

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dartford, Kent.

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118768

Headteacher: Mrs Maria Shepherd

Lead inspector: Ian Nelson

Dates of inspection: 6 - 8 July 2004

Inspection number: 257126

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:	218
School address:	King Edward Avenue Dartford Kent
Postcode:	DA1 2HX
Telephone number:	01322 222759
Fax number:	01322 225307
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Diane O'Brien
Date of previous inspection:	1/6/98

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils entitled to free school meals	3.7% (Below average)
Pupils whose mother tongue is not English	2.7% (Above average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs	10% (Below average)
Awards include:	
School achievement award 2001	

This is an average sized Roman Catholic Primary school near to the centre of Dartford. The pupils come from a very wide area and it is likely that more pupils are entitled to free school meals than actually claim them. Overall socio-economic circumstances are similar to average. Around 15 per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds but all speak English fluently. Five pupils joined and seven left the school during the last school year. The school's assessments of children indicate that attainment on entry is average overall but within a wide range.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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28200	Paul Stevens	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher and governors provide satisfactory leadership. However, this school has serious weaknesses in senior management support for the head and in teaching and learning. Overall standards are average and achievement is satisfactory in English and information and communication technology (ICT), but standards are well below average in writing and below average in mathematics and science at Year 2 and Year 6. The school receives below average funding, has gone through an unsettled period and has difficulty in attracting staff because it is so near to the boundary over which teachers receive London allowance with their salary. **It is therefore judged to provide satisfactory value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The effectiveness of the support by senior management for the headteacher is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership, management and provision in mathematics and science are unsatisfactory so that pupils do not achieve well enough and standards are below average.
- Teaching at Years 5 and 6 is unsatisfactory.
- Children in the Foundation Stage (reception) get a good start to school and achieve well.
- Standards in writing are well below average.
- The standard of singing is well above average by Year 6.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, have good attitudes to learning and respond well to the opportunities they are given to take responsibility and to express their views in school matters.
- The care and welfare of pupils are good.
- The school has close links with parents, parish and wider community and the parents have very positive views of the school.

The school has addressed the key issues from the previous report by improving curriculum planning and assessment and raising standards in ICT at Year 2. It has also improved the building, and provision for the Foundation Stage. However, standards are lower in mathematics and science than at the time of the last inspection, when they were judged to be average, and there are serious weaknesses in senior management and in teaching despite the hard work of the head and governors. Overall therefore, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

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	B	C	B
mathematics	B	A	B	B
science	C	B	B	C

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

Achievement is satisfactory for most pupils. At Foundation Stage achievement is good and standards are above average. However, pupils currently at Year 6 and Year 2 have not achieved well enough in mathematics and science. Achievement in English and ICT has been satisfactory. Standards are average in English and ICT at Year 2 and Year 6 but below average in mathematics and science. Standards in reading are better than those in writing. The unvalidated results of the national tests for Year 6 and Year 2 in 2004 are lower than the previous year's. In the 2003 national

tests for Year 6 standards were average in English and above average in mathematics and science compared with all schools. Compared with similar schools, standards were above average in English and mathematics and average in science, suggesting that these pupils achieved well from the levels they attained at Year 2. The school met its target for pupils attaining the expected level 4 for English in 2003 but missed it in mathematics. In the national tests at Year 2 in 2003 standards were average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics compared with all schools. Compared with similar schools, standards were below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily.

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour and attitudes to school are good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. In most year groups they are broadly satisfactory, and in reception they are good, but they are unsatisfactory at Years 5 and 6. Assessment systems are satisfactory but have not been in use long enough to have influenced standards yet. The curriculum is satisfactory overall and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum, though there is too little emphasis on some aspects of mathematics. The school provides a good range of extra activities. The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Support, advice and guidance to pupils are satisfactory. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good. Links with parents and with other schools are good. Links with the community are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership and management of the head and the governors are satisfactory and they have made several improvements over the last three years but they have also faced some difficult challenges that have prevented the improvements from raising standards and achievement. They have not received effective support from senior management. Some required information is missing from the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus but in all other respects governors fulfil their statutory duties.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very good views of the school and have no significant criticisms. Some parents expressed concern over the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs but this is judged satisfactory. The pupils' views are good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management support for the headteacher, including the co-ordination of mathematics and science.
- Improve the use of assessment information to raise standards and achievement in writing, mathematics and science, especially for the higher attaining pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching at Years 5 and 6.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- The governors should ensure the school prospectus and annual report to parents contain all the required information.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall achievement is broadly satisfactory for most pupils. However, pupils at Year 6 have not made enough progress between their Year 2 tests and those they took in Year 6 in mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have declined over recent years.
- Children achieve well in the reception class.
- Pupils in Year 6 did not achieve satisfactorily in the national tests in 2004 in mathematics and science and standards are below average in those subjects.
- Standards in writing are well below average.

Commentary

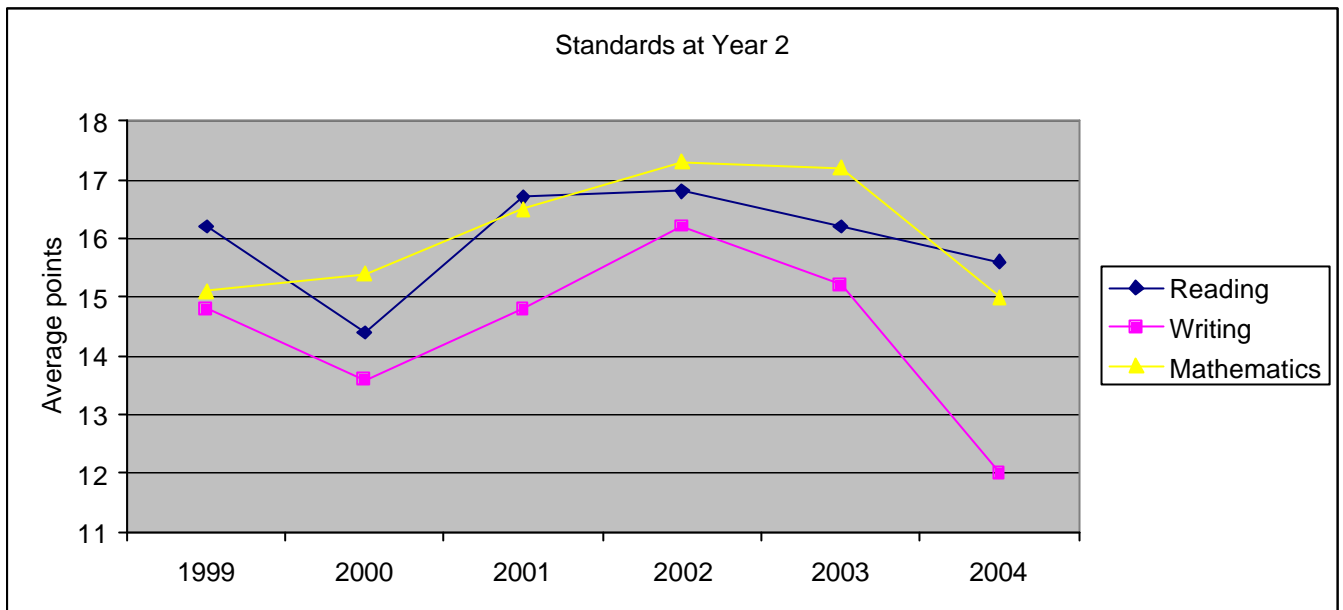
1. Pupils enter the reception class with broadly average standards but within a wide range of ability. Provision in the reception class is consistently good so that children achieve well. By the time they leave reception, most children exceed their early learning goals and are above average. The strong focus on developing their confidence and independence ensures that they achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. The emphasis on developing early reading and writing skills helps children to make good progress and exceed the expectations of their age. They also exceed the expectations of their age in mathematics because the teaching and learning provide the right combination of challenge and support. Their achievement in creative development is good because they have access to a good range of materials and good support from teaching and support staff.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.2 (16.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.2 (16.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.2 (17.3)	16.3 (16.5)

