipment, however, and although staff make good use of the school hall and the large apparatus, nursery children do not have enough regular opportunities to become confident exploring large equipment. A shortage of suitable storage space does not help matters. The good lesson planning ensures that children have a lot of purposeful activities that allow them to practise a wide variety of physical skills. They improve their ability to manipulate and control things with their fingers, for example, by using many kinds of tools and writing materials. The new assessment system enables staff to track how well children are doing and plan for their

continued achievement. Observing the skills and confidence of pupils who recently transferred to Year 1 indicates that they reached above average standards at the end of the reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use their imaginations well during a wide range of creative activities.
- Staff are well prepared for practical sessions with good quality resources.

Commentary

37. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan well to provide rich experiences that stimulate children's imaginations. Good and regular opportunities to take part in role-play encourage children to act out their own ideas. This also extends their communication skills, as when they imagine themselves building and riding fire engines, running a home and making up stories using miniature toys. They share ideas with other children and invent new imaginary situations as they go along. Children do well when painting because they have a natural inclination to explore colours and ideas imaginatively, for example when painting fireworks. Children enjoy music and often hum or sing contentedly to themselves. They use the craft materials that staff provide and add their own stamp of creativity, for example when creating imaginative fireworks. From average attainment when they start nursery, children achieve well and attain above the goals expected for their age by the end of the reception year, when they are flowing with creative ideas.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils perform very well in national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The co-ordinator is helping the school to raise standards by improving teaching.
- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching of literacy skills in English lessons.
- Standards in speaking, listening and reading are high throughout the school.
- The standard of writing lags behind the standard of reading by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils do not know enough about what they need to do to improve their reading and writing.
- Teachers do not take full advantage of opportunities to improve pupils' writing skills through work in other subjects.

Commentary

38. Pupils achieve well in all year groups, and standards are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is because teachers build on the good start that children make in the nursery and the reception class with learning the basic skills they need to benefit fully from their future education.
39. The subject co-ordinator knows what the strengths and weaknesses are in pupils' attainment, and has taken steps to help teachers to improve teaching in writing, because this is the area where pupils have not been doing as well as they should. Standards are now above average in English, overall, but standards in writing lag behind standards in reading, and pupils' handwriting and presentation are sometimes weak at the end of Year 6. The headteacher and

co-ordinator know this, and they have provided a commercial scheme to help teachers to teach handwriting more systematically right from the start in the younger classes. This positive action, however, is not showing much success yet, because teachers do not match pupils' work well enough to their particular needs, and they move some pupils on to even more difficult work before they have mastered new skills properly. Also, teachers do not always expect high enough standards of handwriting and presentation, both in English lessons and when pupils write in other subjects. Standards in all other aspects of writing are showing strong signs of improving, however. This is because the co-ordinator has sought guidance from the local education authority advisory service, and helped teachers to introduce new teaching methods that are improving standards over time.

40. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in speaking, listening and reading, and standards are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Teachers are good at phrasing their questions to pupils in all subjects, so that pupils have to think hard and answer using increasingly complex words and sentences. Teachers know how important it is to introduce pupils to new words, and they do so all the time. As a result, pupils learn to listen attentively to their teachers, and they use the new words when discussing their ideas. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, pupils used words, such as 'extraordinary' and 'suspense', when discussing an extract from a book and when writing their own introductions to a story. When taking part in discussions with inspectors, pupils were very confident and articulate speakers for their ages. Teachers also put a lot of emphasis on teaching early reading skills, especially by helping pupils to read new words by looking closely at the sounds represented by letters and groups of letters (phonics). When reading, pupils also use a variety of other methods of finding out what new words are, and this helps them to read with increasing accuracy, fluency, expression and understanding. The National Literacy Strategy is firmly in place, and teaching is well organised and purposeful in all classes. This encourages pupils to listen and try hard.
41. The school organises appropriate additional help for the following groups of pupils, to enable them to achieve as well as they can in lessons :
 - pupils from minority ethnic groups;
 - pupils with special educational needs;
 - pupils from homes where English is not the first language;
 - more able and talented pupils.
42. The school is currently improving procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum, charting their progress over time and setting targets for pupils and their parents to aim for. There is uncertainty and inconsistency between classes, however, about how these improvements should influence teaching on a day-to-day basis. Some, but not all, older pupils have written targets for reading and writing in their new individual 'personal journals'. The targets are usually too vague to help pupils, parents and teachers to know what pupils need to learn next. Examples of their targets are: 'enjoy my reading', 'read for 15 minutes every day', 'listen', 'spell correctly' and 'be careful'. In writing, one pupil has a clearly stated target, but does not know what it means. This weakness makes it difficult for teachers to match pupils' work as closely as possible to their current learning needs. Consequently, there are occasions when some pupils struggle to complete work that is much too difficult for them. There is usually plenty of challenge for more able pupils in English lessons, but the lack of clarity in their targets means that they could sometimes do even better. This was seen when a very capable boy was reading literature that did not extend his reading skills at all. His target provided nothing new to aim for, and he commented upon this fact. Pupils in all classes, therefore, do not know enough about how they need to improve. The quality of teachers' marking of work varies, and while there are some very good examples, at other times teachers accept poorly presented work and do not refer to pupils' specific weaknesses. Given pupils' very good attitudes to their work, teachers miss a golden opportunity to involve pupils in their own learning and progress as an integral part of the school's efforts to raise standards.
43. The subject co-ordinator does a lot to find out how well teachers are doing with teaching the National Literacy Strategy, and to provide the help and training they need to continue to improve.

The school development plan reflects the school's weaknesses very well, and there is a strong determination to continue to raise standards. Consequently, teaching and learning are good throughout the school, even when taking account of the known weaknesses in teaching writing, especially handwriting. The school has maintained above average standards since the last inspection, but there have also been several significant improvements. These include closer checks on teaching and standards, better resources and improved progress for the more able pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

44. Pupils use their speaking, listening and reading skills well, and sometimes very well, across the curriculum. Although pupils write in most subjects and in a wide variety of styles, teachers do not take full advantage of these opportunities to improve and extend pupils' skills through meaningful writing tasks in other subjects. All pupils in the class sometimes copy out the same passages, for example in science and geography, and this does nothing to narrow the gap between standards in reading and standards in writing by the end of Year 6. Pupils have an increasing number of opportunities to research using a computer and to record their ideas using a word-processing program.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test results at the end of Year 6 are improving.
- The subject co-ordinator gives a strong lead to other teachers.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are now achieving well, owing to the school's efforts to improve provision.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 are not improving as quickly as standards at Year 6.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematics skills to work in other subjects.

Commentary

45. Pupils' satisfactory achievement in Years 1 and 2 and their good achievement in Years 3 to 6 are reflected in the current standard of their work and in the 2003 national test results. Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. National test results at the end of Year 6 have been improving year on year since 2000, and the 2003 results represent good improvement on the previous year. In 2003, fewer pupils failed to attain the level expected for their age, and more pupils attained a higher level. Standards at the end of Year 2 are not improving as quickly as this, and there was a small dip in standards in the 2003 test results. The school's data shows that the year group tested, however, started from a poorer baseline in mathematics. The recent and determined efforts to raise standards by improving the teaching of mental mathematics and problem solving are not yet showing full effect on the standard of pupils' work. Nevertheless, when taking test results for the last three years together, pupils' performance is above average.
46. Most pupils in Year 2 are confident to 'have a go' when asked to double numbers to ten quickly in their heads. The more able pupils are beginning to understand the value of each figure in numbers of 100 and beyond. They can explain how they might work out an answer when adding three smaller numbers together. The less able pupils, however, still need help to find pairs of numbers that make ten. Most pupils in Year 6 calculate accurately on paper when asked to add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers up to 100, although a few less able pupils are unsure how to multiply by ten. The more able pupils can reduce fractions to their simplest terms, but less able pupils are unsure about working with simple fractions that are several parts of a whole, for example calculating two-thirds of 60. In their lesson, pupils revised the properties of quadrilaterals. They achieved well when learning how to measure angles using protractors.

