

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LADYMOUNT ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Pensby, Wirral

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105084

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Dawn Ormes

Lead inspector: Mrs Chris Field

Dates of inspection: 24th to 26th May 2004

Inspection number: 256689

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	226
School address:	Portal Road Pensby Wirral
Postcode:	CH61 5YD
Telephone number:	0151 6484326
Fax number:	0151 6489098
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Cantillon
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School that serves principally the two parishes of Holy Family in Pensby and Our Lady and St John in Heswall. It is of average size and provides for 226 pupils from the age of 4 to 11, some of whom come from beyond the locality. The profile of the children's attainment is above average when they join the reception class, known as the *Foundation Stage*. A below average proportion of pupils have special educational needs but seven have a statement and this is more than typically found in a primary school of this size. Pupils' needs encompass a range of difficulties but in the main are for moderate learning difficulties. Virtually all pupils in school are from White European backgrounds and speak English at home. A very small number speak both Chinese and English.

At the time of the inspection an acting headteacher was in post due to the prolonged absence of the substantive headteacher. The school is currently without a deputy headteacher; a new appointment has been made for September. Some staff have recently taken on management positions on a goodwill basis; the senior management team is very new to its role.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9479	C Field	Lead inspector	Personal and social education and citizenship.
10965	P Edwards	Lay inspector	
4099	R Braithwaite	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage.
30144	E Hastings	Team inspector	English, history, geography, physical education, provision for pupils with special educational needs.
21816	B Thomas	Team inspector	Science, art and design, design and technology, music.

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is **effective** in providing a good quality education within a caring Catholic Christian ethos that supports pupils' good achievement. Teaching is good overall with some very good features that enable pupils' successful learning. The acting headteacher has made a good impact in a very short time and together with staff and governors is leading the school forward. Within a very tight budget and despite the current uncertainties in leadership, the school provides **good** value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The ethos is caring and supportive and enables boys and girls of all abilities to achieve very well in English and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science and above average in design and technology and history.
- The highly effective teaching team have enabled pupils to learn successfully despite the significant turnover of senior managers and the absence of the headteacher.
- The youngest children in school receive a good start to their education in most respects because of well-planned provision and the strengths of the teaching team.
- The curriculum is rich and exciting with a very good range of extra activities that pupils enjoy.
- Good links with the church, community and other schools benefit pupils' education.
- The acting headteacher is doing a good job in difficult circumstances and with support from the governors, senior managers and the local education authority is revitalising school improvement and management systems but there are still weaknesses to be addressed.
- Governors are not ensuring that all legal requirements are met in full and this is unsatisfactory.

There has been adequate improvement overall since the previous inspection in 1998. The many strengths concerning the quality of education have been sustained and no serious weaknesses have arisen despite the problems over the past year. However, the management roles of senior staff and subject leaders, highlighted for improvement in 1998, are still on the agenda for action as is the need to improve the quality of resources for outdoor-play in the Foundation Stage. Assessment, which was a weakness six years ago, is now good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. There is no agreed or consistent approach to assessing pupils' progress in non-core subjects and this requires attention. Multi-cultural aspects, underrepresented in the curriculum previously, are now woven into topic work through dance, art, music and history and provision is satisfactory. Homework has been given good attention with a very good system established to support home reading. The school has good capacity to move forward on these matters and those highlighted by this inspection as the key to better effectiveness.

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Most children start with above average levels of skills and knowledge and achieve well so that virtually all reach the goals set for them by the time they transfer to Year 1. Pupils achieve well in the infants and at the end of Year 2 are currently reaching above average standards in English, mathematics, design and technology and history and average standards in science, information and communication technology, art and design, geography and physical education. Pupils achieve well overall in the juniors with some rapid progress in Year 6. Current standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science, above average in design and technology and history and average in all other subjects except music where no judgement has been made because of limited evidence.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average. Similar schools are those with up to 8% of pupils eligible for free school meals and whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2*

The table above shows that Year 6 pupils reached well above average standards in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in all subjects. From their starting point in Year 2 most pupils achieved satisfactorily in English and science and very well in mathematics. The schools' trend in raising standards is in line with that found nationally.

Pupils' attitudes are very positive and other personal qualities are good. Pupils enjoy school, they try hard with their work and behave well. Attendance levels are well above those found in other primary schools and punctuality is good. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Classes are productive and purposeful places in which pupils enjoy learning and very good relationships underpin their good achievement. The curriculum meets requirements and offers worthwhile experiences for pupils of all ages with some very good enrichment. Resources though adequate overall are being supplemented by staff, and managers have yet to undertake a full audit of resource needs in subjects. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and the small number of support staff is generally deployed to best advantage. The outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage to use is uninspiring and lacks stimulus for their physical skills development. Pupils receive good levels of care and support. They are very well looked after during the school day. Child protection arrangements are adequate but staff training is required. The very effective provision for personal and social development ensures the pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school has enjoyed a very positive partnership with parents, but the current leadership situation is understandably causing a strain on home-school links that governors are working hard to rebuild. Some of the information that parents are entitled to has not been provided in the prospectus and the governors' annual report and both documents contain inaccurate information. This needs urgent attention to ensure that statutory requirements are met. The school has forged strong links with the church, other schools and its community to the benefit of pupils.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **satisfactory** but management and governance have weaknesses. Governors are doing their best to improve a difficult situation in which there have been significant changes in senior management. With Diocesan support, an appointment of an acting headteacher was made in March and this has given stability and enabled the school to begin to build for the future. The governors have a good grasp of what needs to be done to address the issues that have emerged over recent months. They are a skilled group who show great dedication and commitment to the school and are very alert to the need to cast their net wider in seeking the views of all stakeholders to help inform their decisions. A new action plan that covers the immediate future has been created with support from the local education authority and is currently being implemented to address the main priorities facing the school. It rightly focuses on developing the leadership and management of the senior team who so far have had limited opportunities to contribute to strategic decisions. Performance management systems have been set back on track but more remains to be done to support teacher's professional development. The links between school improvement priorities and

the budget are not well made; the very tight budget is a barrier to future improvement that governors have yet to fully assess.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Most parents believe that their children achieve well at the school and they are right to do so. A significant minority is understandably very concerned about the instability in leadership. Some parents are also concerned about staff changes in lower juniors and the impact that this has had on behaviour standards. Inspectors would seek to reassure parents that the behaviour management in this year was good during the time of the inspection. Pupils hold very good views of the school. They enjoy being with their friends and find lessons interesting and good fun. Some pupils told inspectors that *the toilets smell and that they would like new ones please!*