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

2. Standards in the Year 2 national tests in 2003 were average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics compared with all schools. Given the good progress children make in the reception class, from average attainment on entry, this suggests broadly satisfactory achievement in writing and mathematics and unsatisfactory achievement in reading in Years 1 and 2. Achievement in the 2004 tests shows a dip from the 2003 results and standards are judged to be broadly average in English but below average in mathematics and science. Standards in reading exceed those in writing which are well below average. The graph below shows that standards have declined since 2002 in reading and writing and dropped in 2004 in mathematics after rising between 2000 and 2002 and being more or less maintained in 2003. Part of the reason for the drop in 2004 is attributed by the school to the long term absence of the regular teacher.

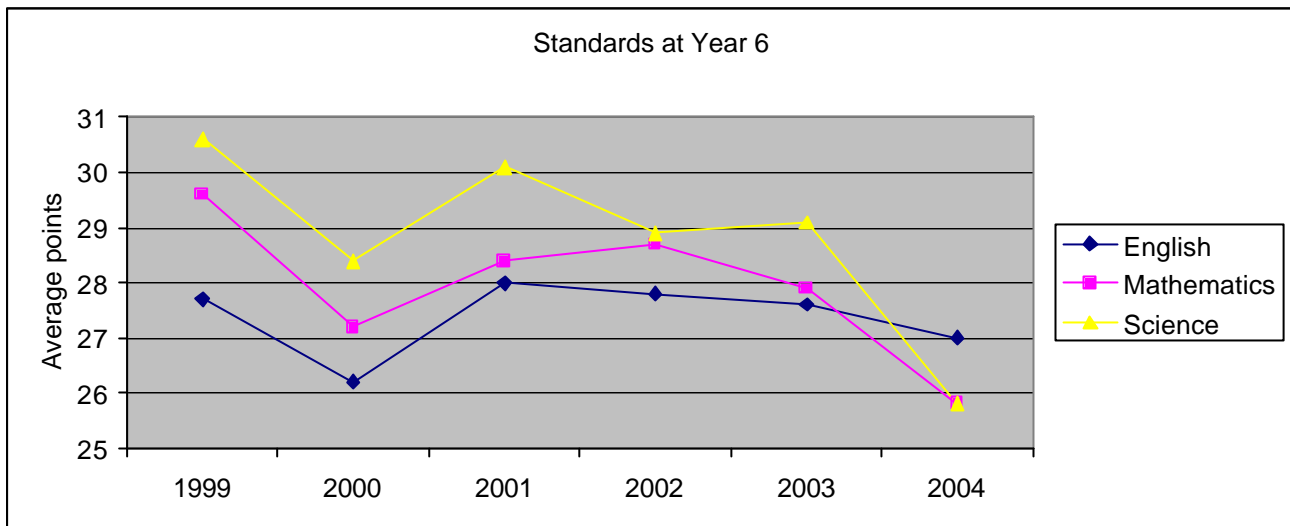


Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.6 (27.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.9 (28.7)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.1 (28.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 32 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Standards in the 2003 national tests for Year 6 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science compared with all schools. The comparison with similar schools shows that these pupils made good progress and achieved well in English and mathematics in relation to their results in their Year 2 tests. In science, achievement and progress were satisfactory. The unvalidated results of the 2004 national tests were lower than the previous year. While the 2004 results were predicted to be lower than the previous year's because of the standards attained by these pupils at Year 2, an analysis of the number of National Curriculum levels gained between the Year 2 and Year 6 tests by those pupils who took both tests in this school suggests that only in English did the pupils achieve satisfactorily. Achievement in mathematics and science was unsatisfactory. Within English, however, standards in reading are above average while those in writing are well below average. The graph below shows that standards have fluctuated over recent years but that the overall trend has been a declining one in all three subjects in spite of the above average standards being attained in recent years. English standards have been declining since 2001, mathematics since 2002 and science, after a slight improvement in 2003, dropped sharply in 2004. Part of the reason for the drop in 2004 is attributed by the school to the loss of some high quality teachers to promoted posts and the difficulty in attracting new staff. However, leadership and management in mathematics and science are unsatisfactory and the quality of teaching at Year 5 and Year 6 is unsatisfactory overall. The school met its targets for pupils attaining Level 4 or above in English in 2003 and 2004. It exceeded its target for Level 5 in English in 2003. However, it did not reach its targets for mathematics at Level 4 or above or at Level 5 in either year and in 2004 it did not reach its target for Level 5 in English.