By the end of the lesson, almost all pupils could do this accurately, and about half could measure angles to the nearest degree. They used the mathematical vocabulary well when explaining their work, and knew that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees. The teacher questioned them skilfully to make sure that they understood whether to use the outer or the inner scale on the protractor, and checked to make sure that they were all measuring correctly.

47. The National Numeracy Strategy is firmly in place, and as a result, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers adapt the national guidance for teaching mathematics to meet the needs of all pupils effectively. When teachers plan lessons, they are clear what they intend pupils of differing abilities to learn. This means that lessons are purposeful and that all pupils are challenged to do their best. In a lesson in Year 4, for example, all pupils achieved well when the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate how to collect and interpret data. He set the lesson in an interesting and practical context, and allocated different work for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils with special educational needs had good support to be able to take a full part in the lesson. Teachers focus strongly on helping pupils to understand the vocabulary of mathematics. This was seen in a lesson in Year 5 during which all pupils achieved well when learning what 'isosceles' and 'scalene' triangles are like. During and after lessons, teachers take good account of what pupils can and cannot do, and they use this information to change the course of lessons if necessary and to plan what pupils need to learn next. This good teaching gives older pupils a clear knowledge of their own learning in lessons, and Year 6 pupils can talk about the National Curriculum levels they have reached, and how near they are to reaching the next level. They talk positively about the increased focus on mental mathematics and problem solving, and one pupil explained how his mental mathematics skills now help him with his work in other subjects.
48. A particular strength of teaching is the very good relationships that teachers foster with their pupils, and they insist on high standards of behaviour in most lessons. Pupils respond well to these expectations, and appreciate teachers' good sense of humour that helps them to feel secure and confident in their learning. Teachers use a good range of resources and tasks to make learning meaningful and interesting. The thoughtful use of interactive whiteboards, for example, helps teachers to convey important teaching points effectively. Similarly, the regular use of practical mathematical equipment and calculators helps pupils to enjoy mathematics and describe it as their favourite subject. Pupils' good attitudes to learning are evident in their lessons.
49. Improvement since the last inspection is good, overall. Teaching is better than it was, and the more able pupils make better progress than they did in 1998, because there is more challenge in their work. The co-ordinator's good level of knowledge and understanding of mathematics enables her to give a strong lead to other teachers. She sets a good example in her own teaching and gives further guidance to other teachers after observing their lessons. Staff give careful consideration to how they organise pupils in the older classes so that they achieve their best. Intensive teaching for groups of pupils who have confidently reached the level expected for their age, for example, offers them a good chance of attaining higher levels. The school development plan demonstrates the depth of the co-ordinator's knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. It also shows the school's determination to continue to improve, for example, by aiming for even better test results in 2004, especially in the Year 2 tests.

Mathematics across the curriculum

50. Provision is satisfactory. At times, mathematics contributes effectively to other subjects. In history, for example, time lines help pupils to develop a better sense of chronology, as in the current work in Year 3 about the Tudors and Stuarts. Teachers know that they do not yet always plan to take fullest advantage of opportunities to help pupils to make meaningful links with other subjects, notably between mathematics and ICT, and this weakness is reflected in the school development plan.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well, and national test results for pupils at the end of Year 6 improved in 2003.
- The school's action to improve provision is currently being managed well.
- Teachers do not take enough advantage of opportunities to improve pupils' ability to record their ideas by writing.
- Pupils have few opportunities to investigate scientific ideas and to increase their curiosity and initiative.
- Assessment information is not used as well as it could be to check how well pupils are performing.