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that all legal requirements are met.
- Move quickly in remedying the weaknesses identified by the 1998 inspection and that are highlighted by this inspection as areas for improvement.
- Plan for school improvement in the longer term with clear indications of priorities, costs and success criteria.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of teaching staff and make sure that time, opportunity and training is put in place to support the implementation of the recently written job descriptions for subject leaders and senior management team and to ensure a life-work balance.
- Make sure that the performance management process runs to plan and review the impact it is having on staff development and school effectiveness at timely intervals.
- Implement a school self review process that involves all stakeholders and seeks to challenge the quality and effectiveness of the schools' performance and quality of education being provided.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Standards overall are well above average in the core subjects at the end of Year 6.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Boys and girls of all abilities achieve very well in English and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science and above average in design and technology and history.
- Standards in science though average at the end of Year 2 should be higher, and the school is working effectively, with intensive support from the local education authority, to bring improvement.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school has sustained pupils' good achievement since the time of the previous inspection. Most children start with above average levels of skills and knowledge and achieve well so that virtually all reach the goals set for them by the time they transfer to Year 1. The skills that the children build in their physical development are hampered by the lack of suitable outdoor provision and a limited quantity of climbing equipment and wheeled toys. Recent funding has enabled some new purchases, but a wider range is still required to enable the children to develop to the full of their capabilities. Very effective full time, one-to-one support is helping statemented children in the Foundation Stage to make good progress against their specific targets.
2. Pupils achieve well in the infants' and standards at the end of Year 2 are currently above average in English, mathematics, design and technology and history. Standards are average in information and communication technology, art and design, geography and physical education. Standards in science though average at the end of Year 2 should be higher. The school knows this and is working effectively to improve the investigation and practical aspects of the subject as well as introducing a new scheme of work. With support from the local education authority advisory staff, the school is on track to make the improvements to science by the end of this term.
3. Pupils achieve well in the juniors' with some rapid progress made in Year 6 due to particularly effective teaching. Current standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science, above average in design and technology and history and average in all other subjects except music where no judgement has been made because of limited evidence. The school is targeting the very highest attainers in English and mathematics with extra challenging work as part of its developing approach to meeting the needs of those with gifts and talents and this is a positive feature. The progress of these pupils in lessons, however, is not being consistently assessed and recorded and the implementation of a tracking system is the next step forward.
4. There are effective individual education plans in place to support the achievement of those pupils with learning difficulties, including those who have statements. However, teachers are sometimes stretched to match work to specific learning needs when they have limited additional support in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as their classmates because of the strong commitment shown by all staff to meeting the needs of individual pupils and the encouragement given to do their best.
5. The table that follows shows that Year 2 pupils reached well above average standards in the 2003 National Curriculum tests. Standards were above those reached by pupils in similar schools in reading, above average in writing and average in mathematics. Teachers

assessed science standards as very high and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Boys did much better than the girls in reading and mathematics and achieved broadly similar results in writing.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.9 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	16.4 (15.0)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.4 (17.8)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

6. The table that follows shows that Year 6 pupils reached well above average standards in the 2003 national tests in all subjects. Standards were above average in English, well above average in mathematics and average in science when compared to those in similar schools. From their starting point in Year 2 most pupils achieved satisfactorily in English and science and very well in mathematics. Girls performed much better than the boys in school in English. The schools' trend in raising standards is in line with that found nationally.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.7 (29.4)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.6 (28.9)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.0 (29.8)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 40 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

7. Over recent years, the school has been meeting the targets set by the local education authority (LEA) and for some time has been a *light touch* school because of its sustained high performance. The many strengths in teaching have ensured that pupils across the ability spread continue to achieve well despite the lack of focus given to establishing rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to support school self review. The school has very limited data about the relative performance of different groups of pupils beyond that maintained by teachers. Inspectors looked closely at the achievement of boys and girls due to the gender variations highlighted by the results in the National Curriculum tests in 2003. From the intensive scrutiny of pupils' past work and from lessons observations, it was evident that boys and girls are equally enthusiastic for their studies and that both achieve well during their time at school. In view of the uncertainty caused by the prolonged absence of the headteacher and the temporary appointments made to senior management, the school is receiving intensive support from the LEA to establish clear subject action plans that should support even better school effectiveness and rigour to tracking and target setting processes. The governing body has not published the 2003 National Curriculum test results in the prospectus or shown the targets for 2004 and 2005 and this requires attention.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes are **very good** and other personal qualities are **good**. Attendance levels are well above those found in other primary schools and punctuality is **good**. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between pupils are very good.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in the activities provided.
- Pupils enjoy school and they try hard with their work and behave well in class and as they move around the school.
- Pupils' attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

## Commentary

8. Pupils are a strength of the school today in much the same way as they were when the school was previously inspected. Pupils like being part of the school community and they enjoy taking part in the activities provided. They listen very carefully and try hard in lessons. The staff hold high expectations for behaviour and adopt a consistent approach to encourage good behaviour and pupils respond well. Relationships between adults and pupils in the school are very good. The staff deal with any reported incidents of bullying or harassment promptly. No exclusions have been made in recent years and this is testament to the very good inclusion policy and practice.
9. Teachers value pupil's ideas and provide good opportunities for them to reflect, use their imagination and develop self-awareness. Staff provide good role models in their dealings with pupils. Pupils discuss school rules and they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They respond well to the use of golden time and look forward to taking part in their chosen activity. Moral issues are discussed, for example the need provide education to children in the third world. Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities as classroom helpers, house captains and librarians. They take these responsibilities seriously and carry them out to the best of their abilities. Parents praise this aspect of provision. They highlight the good work of the "play ground friends" who give support to those who ask. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own cultural background through visits to local museums and places of interest. Their knowledge of other cultures is developed mainly through music, art and the curriculum for religious education. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
10. Attendance is well above the national average and staff monitor any absence very carefully. Teachers call registers at the beginning of every session. Parents know the school rules regarding absence and the home school agreement supports the school's policy on attendance. Most pupils arrive punctually at the beginning of every session.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/3 (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.1	School data :	0.0
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.*

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school is **effective** in providing a good quality education within a caring Catholic Christian ethos that supports pupils' good achievement. Teaching is **good** overall with some very good features that enable pupils' successful learning. The **good** curriculum meets needs and aptitudes and has a **very good** range of extra activities that pupils enjoy. Pupils receive **good** levels of care and support. Links with parents are currently **satisfactory** and are **good** with other stakeholders.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good overall**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching observed by inspectors in lessons, and reflected in a sample of pupils' work saved from last September, was of good quality overall.
- Some very good features in the teaching of English and mathematics is helping pupils of different abilities to learn successfully and reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Limited use is made of teachers' evaluations of lessons to inform the planning of non-core subjects and this is a shortcoming.
- The provision for homework is good and through this, parents are committed as partners in education.