4. Standards in ICT are average at Year 2 and Year 6 which is an improvement at Year 2 since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily throughout the school but remain below the national average in their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils with emotional needs make satisfactory progress. The school has just completed a two year programme of intensive support from the local education authority to raise standards by putting in place effective systems for tracking pupils' progress each year. These systems are too new to have had an impact yet and need refining to include checks of pupils' progress during a year, as well as at the end of each year, so that intervention can be targeted as soon as under-achievement is recognised.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show a high level of interest in school life
- Rare incidents of bullying are dealt with very effectively
- The very good provision for pupils' social and moral development results in very good relationships throughout the school
- The number of requests for holidays in term time is increasing

Commentary

5. The good attitudes to school that were seen at the last inspection have been maintained. Parents confirm this, as the great majority state that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic, especially when tasks are interesting and enjoyable. For example, children in the reception class were very eager to tidy up so they could continue listening to the teacher read a Roald Dahl novel. They listened avidly and were enthralled by the story. Older pupils also work enthusiastically in lessons when teaching is good, such as in a Year 4 literacy lesson when they were writing an additional verse to a poem about personal fears. There is also enthusiasm for other aspects of school life, such as the various music and sports clubs, and pupils speak proudly of their achievements, for example, in the district sports events. Most pupils in the Foundation Stage are set to exceed the goals expected of their age in personal, social and emotional development because of the good provision in the reception class. Pupils who have special learning needs have positive attitudes to their learning. They respond well to the learning support assistants during their targeted group time

within lessons. Pupils with emotional needs mix well with others; they work hard and respond well to their teachers.

6. Behaviour has also remained at the good levels seen during the previous inspection. Most parents feel standards of behaviour are good, although a very small number voiced concerns about bullying. However, during the inspection there was no evidence of any intimidation. In fact it was noticeable that relationships were very good amongst pupils, with older ones being particularly caring towards younger ones. A small number of pupils spoke about instances of falling out, or name calling, but they generally felt that the school dealt very swiftly and effectively with any issues of bullying that it was made aware of. There have been very few racist incidents but on the rare occasion that they have occurred they have been dealt with and reported promptly.
7. Pupils behave well in assemblies and also in the dining hall at lunchtimes. Behaviour in lessons is generally good although a small number of older boys do not always behave maturely all of the time, particularly when class management is not effective enough.
8. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is now considered to be satisfactory rather than good. A spiritual element is not overtly planned for in all subjects, and lessons observed gave little opportunity for pupils to reflect on their work or wider issues. However, pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through the strong emphasis on music throughout the school and there is a strong Catholic ethos, particularly in assemblies.
9. Pupils' moral development is still considered to be very good. Even the youngest children know right from wrong and are encouraged to think of others. Adults model this behaviour very well by speaking to pupils politely and respectfully. Pupils are publicly rewarded for being brave and kind and for helping each other, not only for academic achievement. Pupils are encouraged to, and do, show a very good level of respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. For example, an assembly theme was "Different but Equal". Pupils were clear in their understanding that people of different colours and abilities should all be treated the same. In addition, a prayer board in the school corridor gives pupils the opportunity to put into words their concerns and hopes for others. As a result of the consistent emphasis on moral development, pupils behave well and relate very well to each other.
10. The provision for pupils' social development has improved and is now very good. Very strong relationships have been fostered between older and younger pupils, which is something several parents spoke highly of. Older pupils have a very wide range of responsible roles such as Head Girl and Head Boy, prefects, and house captains and they fulfil these roles maturely. Pupils who serve on the school council are very aware of the part they play in enhancing the school community as a whole. The pupils' personal and social development and their ability to work with others are further enhanced by the residential visit undertaken in Year 6. A sense of social responsibility in the wider community is developed through regular charity fundraising events.
11. Pupils' cultural development is now good rather than sound. Their experience and appreciation of other cultures is enhanced through using other languages such as Polish and Italian to respond to the register, for example. Year 4 pupils celebrated a Japanese Day and Year 2 pupils have learned about Maori culture. Pupils have also visited the local Sikh temple and enjoyed an African drumming workshop. Their cultural development is further enhanced through the strong emphasis on music in the school with the choir and orchestra taking part in several local festivals, and through visiting story-tellers and visits to the theatre.
12. Attendance levels are in line with national averages although there has been a slight decline in the school's figures since the last inspection. This is partly due to an increased number of requests for holidays during term time, despite the school's discouraging this. For example, this academic year, well over 350 days absence is due to holidays. Generally, pupils arrive punctually at school and the register sheets are marked appropriately.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

As at the time of the last inspection, there have been no temporary or permanent exclusions

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a broadly satisfactory quality of education for most pupils but there are serious weaknesses in teaching at Years 5 and 6. Systems for checking how well pupils are doing are satisfactory and improving. The curriculum is broadly satisfactory and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The overall quality of care for pupils is good and the school has good links with parents and very good links with the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall because of the high proportion of unsatisfactory lessons seen. Teaching and learning are consistently good at Foundation Stage, satisfactory in Years 1 to 4 and unsatisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good or very good teaching was seen in all year groups except Year 6.
- Half of the lessons seen in Years 5 and 6 were unsatisfactory.
- Teaching quality is inconsistent, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	10	8	5	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

13. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in their learning because of consistently good teaching. The teacher and classroom assistants work well together to plan effective learning activities based firmly upon the Foundation Stage curriculum. They work hard to provide a good balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities and help the children to develop effective personal skills to be able to choose activities sensibly and work and play independently and with other children. They understand the needs of young children and provide attractive resources to stimulate their interest. As a consequence, children are well motivated and eager to learn. They enjoy the practical activities that help them to acquire early reading, writing and mathematical skills and make good progress in these areas.

14. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are inconsistent and range from very good to a single unsatisfactory lesson seen. In Year 1 most of the lessons observed were good but one science lesson was unsatisfactory because the pupils spent too long on a low-level cutting out activity that did little to extend their learning. In contrast, a good mathematics lesson saw pupils learning to calculate which coins they would use to pay given amounts. In a good music lesson the teacher's knowledge, enthusiasm and rapport with the pupils ensured that they all handled the instruments sensibly and composed a simple piece of music, before commenting on each other's work. Teaching at Year 2 is mainly satisfactory. However, pupils have not made the progress they should have this year because of staffing difficulties and the teacher has only had the class for a few weeks after a long term absence when they were taken by a temporary teacher. In a satisfactory science lesson on making circuits she provided a good range of equipment that excited the pupils and made them want to explore ways of making a bulb light up, but she tried to keep the whole class learning at the same pace instead of encouraging the more able to explore independently and supporting the less able with their investigations. This meant that while most pupils learned satisfactorily some of the more able did not make as much progress as they might have done.
15. The teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 range from very good to satisfactory. Pupils in Year 3 have been taken by a temporary teacher after the departure of their regular teacher earlier in the year so their learning has not been as consistent as it might have been. In Year 4, teaching and learning are mainly good. The teacher has a good rapport with the pupils so that they enjoy their work and make good progress. She plans a variety of tasks to ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged and have work that is hard enough. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were required to use three of four given digits and any two of the functions, add, subtract, divide or multiply, to reach a given total. The more able pupils were given harder problems with bigger numbers to complete unaided while the teacher supported the less able pupils on simpler tasks. The same approach worked in a science lesson on using force meters when the more able pupils had a harder task to complete than other groups. Consequently most of the pupils achieved well with their learning within the lesson.
16. At Year 5 the teaching is inconsistent, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching stems mainly from a lack of experience. For example, in a mathematics lesson the tasks were not planned carefully enough to challenge all the pupils so the more able did not learn as effectively as they might have done. In an English lesson the pace of learning was too slow because the teacher did not engage the pupils' interest well enough and they did not work hard enough. At Year 6, teaching ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. Teaching is not planned well enough to ensure that all pupils get work that is hard enough so too many pupils do not learn fast enough. Opportunities are missed to extend learning beyond a fairly superficial level, as in a geography lesson on weather symbols. In a mathematics lesson, opportunities were missed to get pupils to explain their ideas and how they had worked out answers. As the work lacked challenge the pupils lost motivation and behaviour and learning deteriorated.
17. Teaching, learning and achievement of pupils identified on the special educational needs register are satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and good in the Foundation Stage. When pupils have targeted support by the learning support assistants and school's special needs co-ordinator they make good progress and achieve well.
18. The quality of teaching is not as good as at the time of the last inspection as there was a higher proportion of lessons judged very good and fewer unsatisfactory ones then. There have been significant staff changes since that time.
19. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. They include end of year tests and the school has developed a comprehensive system for tracking the progress of pupils each year. The results of assessments are used to set targets for pupils to aim at in English and mathematics. The systems for tracking pupils' progress during a year are not yet in place and this is the next phase of development planned by the school. The school has also

developed a good system for marking pupils' work that should tell them precisely what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. However, a scrutiny of pupils' books shows that this system is not being used consistently in all subjects.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The range of activities that enrich the curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for mathematics places too little emphasis on investigation and data handling which hinders pupils' achievement in these areas.
- Enrichment of the curriculum broadens pupils' understanding of what they are learning.
- The improvements to both accommodation and resources provide a good environment for learning.

Commentary

20. The school teaches all the subjects required of the National Curriculum but does not cover all aspects of mathematics. Here, there is too little emphasis on data handling and investigation so that pupils under-achieve in these areas. This contrasts with the curriculum for ICT, where improvements to resources and developments in in-service training have been based on rigorous evaluation. Consequently, standards are improving.
21. Pupils have many interesting opportunities to develop themselves both personally and socially in the wide range of activities which extend and enrich their learning. They have good opportunities to participate in a variety of sports and in activities associated with the arts, such as the choir and orchestra. There is a satisfactory number of clubs for pupils to enjoy and older pupils have the opportunity to develop themselves by facing challenges and learning to live together at a residential course. Pupils also extend their learning through a very good programme of visits. These include going to museums such as the Museum of Childhood, to historical sites such as Lullingstone Villa, to environmental centres and to France.
22. Provision for children identified on the special needs register is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory throughout Years 1 to 6. They are provided with extra help in literacy and numeracy and Year 6 pupils have booster classes.
23. Accommodation and resources are now good. The school has improved the building and the resources for learning. The computer suite has helped to raise standards in ICT at Year 2. There are sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff but the school finds it difficult to recruit teachers.
24. Overall, the school's curriculum has improved, particularly with regard to planning. Teachers are also working on opportunities for increasingly independent investigative work, and on how much use they make of English and mathematics in different subjects. They already make good use of ICT in the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. The support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on monitoring, are satisfactory. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good procedures for child protection and for pupils' welfare

- Pupils are very confident that they have an adult in school they can talk to
- There are good induction arrangements for new pupils

Commentary

25. The school now has good procedures for child protection. The headteacher is the designated co-ordinator and has been formally trained. Whole-school training has been undertaken since the last inspection and staff are all aware of what steps to take if they have concerns about a pupil. Child protection matters are often an agenda item at staff meetings to keep staff well informed. The school's policy is appropriately based on local area guidelines but there is not yet a school-specific policy for the positive handling of pupils.
26. Health and safety procedures are good with the caretaker and governors involved in regular checks. Contractors carry out an annual risk assessment, including fire and electrical equipment checks. An adequate number of staff are trained in first aid and when pupils are feeling unwell or have hurt themselves they are looked after kindly by support staff. Appropriate records are kept of any pupils who report accidents or illnesses.
27. Procedures to monitor pupils' personal development are satisfactory. Although no formal records are kept, apart from a section in the pupils' annual progress reports, teaching and support staff know pupils very well and any concerns are raised and discussed at staff meetings. Pupils who have specific behaviour needs are monitored and supported effectively by the school. A member of the support staff has recently undertaken counselling training to provide further support for pupils. Throughout the school, pupils have targets for literacy and numeracy that are reviewed regularly. These are beginning to be used to support and guide pupils. Comprehensive systems for checking how well they are learning have been developed over the last two years through the intensive support programme but are too new to have a significant impact on their achievement yet.
28. There are satisfactory systems for identifying pupils' special educational needs. The targets in their individual plans are appropriate and reviewed each term. A few parents had concerns that the pupils' action plans were not reviewed regularly enough. This has been addressed by the co-ordinator and a better system has been adopted. There are satisfactory arrangements for when pupils enter or leave the school. The co-ordinator meets with external agencies as necessary.
29. Pupils spoken to listed a range of adults in the school that they would be comfortable talking to if they had any problems. They are very confident that adults will try to sort out their difficulties quickly and effectively and use words such as "fair" and "kind" to describe the way adults respond to them.
30. Children who are about to start their education now come for several visits in the summer term so they get to know the staff, routines and the building and this ensures they settle quickly into school. Older pupils who join can also visit beforehand and are paired up with friends in their new class when they start so that all may settle happily at whatever stage they join the school.
31. Pupils are very well involved in the life of the school and strongly believe that their suggestions are listened to. For example, all classes from Year 2 upwards are represented on the school council and other pupils are able to put their ideas in a suggestions' box. These are discussed during school council meetings and the representatives then feedback to others. Pupils are pleased and proud that their ideas, such as a clock outside, and more games for the playground, have been adopted and so have improved the facilities. Older pupils have a very wide range of responsibilities that make them feel very much a part of the day-to-day life of the school. The school has maintained the good provision for the care, health, welfare and safety of the pupils noted during the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links with parents. Links with other schools are good and links with the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views of the school
- They make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning
- Some statutory information is missing from the school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents

Commentary

32. A high percentage of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and their views, along with the views of those who attended the meeting and were spoken to during the inspection, are largely very positive. There has been an improvement in parents' satisfaction with the school since the previous inspection. A few parents do have concerns about the inconsistency of homework and some older pupils confirm that the frequency of work given at home has declined. However, overall, homework is judged to be satisfactory. Parents are especially positive about how much their children enjoy school, the standards of behaviour, how well their children settle and how fairly their children are treated. The evidence from the inspection confirms all these positive views.
33. Parents are very supportive of their children; for example, in relation to homework they listen to them read regularly and help with other tasks. They also support the school in important practical ways. The Parent Teacher and Friends' Association raises very substantial funds each year that have been used, for example, to pay for cabling the ICT suite. This has had an important impact on improving pupils' computer skills. Parents also help with after school activities, such as with sports clubs, and support the teams when they are involved in inter-school matches.
34. The school works well in partnership with the parents of pupils with special needs. Information is shared at review meetings. There are also informal meetings between the special needs co-ordinator, parents and staff to discuss individual pupils' needs.
35. The information that the school provides for parents is satisfactory. The annual pupil progress report has a limited amount of written information, especially about foundation subjects, but it does give parents information about whether their child is above, average or below in relation to all subjects. Parents also receive regular newsletters and curriculum information. The school has now been made aware of all the statutory information that needs to be included in the prospectus and the governors' annual report in future.
36. Pupils benefit from the links that have been established with several local schools. For example, there are close ties with the adjacent private childcare facility and many children join the reception class from there. Pupils have benefited from the science and language resources at local secondary schools and they have also participated in dance workshops and sports tournaments. These links have enhanced the curriculum as well as introduced older pupils to the schools they are likely to transfer to.
37. Community links have strengthened since the last inspection and there is a strong sense of the school being part of the wider parish and local community. Links with the church are very strong and the congregation, as well as others in the area, support school events very well enabling the school to raise substantial funds from their annual summer fun day. The school makes good use of the local area with visits to look at architecture and to the park to use play equipment for demonstrating forces. Pupils have swimming lessons in the leisure centre. Local businesses are generous with donations for prizes and a major company sponsors a

personal safety session for older pupils. The school is often featured in the local press and the choir and orchestra are frequently invited to perform in the community. Such links do much to develop pupils' self-esteem and to enhance and widen their learning and experience.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. However, there are serious weaknesses in the effectiveness of senior management support for the head. The head and the governors have made many improvements over the last three years but they have also faced some challenging tasks that have slowed the pace of change and prevented the improvements from raising standards and achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head and governors have a clear vision for the school and work hard to engender its positive Catholic ethos.
- The head has made many improvements since taking over but these have not yet impacted on standards and achievement.
- Senior management is not effective enough in supporting the head.
- Leadership and management in mathematics and science are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

38. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are very hardworking and committed and have established a good committee system to ensure they work efficiently. They work closely with the head to establish and maintain the Catholic ethos of the school that underpins all that it does. The governors and the head have addressed the criticisms of the last report on the systems for financial planning that were judged to be unsatisfactory at that time. Since then they have put good financial planning systems in place and taken steps to ensure that day-to-day financial management is also good. They have recovered from a deficit budget and they ensure that all funds for designated purposes are used appropriately. They have also worked closely with the head to attract funds to refurbish and redecorate the building. They have a clear understanding of the need to obtain the best value for their funds and have systems to ensure this happens. They also appreciate that value for money is judged by the impact of a particular spending decision on standards and achievement. Governors understand the information supplied to schools on standards in the national tests at Year 2 and Year 6 and have identified writing and the achievement of more able pupils as priorities for improvement. They are fully involved in developing the school improvement plan. They are aware of the weaknesses with senior management and have worked with the head to provide a lot of support to try to address them. The governors try to ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties but they have not included all the required information in their annual report to parents and in the school prospectus.
39. Leadership is satisfactory overall. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school and provides satisfactory leadership. Her vision of Our Lady's as a good Catholic school with high standards is clear. However, circumstances have prevented her from turning this vision into reality in the three years she has been head teacher. These include:
- Weaknesses in the effectiveness of the senior management team
 - The loss of high quality senior staff to promoted posts elsewhere
 - The difficulties in attracting new staff to the school
 - Long term staff absence necessitating temporary replacements
 - Funding that is below average
 - Having to deal firmly with unsatisfactory teaching.

These have been real barriers to school improvement.

40. In the three years that she has been the head she has achieved much. There is better office accommodation that has improved the efficiency of the school and placed reception staff by the entrance, to welcome visitors as they arrive. The school now has good accommodation for the Foundation Stage. The headteacher has made some good teaching appointments so that provision is good for the Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 4 and they achieve well. She has worked closely with the local education authority on the Intensive Support Programme to develop assessment and tracking systems to check how well pupils are doing each year, although these have not been in place long enough to have impacted on standards and achievement yet. However, all this hard work has not prevented standards attained by the pupils from declining in recent years.
41. Management is unsatisfactory because there are serious weaknesses in the effectiveness of the senior management team. This results in the headteacher having ineffective senior management support and having to do too many management tasks herself. Co-ordination of mathematics is unsatisfactory, leading to unsatisfactory provision and declining standards and achievement. There has been no co-ordinator for science since the previous one left for promotion, and the senior staff with oversight of the subject have not provided satisfactory leadership and management, so that standards have continued to fall at Year 6. The headteacher, with the support of the governors, has effectively managed some difficult situations over the last three years. For example, she has not shirked from making hard decisions and taking decisive action over weak teaching. She has managed the various building projects that have led to improved accommodation. She has worked with governors to ensure the budget balances. She has improved greatly the parents' perceptions of the school and established the school as central to the parish community. The school improvement plan is a comprehensive and detailed document outlining key priorities with measurable targets for improving pupils' attainment. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The relatively new special needs co-ordinator meets with staff on a regular basis to discuss provision and give support with writing individual action plans. She organises training, liaises with outside agencies and assesses pupils.
42. However, the systems for checking the quality of teaching describe what the teacher does rather than evaluating how well the pupils learn as a result of that teaching. Consequently, they are not yet rigorous enough to be wholly effective in raising the quality of teaching and learning. The procedures for supporting newly qualified teachers have not been effective enough to ensure that teaching is consistently satisfactory or better. School self-evaluation has been optimistic rather than accurate in some areas and the head has recognised that she has focused rather more on effort than on the effectiveness of that effort on raising standards. Performance management has been satisfactorily introduced and has helped the school to identify some of the issues identified during this inspection. Day-to-day management is efficient and effective with the office and premises staff making a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school on a daily basis. Given the below average funding, the fact that most pupils achieve satisfactorily and what the school has achieved in terms of laying the foundations for improved standards, it is judged to provide satisfactory value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	466,584
Total expenditure	452,064
Expenditure per pupil	2,122

