

INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Blackpool

LEA area: Blackpool

Unique reference number: 119596

Headteacher: Miss E Brierley

Lead inspector: Mrs Heather Evans

Dates of inspection: 10 – 12 November 2003

Inspection number: 257118

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Primary |
| School category: | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 – 11 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 191 |
| School address: | Common Edge Road Blackpool |
| Postcode: | FY4 5DF |
| Telephone number: | 01253 762833 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs Eileen Guerin |
| Date of previous inspection: | 12/12/2001 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized Catholic primary school on the southern outskirts of Blackpool, close to Blackpool airport. Pupils are drawn from all parts of the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption. The housing around the school is mixed. Most of the pupils speak English as their first language, although a few pupils speak other languages at home. All of these pupils speak English fluently in school. There are 191 pupils on roll with a good balance of boys and girls. Twenty-four of the pupils claim their entitlement to free school meals, which is about average. There is evidence, however, that some of those that qualify do not claim. Of the 25 pupils with special educational needs, three have a statement and one is in the process of formal assessment. This number is about average for a school of this size, although in two classes the percentage with identified special needs is above that usually found in mainstream primary schools. The school has been successful in raising the level of attendance to a satisfactory level, although a few families still send their children late on most days. Until this year the level of attainment on entry has been below that for children of the same age nationally. The group of children presently in the Reception class has attainment levels that are broadly average when compared with children of the same age nationally.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| 21374 | Heather Evans | Lead inspector | Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Information and communication technology Physical education Citizenship English as an additional language |
| 11041 | Marvyn Moore | Lay inspector | |
| 15236 | Morag Thorpe | Team inspector | Science Music Foundation stage |
| 21910 | Gordon Longton | Team inspector | English Geography History Special educational needs |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school, which gives very good value for money. It is greatly improved and all pupils are getting a very good deal. They make good progress in most lessons and achieve well. Pupils of all levels of attainment are fully included in all learning activities and get on well with one another. The majority of the teaching is at least good and in almost half of the lessons it is very good. Strong leadership and management over the past four years have resulted in standards being at least satisfactory in all subjects and in English, mathematics, science and music by the end of Year 6 they are at a level that is above average. The school is now very well organised and the few remaining weaknesses that have been identified are all detailed in well-informed action plans containing strategies that are proving to be effective at dealing with them. As a result of the strong management, the greatly improved standards and the very many other positive aspects the school is judged to provide very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very strong leadership and management skills of the headteacher and the key staff.
- The well-above average standards achieved in English, mathematics and science in the statutory tests in 2003 at the end of Year 6.
- The predominantly good quality of teaching that enables effective learning to take place.
- Standards in music and the provision and teaching for music are very good overall.
- Pupils are very well cared for across the school.
- The monitoring role of subject co-ordinators needs to be strengthened further.
- There are no separate outside playing facilities for children in the Reception class.
- A significant minority of pupils persistently arrive late and these few disrupt the learning for everyone at the start of lessons.

Since the last inspection in 2001 the school has responded very well to the issues raised. Standards have risen in most years, especially in English, mathematics, science and ICT. The quality of teaching has continued to improve and the co-ordinator role has been reviewed with a considerable measure of success. In some subjects, however, more work is needed as personnel have changed. The governors now follow curriculum developments more closely and welcome regular reports about improvements from the designated subject leaders.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

The achievement of children and pupils across the school is good. Most of the children in the present Reception class are on course to attain all of the expected learning goals by the end of the academic year. Some will exceed these goals. This is a new situation, as, in the past four years, attainment on entry has been below that normally found and many pupils have moved into Year 1 at a below average level of attainment overall. Across the school in all classes pupils now make good progress and achieve well. The standards attained in statutory tests at the end of Year 2 in all subjects tested have been well below average, when compared with schools nationally and with similar schools, but strategies that are now in place are proving to be effective in addressing earlier

difficulties. At the end of Year 6 for the past four years standards have varied but they now exceed the national expectations in English, mathematics and science. The trend of improvement over the past three years has been greater than that in schools nationally. Standards in music across the school are well above expectations. In ITC and in all other subjects pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectations and is improving.

Pupils' personal welfare, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is well organised and is good. Work to support these aspects of the pupils' development is threaded through different subjects, including science and health education. It is linked very successfully with the commitment of the school to the promotion of the Christian faith of the pupils. The school has been successful in managing strategies to improve attendance but the persistent lateness of a few pupils is still a concern for teachers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education including teaching and curriculum provision is good.

The quality of teaching is predominantly good and much is very good because the teachers are secure in their understanding of the National Curriculum and about their pupils' prior knowledge. In specialist subjects teaching is excellent. As a result lessons are well planned and interesting and so most pupils learn readily and achieve well. Most achieve the step-by-step targets set for them and recognise how well they are doing. The curriculum is structured to cover all of the required subjects, often in such a way that new learning is linked to work covered earlier and this reinforces facts and processes very well. The care and guidance provided for children by the staff are good. Parents support the school well and are involved in their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher leads the school very effectively and has a strong vision for the school's future. Her dedication and inspiration have revitalised the school and have provided clear direction for the teaching and support staff as well as for the governing body. The deputy headteacher is new this term and her role is being developed gradually. Her impact on the leadership of the Reception class is already proving to be very successful. The governors' decisions are managed well and follow the priorities set out in the clear and relevant school development plan. The subject co-ordinators work in pairs, where they support one another well. This system enables them to check that lessons are well planned and that the decisions about the curriculum are carried through across all classes. Time to extend their monitoring role in the classroom has been allocated and it is planned that this work will move from the headteacher to the co-ordinators as part of a programme of structured progression.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

In conversations, at the meeting with parents and in the replies in questionnaires the majority of parents expressed a good level of satisfaction about the school. A few parents would welcome more regular advice about how to help their children with their work at home. The school is willing to offer this additional help. Most pupils have very positive views of the many good things that the school offers them, although a small number have concerns about the aggressive behaviour of a few of their fellow pupils. The school is alert to this problem and there are strategies in place aimed at minimising such problems. No unacceptable behaviour was observed during the inspection.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend the monitoring role of the subject co-ordinators that works well in English, mathematics and science to include other subjects in turn.
- Seek all possible ways of implementing the plans that are in place to provide separate playing facilities for children in the Reception class.
- Remain vigilant in encouraging parents to bring their children to school regularly and on time.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards attained in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 in 2003 were well below the national average and were well below those in similar schools. Standards in reading were very low. By the end of Year 6 in 2003 standards were well above national averages in English, mathematics and science. When compared with the attainment of that group of pupils in Year 2 pupils had made improvement that was well above that of pupils in similar schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the tests in English, mathematics and science in 2003 were well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 in recent years have been too low, but are improving.
- Pupils' achievement in music across the school is very good and exceeds national expectations.
- The standards attained in all other subjects are at least in line overall with national expectations and in all of these subjects some pupils perform at higher levels.