Commentary

51. Pupils achieve well, overall, and standards are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Provision has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. Teachers now give greater consideration to assessing pupils' attainment, and they make better provision for more able pupils. As a result, there was a large increase in the proportion of pupils reaching a higher level than that expected for their age in the 2003 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6. There has not been as much improvement, however, in the opportunities for pupils to learn to plan and carry out scientific investigations by themselves, or to develop their understanding of testing and enquiry. This explains why the standard of pupils' work is not as high as test results alone suggest. Although there is a curriculum plan for the whole school that provides good guidance, teachers plan few topics that require a fully exploratory approach. Consequently, when the older pupils study topics, such as 'materials', their achievement is curtailed by lack of attention to the investigative aspect of the subject. There are times also when the reason for this is partly insufficient resources. The school development plan reflects clear intentions to address these weaknesses in the near future.
52. Teaching and learning, although variable, are good, overall. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, the teacher organised first hand practical activities for pupils to investigate a wide range of materials for themselves, in order to understand the idea of 'suitability for a purpose'. The improved and good test results at the end of Year 6 suggest good teaching in the past, but this was not observed during the inspection, and it was not always evident in pupils' work. There was little evidence of the adventurous or inspired teaching to which the subject lends itself. Nevertheless, discussions with Year 6 pupils indicate that they understand the idea of fair testing from their work in Year 5. This reflects the school's decision to give extra support for teaching in Year 5 and to continue as a 'booster' programme for any pupils who need it in Year 6. Pupils are confident, enthusiastic and capable of replicating the good achievement of the previous Year 6 pupils.
53. The co-ordinator is currently checking that the curriculum is balanced properly. He is encouraging teachers to allow pupils to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning more often. He is upgrading resources and encouraging more consistency between classes in the use of texts for teaching purposes. Teachers have recently been trying out various methods of assessing their pupils, and, with the help of the co-ordinator, will shortly select those most likely to provide the information needed to plan lessons that more accurately reflect the differing levels of ability in their classes. The co-ordinator is aware that too much of pupils' writing in science is copied, and has plans to give teachers help to overcome this weakness by encouraging pupils to record and extend their own scientific ideas.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and teamwork have resulted in greatly improved provision.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and their achievement is now good.
- Year 6 pupils attain high standards in graphics, multi-media display and communication.
- Good curriculum planning ensures that pupils make consistent progress.
- Teaching is good, despite limited space and cramped conditions.
- Teachers do not yet have access to good assessment information to guide them when planning lessons.
- Pupils have few opportunities to work independently and show initiative, and they know little about how they need to improve their next work.

Commentary

54. Very strong leadership by the headteacher, who is the co-ordinator, has encouraged staff to adopt an enthusiastic 'can do' approach to ICT. The school development plan charts the purchase of computers and other necessary hardware that enables the school to meet the national ratio of one computer to 11 pupils, building up to one to eight next year. The purchase of resources for control technology and data-sensing means that pupils can, for the first time, cover the full curriculum this year. Curriculum planning is much better than it was at the time of the last inspection. It gives teachers a clear structure to work from, and each lesson is designed to introduce pupils to new skills. Standards have improved considerably fairly recently, owing to good teaching. Pupils are on track to attain the levels expected nationally by the end of Years 2 and 6. They are now acquiring new skills rapidly, and are achieving well from a low starting point. Pupils in Year 2 can find information from the Internet as part of their work in science. They record their ideas, for example in history, using a word-processing program. Pupils in Year 6 produce posters warning of the dangers of bacteria as part of their work in science, and use computer programs to research in several subjects. They organise and refine their work with a particular audience in mind, and are beginning to be able to prepare presentations using advanced technological equipment. The more able pupils can share and exchange information, using electronic mail.
55. Teachers demonstrate new skills quickly and clearly to the whole class, then give them plenty of time to work through the instructions and practise new skills. This often involves them in tackling challenging problems. Pupils have very positive attitudes and persevere well. Sometimes conditions are cramped, but pupils behave very sensibly. Year 6 pupils, for example, explain how they assign each other roles in their groups of three, in order to ensure that they have equal turns on the computers. They show, by the attentive way they listen to the teacher, and by using the notes they make, that they relish this responsibility and can apply their literacy skills to ICT. There is scope to extend still further such opportunities, however, in order for pupils to be able to meet the rigorous requirements needed to attain the National Curriculum level higher than that expected for their age. Pupils' good behaviour allows the teachers to explain things confidently and in depth. Consequently, pupils' work on image composition and multi-media presentation is moving to above the average level by the end of Year 6.
56. The co-ordinator keeps a close eye on how well things are progressing in the school and ensures that all aspects of ICT work are being represented equally. When problems are spotted, they are dealt with quickly, for example Year 5 pupils were given extra help to learn about spreadsheets, so that their attainment could rise to the next level. Staff are committed to a continuing drive to improve standards, and have introduced procedures for assessing pupils' attainment. These procedures are not fully effective, however, because teachers do not yet have the information they need to adjust their planning as they go along. Consequently, early opportunities to 'fast track' the more able pupils are missed.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