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	12,906
Balance carried forward to the next	27,426

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**. Children are taught well and as a result achieve well with their learning. They settle in quickly and work from interesting, relevant and challenging learning activities, well matched to their needs. This is an improvement from the previous inspection where provision was satisfactory. Children enter reception with broadly average skills. By the time they leave reception, most children exceed their early learning goals and are above average. Admission arrangements are effective and ensure children settle easily. Parents make a good contribution to children's learning at home. The teacher has high expectations of children's behaviour and learning. She uses attractive resources to stimulate children's learning through a range of practical experiences. The learning support staff is an invaluable asset. They work well with small groups of children. Provision for children who have special needs is good. They are well integrated in lessons and also benefit from a tailored programme of activities in the quiet *Rainbow Room*. As a result they achieve well with their learning. The management of the Foundation Stage is good. The co-ordinator has used effectively her first year in the school to establish a good working relationship with the Foundation Stage team. The accommodation is good with a good range of resources. The outside area is used appropriately, but there is no large fixed climbing frame for children to use.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are focused on promoting children's confidence and independence.
- The support staff help to create a positive and secure climate for learning.

Commentary

43. Teaching and learning are good and as a result children achieve well in their social skills. By the time they leave reception, most children exceed the expected goals and their skills are above average.
44. Organised visits for children with their parents are effective in helping new children feel safe and confident. Staff establish secure routines. All staff are very caring and use every opportunity to praise children's independence. As a result, children work successfully both alone and in small groups. They are able to work unsupervised for extended periods of time. They are confident to try new things.
45. All adults encourage the development of children's social skills in a variety of ways. For example, children are encouraged to take turns, share equipment and take responsibility for any equipment they use. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. Children understand the reward system. When children do not do as expected they are dealt with firmly and fairly. Most children respond well to this and their behaviour and attitudes to school are good. Children who have particular special needs are well integrated and receive good support. Children enjoy school. They are well prepared for joining the next class. They have established good working practices in preparation for more formal work patterns.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching develops children's skills through an interesting curriculum and they make good gains in their learning.
- Very able children achieve highly with their reading skills.

Commentary

46. Teaching is good and as a result most children make good progress in their learning and achieve well. There is a sustained focus on developing children's early reading and writing skills. By the end of reception, most pupils exceed the expected goals in reading and writing, and their skills are above average. Most have good listening skills and satisfactory speaking skills.
47. Staff provide many informal opportunities for children to talk and to explain what they are doing. Reception children are encouraged to listen well. The activities are organised so that they have good opportunities to talk about what they are learning. For example, time was given for children to sequence a story they had read, using practical equipment. The imaginative play area, currently based on a *Journey under the Blue Sea*, is used well to encourage talk that is meaningful and relevant. Staff encourage less confident children to talk in sentences and more fluent communicators to extend their vocabulary.
48. Reading is given a high priority. The teacher consistently establishes good reading habits. Children know how to handle books with care. Daily activities include reinforcement of initial sounds and reading simple words. Most children recognise many simple words and use their knowledge of sounds to help them with their reading. Good use is made of rhymes and actions to help children remember each letter and sound of the alphabet. Very able children are particularly well catered for and read to a high standard. Staff encourage an enjoyment of books through regularly using good quality story and information books. Stories such as *Mr Grumpy's Outing* are told in an interesting and appealing way to capture children's interest and enthusiasm. An attractive seating area provides opportunities for children to browse and share books.
49. Daily opportunities are provided for children to write for a range of purposes. Children are encouraged to record ideas. The staff value their efforts to write. Though most reception children form their letters correctly a few reverse their letters and have difficulty recording their ideas on paper. More able children are well extended and use their knowledge of words and sounds to record their ideas.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are focused on developing children's skills through a practical curriculum.
- There is a good balance between structured activities and learning through play and informal experiences.

Commentary

50. Teaching is good and as a result most children make good progress in their learning and achieve well. By the end of reception, most pupils exceed the expected goals and their skills are above average.
51. Staff take every opportunity to reinforce and extend children's mathematical skills. For example, children take an active role in counting numbers daily. Number awareness is promoted through counting games and familiar number rhymes, which the children really enjoy. Children have daily opportunities to use sand and water. A strength is the focus on practical mathematical activities, as part of their topic work, to make their learning relevant and fun. For example, children learned to order numbers and use language of position such as before, behind and on top, while playing mathematical fish games. Children squealed with delight as they handled big dice having made a board game based on a football match. As a result of these interesting activities children show real interest and pleasure, and work for long periods. Although staff provide many opportunities to use mathematical language a few children find it difficult to explain what they are doing. There is a good balance between structured learning, informal exploration and recording of work. A few children have difficulty recording their work and reverse some of their numbers. This is not always corrected.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

52. *No judgements about overall provision, teaching and learning, standards and achievement are made in this area of learning, because not enough lessons were seen.*
53. Reception children develop their understanding and build up a picture of the world through a wide range of interesting activities. Topics are changed weekly and focus on particular scientific and geographical skills. For example, the current theme of *On and Under the Water*, provides good opportunities for scientific investigations. Local trips, and shape and sound walks, provide first hand experiences. Good use is made of an interest table for each topic, with children encouraged to bring items from home to share. Staff extend children's knowledge of different cultures through books and toys. Computer skills are appropriately taught with a range of programmes in daily use. As a result, boys and girls have positive attitudes and use computers confidently.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

54. *No judgements about overall provision, teaching and learning, standards and achievement are made in this area of learning, because not enough lessons were seen.*
55. Planning shows that children have regular sessions in the hall to help them develop their physical skills and to learn to respond to music. The reception class has a good sized outside area and daily opportunities to use a range of small games equipment and three-wheeled vehicles. However, there is no large fixed climbing equipment. Children have good manipulative skills. They are provided with regular opportunities to handle dough, scissors and small construction equipment.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for children to develop their creativity.
- Teaching is good and as a result most children make good progress in their learning and achieve well.