Commentary

1. For the past four years children have entered the Reception class with attainments that have been assessed as being below those expected for children of the same age. From that base on entry, children in the Reception class have made steady but unspectacular progress and have achieved at a satisfactory level. By the end of Reception, many have not achieved the expected learning goals and work to rectify this has then been an important part of the work of teachers in Years 1 and 2. The school has identified specific problems and made changes in teaching personnel and the curriculum.
2. The intake this year has been assessed as about average, using the same well-known assessment procedures. The rate of progress and achievement of this group of children is already proving to be very good. Most of the children in the present Reception class are well placed to achieve the expected learning goals before they move into Year 1. Children join the school from five or six different pre-school providers. The fluctuation of attainment levels on entry and the variation in the numbers of pupils with learning difficulties means that it is impossible to be sure that this present change represents the start of a trend.
3. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are now on course to achieve the expected standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 and 4, where in each class more than a quarter of the pupils have special educational needs, and many others learn slowly, pupils struggle to reach the expected standards. These pupils did not do well in Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading and the school has made great efforts to provide an increased level of support to help them to get back on track for higher achievement. These efforts are now beginning to show dividends. The strategies adopted by the school are working and the programme of work in place is enabling pupils to achieve well. They are systematic and thorough. The progress made is real but is not dramatic. The standards in reading that were too low are much improved by Year 4. In all lessons the challenge for pupils of all attainment levels is great. Those capable of working at a higher level are supported very well and are encouraged to succeed. In these classes the lower attaining pupils achieve their individual targets because of the carefully modified work and the dedication of the skilled teaching team including classroom assistants.

4. By the end of Year 6 standards are good. At this early part of the school year pupils are already working at the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science and are on course to be above the expected levels by the end of the year. The average attaining pupils and those capable of higher attainment are on course to exceed the national expectations by the end of the year. To achieve these standards pupils learn well and make good progress because of the industry and commitment of all of the teachers. In other subjects pupils' skills and achievements in English and mathematics lift levels. A strength of the school is the way in which pupils of all attainment levels are very well supported in lessons and are helped to learn particularly well by being constantly encouraged to pursue their own interests through independent research and personal study. Across the school achievement is good.
5. In mathematics pupils learn well and use their knowledge and understanding of number without hesitation. They manipulate numbers using multiplication and division, confident that their understanding of the rules of mathematics will help them to find the easiest way of solving a problem. They are good at trying several methods to check their result. By the end of Year 6 pupils select and use the most comfortable method for themselves to solve problems in geometry or in calculations involving fractions and decimals and then explain their reasoning to the class.
6. Standards in science are also above the national average. Pupils across the school show how they are learning to be scientists rather than demonstrate simply which scientific facts they have learned. This was seen to particularly good effect in Years 1 and 2 and again in Years 3 and 4. By the end of Year 6 pupils show good scientific knowledge and the work in their books and that displayed in classrooms shows good work in all of the parts of the curriculum for science that need to be covered.
7. Work in information and communication technology (ICT) is stimulating and challenging, as a direct result of the greatly improved facilities. Since the last inspection, the increased skills of the teachers have enabled pupils to make good progress. Standards for pupils in all classes are now in line with the expected level. Some pupils who have computers at home have skills that are better than those regularly found in primary schools. These pupils are greatly appreciated in lessons where they sometimes act as tutors for their less confident friends. All of the pupils are confident when using computers for word-processing, to enhance work in English, history and geography. They are now beginning to use their skills to organise and review data in science and mathematics and to develop work in composition in music.
8. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress and most frequently reach their individual or group targets. These targets are now increasingly close to those of the rest of the class and the expectation that these pupils will attain expected levels with support is the norm. As a result of good and regularly very good teaching, linked to effective support by teaching assistants, these pupils achieve well. The school carefully monitors the few pupils who speak languages other than English and they make good progress. They are all achieving well. As they are all fluent in English they do not have any special teaching but their individual progress is carefully checked as part of the school's normal tracking process.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| Reading | 12.7 (14.4) | 15.8 (15.7) |
| Writing | 12.5 (12.9) | 14.6 (14.4) |
| Mathematics | 14.7 (15.4) | 16.5 (16.3) |

There were 23 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 29.1 (25.5) | 26.8 (27.0) |
| Mathematics | 28.9 (26.8) | 26.8 (26.7) |
| Science | 29.7 (27.8) | 28.3 (28.6) |

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning and achieve well. Behaviour is good and the attendance rate at the school at 95.4 percent is above the national average. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and have good behaviour.
- The school stimulates in pupils a desire to learn and sets high expectations for their conduct.
- The atmosphere inside the school is free from bullying, racial and other forms of harassment.
- Some pupils do not arrive on time for lessons at the start of the school day.

Commentary

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and learning, both in the Reception class and other years. Children and pupils in all year groups are pleased to take part in the activities provided and show a good interest in and enthusiasm for school life. Pupils have good relationships with teachers and other adults and are very willing to be enterprising and to take responsibility. Pupils have respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and work hard to achieve the high expectations that the school has for their conduct.
10. Behaviour at the school is good. Pupils interact very well with each other and have good relationships with the adults who help them to learn. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement, and pupils' response to these expectations is good. Teachers constantly use praise to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem and, as a result, pupils learn with confidence and achieve well.
11. The school works hard to maintain and promote racial harmony and pupils have a very good awareness of their own cultural traditions and those of others. Pupils and parents interviewed during the inspection week feel confident that any instances of racial harassment or other forms of bullying will be dealt with very effectively by the school. Pupils have a very strong awareness of the principles that distinguish right from wrong and show a healthy respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The ethos of the school ensures that pupils' spiritual awareness, self-knowledge and self-worth are developed well. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, regular assemblies are held and through lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, together with opportunities provided for school visits, pupils' moral and cultural awareness is enhanced.

Attendance

Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and the school has good procedures to promote attendance. Some parents, however, still keep their children out of school for family holidays during term time. Unfortunately, a few pupils persistently arrive late each day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 95.4%

| Authorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.3 |
| National data | 5.4 |

| Unauthorised absence | |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.4 |
| National data | 0.4 |

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – any other mixed background |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background |
| Chinese |

| No of pupils on roll |
|----------------------|
| 185 |
| 1 |
| 1 |
| 1 |
| 3 |

| Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 |
| 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 quality of education is good and the quality of teaching is predominantly good with almost half being very good. Curricular provision is good and is enriched by a good range of opportunities for reinforcing work learned in class and in the community, where its relevance is made clear to pupils.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was almost always at least good and was very good in many of the lessons seen. In a few lessons in all phases, but especially where there was a specialist teacher of music, teaching was judged to be excellent. As a result, pupils learn well and make rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding of the programmes of work that they study.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching overall is very good.
- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects that they teach.
- They have very good relationships with the pupils.
- Teachers have realistic expectations that are increasingly high and that challenge thinking.
- Lessons are organised well and work is well matched to pupils' needs and to their earlier learning.
- The planning is thorough, detailed and precise; teachers select from a good range of methods.
- The pace of lessons is good and there is good use of time.
- Strategies for assessment are incorporated into planning and information gathered is used very well.
- The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good and are working well.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 6 (16%) | 11 (29%) | 18 (47%) | 3 (8%) | 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.