57. The portfolio of previously completed work indicates that pupils use ICT in a wide variety of ways, covering most subjects. Opportunities for practising word-processing skills dominate because text is the most frequent way of recording and communicating pupils' ideas. This extends pupils' literacy skills well. Pupils also extend their work in mathematics and science, and there are good examples of work in which pupils have produced graphs drawn up from spreadsheets, for example to illustrate plant growth. Pupils in Year 1 made a leap in their understanding of 'flat not fat' shapes in mathematics by observing computer graphics.

HUMANITIES

Commentary

58. Only two lessons were seen in **geography** and one lesson in **history**. Pupils' previous work was also looked at, but there was too little evidence to make overall judgements about provision.
59. In **geography**, pupils in Year 6 show satisfactory knowledge and understanding when they discuss geographical features, such as landscapes, and they know some ways in which humans can change landscapes, for example by farming. Pupils in Year 4 can look at evidence of contrasting human and physical features, and give reasons to justify their observations. In their lesson, the teacher used photographic resources well, and asked pupils probing questions that made them think hard. Pupils achieved much better levels of understanding about life in India than they had before the lesson started. They enjoyed this challenge, because it gave them a chance to make decisions by collaborating with one another. Probing questioning by the teacher was also a strong feature of the lesson in Year 6. It did not provide opportunities for pupils to find anything out for themselves, however, and it was the same for all pupils, regardless of their differing abilities. Consequently, their interest and concentration levels suffered, and they did not achieve as much as they could have. Pupils' previous work indicates that they are rarely expected to suggest suitable lines of geographical enquiry, plan investigations or record their ideas and findings using a wide variety of writing or recording styles. The last inspection found that pupils had few opportunities to use their own initiative in geography, and this appears to be still the case.
60. In the **history** lesson in Year 3, pupils showed a satisfactory knowledge of the part played by Guy Fawkes in the history of Britain. The teacher used resources and questioning well to encourage pupils to talk about their work and to understand the sequence of past events. When watching a video, for example, the teacher stopped it to ask the pupils, "What might the conspirators be saying?" This depth of questioning encouraged the pupils to put themselves 'in the shoes' of the plotters, and to understand the historical circumstances surrounding the Gunpowder Plot more deeply. Pupils spent a lot of time, however, copying out sentences, rather than concentrating on increasing their understanding of chronological order. Similarly, samples of previous work from all classes suggest that marking of written work does not always help pupils to know how they need to improve their skills of historical enquiry.
61. When planning their lessons, teachers list 'key questions', such as "Why did Guy Fawkes try to blow up the Houses of Parliament?" This helps them to focus their questioning and to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills. The plans in both **geography** and **history**, however, are not as clear as they are in English and mathematics lessons, which are supported by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, with regard to what teachers intend pupils to learn.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Commentary