### Commentary

11. Teaching quality has retained the good qualities reported at the time of the previous inspection and this reflects the strong commitment shown by all staff in doing their very best for the pupils. Between them the teachers have many skills and talents. Newly qualified teachers and more experienced members of staff work together successfully, sharing ideas and supporting one another well. The school has managed to cover the teaching commitments of staff on long-term absence effectively. Teething troubles with the staffing changes that caused parents anxiety at the start of the term have now been resolved and this is resulting in lower junior-age pupils working in a settled and positive atmosphere. The instability in senior leadership and management have led to some loss of drive to moving forward on the system formerly in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and this is a weakness. For example, the good teaching and learning policy is not being used to help identify and share best practice. Assessment, which was a weakness six years ago, is now good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. There is no agreed or consistent approach to assessing pupils' progress in non-core subjects and this requires attention. Homework has been given good attention with a very good system established to support home reading. The pupils say they enjoy coming to school as they are learning plenty and having fun.
12. The strengths in teaching lie in high expectations and the levels of challenge in the work that stimulates good responses and encourages pupils to aim high. All teachers show very good subject knowledge in teaching English and mathematics and this is supporting the very good achievement in these subjects. Relative shortcomings are the focus on teaching activity rather than learning outcomes in planning, the use of time which, although satisfactory, could do with being brisker and the limited use of assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics to aid pupils' next steps in learning and to show them how they can improve their work. Marking is thorough and mostly constructive. The recently introduced target setting system in English is a positive feature that could usefully be exported to other subjects. The pasting of writing targets into the fronts of English and history books in Year 6 is a good strategy to bring focus to the standards of writing expected and to help pinpoint individual progress. The pupils told inspectors that the system of celebrating the achievement of targets with the award of stickers, is a good motivation. Teachers are reflective about their practice and are very keen for pointers for improvement, but there has been very limited monitoring of their work to enable this, for example through the performance management process, and this is a weakness in senior management.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	9 (21%)	23 (56%)	9 (21%)	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.

13. The teaching observed by inspectors in lessons as shown in the above table, and reflected in a sample of pupils' work saved from last September, is of good quality overall. Classes are productive and purposeful places in which pupils enjoy learning and very good relationships underpin their good achievement. Teaching is never less than good in the Foundation Stage and more often good than satisfactory in the infant and junior classes. Teachers set suitable learning challenges in response to pupils' diverse learning needs, as work provided is closely related to targets identified in pupils' individual learning plans. Pupils are provided with the correct blend of help and challenge, so that they do not become over-reliant on adults. The work of support staff is effective, as is the volunteer help in some classes.
14. The very best lessons in which learning moved forward at a very good pace were in English, mathematics, information and communication technology in the infants, and English, mathematics, science and history in the juniors.

There are common features of the very best teaching that could be used to support improvement:

- Well distributed questioning that elicits pupils' knowledge and understanding, as well as probing their deeper thinking skills.
  - Positive promotion of learning objectives during the lesson with a focus on pupil self evaluation of progress in the plenary sessions.
  - Setting of time targets to support the pace at which pupils work during group activities.
  - Opportunities for pupils to manage appropriate aspects of their own learning through first hand experience.
  - A real sense of enjoyment in learning that was demanding but fun.
15. An excellent music lesson in Year 6 enabled the pupils to achieve very well as they firstly explored African music and then sang beautifully as they performed their own compositions, keeping the beat with body popping and hand clapping and the rhythm with African drums.

### The Curriculum

The curriculum meets requirements and offers worthwhile experiences for pupils of all ages with some **very good** enrichment. There is a shortfall in the resources in some areas.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very inclusive; equality of access and opportunity is good for boys and girls of different abilities and enables those with learning difficulties and physical needs to achieve well.
- The curriculum is good across the school with a very good range of extra-curricular activities that enhance pupils' experiences.
- Resources in lessons are well chosen but the range available is narrow, especially in mathematics and in the Foundation Stage.
- The library is a major asset as are the information and communication technology suites.
- The outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage is barely adequate.

### Commentary

16. The curriculum today is of similar quality to that reported at the time of the previous inspection. However, nearly all subject policies were updated in late 2003 with art and design ratified by the governors this month. Science is currently undergoing a full audit and a new scheme work is being introduced. The new *Here I am* scheme for religious education gives good focus to key world religions and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The multi-cultural aspects, underrepresented in the curriculum previously, are now woven into topic work through dance, art, music and history and provision is satisfactory. Governors have recently set up curriculum links which will involve liaison with subject leaders, and specific visits to classes, and this is a positive development.
17. Planning at the long and medium term is carried out thoroughly and supports pupils effectively in learning systematically across subjects. Short-term planning is generally good for literacy and numeracy and adequate in other subjects. The additional strategies being used to support pupils' language and literacy skills development and the recovery programme in mathematics are proving to be very effective. Pupils have a range of good quality experiences in the humanities, creative, aesthetic and physical aspects of the curriculum. For example, work in Year 4 involved pupils studying Spanish culture. An artist worked with pupils to create designs in the style of Gaudi and pupils ate tapas cooked by a chef from Barcelona! All pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to go swimming and last year 90 per cent met the required standard in swimming. Parents praise highly the choir and chess club. Last Summer some 24 families supported four teams from Ladymount in the qualifying round of the semi finals organised by the Primary Schools Chess Association held at Pontin's holiday village. Tennis coaching is a longstanding tradition at the school with very skilled future tennis players being nurtured who later represent the school and county in national tournaments. Pupils can also take part in football, cross country, recorders, French and band clubs. Good use is made of visitors to extend pupils' experiences, for example the Hamlet workshop led by the Young Shakespeare Company. A range of visits take place that are well linked to the topics that pupils study including residential visits in Years 5 and 6.
18. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and the small number of support staff is generally deployed to best advantage. Very recent changes in the way that funding for this aspect of provision is made available to schools by the local education authority has placed more demands on the school's tight budget and managers are alert to the need to review the situation at regular intervals to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
19. The school environment is pleasant and well maintained, though more focus could be given to the display of children's work in some classes. The lack of storage is an issue the school has flagged up, with lunchbox storage in particular causing concerns for health and safety. Toilets are adequate but some pupils find the odour unpleasant and inspectors agree that they could be sweeter smelling. The library has recently been upgraded and is a major asset. It could be further enhanced by the provision of computers so that pupils would not have to be taught in split groups when undertaking research. The information and communication technology suites are well equipped, though there are not enough seats in the lower junior suits for whole class use and when Year 2 pupils make use of these facilities which are adjacent their classroom, the seats are too low for them to see the screens without straining. The Foundation Stage environment is good indoors with attractive displays and well organised activities that enable continuous provision to be made in all areas of learning. However, the small outdoor space is uninspiring and lacks stimulus for their physical skills development. There are too few dressing up clothes in the role play areas. Some lovely finger puppets have been made by staff to help with storytelling. Resources though adequate overall, are being supplemented by staff, for example the mathematics games in Year 1. This situation is not ideal and requires review.

## Care, guidance and support

Pupils receive **good** care and support.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know their pupils well and are supportive of them.
- Child protection training needs updating.
- Parents are happy with the school's induction programme.
- Arrangements for first aid are comprehensive and the care of pupils is good.