12. In all lessons teachers' knowledge of the subjects taught is secure and the objectives set are clearly explained to pupils. Whenever possible teachers link their expectations to earlier work or to practical experiences that most pupils remember. Lessons are well organised and teachers' planning is thorough. The methods chosen and the available resources are always suitable. Teachers are at pains to engage pupils' interest at the start of lessons and the pace of learning is brisk. Challenging work is evident in all classes and as a result of the very positive relationships, there is a shared sense of joy in learning. Overall the quality of teaching is of a high standard across the school.
13. All teachers follow the agreed marking policy well as an important strand of the shared assessment procedures. All of the procedures for assessing pupils' progress, attainment and achievement are good and the use made of all information gathered is very good. The systems provide a clear focus for the analysis of strengths and weaknesses and for setting short, measurable targets for improvement. As a result, work is invariably well matched to pupils' abilities, whether when working in groups or as individuals. Since the last inspection assessment and its use to promote work matched to pupils' ability has continued to improve. The success of this work is one of the reasons for the improved and sustained gains in pupils' achievement and standards.
14. All teachers are familiar with the Code of Practice for supporting pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are identified as soon as possible in the Reception class or when they begin at the school part way through their primary education. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the teacher discuss pupil's individual education plan based on targets that need to be worked on. Long and short-term targets are shared with pupils. Short steps are essential to enable each identified pupil to realise that progress is being made. All of the class teachers work hard to help all pupils to make measurable progress and they receive good help from all support staff.
15. The use of the trained classroom assistants in lessons is invaluable in the effort to increase the rate of learning. Their skilled intervention when pupils think that they are 'stuck' enables lessons to move at a brisk pace where everyone builds well on the sense of success. Similarly, when they work with those pupils capable of higher attainment their skills and initiative enable imaginative and innovative experiences to be shared. The tremendous partnership between the teachers and the classroom assistants and trained nursery nurse makes a significant contribution to the ethos of the school and the very positive working atmosphere in all classes. Homework is set at suitable levels and during the inspection was seen to be a positive aid to learning.

The curriculum

The school provides its pupils with a good range of worthwhile learning opportunities, successfully meeting their interests, aptitudes and learning needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of learning opportunities for children in the Reception class.
- The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy.

- Provision for the support of pupils with special educational needs.
- Provision for the development of the skills of literacy and numeracy through work in other subjects such as geography, history and science.
- The availability of computers for ICT.
- The school has yet to develop a dedicated, secure play area for children in the Reception class.

Commentary

16. The school's curriculum has been reviewed and reorganised and has been improved considerably in recent years. It now meets statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum. Well-structured schemes of work are in place for all subjects, based on the latest national guidelines. Children in the reception class benefit from a rich curriculum. Throughout Years 1 to 6 good curricular planning ensures that teachers use a range of suitable topics on which to base lesson plans.
17. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported so that they can work alongside their friends to take advantage of the curriculum offered. Provision for pupils with statements is good. When necessary the curriculum is carefully adapted to their needs so that the requirements of their individual education programmes are met. The school moves quickly to take effective action when there is a need.
18. The school is now implementing the established strategies for literacy and numeracy very well. This results in pupils of all levels of attainment being provided with a good range of learning opportunities to develop their skills in these subjects. The development of skills in ICT enhances the development of work in other subjects.
19. A central feature of the school's work is its determination to value all pupils and to include them in all aspects of its work. Girls and boys have the same access to all parts of the curriculum including games, with no noticeable differences overall in the standards achieved during the inspection.
20. Provision for personal, social, health education and citizenship is well developed. The school council is very well organised. During the inspection council members were very keen to explain how much they enjoyed the responsibilities. Everyone involved takes these opportunities to influence what happens in the school very seriously.
21. The range of extra-curricular activities available is less during the winter months than it is when the evenings are lighter. A very enthusiastic group of parents and friends of the school supports teachers and provides training in football and netball. The school takes part in competitive sport and joins local music festivals when the school choir performs to a very high standard. A residential visit to Borwick Hall introduces Year 6 pupils to a variety of outdoor pursuits. Competitions in art and design and design and technology are regular and successful elements of additional work.
22. There is a dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff who work together well. All of these adults are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning needs. The school improvement plan provides clear guidance for staff development with practical strategies for monitoring the effect of allocated funding. The quality and adequacy of the building, with its latest additions and alterations, fully meets the requirements of the staff and pupils. The school has plans and the necessary finance to improve outdoor accommodation for the Reception class to provide continuous access for children, but the work has not yet begun. The resources in all subjects are at least satisfactory. In English, mathematics, science, art and design and for the Reception class they are good. Resources for music are very good. The library has recently been completely renovated, reorganised and restocked and is now a very useful tool for research as well as for promoting and encouraging the development of reading.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good.
- The involvement of pupils in the life of the school by seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment are good.

Commentary

23. The school cares well for pupils in a safe and secure environment with good care and support from teaching and support staff. There are good procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic and personal progress. Effective strategies are in place to help pupils to attain their personal targets. The Child Protection Officer is very aware of her role and has received adequate training, which she has shared with all other members of the staff. Everyone is fully aware of the relevant procedures. Pupils receive a good level of support and care from all staff at the school and this enables them to make good progress and thrive in the supportive and strong atmosphere for care and learning. Lunchtime supervisors provide a good standard of care at midday and know the pupils well. The caretaker and his team ensure a high standard of cleanliness at all times.
24. The headteacher and a representative of the governing body carry out regular health and safety audits and act promptly to rectify any problems that are identified. The school has a suitably qualified 'first aider', who keeps good records of any accidents that occur to pupils. Other members of staff are preparing for additional training from the approved training agency.
25. All staff at the school know the pupils and relate to them very well. Pupils interviewed during the inspection week confirmed they know whom to go to for support and advice, and appreciate the care that they receive from staff. The school has arranged with the school meals service to provide a healthy eating scheme and promotes awareness of health issues. This work is sometimes included in the structured use of a programme of work in what is known as circle time. Supervision of pupils at break and lunchtimes is good. Lunchtime staff have all received a good level of training from the behaviour support team. Pupils who have volunteered to be members of a 'circle of friends' provide support for pupils displaying any behavioural difficulties in the playground. Pupils are very pleased to be elected as members of the school council. The suggestions made are taken seriously and listened to with care by staff. Other responsibilities given to pupils include: helping as receptionists in the school office, being appointed as one of the 'playground pals' and volunteering for litter picking. The good level of responsibility given to pupils by the school enables them to increase their confidence, and develop their self-esteem.
26. Induction procedures for new pupils are good. The school has produced a special induction pack for parents of the Reception class children. This sets out a programme of events and has arranged a staged entry at the beginning of term with children attending half a day for the first week, accompanied by their parents if they wish. Because of the sensitive way that children new to the Reception class are treated by the teachers and nursery nurse, they settle very quickly into the routines of school life. Pupils with barriers to learning or behavioural difficulties are identified early. Provision for those with special educational needs is good. The school has good relationships with all outside agencies, which are used regularly.