62. There was too little evidence to make overall judgements in **art and design** or in **design and technology**, although the two lessons seen in **art and design** were satisfactory. The standard of pupils' work in these lessons, in the work on display and in pupils' sketchbooks, is typical for pupils in Years 2 and 6. A discussion with pupils in Year 5, however, indicates that their knowledge of art and design materials and of artists and craftspeople is fairly limited. Pupils in both lessons enjoyed their work and tried hard, because of the enthusiasm of their teachers. Year 1 pupils used oil pastels to draw pictures of trees representing the four seasons. They found it difficult at the end of the lesson to compare the new art materials they had just used with materials they had used previously. The theme for the lesson linked closely with the English lesson for the next day. The teacher's plan for pupils to try out tools and techniques was not carried through as well as it could have been. This was because the teacher did not focus strongly enough on investigating and experimenting with the oil pastels. Year 5 pupils used sketching pencils carefully when observing and drawing objects, such as bottles and apples. The teacher had a clear focus on improving pupils' art and design skills, and the finished pictures were mainly of a good standard.
63. **Design and technology** lessons in three classes were sampled briefly, because they were all timetabled at the same time. The standard of pupils' work in these lessons was fairly typical for pupils of their ages, although pupils in Year 5 did very well when asked to design, make and evaluate firework creations made from bread. The teacher's strong focus on teaching the skills of design and technology – designing, making and evaluating finished products – helped them to achieve well. Year 3 pupils used a satisfactory range of materials to make a model with hinges, but the teacher gave them a lot of direction about what to make and how to make it. Year 4 pupils were sewing money containers to link with their history work about the Vikings. The teacher explained that the history work was more important currently than developing pupils' skills in design and technology.
64. There was too little evidence to make overall judgements in **music** or **physical education**.
65. The one lesson seen in **music** was for pupils in Years 1 and 2. It was a good lesson that helped pupils to achieve well and to attain standards above what is typical for pupils at Year 2. The school employs a teacher to visit the school weekly and to work with class teachers to plan interesting and enjoyable lessons that reflect the National Curriculum well. Pupils were learning new songs for their Christmas production, and teachers built this into a lesson that also developed pupils' musical knowledge, skills and understanding. The standard of singing was high, as was pupils' knowledge of musical terminology and appreciation of musical ideas. About 60 older pupils are learning to play tuned musical instruments – guitars, keyboards, woodwind and brass. They sometimes miss parts of assemblies and class lessons when they have their music lessons with visiting teachers, but the school works hard to ensure minimum disruption to teaching and learning.
66. Only one lesson was seen in **physical education**, and it was a satisfactory gymnastics lesson for pupils in Year 2. Good relationships between the teacher and the pupils ensured good behaviour on the part of pupils and safe practice. The pupils used the floor and apparatus to roll and to perform high and low movements to varying levels of skill. There were few chances for them to consider and talk about how their performances could have been improved. Pupils start swimming lessons in Year 4 and continue until they reach the standard required for pupils by the end of Year 6. By the time they left the school, almost all pupils in Year 6 last year could swim at least the required 25 metres, and this suggests high standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is good because it links well with other subjects of the curriculum.
- There is a strong and effective School Council.

Commentary

67. Curriculum planning is good because it makes links with other subjects to make learning more meaningful. Health, exercise and safety aspects, for example, are covered as part of physical education, and health, sex education and drugs awareness are covered as part of science. The school takes good advantage of expertise from outside the school, for example by working with the police on special projects to raise awareness of the dangers of drug abuse. Social education is a consistent theme in all the school's work, whether planned or as opportunities arise. The pupils' School Council is an active group of lively minds, not afraid to put forward good ideas for the benefit of the whole school community. This makes a considerable contribution to pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
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	4
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	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
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	3

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