### Commentary

20. The school provides a caring, Christian environment where pupils are valued as individuals and encouraged to do their best. The personal development of pupils is closely but informally monitored through discussion rather than through a recorded system. Child protection procedures are adequate but training is in need of updating. Parents regard the reward system as a key motivator- of the good behaviour, especially *Golden Time* that can lead to pupils choosing a treat if they have earned enough credits for their good attitudes, effort and behaviour. The House system also supports corporate endeavours very successfully. Bullying instances occur but parents are confident that they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Circle time used to help build bridges as the bully writes a letter of apology to the victim.
21. Staff know their pupils well and pupils are made aware of their targets for improvement and these are discussed with parents at parent teacher consultation meetings. School managers have ensured that the needs of pupils with special educational needs are met through the provision of well-trained support staff, although the number of them is limited due to the constraints of the school budget. Teaching assistants work hard alongside class teachers ensuring suitable levels of work and personal support are provided enabling them to make similar progress to their peers.
22. The school arrangements for health and safety are good. All the necessary checks on equipment are up to date. Regular fire drills and risk assessments are carried out, first aid training is undertaken and parents are kept informed of any accidents and treatment given. Parents told inspectors that they are happy with the school's induction programme. This allows children to settle quickly and feel secure in their new class. The newly introduced School Council provides staff with the opportunity to obtain pupils views on a range of issues. Pupils have trusting relationships with staff and feel they are treated fairly in any situations that arise.

### Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school currently has a **satisfactory** partnership with parents and has forged strong and effective links with the church, other schools and its community to the benefit of pupils. The majority of parents are happy with what the school provides for their children.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are supportive of their children's learning at home.
- The parent teacher association raises considerable funds to help with school resources.
- The school has strong links with the local parishes and community.
- The school has productive links with St. Mary's Roman Catholic High School.
- The school prospectus and annual report to parents from the governing body lacks some statutory information and some of the contents are out of date.

## Commentary

23. The majority of parents think well of the school and believe that their children achieve well. Inspectors agree that they are right to do so. A significant minority of parents is understandably very concerned about the instability in leadership. Some parents are also concerned about staff changes in Year 3 and the impact that this has had on behaviour standards. Inspectors would seek to reassure parents that the behaviour management in this year was good during the time of the inspection. Most parents are pleased with homework and the very good home school reading system in particular. The home school partnership is strong but is going through a temporary set back because of issues beyond the control of the school.
24. The information provided for parents at the autumn open day and spring consultation meeting is good. Parents are well informed about practical arrangements included in the school prospectus which is also used as the annual report to parents from the governing body. However some of the information in the prospectus is out of date and some statutory information is missing, for example the process of parent governor elections, national test results for comparison and targets for the coming years. Parents receive a regular newsletter of forthcoming events and diary dates. Pupils` annual progress reports provide useful information regarding what pupils know and can do with areas for improvement. Parents are made aware of the opportunities to discuss reports with the class teacher during the summer term. At present parents are not provided with regular information regarding the curriculum to be studied each term, although an annual overview is provided at the autumn open evening. Parents help with art and numeracy lessons, in class, with school productions, football club, chess club, educational and residential visits. This help is much appreciated by staff. Parents are consulted by questionnaire, for instance regarding school uniform and the provision of homework.
25. The school has good links with the community it serves. A Christmas concert is held in the parish church and parishioners are invited to this and to Masses held in school. Harvest gifts are sold to support charities such as Cafod and the Ark Project for the homeless. There are productive links with St. Mary`s Roman Catholic High School and pupils are invited to use its facilities for performing arts, design technology and information and communication technology. Students from the high school have visited and taken part in role-play, dance and drama. Students on work experience and those on initial teacher training from Hope University are also made welcome in the school. The school works well in conjunction with Orrets Meadow Special School to support the particular needs of pupils. For example, good shared provision is made for pupils with statements. The school involves parents of pupils with special educational needs in the formulation of their individual education plans, and encourages them to contribute to the review process. This is a positive feature. The school identifies the strong sense of community as a key aid to raising achievement and inspectors agree with them.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is **satisfactory** overall. Management in the school is **unsatisfactory**. Governance is **unsatisfactory**, because the governing body has failed to meet some legal requirements. There is a very positive ethos in the school, shared by the whole school community.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the acting headteacher, and of other key staff in the school is satisfactory with some good features.
- Management in the school is unsatisfactory because senior management and subject leaders have ill defined roles and little time to monitor and evaluate school effectiveness.



- Governance of the school, although supportive and caring, is unsatisfactory because governors do not ensure that all statutory requirements are met and they have not been challenging or critical enough in some areas of their work.
- The school has a very strong commitment to inclusion and to meeting the needs of individuals.

## Commentary

26. Ladymount School has endured a period of considerable difficulty and turmoil in its leadership and management during the last 12 months. The headteacher has been on extended leave for illness since last September, and the former deputy headteacher left after promotion to headship at Christmas. After a short time with another acting head, a new acting headteacher was identified by the Diocese and appointed in March to cover for the summer term. Her leadership of the school thus far has been satisfactory, and it is clear that the school is beginning to overcome the problems caused by this lengthy period of uncertainty. Considerable credit is due to the teaching staff over this time, for their successful efforts to maintain the good standards of learning and achievement in the school. This has been in spite of the fact that a number of teachers have either been uncertain of their management responsibilities, or have not had the opportunity to perform their defined duties.
27. Management structures within the school are ineffective. Teachers have had job descriptions for roles such as senior managers, phase leaders and subject leaders, but have had very little time allocated when they can manage these duties. Some have not known whether they are temporary or permanent responsibilities because the governing body has been hamstrung by a very tight school budget, which has now fallen into a deficit situation. Strategic financial management could not foresee the drain on the budget of the lengthy absences for the headteacher and the special needs co-ordinator. Nevertheless in spite of the problems, the leadership of key staff is satisfactory overall because of their strong sense of purpose. The school provides its pupils with a good education and a happy and caring learning environment. The present school leaders are succeeding in maintaining these strengths. The staff in the school demonstrate a good capacity to improve standards and achievement, given decisive leadership, a thorough programme of training and development and an effective management structure.
28. The governing body has had an extremely difficult year. Decisions have had to be made under a continuing veil of uncertainty, and the governors have not always had access to the information they needed. In spite of their wholehearted support for the school and devotion to maintain the strong ethos for learning and care which has been evident for many years, on occasion the governors have been overwhelmed by events. Consequently, in a number of instances, they have not been aware of legal requirements in areas such as reporting to parents and performance management, which inevitably results in governance being unsatisfactory when requirements are not met. One of their major concerns has been to deal with the rapidly diminishing budget, and under the very skilful direction of the vice chair, this has been managed effectively, although requiring a drastic cut in spending on resources and consideration of possible redundancies. Although a deficit budget is projected this year, future projections, helped by a possible increase in pupil numbers, should stem the drain on finance. Additionally the governors have now realised that their commitment to performance management and professional development, which is unsatisfactory because it has not been carried out this year, will be put into practice again. Plans are also in hand to link the school action plan more closely to the budget and for strategic planning to cover a longer period, and become more specific about school priorities with clear success criteria set down to aid evaluation. Most importantly, the governing body is planning a more coherent management structure within the school, where postholders are clear about their responsibilities, have time to perform them, and will have a contact governor to work with. Governors realise the importance of this with the introduction of workforce remodelling and reform imminent.
29. The staff and governors alike demonstrate a very good commitment to the inclusion of all pupils in activities in the school, and to providing for the needs of each individual pupil. Staff