27. Procedures for transfer to the linked secondary schools are good. Pupils visit secondary schools for a taster day and liaison meetings are held with the head of Year 7 from both receiving secondary schools in the summer term. Teachers from the linked schools visit classes to observe lessons taught in Year 6 and to meet the pupils. As a result of the good transfer procedures, pupils make a good start to the next phase of education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community and other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with parents are effective.
- Good information is provided for parents about the school.
- The school has good procedures to ensure satisfaction in dealing with any concerns or complaints.
- Reports in some classes are not individualised and too few have clear targets for improvement.

Commentary

28. More than half of parents or carers responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Almost all of these think that their children like school, are making good progress, and that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with queries, problems or complaints. A significant number feel that the school actively seeks the views of parents, and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection findings confirmed all of the positive views.
29. A few parents feel that they are not always kept sufficiently well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspection team understands this concern although all teachers are very accessible after school each day. The information to parents about pupils' standards and progress meets all requirements but could be presented in a better format. The school prospectus is well presented. It is parent-friendly and contains all of the information needed by parents. Newsletters are sent home on a regular basis. These are well written and give good information about school life, future events and opportunities for parents to join in school activities. There are two formal parents' evenings each year, where teachers provide good opportunities for parents to find out about the progress that their children are making. In addition, parents are invited into school following the issue of the written reports in July so that they might discuss any items of concern. Annual reports meet requirements but some comments are very stilted and do not reflect the personality or activities of individuals. In some instances reports do not include clear targets for improvement. The school recognises that the written reports are in need of review and improvement and is more than ready to work towards offering a better product to parents. Parents are confident that they will be contacted immediately if the school has any points they wish to talk over, or concerns that need to be shared.
30. Parents are welcomed into school and, sometimes with grandparents as well, they help in various ways such as the 'better reading partnership', band practice, helping in the school garden or with school visits and on sports days. Although the school does not have a regular formalised process for consultation with parents, it responds willingly to the views of parents that are brought forward through the parent-teacher association (PTA). As far as possible the school establishes close relationships with parents of those children with special educational need. Parents are always invited to reviews of statements and individual education plans and an increasing number now take advantage of the invitation to discuss their child's need with professionals.

31. Links with the main receiving secondary schools are well developed, and the school has positive links with the local church and community. The local parish priest is a member of the governing body at the school and pupils regularly sing to patients at the local hospital. They are involved in many charitable works and nominate community charities that they wish to support each year.
32. The PTA has a small but very active committee. The group organises many successful events throughout the year, for example, a summer fair, regular discos and very enjoyable shopping trips. Last year they raised over £4,000. These funds have been well used by the school. The work of the organisation is much appreciated by staff and pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clear vision and high aspirations of the headteacher are very strong.
- The leadership and management by the headteacher are very good.
- The leadership and management of the separate subjects by key staff are very good.
- The role of the governing body is strong in all aspects and there is good governance of the school.
- The strategic planning is very good.
- The school's self-evaluation and monitoring procedures and their use are very good.
- The financial planning and principles of best value are very securely incorporated into all aspects of school development.

Commentary

33. The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership and management in the commitment to raising standards and providing a very good education for all pupils. They have a very high level of commitment for the school's vision of providing an inclusive and wide-ranging curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. The headteacher has remained firmly committed to this view since her appointment and is not afraid of making unpopular decisions when they are in the best interests of pupils and staff. The headteacher leads by example at all times. All of the staff are totally dedicated to the school's vision of providing a very strong Catholic ethos. Strategic planning, responses to the key issues from the previous inspection and the school improvement plan are very securely in place. The school improvement plan is very well focused on the identified needs and therefore is an easily managed document.
34. The management of the school is very good. Teachers' roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and carried out. Curriculum co-ordinators are given a very high level of responsibility for developing the work in their subjects. They have very well established and rigorous curricular development plans and reviews. Co-ordinators have a very strong influence on the work of the school in all subjects and aspects. They create very effective teams of teaching and support staff. They provide very good role models for other staff and pupils.
35. Since her appointment the headteacher has maintained an extremely rigorous programme of monitoring teaching and learning, especially in English, mathematics and science. Other subject co-ordinators have not yet had sufficient opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning. In English, mathematics and science subject leaders monitor pupils' performance in the national tests and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. Their role of monitoring teaching in the classroom is less well developed and has been undertaken by the headteacher with great success. If this aspect of subject leadership is developed by the co-ordinators then they will be able to raise their performance to a very high level. The leadership role of the special educational needs co-ordinator has been greatly strengthened in the past two years. The new co-ordinator works very closely with all staff and

provides good support for pupils with special educational needs. As a result their achievements and rate of progress are improving.

36. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage as seen in the Reception class by the recently appointed deputy headteacher are very good. She is very successful in identifying priorities, setting targets for improvement and monitoring and reviewing progress towards them. She involves the very high quality support staff in the class and they are a very strong team. They have been very successful in improving standards of behaviour since the beginning of term. The good range of resources and satisfactory accommodation are used very effectively to ensure that all aspects of the Reception class curriculum are securely in place. The headteacher and governing body have already identified the need for a secure outdoor area providing continuous access from the classroom.
37. The governing body has good knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They receive very good information from the school including headteacher's reports and annual reports from each subject co-ordinator. There are governors for special educational needs and literacy and numeracy. Many governors have attended training provided by the local education authority and there are plans for recently appointed governors to receive training. They have a good knowledge of how the school works and about areas such as curriculum development and the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
38. The governors are given very detailed financial information about the school. The very efficient finance officer maintains very detailed and up-to-date accounts. The governors have been very closely involved with the finance officer from the local education authority and, where necessary, have challenged recommendations and considered alternatives. The governors take opportunities to discuss and, where appropriate, agree priorities on the school improvement plan. Although the main priorities are decided by the headteacher in consultation with the staff, the governing body supports and, when necessary, challenges decisions and costings. In this way the school has developed very effective and evaluative approaches to financial management. A very strong feature of the school is the approach to ensuring best value in all aspects of provision including resources. Recent financial reports are very favourable. The apparent excess of carried forward funds was for improvements that had been planned but had not been paid for by the end of the financial year.
39. The governing body successfully ensures that the school fulfils all statutory requirements. Their knowledge and understanding of the work of the school and their responsibilities have improved since the last inspection.
40. The planning for staff performance management is very good, especially the monitoring role of the headteacher. All teachers have been informed about the procedures but some of the work has yet to be completed. The headteacher has already been assessed and there are performance management plans for all teaching and non-teaching staff. Some governors are new and their role is being developed very well alongside the more experienced governors. The very good systems in place for the induction of new staff and the ongoing professional development of all teaching and non-teaching staff contribute to their skills and effectiveness.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 478,922 |
| Total expenditure | 461,453 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,378 |

| Balances (£) | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Balance from previous year | 38,011 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 57,350 |

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

This has been improved since the last inspection. Children are prepared very well for transfer to Year 1. The children enter the Reception class in the September before they are five and are taught in a single age-group class. The children have attended a wide range of nurseries. All children achieve very well because the teaching and the support and guidance from the trained nursery nurse are very good. The curriculum is very well planned to provide an exceedingly wide range of interesting, challenging and relevant activities. All adults are very good role-models for children and establish very good relationships with them. There is a good ratio of adults to children, ensuring that the needs of all are met. All staff work very effectively as a cohesive team carefully monitoring all aspects of children's learning and personal and social developments. The accommodation inside is satisfactory and effective use is made of the available space for children's physical development. Children do not, at this stage, have continuous access to a separate outside area, with sufficient resources for outdoor activities. This is an unsatisfactory aspect of the curricular provision; however, the headteacher and governing body have already made plans to rectify this in the near future.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well and develop very positive attitudes because of the very good teaching and very high expectations of all staff.
- All adults in the class ensure that children are sensitively introduced to prayer at the beginning and end of every session and to the special events and people who are an integral part of their religious beliefs.
- Very supportive relationships are quickly established and children feel confident and happy and enjoy learning.