Commentary

56. By the end of reception, most pupils exceed the expected goals and their skills are above average. There are daily opportunities for children to develop their creativity and skills. There is access to a good range of materials, with many planned opportunities to paint, draw and make models. As a result, children handle scissors and paint brushes confidently, enjoy being creative and produce pleasing results. The attractive classroom is filled with lovely examples of children's artistic work. Children have many opportunities to learn nursery rhymes, sing songs, listen to music tapes and act out simple stories. They join in well and with real enthusiasm in the weekly Infant singing session. A strength is the extensive range of imaginative play experiences, matched to every topic. Children show real pleasure and confidence as they use the imaginative area linked to a recent visit to the *Sea Life Centre*.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in reading, average in speaking and listening and well below average in writing by Year 6.
- Not all classes provide sufficient time for pupils to write extended pieces of work.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but inconsistent across the school, with examples of good and unsatisfactory teaching observed.
- Marking is helpful. Pupils know their targets and understand what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

57. Achievement is satisfactory overall, though writing is a weakness. Standards at the time of the last inspection were judged average and this position has been maintained, although over recent years standards have been above average in the national tests at Year 6. Standards in the tests at Year 2 have generally been above average but currently they are average.
58. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average across the school and above average in Year 1. Most pupils make satisfactory progress and achievement with their learning. The Year 1 and 2 classes have imaginative areas where children enjoy informal opportunities to talk. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 answer questions in sentences and use correct subject vocabulary. By Year 6 most are confident communicators and express their ideas fluently. There are timetabled sessions for pupils to talk together and discuss their ideas. Year 6 pupils are very enthusiastic about their participation in the end of year annual play. In some classes good use is made of 'talk partners' and group discussion but this is not consistent throughout the school.
59. Pupils' reading skills are above average at Year 6. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning. In Year 2, standards are average. Pupils have sound strategies to work out unfamiliar words. In Years 3 to 6, most pupils' skills are at least average with many above average. By Year 6, most pupils are confident, fluent readers, with a significant number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5. The school has put in place a number of successful strategies to improve standards in reading. For example, a review of the guided reading session has led to a sharper focus on the comprehension and reading skills of different ability groups.
60. The school has improved the range of books available. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of fiction, information books and books that reflect other cultures. Care is taken to include books that appeal equally to boys and girls. Although the school no longer has a dedicated library, all classes have attractive reading corners. Discussion with Year 6 pupils shows that both boys

and girls are interested in reading. Parents and carers support the school well by hearing their children read and helping them practise their spelling.

61. Pupils' writing skills are well below average by Years 2 and 6. Not enough pupils reach the national average and few pupils attain the higher levels. Standards in writing remain an area for continued development and this has been included in the school improvement plan. There is a clear focus on basic skills such as spelling, handwriting and grammar. Teachers provide a satisfactory range of writing opportunities. Pupils have regular opportunities to write their own poetry. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, a good range of humorous poems was used well to help pupils develop their rhyming skills and to experiment with vocabulary. Additional time has been allocated for pupils to write extended and imaginative pieces but this is not consistent across the school and some older pupils need more planned opportunities to write at length and develop their skills. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their work, which is usually neat. However, a small number of pupils do not take enough care with their presentation. The new marking system is effective and helps pupils to have a clear understanding of what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils know their targets, which are written in language that children understand. While many pupils now make satisfactory progress, in some lessons the work set is not hard enough for the more able pupils, who could achieve more. Consequently the numbers of pupils reaching the higher than expected levels for their ages remain low.
62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but inconsistent between classes and between reading and writing. Examples of good teaching were seen in Years 1 and 4. In these successful lessons teachers used questions effectively and had high expectations of the pace and quality of pupils' work. In other lessons, the pace was steady rather than brisk. In the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, the pace was too slow and the pitch of the work was not demanding enough for more able pupils. As a result too little learning took place, particularly for more able pupils. The teaching of writing is particularly effective in Year 1 because the pupils are taught in ability groups and have regular extended time for imaginative writing. Consequently the quality and amount of independent writing is impressive for all the different ability groups.
63. Teaching of pupils identified on the special educational needs register is satisfactory. When they have targeted support by the learning support assistants and school's special needs co-ordinator, they make good progress and achieve well. The school has benefited from local authority support with a focus on raising standards in reading and writing.
64. The leadership and management of English are satisfactory. The relatively new subject co-ordinator monitors work and planning and has produced an effective action plan for improving standards in writing particularly for boys. Termly writing assessments across the school are moderated. However, she has not yet had the opportunity to observe lessons in order to identify and build on the best teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. There are satisfactory opportunities to use language and literacy skills in most year groups. However, in Year 6 science, there is limited recording of work and incorrect spellings of subject vocabulary are not always corrected. Pupils generally have satisfactory opportunities to talk in small groups and share their ideas. Some opportunities are missed for pupils to explain their thinking at the end of mathematics lessons. Pupils practise their writing in word processing lessons in ICT.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching gives pupils a good grounding in number and its application to money and measures.
- Learning places too little emphasis on data-handling and investigation so that pupils under-achieve in these areas.
- Improvements in provision are not raising standards.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

66. Pupils in Year 2 attain below average standards. This represents unsatisfactory achievement. This is because there is too little work with investigations. Consequently, while they make simple bar charts, they do not sort data in different ways. Moreover, they do not select their own methods to solve problems. The more able neither interpret information nor organise their own work and check the results. However, pupils work confidently with addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers to 100. They also double numbers and multiply by units. They recognise and construct symmetrical and non-symmetrical shapes and work with right angles.
67. Pupils in Year 6 attain below average standards, and therefore also under-achieve. They do not use a variety of ways to sort data. For example, they rarely refer to the median, mean or mode or construct graphs with two variables. Pupils do not face open-ended investigations, choosing their own strategies and methods of recording conclusions. Nevertheless, they find equivalents using decimals, fractions and percentages and calculate volumes. Pupils recognise and construct acute, obtuse and reflex angles. The more able do not progress any further because teachers do not plan more advanced work for them.
68. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils under-achieved in one in four lessons seen. The other lessons varied from satisfactory to very good. The better lessons included lively pace, clear explanation, a variety of methods, and in-depth work with pupils of different abilities. In a Year 3 lesson about right angles and compass points, for example, the main session was preceded by a fast moving game about place value which pupils thoroughly enjoyed. After listening attentively to the new ideas, pupils divided into groups and applied themselves independently to a variety of tasks. The teacher ensured that all pupils took part in the lesson by targeting those who were reluctant to answer questions and by giving pupils the challenge or support they needed. Where teaching is weaker, expectations are too low, both of thinking and of behaviour. As the work is not hard enough to engage all the pupils their behaviour deteriorates and too little learning is achieved. Teaching assistants are attentive to pupils and provide good support to those with special educational needs. This happens not only in group work, but also through quiet discussion during whole class sessions.
69. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and focus too little on the fact that provision is not effective in raising standards. There are good systems for assessing pupils' learning, but teachers do not use what is gained from them effectively enough yet when planning. Moreover, teachers do not challenge the more able by planning more advanced work for them. The co-ordinator does not pick this up because she does not monitor teaching and learning enough.
70. Unsatisfactory provision has resulted in unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the subject being a serious weakness.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects, including ICT. Whilst there are examples, they are not typical of the school's provision.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at Year 6 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Standards at Year 2 are below average and achievement has been unsatisfactory but is now improving.
- Standards in Years 3 to 5 are largely average and achievement is satisfactory.
- Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