provide very good role models for the pupils, and work well in 'ad hoc' informal teams, which has helped the school considerably through its recent crisis. A lack of enfranchised management, though, has led to unsatisfactory self-evaluation, because not everyone has been involved in it. It has also resulted in the unsatisfactory monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the school. The most effective monitoring has taken place in English in recent times and it is no surprise that this is the strongest subject in the school. Other subject leaders have not monitored their subject in sufficient depth because of their full time teaching duties, and have not received training in how to monitor effectively. They have only just begun the look at data to analyse pupils' performance in the national tests, for example in mathematics.

30. The school makes a good contribution to teacher training. This was demonstrated clearly during the inspection. Staff and governors alike are determined that 'best value' principles will be applied for the benefit of pupils, not wholly in finance, but also through the provision of a well structured school. Morale is clearly rising throughout the school, pupils are receiving a good education and achieving well. The school adds value to pupils' education and gives good value for the below average expenditure per pupil.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	588,007
Total expenditure	611,448
Expenditure per pupil	2,705

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	12,339
Balance carried forward to the next	-£12,656

## **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 overall**

31. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. When children enter the school in September a significant proportion of them have above average English language skills, and are advanced for their age in mathematical development, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. They are reaching the levels expected for their age in physical development and creative development. Children make a positive start to their life in school in the two reception classes. Their achievement is good in all areas except physical and creative development, where it is satisfactory. In physical development this is because, as at the last inspection, their area for outside activities is under developed and under resourced. In creative development it is due to resource shortages to, for example in dressing up clothes in the role-play area. Children with special educational needs are identified early and monitored and supported well. Their achievement is good and they are fully integrated into all areas of learning. Some children are already reaching, with a few exceeding their early learning goals during the school year. They could certainly cope with the early stages of the National Curriculum before reaching Year 1, if school policy allowed this planned development.
32. Teachers plan well, and with the help of their caring support assistants provide a happy and stimulating learning environment. Children's progress is assessed methodically and regularly, and teachers use the information provided to plan for the individual needs of all. Relationships are very good and enable the children to grow both socially and academically with confidence.
33. Leadership and management are good in the Foundation Stage. This is in spite of the fact that the Foundation Stage leader is not officially appointed as yet, and has taken the role on out of goodwill. She uses her own initiative to lead and manage and provide necessary resources, sometimes of her own making and she is a good role model for the newly qualified teacher who works alongside her. Together they are a good team.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

Provision in children's personal, social and emotional development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well, including those with special educational needs and are well prepared for their transfer into Year 1.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Relationships are very good.

### **Commentary**

34. A majority of children, although not all, enter the school with personal, social and emotional skills above average for their age. Children quickly settle to the organisation of their classes and become involved in the school routines. Teaching and learning are good and nearly all children achieve well. Children are confident in their activities and learn to share and take turns. They play well together and listen quietly to other children's ideas, and when teachers and support assistants are talking to them. Relationships between children and adults are particularly good, and the personal and social needs of children with special educational

needs are especially well provided for by staff. The children are well on track to reach the goals expected for their age and many will exceed them before the end of the school year.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children's achievement is good, and most are exceeding the goals set for their age, especially in speaking and listening when they enter Year 1.
- Teaching and learning are good.

#### **Commentary**

35. A few children are ready for National Curriculum programmes during the year, having exceeded the early learning goals set in speaking and listening. Children talk regularly in complete sentences about their daily lives – 'I went swimming in granny's deep, deep pool'. They are confident in speaking to the whole class and are more than willing to talk about the work they are doing, and share little jobs. Children enjoy sharing books and choosing them to take home to read with their parents or carers. Children enjoyed reading parts of the story of the 'Hungry Caterpillar' with the teachers during an observed lesson, and talked about the life cycle of the butterfly using words like 'cocoon' and 'chrysalis'. Most children can write their names clearly and enjoy writing in their 'busy books'. Teaching and learning are good because teachers and their assistants are sympathetic and constantly encourage the children to communicate in a range of settings. Assessment of children's progress is good, and this helps them move forward confidently on the next steps in learning.

### **Mathematical development**

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Nearly all of the children are reaching the goals expected and achievement is good.
- The teaching of mathematics is well linked to other areas of the curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

36. The children can count together the legs of a centipede and reach up to 44 before their skills peter out, most of them making prior sensible estimates. They also enjoy explaining how they reach their answers and try hard to understand what a line of symmetry is. Some are able to use laptop computers to help them produce 'symmetrical' butterfly designs. Teaching and learning are good, because all adults have good expectation and encourage children to be responsible for their own learning. Assessment of children's progress is systematic and used well in planning. A few children are ready for National Curriculum programmes during the year, having exceeded the early learning goals set and the staff respond to this need well.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

The provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve and learn well.
- They learn to work independently and develop inquiry skills.
- Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good.

## **Commentary**

37. Teachers use a variety of activities to encourage learning of the life of a butterfly, such as radio headphones to listen to the story, software programs on laptop computers that encourage interactive experiences, painting pictures and looking around the grounds outside to find butterflies to look at for themselves with magnifying glasses. Many of these activities children pursue independently and with considerable concentration, although one or two are sometimes boisterous. They enjoy explaining why mini beasts should not be picked up 'they could be frightened, or might bite you.' Teaching and learning are good overall, and sometimes very good. The children are well on track to reach the goals expected for their age and many will exceed them by the end of reception.

## **Physical development**

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory overall**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are working at a level expected for their age but some could potentially achieve more.
- There has been very limited improvement in the provision of outdoor resources since the last inspection.
- Children have too few opportunities to develop physical skills.

## **Commentary**

38. At the time of the last inspection, few outside resources, such as wheeled toys and climbing equipment were provided, and this was judged to be unsatisfactory. The situation is the same today. Despite a recent small grant to extend resources, the range and quality of what is available is not good enough to enable the children full opportunity to develop climbing and manipulation and control of wheeled toys. Although the school hall is used for dance and gymnastics, children have far too few opportunities to develop their physical skills in a challenging and stimulating environment. In classroom activities children learn to hold pencils, paintbrushes and scissors correctly and use them accurately in their work. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and achievement is satisfactory overall.

## **Creative development**

Provision for creative development is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children have good opportunities to learn to be creative through exploring songs, colours and communicating with each other.