Commentary

41. Children's standards in this area of their work are good. Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the very good teaching and the contributions by classroom support. As a result they know what is fair and acceptable behaviour because of the consistent approach and routine. Children listen to and participate in the many interesting activities and stories and the majority speak clearly and confidently. They are continually encouraged to feel confident about their achievements and are reminded of the very high standards of behaviour expected. They are encouraged to share and take turns and put up their hands before answering a question. Consequently groups of children were frequently observed working very well together with minimal adult intervention in all lessons. They behaved very well, shared resources, especially books in the roleplay area called 'Percy the Park Keeper's Hut', took turns when using computers and shared the use of construction equipment very well. The teacher and classroom support create a very supportive atmosphere where children feel special and valued from the time they arrive in class in the morning to when they say prayers at the end of the day.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and all staff take every opportunity to develop children's language skills in all areas of learning.

Commentary

42. From discussions with children and the analysis of work already completed, it is clear that the majority of children are on course to exceed the expectations in this area of learning. Children are already making very good progress as a result of the many opportunities for speaking and listening. They were frequently observed sharing books, listening to stories and practising writing skills. All staff take every opportunity during all activities to develop children's vocabulary through probing questions. They insist that children take turns and listen to each other. When children were preparing for break, the teacher said, "What would you like to do?" and nearly all children spoke in sentences in reply. When children made Hallowe'en biscuits they named the ingredients and described their methods.
43. Very good relationships give children the confidence to speak and all adults listen intently to their comments. The teacher has developed a very rigorous and tightly structured plan for the teaching of sounds with the emphasis on children's ability to say the sounds, recognise them in words and practise their use in writing. Children are encouraged to hold pencils with the correct grip. The analysis of writing shows that most children form letters accurately and have frequent opportunities for practising letter formation and patterns. Work in ICT is very well planned in order to develop children's understanding of spelling. Most children know the initial and final sounds of simple words and sound all the vowels.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher plans a wide range of structured activities to ensure that children understand numbers and apply them to other areas of learning.
- Every opportunity is taken in other areas of learning to promote children's mathematical understanding.

Commentary

44. Standards are good and children achieve very well in this area of learning because of very good teaching and rigorous assessment. The quality of teaching is always at least good and is sometimes very good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and uses assessment very effectively to guide planning based on children's learning. Their knowledge and understanding are very good in all aspects of number, shape and space and problem-solving. Most children add and subtract using numbers to ten. Higher attaining children count to 20 and order numbers accurately. Nearly all children recognise a wide range of two-dimensional and some three-dimensional shapes. Children create interesting mathematical patterns in art showing a very good awareness of order, shape and colour. Most children are confident in this area of learning, enjoy the activities and work very well.

45. The teacher plans a very good range of mathematical activities associated with other areas of learning. During the inspection children applied their knowledge of number to money and developed a good understanding of cost, price tags and giving change. Their personal and social development were enhanced by activities in the class fruit shop.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very wide range of interesting activities is planned to enhance learning and achievements.
- Very good opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing and mathematics are included in the planning.
- Children have many opportunities to use computers in the classroom.

Commentary

46. As a result of good teaching children's attainment is close to the expected level. As a result of very imaginative planning, children achieve very well. In the short time that they have been in the school they have become confident and interested learners who complete one activity before moving on to the next. During the inspection children classified leaves according to shape, colour and texture. They then used a data information sheet to record their findings, while other children examined seeds and pinecones using magnifying glasses and other groups used construction material to design roads and position buildings by the roadside.
47. Children have many opportunities to use listening centres. The shared book 'Percy the Park Keeper' is exceedingly well used as a stimulus for the scientific and social aspects of learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good.
- All staff make very effective use of the outdoor accommodation and children have access to the hall.
- There is no continuous access to an outside play area; opportunities for some aspects of physical development are as a result unsatisfactory.

Commentary

48. As no activities in the hall were observed during the inspection no judgement has been made on this aspect of teaching. Very good lessons were observed however in the playground and in the classroom. Children are well placed to exceed the expected goals by the end of the year.
49. The available space outside is large and therefore children have good opportunities in the structured lessons for using wheeled equipment, large apparatus for games, and balls. They move with very good levels of control and awareness of space as they move along guided paths. Children handle and control a wide range of smaller equipment such as pencils and scissors with very good levels of dexterity, control and attention to detail.

50. Children have only limited opportunities to use the outdoor accommodation as it is shared with the rest of the school. As it is not an integral part of the Foundation Stage accommodation, children do not have enough frequent opportunities to use it.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision for this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching of children's creative skills, very good planning and relationships with children.
- Children are enthusiastic in all areas.
- Excellent teaching, learning and achievement in music.
- Very good provision for and use of the role-play area.

Commentary

51. Overall pupils attain at the expected level. The classroom is divided into suitably designated areas, which all have good resources. These are planned to extend children's creativity and language skills. Planning shows that over the year children have a very wide range of creative opportunities. They are encouraged to experiment when mixing paint and using modelling materials. A particular strength is their very good awareness of shape and texture in art. They produce attractive designs and symmetrical patterns. All staff skilfully extend children's language and encourage their imaginative and collaborative activities. Teachers and pupils have a very clear understanding of the skills to be learned from each activity. A specialist music teacher works to develop all aspects of children's musical skills to a very high level. In this aspect of creative development children exceed the expected levels. Children enjoy the many opportunities to sing and play instruments. They have a very good awareness of pitch, dynamics and rhythm. During the inspection, children were completely engrossed in the role-play area and in dressing up. These activities encourage their creative development as well as their speaking and listening skills.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in reading and writing by the end of Year 6.
- The National Literacy Strategy has been very effectively introduced.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make lessons interesting.
- Very good subject leadership gives a successful impetus to improvement.

Commentary

52. Standards observed in lessons and an analysis of work in books indicate that the attainment of pupils in the present Year 2 is average and for those in Year 6 it is above average. This is a very significant improvement since the previous inspection. The improvement in attainment is due to the efficient implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, clear target setting following effective assessment and the effect of the school's new initiatives in English.

53. Pupils throughout the school enjoy English lessons and achieve well. They are given many opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills, which are now above average. For example, in lessons, pupils often discuss with a partner before attempting to write. By Years 5 and 6, pupils attain above average standards in speaking. They converse with adults confidently and fluently and read aloud with expression. Members of the school council were very keen to explain all that they had suggested to make improvements to the school. Pupils' listening skills throughout the school are very good, especially in situations such as in assemblies and in group singing sessions.
54. Teachers have worked hard to improve the standard of reading and pupils are making good progress. There is additional help in reading for pupils with special educational needs. Classroom support assistants provide valuable help to all pupils. The voluntary help from parents and grandparents working in the school is proving effective and is helping to raise standards in reading. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 and again in Years 5 and 6 continue to make good progress in reading. Higher attaining pupils in the upper juniors are very confident readers. For example, they are very familiar with the 'Harry Potter' books and are all members of local libraries. In some year groups there are still pupils who find reading difficult, especially when it comes to tackling unfamiliar words and texts. The school is doing everything possible to encourage these pupils and to teach the strategies that will help them to read with greater accuracy and understanding.
55. In writing, pupils of all levels of prior attainment make good progress. They develop good skills of writing different types of text, for example, sequencing instructions or letters on a variety of topics. Pupils in Year 5 were observed planning how to write an account of the sinking of the *Titanic*. After researching the event for homework they were stimulated by a huge model of the ship provided by a parent. They worked in groups to discuss sensibly the best way to organise their accounts.
56. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported through well-focused individual education plans that detail the targets these pupils should achieve. During the inspection the two support teachers were observed working very successfully with groups of special needs pupils. A combination of good subject knowledge, high expectations and very good relationships helped the pupils to make clear progress.
57. Standards in teaching are good. The effort to raise standards in reading by providing additional classroom support is now paying good dividends. The work undertaken by the staff to increase the time spent on reading and writing in other subjects is proving to be very effective. Teachers plan well and the systems in place for assessment and careful marking are good. The leadership and management of the subject by the new co-ordinator, assisted by the headteacher, are very good. There has been regular and perceptive mentoring of teaching and learning which has led to an improvement in the standard of teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Now that the standard of writing has improved it is being used more and with increasing effectiveness in other subjects such as history and geography. The school has set very challenging targets for its present Year 6 pupils. Inspection findings indicate that it has a good chance of meeting these. Two factors contribute most strongly to the school's success in developing its pupils' skills in literacy. These are the very effective teaching in classes across the school and the very good leadership and management by the subject co-ordinators.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the most recent tests in 2003 were well above the national average by the end of Year 6 and are greatly improved.
- Standards of work seen are above national expectations.
- Teaching and learning are at least good in all classes across the school.
- The co-ordinators lead the subject very well.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 in the tests in 2003 remain at a low level.

Commentary

59. Good teaching helps pupils to be on course to achieve the expected standards by the end of the present Year 2. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to use addition and subtraction up to 30 to help them build and use multiplication tables. They use practical skills to solve problems and automatically look for patterns in their written work. For the past two years classes containing more than a quarter of pupils with special educational needs have had overall results that have been well below the national average by the end of Year 2. This is despite the fact that those pupils with average and above average capabilities are achieving well and attaining at and sometimes above the expected level. The school has worked hard to help every pupil to achieve his or her own personal best and, by the end of the present year, for pupils in Year 6 standards are on course to be above the expected level and the national average. This is close to the well above average results attained in the most recent statutory tests in 2003. Standards fluctuate from year to year as the numbers with special educational needs and the above average mobility of families changes the nature of the year groups. The number of pupils attaining Level 5, the level above that normally expected, is increasing annually as a result of the structured programme of booster classes that is in place. The school is well placed to maintain the above average levels of attainment.
60. Across the school teaching is good in mathematics and in some instances it is very good. As a result pupils achieve their personal targets and learn well. In class, relationships between adults and pupils are very good and learning is an exciting and stimulating activity. The partnership between the teachers and the classroom assistants and students in training is very good. A direct link with this is that planning always involves all adults and the purpose of activities is clear. Pupils and resources are always organised and managed well so that everyone is fully included in the good-natured process of working towards shared objectives. In most lessons mini review sessions are interspersed throughout the activity period so that, by sensitive questioning, teachers are able to check how well the intended work is progressing. This works well and any pupils who appear to have barriers to learning are reminded of their targets and are encouraged to increase their effort in a persistent but gentle manner. The system also helps teachers to assess how well pupils are doing and enables them to modify their plans in a practical way. In classes for younger pupils, teachers often mark work alongside groups and offer praise, hints or encouragement. The marking in books of older pupils is thorough and often involves a running dialogue over the term as difficulties are ironed out and success shines through. Equal care is shown when marking homework books.
61. The shared co-ordination of the subject works well, with co-ordinators from each phase overseeing the planning process. This ensures that the overlap between Years 2 and 3 is managed well. This has been very important in recent years, as the results at the end of Year 2 have been disappointing. The analysis of work and the identification of the reasons for the lower attainment have enabled staff to devise approaches that are beginning to raise standards in lessons for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The national strategy for teaching mathematics has been instrumental in establishing good systems and continuity across classes. Every teacher shares the secure knowledge and understanding of what is required and how the school is

organised to deliver mathematics at a high level. Support is available at all levels to help teachers to meet their personal objectives and support their pupils in achieving the targets set for them.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. There is effective use of mathematics across the curriculum. The computer suite and the use of ICT in the classrooms enhance pupils' understanding in many areas of numeracy and mathematics. These include problem solving, creating symmetrical patterns in art and design and accurate measurement in science and design and technology. Understanding in mathematics is also used well in science and design and technology and when working to compare historical periods in times past. Links between mathematics and music using computers for composition are only just being introduced. The challenging targets agreed for the summer of 2004 will need a considerable effort to be made by teachers, pupils and parents but everyone is confident that they will be achieved.

SCIENCE

The provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management by the headteacher and co-ordinators are very successfully raising standards and achievement levels.
- Good standards are achieved in the majority of lessons.
- The qualities of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement are good overall.
- There are many good opportunities for investigations.
- Pupils use accurate scientific language and apply their numeracy skills well.
- Science contributes very well to pupils' knowledge and understanding of a healthy lifestyle.
- Effective use of the school garden and a wide range of visits increase children's knowledge and understanding.
- There is too little structured use of ICT to support the learning in science.

Commentary

63. The pupils in the current Year 2 class entered school with well below average standards in literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. This is shown in the carefully maintained records of attainment. As a direct result of the good and, in some instances, excellent teaching pupils achieve well and are now well placed to reach the national average by the end of the present school year. The higher attaining pupils are already achieving Level 2 and are on course to exceed this. Particular strengths are in their knowledge and understanding of foods and the range and scope of their practical work and investigations. Pupils know how circuits are constructed and have a good understanding about which materials are best suited to different purposes. In their work about forces and friction they are keen to devise practical tests to verify their ideas.
64. Pupils in Year 6 are well placed to exceed the expected standards by the end of the year with higher attaining pupils achieving at a level well above the nationally expected level. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls; all pupils, including the higher attaining and those with special educational needs, achieve well. Teachers plan well for the different ability groups and match work to their prior attainment. Considering the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and the well below average levels of attainment on entry for the majority of pupils, they achieve well in most classes and very well in Years 1, 4 and 6.