## **Commentary**

39. By the time children transfer to Year 1, almost all are reaching the goals expected for their age, and a number are exceeding them. Children enjoy exploring colour and shape, and join

in simple songs, including prayers, which they remember well. They are imaginative in their role-play which is currently the vets, and in expressing and communicating their ideas to each other and their teachers. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. For example, the children take care of a stuffed toy hamster called "Hammy" with monitors responsible for feeding him and cleaning out the cage each day. There are clear rules to be followed, just as if he were real. The activity has supported creative aspects as well as stimulating story writing and good personal development.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now well above average at the age of eleven.
- Pupils' achievement is very good overall.
- Literacy skills are developed well across the curriculum.
- A well organised home reading system that engages parents, pupils and staff in the drive for better reading is a very positive partnership.
- The use of targets to support pupils' progress in English is an effective development.
- Leadership and management of the subject are both good.

#### **Commentary**

40. Standards have been consistently high over the period since the previous inspection, reflecting the school's focus on improvement in the subject. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that this pattern of results in the National Curriculum tests is likely to continue, and standards are judged to be above average at the end of Year 2, and well above average at the end of Year 6.
41. The inspection found that pupils achieve very well, including those with special educational needs. The attention given to pupils with special educational needs by all staff ensures that they make the same rate of progress as their peers through work that is planned carefully to meet their particular needs. The same is true for the higher attaining pupils in English.
42. Standards in speaking and listening are above average in Year 1 and 2, where pupils speak confidently and express their ideas and feelings well. By Year 6 pupils have developed well above average levels of ability, speaking fluently using a wide range of vocabulary. They listen intently to others' points of view, and take turns in expressing their views very clearly and in a lively fashion. The school makes good provision for their development and actively encourages pupils' oral contribution in lessons.
43. Pupils achieve well in reading. They obviously enjoy reading because of their enthusiastic attitude to books, and happily talk about their reading preferences. Standards are above average by Year 2, when pupils have become competent and fluent readers. There is a structured reading scheme that pupils work through, and they are provided with regular opportunities to read. Good support is provided by parents and staff in school, and a very good home reading system reinforces positive reading habits at home. By Year 6 standards in reading are well above average. Pupils read expressively so as to convey the full meaning of the text, adapting their style appropriately to the mood of the work. They read widely books of different genres, newspapers and magazines, and have good research skills to support their independent project work. A strong feature is the evident pleasure that they get from

reading. The high quality of the library ensures pupils have regular access to good quality books, and to a variety of reading experiences.

44. Writing standards are above average by Year 2. Pupils are given the opportunity to write for a wide range of purposes, and most write well-structured stories and develop their ideas well. Their handwriting is well formed and letters correctly sized and orientated, but not yet joined in a fluent cursive style. Punctuation is used accurately and the spelling of the most frequently used words is also mostly accurate. By Year 6 standards are well above average, and pupils produce work of very high quality. A significant feature is their extended writing and the production of booklets about classical works of fiction and biographical compilations on the authors. They use information and communication technology very effectively in the presentation of this work. Their writing contains imaginative use vocabulary and is adapted suitably for different audiences. The recently introduced target setting system in English is a positive feature that is supporting the very good achievement in writing in particular.
45. The pupils' very good achievement is due to the consistently effective teaching of English. Teachers know their subject well, ensure that lessons are conducted at a good pace and provide good levels of challenge for all groups of pupils. Target setting and effective assessment procedures ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to get to the next level in their learning. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn. Very good relationships and very good behaviour are strong features that support pupils' good learning. Pupils work with enthusiasm in lessons, are highly productive, make overall good progress, but their achievement is given a boost in Year 6 by some very good teaching.
46. The subject leader has a good oversight of the subject, and is constantly involved in new initiatives to improve the quality of provision and to raise standards further. She provides effective leadership and management.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

47. Pupils use their language and literacy skills very well in other subjects. Teachers ensure these opportunities are well planned for so that pupils can use their writing skills for different purposes. They are used and developed particularly well in history, and research skills using the Internet support the development of knowledge and understanding in both history and geography.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement in mathematics is good throughout the school, and very good in Year 6.
- Standards are above average at the end of Year 2, and well above average at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching and learning is good throughout the school and sometimes very good.
- Pupils take a pride in their work.
- Leadership is good in mathematics.
- Management is unsatisfactory, because of lack of opportunities for the subject manager to monitor and evaluate standards, teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

48. Standards in mathematics are above average at the end of Year 2, and well above average when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. This is a similar finding to that of the last inspection, and results indicate that these consistently high standards have been attained for

several years. Pupils also attain standards well above those reached in similar schools. Nearly all pupils, of whatever ability, and including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Progress is consistent from the time children enter the school in the Foundation Stage, until Year 5. In Year 6 progress accelerates with the help of additional 'booster' classes, enabling many pupils to attain above average grades in national tests.

49. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, teaching throughout the school is consistently good and sometimes very good. Secondly, pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning in mathematics, and thrive in a competitive environment. Several have been identified as 'talented' in mathematics, including a dual-language speaking pupil who is one of the highest attainers in his year group. The success of the teaching is based on high expectation, well-planned and well-organised lessons, and a good understanding of the capabilities of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to be independent in their learning, and to work at speed. In addition their books clearly show that high standards of presentation are expected by teachers, so eliminating unnecessary carelessness. Pupils' learning is enhanced by teachers ensuring that the work they each do is tailored to their abilities – not too hard, and yet not too easy. Teachers could however, make pupils more aware of their targets in mathematics. A further feature of learning is the good range of the curriculum offered, as for example during the inspection several classes were observed working on aspects of shape and space including the use of protractors. A number of displays, and some work in books, showed a variety of approaches to recording data gathered by pupils.
50. Leadership of mathematics is good. The subject leader has done her best, with limited opportunities, to help to maintain the high standards in the school, and knows what she would like to do to enable pupils to do even better. However, she has been denied opportunities to manage the subject in recent times, and so management is unsatisfactory. A shortage of finance for resources has meant that she, like other teachers, sometimes has to make her own teaching resources. She has not been allocated time to monitor or evaluate the teaching and learning of mathematics in the school and has not until now been able to make a contribution to the planning for improvement priorities. In spite of this, due mainly to good teaching, standards have been maintained, and plans are in hand to increase management opportunities.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

51. The basis skills of numeracy are taught well in all years. Teachers foster pupils' mathematical skills in geography, design and technology, science and information and communication technology. Links with information and communication technology, although satisfactory, are not as good as the school anticipated because this priority area has been on hold in the last year. Teachers plan for the use of numeracy across a broad area of the curriculum.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 6.
- The science curriculum has been reviewed and the new Wirral scheme of work is being implemented effectively.
- Older pupils achieve very well as a result of the very good teaching.
- There is good emphasis on the use of specific technical language.
- Too little use is made of information and communication technology to support science.



- An over prescriptive style of teaching reduces pupils opportunities to investigate and find things out for themselves.
- Assessment procedures do not reliably measure attainment at the end of Year 2, nor do they identify areas that require more focused attention. There is a lack of rigorous assessment for the investigative strand of the subject.