65. From the analysis of pupils' written work and displays, discussions with pupils and lesson observations, it is evident that the teaching and learning are good overall, with some excellent features. In Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are good overall with some excellent teaching observed in Year 1. In this class the planning, challenges and support for each group were exemplary and consequently children achieved very well. Pupils were involved in very challenging investigations when they predicted, tested and recorded their observations in comparing the brightness of torchlight.
66. In Years 3 to 6, teaching and learning are good overall and, in the lessons observed, ranged from excellent to satisfactory. Where teaching is good or better, the planning is very good, teachers have very good relationships with pupils and give praise for high standards and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. All teachers ensure that pupils learn and use accurate scientific vocabulary and give them many opportunities for extending their numeracy skills whenever possible. This was exemplified during discussions with pupils from Years 5 and 6 when they explained how planets of the solar system move around the sun and the effect on seasons and day and night. Some pupils remembered correctly the distances of some of the planets from the sun.
67. During the inspection most pupils spoke with interest about many investigations, the importance of a healthy lifestyle, environmental issues and conservation. They have benefited from the wide range of visits undertaken by the school. Curricular planning, lessons observed and discussions show that until very recently too little regular and systematic use has been made of ICT for recording and investigation.
68. The leadership and management by the headteacher and co-ordinator are very good. They are very strong contributory factors in the improved standards since the last inspection. They have been responsible for the good levels of achievement and rigorous monitoring and analysis of assessment and meticulous tracking. The very high levels of support provided for teachers give them confidence. In most cases this increased confidence has contributed to the rapid rate of improvement that has exceeded the national trend. The school has come a very long way in the past three years and is well set to maintain this progress with other classes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ITC is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership has had a very positive impact on improving the quality of provision.
- Pupils throughout the school achieve well and standards are now in line with the expected levels.
- Teaching is good overall and is very good for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

69. Standards across the school by the end of Year 2 and 6 are in line with national expectations. A few pupils who have computers at home and who get additional help from their parents are confident at a higher level. The skills of this small group of pupils help some lessons to move at a fast pace when they readily help their friends. There is a well equipped computer suite, and all of the staff have undertaken training. The well-structured scheme of work ensures that all aspects of the curriculum are taught.
70. By the end of Year 2 pupils understand the various forms of communication such as CD-ROMs, tape recorders, text and photographs. They use the computer for word processing, using the mouse confidently, and easily find their way around the keyboard and icons. They readily demonstrate how to log on, edit text, save their work and log off. By Year 6 many pupils

are confident and competent users of computers. They know the usefulness of ICT in their work and in the outside world. Pupils readily collect information and present it on spreadsheets and on different designs of graph. They use secure search engines to access websites on the Internet. Their skills in control technology are well established. The school has good access to a good range of relevant software and the action plan, for which funding has been allocated, sets out the next phase of development.

71. Teaching is good overall across the school. This has a positive effect on raising the standards for pupils of all levels of attainment. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present their requirements to pupils with confidence. Lessons are planned well and the learning objectives are made clear. Emphasis is placed on the development of relevant technical vocabulary. Teachers achieve a good balance between formal instruction and the time allowed for pupils to practise skills. This results in good learning when pupils achieve their class and individual targets. In all lessons, the pace is brisk and learning is broken down into manageable steps. Skilful questioning involves pupils in their own learning very well. Effective support is well targeted at those who need it most. Positive attitudes and good behaviour are important factors in pupils' achievement in lessons.
72. The shared leadership of the subject is good and strategies to raise standards are managed well. The co-ordinators have carried out a clear whole-school audit to evaluate skills and to identify training needs for teachers and support staff. As a result, there is a clear overview of provision and standards across the school. Practical assessment systems are used well to monitor skills acquired, chart progress and to enable teachers to provide relevant follow up work.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. The use of ICT across the curriculum is now being developed effectively. Teachers' planning for other subjects regularly identifies opportunities for its use. In ICT lessons teachers and pupils support work in other subjects using their computer skills. Literacy skills are improved by the pupils' growing proficiency in word processing and by the use of software programs to improve their skills in reading and spelling. Every pupil follows a personal learning plan on a computer in rotation with others in the class. Pupils use CD-ROMs and the Internet regularly for personal research in other subjects such as history, geography and art and design. Data handling in science, using computer skills is a strand of work that has been neglected until very recently but is now being developed. An exciting program linking music and computer skills is very new but is being used in collaboration with other schools and the local education authority.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

The provision for history and geography is at least satisfactory and elements involving visits to places of interest are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects that lead to good learning.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The range of learning opportunities provided that make history and geography come alive.

Commentary

74. Work was sampled in history and geography, which is taught in half term blocks. From collected evidence, including discussions with pupils and teachers, attainment levels in both subjects are satisfactory. Pupils learn effectively from the time that they start studying history.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about old and new toys and holidays taken both now and in times past. Opportunities are given for pupils to develop their speaking skills. For example, several pupils in Year 1 explained to the class all they knew about the old toys they had brought from home. In discussion with pupils of all ages it was obvious that the recent school's Golden Jubilee celebration had given pupils the opportunity to focus on history. Teachers had worked hard to make history come alive. All the school had enjoyed dressing for the day in clothes of the 1950s. In discussion, pupils explained that on the special day they had tried to complete pages of very difficult sums and they reported that, "Teachers had been very strict and horrible, as it was in the olden days!" Evidence of the quality of the celebration was evident on displays in classrooms and corridors. Pupils reported that many of their parents had enjoyed coming into school to see their work about the past.

75. Although it was only possible to observe one lesson in geography, an analysis of work on display, together with discussions with teachers and pupils indicates that pupils achieve well and reach the expectations set nationally. The youngest pupils were very excited about the travels of 'Barnaby Bear', identifying where he had been on maps of the British Isles and the World. In Year 4 pupils developed research skills as they worked very enthusiastically in pairs and groups, extending their knowledge of India, especially the village of Chembakolli. It was evident that pupils enjoy studying geography. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and create a very good ethos for learning. Pupils work hard and achieve well.
76. The co-ordinators are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They work closely together to provide good leadership but as yet they have had very little opportunity to monitor teaching. There is no shortage of resources and those used are of good quality.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

These subjects are taught in rotation and during the inspection there was only limited opportunity to inspect lessons in art and design and design and technology. The previous report made little or no mention of any of these subjects except music and therefore it is impossible to make judgements and comparisons between attainment levels in 2001 and the present time.

Art and Design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of a structured scheme of work which gives guidance to all teachers.
- The opportunities for pupils to use the school environment, ICT and other areas of the curriculum as stimuli for creativity and the development of artistic skills.