## Commentary

52. Standards have been maintained in Year 6 since the previous inspection, but have fallen at the end of Year 2 and though average, should be higher. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving well above average standards, as a result of the very good teaching, challenging work and insistence on the correct use of technical vocabulary. No differences were observed between the achievement of boys and girls, and most pupils in Year 3 to 6 achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, including those with special educational needs. However, in some lessons pupils are set the same tasks, and this restricts opportunities for potentially higher attaining pupils to reach a higher standard in their work.
53. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 to 6. In lessons where teachers' subject knowledge was secure, and planning showed a clear focus, pupils learned well, showed interest and enthusiasm for the subject and concentrated hard. Where there was not a clear focus and too few opportunities to learn through practical activities pupils' learning was only satisfactory.
54. The directed teacher led style of lesson organisation, adopted by some teachers, limits the opportunities for pupils to investigate and experiment in their scientific enquiry. Teachers generally provide opportunities to carry out experiments, but analysis of work indicates that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations. There was good emphasis in all lessons seen on the correct use of specific vocabulary, and this ensures that pupils fully understand scientific terms. Throughout, relationships are very good, and behaviour of all pupils is good. There is a lack of consistency in the way pupils record their work, and this leads to confusion and a lack of clarity. The Wirral Investigation Sheet beginning to be used by the teachers ensures that pupils use an agreed format, as they were unsure of how to record their experiments, which meant valuable time was lost on techniques that should be familiar to pupils.
55. Teachers' day-to-day assessment fails to identify areas requiring particular attention, nor does it provide the necessary information for overall assessment at the end of Year 2. This class has been taught on an ad hoc basis recently, due to the difficulties the school is experiencing. Expectations of these pupils have been too low. There are no rigorous assessment procedures for the experimenting strand of the subject to help teachers have a clear picture of pupils' attainment in this important element of the curriculum. There remain some areas for development.
56. Currently there is no subject leader. Over the last 12 months there has been insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning or analysis of results. There is a lack of the use of information and communication technology to support learning in the subject. Science is usefully a top priority in the newly written school action plan and staff are working effectively, with intensive support from the local education authority, to bring about improvement.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **satisfactory**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards throughout the school are average, and a small number of pupils reach above average levels.
- Resources have improved since the last inspection, but more are still required.
- Teaching and learning is best where teachers are confident in their knowledge of information and communication technology.
- Management is unsatisfactory through the lack of opportunity for the subject leader to develop the subject.

## Commentary

57. Standards in the school are average at both Years 2 and 6. Although standards at the last inspection were described as above average at the end of Year 6, the evidence from this inspection does not indicate a deterioration in information and communication technology standards overall. There has been a high pace of development during the last few years, and although the school initially struggled to keep up, good improvement was made to standards and provision two years ago. However, in the last year, development in a subject clearly identified as a priority has come to a halt because of the severe management problems in the school. In spite of this the great majority of pupils in the school are achieving satisfactorily, and a significant minority are making good progress and reaching standards above average.
58. Resources have been improved and the two small suites are of good quality, although one becomes uncomfortably hot when the sun shines. Appropriate software has been introduced across a number of curricular areas, and a few laptop computers are used regularly in classrooms and the suites. However some of the furniture in the suite for younger pupils is unsuitable for them and affects their learning.
59. The main problem for improvement in the school is achieving consistency. Timetabling sometimes means that children do not have long enough in lessons to enhance their skills. They observe the theory, as in 'clicking' and 'dragging', but then have to wait their turn on laptop computers, probably for several days, before being able to follow up instructions. Again, although two interactive whiteboards have recently been purchased, not many pupils have had opportunities to use them, or, for the older ones, prepare presentations. A small number of pupils have been to an outside workshop on 'animation', but the school has not yet been able to bring this aspect into school for the benefit of all.
60. Teaching and learning in the school are satisfactory. Although receiving training provided nationally in recent years, not all teachers are confident in information and communication technology, so lessons can vary from satisfactory to very good. Teachers across the school, though, make efforts to give pupils opportunities to develop skills on laptop computers in the classroom. This tends to be a slow process as there are only a limited number of the machines. Learning is best where teaching is confident and knowledgeable, as in observed studies of pupils in Year 6 finding information about the Aztecs, and pupils in Year 2 designing their 'secret shape binary tree'. Many pupils throughout the school are confident when using computers, and a feature of the work of older pupils is their ability to work independently and use their own initiative. However, discussion with them shows gaps in their opportunities, such as being able to exchange information and ideas through for example, e-mail. Pupils show great enthusiasm for this area of learning, behave very responsibly when using equipment, and show great potential to move to higher levels of achievement when given the opportunity.
61. The subject leader has a good knowledge of information and communication technology, and has very clear ideas and plans for the development of the subject and raising standards. She has tried very hard to raise teachers' confidence and knowledge, delivering training herself, and identifying a number of resource needs. However, her leadership is satisfactory, because she has had no opportunities in the last 12 months to continue her development or to monitor teaching, learning and standards of the subject. This is because school management, which is unsatisfactory, has failed to support the subject leader in performing her responsibilities,

having already identified as a priority area. This is accepted as a weakness, and the school is now taking steps to enable the subject leader to lead and manage effectively.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

62. Opportunities for using information and communication technology across the curriculum are satisfactory. This has been an identified priority area for at least a year, especially for the use of information and communication technology in mathematics. Although the subject leader and teachers generally feel they have not succeeded in this because of managerial problems, there is clear evidence that individual teachers have used their own initiative to develop cross-curricular links. In Year 6 for example, pupils have produced good quality news sheets, developing both literacy and historical skills, and analysis of their scientific studies in reflection. A number of other examples of data handling using information and communication technology in mathematics were seen in several classes in the school. With more time and consistency, there is much evidence that higher standards can be reached in the use of information and communication technology throughout the school.

### **HUMANITIES**

63. **Geography** was only sampled during the inspection, but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. From an analysis of pupils' work the indications are that standards are broadly average both at Year 2 and Year 6.
64. A feature of the experiences provided to make the work interesting and relevant is the attention given to using the local environment, with opportunities to observe first hand, and to develop mapping skills. In Year 6 pupils make a study of the Netherlands where their mapping skills are further extended, and study the different way of life in other European countries. The development of research skills using the Internet was a positive feature in the one lesson observed. Pupils showed good skills in navigating through the Internet, and word processing the information found.
65. The subject leader has not yet been able to monitor effectively the quality of teaching and learning recently and this is a shortcoming.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average at Year 2 and Year 6.
- Research skills are developing well.
- Teaching and learning are both good.