Commentary

77. The curriculum is enriched by the opportunities to use a range of media. Pupils now achieve national expectations and make steady progress that is at least satisfactory. Art and design is used to support work in other subjects such as history and geography in a pleasing way.
78. Pupils' artistic skills are carefully developed as they progress through the school. They incorporate art from other cultures such as Aborigine art and that of different historical periods into their work. They build on a range of skills and are well motivated and confident when experimenting with new techniques. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a judgement on teaching, but the analysis of the wide range of work displayed in school and pupils' sketch-books showed that pupils' work is developed systematically. In one lesson observed the teaching and learning were good. Art makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

79. In Years 1 and 2 pupils gain skills using a range of techniques and materials. Their observational drawing and work on pattern become increasingly detailed as they grow older. Pupils are encouraged to observe carefully and they draw detailed sketches of flowers and plants. They explore texture, colour and line and paint in the style of various famous artists.
80. In a Year 6 lesson pupils made detailed pencil drawing through a frame. Whilst some showed great flair and perception, others had difficulties in drawing only what they could see, leaving out details that they knew were there but were not in vision. They took pride in their work and used materials carefully and sensitively. There are many opportunities for higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to develop their skills in learning as they work towards individually agreed targets. Mathematical shapes and patterns are developed well as pupils explore texture and design using ICT skills.
81. Pupils' work is displayed very attractively, valued greatly and provides examples for other pupils. The system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress is simple and practical and is linked to the work that the school has adopted in other subjects.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Total commitment to usefulness and purpose of products made.
- Shared planning about the nature and purpose of work undertaken.
- Pupils' delight in showing and using products that they have made.

Commentary

82. The small number of lessons observed and the collection of completed work, including records of awards gained in national competitions, indicate that standards attained meet expectations at the end of Year 2 and exceed them by the end of Year 6. This is because teachers work together well with the guidance and support of the subject co-ordinator. Work is clearly linked to a purpose and ideas are carried through to fruition. Products are designed to meet a need and are then used in other lessons or productions. They have to be functional and durable. Teachers consider that the process of making and evaluation is still stronger than the design stage. In response to a competition or prescribed need teachers usually introduce ideas for new projects. During the initial design process ideas are discussed and then those that appear to be most useful are worked on until they are of an acceptable standard. One such event was the design of a display for the Blackpool Illuminations. Eventually, professional model makers and electricians made up the winning design and model in huge proportions. Pupils, teachers and parents celebrated the 'switch on' by a pupil from the winning class. Another prize-winning design and model resulted in a visit to Bristol by some pupils to meet celebrities.
83. In food technology in Year 1 the planning, making and evaluation process was carried out rigorously. Through the testing and evaluation process pupils learn that only high quality work is acceptable. Records and collections of completed work show positive links with science and art and design.
84. The quality of teaching in the small number of lessons seen was good and work on display indicates that across the school, teachers work to the same high standards. This is because the subject is led and managed well and the resources provided for pupils are at least satisfactory but are readily increased when a major project is underway. Pupils were eager to share their work with others and were keen to explain how they had developed their earliest ideas through to completion.

Music

The headteacher and staff have accurately identified the provision for music as a strength of the school; it is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent teaching and learning.
 - Standards across the school are above those expected for pupils of the same age nationally.
 - Very good opportunities are provided for all pupils to work with a very wide range of musical instruments.
 - Pupils delight in the many opportunities for performing for others.
85. The school employs a specialist teacher and she is an excellent investment in terms of pupils' achievement, which is above the expected level in all aspects of music. Pupils have many opportunities to perform in school, with neighbouring schools and locally. These opportunities increase as they progress through the school and include working with visiting musicians and participating in instrumental groups.
86. The teacher has excellent personal skills in singing, accompaniment and a wealth of knowledge in all aspects of music. Her enthusiasm is contagious and results in pupils' achieving very well in all aspects. The pace is outstanding and consequently, in a short time, pupils have warmed up and exercised their voices, sung a challenging range of songs and played many tuned and untuned instruments. The opportunities for investigating the full range of dynamics and a wide variety of rhythms contribute to very high quality of composition improvisation. Pupils listen with rapt attention and their impeccable behaviour, intense concentration and pride in performance reflect this outstanding teaching. Some pupils learn to play brass and woodwind instruments but these lessons were not taking place during the inspection. Pupils in Year 6 and those from other classes who sing in the choir perform an excellent repertoire of songs. These reflect traditions from other cultures and pupils perform in two or three parts with ease.
87. Too few teachers in school benefit from the opportunity to learn from this highly skilled teacher. The headteacher and staff now realise the potential value of teachers' observations and participation in the lessons as an effective aspect of their professional development. The school realises that such involvement would also ensure continuity of approach during any absence of the specialist teacher.
88. Pupils also benefit from the expertise of a class teacher within the school who is a highly accomplished composer and instrumentalist. He inspires all pupils during assembly and their tuneful and accurately pitched singing of hymns showed excellent awareness of the style and meaning of the hymns. Their singing filled the hall and greatly contributed to the quality of worship and of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A new venture in music composition using keyboards linked to computers is exciting pupils, especially those in Year 5, where this new work is being focused this year.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Participation in most local and district sports competitions
- Pupils are enthusiastic
- Good extra-curricular sports clubs
- Good collaborative teaching

Commentary

89. Attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is close to national expectations. In the lessons and clubs observed, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Based on prior individual skills and team contribution pupils achieve well, due to their own enthusiasm, keenness to improve and good coaching. School records indicate that standards in swimming certainly meet national expectations with many pupils swimming longer distances by the end of Year 6.
90. Pupils in all year groups know the importance of warming up and cooling down exercises in relation to muscle-tone, heartbeat and breathing. Pupils show increasing control and use of speed and tension to express feelings and moods as they get older. For example, pupils in a Year 4 lesson combined balance, poise and elevation in linking travelling movements satisfactorily during a gymnastics lesson. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 work well together when developing skills in managing control and speed, when making good use of space, and when controlling and passing footballs and netballs.
91. The school places a strong emphasis on developing physical ability, healthy life-styles and positive attitudes. School teams take part in friendly and local football, netball and rounders competitions. Good community links are formed with other the local schools. Valuable in-service training is obtained from the local education authority.
92. The quality of teaching is good overall. The subject is managed and organised well by the knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator supported by a team of teachers. Many teachers willingly devote additional time generously to after-school practices. A good scheme of work and detailed planning ensure that the full range of physical education activities is covered.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for this work in subjects such as science, religious education, health education and specific lessons for the subject known as circle time is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Commitment to supporting the Christian faith of pupils
- The work and effect on pupils' self-esteem of the school council
- The promotion of healthy eating as part of the healthy schools campaign
- Sensitive handling of drugs awareness and sex education issues

Commentary

93. No specific lessons in this part of the work of the school were seen during the inspection but it is covered as part of a cross-curricular approach. In scrutiny and analysis of work and in some lessons in science pupils' development in this area is clearly supported very well. The school considers that pupils' personal development is at the heart of all of its work. Within the science curriculum there is good provision for health education, including teaching about sex education and drugs awareness. Many moral and social issues are explored in religious education, which was not part of this inspection. In this work pupils' spiritual development is a central part of their progress through sacramental preparation and promotion of their Christian faith. Pupils' understanding of working together in a safe environment is being fostered through the ongoing work of the school council and through the class discussions. These sessions inform the council representatives about what their friends wish to be on the agenda. Conversations with pupils demonstrated how well they consider themselves to be involved and included in the decision making process of the school. They are knowledgeable about being part of the healthy schools campaign but enjoy sharing crisps and fizzy drinks during their work aimed at raising standards in their Saturday morning sessions in Year 6.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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