#### **Commentary**

66. All pupils achieve well in history because of the overall good quality of the teaching and the well-planned curricular experiences provided for them. This ensures that pupils throughout the school achieve above average standards. In Year 2 good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop and use their writing. Key vocabulary is provided to enable them to describe famous people. Their writing is sequenced carefully to ensure an accurate chronology of events is developed. From their experiences knowledge and understanding of events in the past is developing well.
67. By Year 6 pupils research skills for historical enquiry using reference works and the Internet are developing well. Some very good teaching on the Aztecs enables them to have 'hands-on'

experiences to understand the difference between genuine artefacts and replicas. Pupils enjoy the very challenging nature of the work and are very enthusiastic about the subject. History adds to their cultural development well. Pupils locate information on the Internet and use their higher order reading skills to skim and scan to retrieve key facts. Booklets are produced containing detailed and well-organised topic information. Writing skills are developed effectively to describe the situation and events of the time, and pupils make good use of subheadings and paragraphs.

68. There is strong leadership of history. However, procedures and opportunities to monitor work in other classes are not yet in place and assessment opportunities are not consistently informing planning. These are the next steps for improvement.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Visiting artists and educational visits enrich the curriculum.
- The curriculum is taught across cross-curricular topics in some year groups.
- Few opportunities are given for pupils to research non-western artists.
- There are no systems for assessing and recording pupil's progress from one year to the next and this is a weakness.

#### **Commentary**

69. Although no art and design lessons were observed in the infants, only in the juniors, there was enough evidence from displays and the range of activities provided to judge that standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the previous inspection. All pupils achieve satisfactorily.
70. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enriched by experiences given by the staff such as Art Week, the use of information and communication technology for research, visiting artists and visits out to learn about the role of art, craft and design in their environment. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these activities, which include observational drawings from unusual artefacts, clay work, painting, printing, looking at work by western artists, representing their work in collage and using information and communication technology for research and to produce patterns. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen was good. However, there was very limited three-dimensional work on display and no portfolio of work or photograph albums built to share best practice.
71. There are two subject leaders who are enthusiastic about their area of responsibility. There is an *Art Gallery* in Year 2 and an area in Year 6 celebrating the work of Monet. No monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is currently taking place to support improvement. The school is aware of the need to develop assessment systems in order to track pupils' progress more rigorously.

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design technology is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy the exciting activities set by the teachers who enjoy teaching this subject.
- Pupils' standards are above average.
- The curriculum is enhanced through links with other subjects.
- The subject leader is very keen and conscientious.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning is at an early stage.
- No opportunities have been provided recently for monitoring and evaluation to support improvement.
- Assessment is in the very early stages of development.

## Commentary

72. Standards achieved by the age of seven and eleven are above average. Pupils produce work that is of good quality and they achieve well.
73. Activities provided for Year 1 ensure they have a good start to developing their skills in cutting out, scoring, hole making, joining, sticking and making slits in paper and card. The pupils have designed and decorated creative puppets and have evaluated the process and final products well. Year 2 pupils are well aware what 'Design criteria' is and use it well to work out and make a vehicle to carry Teddy safely. In a lesson observed by inspectors they had great fun attempting to make a pneumatic system with a range of resources.
74. Teaching and learning are good overall. The teaching of skills is very good in Year 4 where children continue to work out how mechanisms can be used to make things move in different ways enabling all pupils to achieve well as they make the moving parts in storybooks. Good links are made with other subjects for example health education and healthy eating in science when pupils made their choices of fruit and then designed the presentation of a fruit salad and in history, making a hanging pocket for *Lucy Locket*, similar to those used in Tudor times. The Year 6 pupils are proudly completing the *Story Sacks* they have designed and made to leave as a present for the children in the Foundation Stage. These pupils had successfully won first, second and third prizes in an engineering competition that involved designing and building a model of a hotel with a rotating restaurant for athletes taking part in the Olympics.
75. Resources are sufficient and adequate for current use but the use of ICT to support learning either through planning; modelling or control is at an early stage.
76. Procedures for assessment are in place but not used. The very hard working, keen and enthusiastic subject leader has not had the opportunity recently to monitor or evaluate teaching and learning and this need to be addressed.
77. **Music** was only sampled during the inspection, but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. Two lessons were seen and pupils' singing was observed in assemblies. A number of videos of school productions were watched and music tapes heard by inspectors.
78. In **music**, pupils observed in lessons and in assembly, expressed a sense of performance and occasion. Pupils sing tunefully, with awareness of breathing, diction and dynamics and most clearly enjoy singing. The school choir who take part in musical evenings and concerts were not heard singing. The subject makes an effective contribution to cultural development; for example, pupils study Egyptian and calypso music. An excellent music lesson in Year 6 enabled the pupils to achieve very well. The stimulus had been their visit to see 'The Lion King' production in London, building on their previous knowledge of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and instruments. The pupils performed their own compositions, keeping the beat

with body popping and hand clapping before adding a wide variety of percussion instruments and African drums. They sang the songs from the show superbly. Visiting teachers provide tuition for a range of musical instruments.

## Physical education

Provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular activities are enriched very well by specialist sports coaching.
- No monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place recently.

## Commentary

79. Pupils achieve average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is a similar picture to the time of the last inspection. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of skills through some positive teaching, although occasionally lessons lack a brisk pace and do not provide sufficient challenge for the few who could reach a higher standard. By Year 6 most pupils can swim the required distance. Pupils enjoy their lessons and participate with enthusiasm. In a tennis lesson briefly observed in Year 1, the pupils worked with absolute concentration and improved their skills under the skilful tuition of a specialist coach working in successful partnership with the class teacher. Each year a small number of pupils reach a sufficiently high standard and play for the county team. Last year a Year 6 boy from Ladymount represented Cheshire in a national tournament. This strong community link supports the provision of physical education very well as do the other well-organised extra curricular opportunities.
80. Currently, there is satisfactory leadership of the subject, but the subject leader has not yet been able to monitor teaching and learning in other classes.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81. The personal, social, health education and citizenship aspect of pupils' education was sampled during the inspection, but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision.
82. The caring and welcoming atmosphere in school promotes pupils' confidence and self-esteem very effectively. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship is attended to very well through the range of opportunities that pupils have to show independence and take responsibility, for example as house captains. The *Global Gang* in Year 6, have a deep sense of justice and fair play and are championing the rights for education for all through their work in supporting third world countries. Their letters to a local member of parliament about global education are testament to the strong commitment they have for equality.
83. The personal and social education programme is taught through circle time, assemblies, science, dance and drama. There are appropriate arrangements for sex education and the harmful effects of smoking and the misuse of drugs. The school was accredited with the Healthy Schools Award in 2002 and since then the pupils have eaten fruit daily as part of their circle times together. Pupils are involved in recycling initiatives, such as saving waste paper and have a good concern for the environment. The good involvement of the church and community in their education helps them understand how people live and work together and the way in which this locks them together as good neighbours. The pupils know how to treat other people and they take good care of the things around them.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). When judging standards- 1 is very high, 2 - well above average; 3 – above average; 4 – average; 5 – below average; 6 – well below average; 7-very low*