72. Pupils in most classes achieve satisfactorily. However, pupils at Year 2 have not made satisfactory progress this year due largely to the disruption caused by the long term absence of their regular teacher. Since her return, achievement and progress have improved but standards remain below average. Achievement at Year 6 is unsatisfactory and the pupils' books show insufficient work. Standards are below average. Year 6 pupils enjoy some science lessons at a neighbouring secondary school where they undertake investigations and practical experiments that they enjoy. Their books show, however, that lessons in school focus more on gaining factual knowledge than acquiring scientific skills. The work in pupils' books in Years 3 to 5 shows broadly satisfactory achievement and average standards.
73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall though one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. In this case the pupils spent too long on a low level task, cutting out pictures and sticking them onto another sheet, instead of pursuing their investigations into how various instruments make sounds. In a good lesson in Year 4 pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning about force meters because the teacher provided a range of different ones, gave pupils time to explore them and set a range of tasks for the different ability groups within the class. Consequently pupils learned about the use of scales and the need to choose the most appropriate meter for the task. The most able pupils had to predict how many metal nuts they would need for one Newton, measure accurately, record their findings and use them to hypothesise how many nuts would equal two Newtons and so on, while lower attaining pupils simply measured given articles as accurately as they could. However, there is little evidence in pupils' books of different tasks being set in other classes according to what pupils have learned previously. There is also little in the marking to tell pupils what is good about their work and how to make it better. Pupils at Year 5 seem to have completed considerably more work than those in Year 6.
74. There is currently no co-ordinator for science as the previous one left for promotion and the school has not been able to attract a replacement yet. The subject has been overseen by senior management but this has been unsatisfactory. Checking the quality of teaching and learning has lacked rigour and not picked up the lack of work in Year 6. The school has produced a comprehensive action plan to tackle the matter and to raise achievement and attainment in science and this includes very clear measurable targets for improving standards. At the time of the inspection the school had identified a potential science co-ordinator and making progress on this was a priority.

75. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory because standards at Year 6 have declined, leadership is currently unsatisfactory and for much of this year pupils at Year 2 and Year 6 have not achieved as well as they might, though pupils in other classes have achieved satisfactorily.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and assistants use their strong subject knowledge and the school's good resources to meet pupils' needs.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment is effective in providing information for both planning lessons and improving provision.
- The co-ordinator uses effective self-evaluation to make improvements to the curriculum.
- Teachers do not take into account the previous knowledge and skills gained at home, so that they do not challenge more capable pupils.

Commentary

76. Pupils in Year 2 attain standards in line with national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement. They record some of their stories and poems using different fonts. They graph monthly frequencies of birthdays and program moving 'robots' to follow specific routes. Pupils use CD-ROMS to access information. More capable pupils do not develop enough independence to use ICT for their own purposes. Pupils in Year 6 attain standards in line with national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils use the Internet to gain information for other subjects such as history, and create multi-media presentations. They make toy fairground rides and design the means to control them.
77. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons range from being satisfactory to very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and put across new skills effectively. However, planning does not make best use of the knowledge and expertise pupils gain from frequent use of home computers. Consequently, all pupils work at the same level and progress at the same rate. This means that most teachers neither stretch more capable pupils nor meet the needs of those who find ICT difficult. Pupils with special educational needs often achieve well in this subject without support. Very good teaching in a lesson for Year 5 ensured that all pupils progressed well and that they were constantly challenged with increasingly difficult tasks. More capable pupils developed their independent learning through extension activities on spreadsheets.
78. The co-ordinator uses her strong expertise to lead and manage the subject well. She has a good action plan, which includes making further improvements to the school's resources, more direct monitoring of teaching and in-service training, all of which should benefit pupils' learning. The co-ordinator is in the process of making a thorough evaluation of the school's provision. She has also ensured that teachers use the school's effective system for monitoring pupils' progress. She aims to rectify the current situation where the school does not possess the software either to cover all aspects of control or to extend more capable pupils.
79. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' attainment in Year 2 was below the national expectation. This is due to improved teaching and much better resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. ICT makes a good contribution to the school's curriculum. Work with spreadsheets supports graph work in mathematics. Pupils use a variety of fonts and pictures to record and illustrate their stories and poems and write letters for e-mailing. They use the Internet both to access information and to use photographs and data to support their work in history and geography. Pupils use programs which enable them to be creative in art and to be imaginative in designing leaflets, as in Year 5.

HUMANITIES

81. *Too little evidence was gained during the inspection to make secure judgements about provision in these subjects, as they were not foci for inspection. However, the co-ordinators and a representative number of pupils were interviewed and a scrutiny made of written work. Only one lesson was seen in geography and none in history. Religious education was not inspected as this is the responsibility of the governors.*
82. In **geography**, pupils in Year 2 are aware of the various natural and man-made features of their environment. However, they do not express and explain their likes and dislikes about Dartford. They are not aware of the effects of different types of weather on people's lives and are not secure about using maps. Pupils carry out in-depth studies in Year 6, such as about the causes and effects of erosion, which raise their standards of attainment. In **history**, pupils in Year 2 are only beginning to compare life in the past and now, and much of their work is factual, rather than the result of thinking about the past. Pupils in Year 6 have little knowledge of the chronology of the eras they have studied. They make few connections between events, their causes, and their effects. They compare aspects of life, such as changes in fashion, at a simple level, but find it difficult to identify different sources of historical evidence. The co-ordinators' priorities for action concentrate on provision and not on ways to raise standards, and arrangements for assessment of pupils' progress are inadequate.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

83. *Only one lesson was seen in music and two in physical education. No lessons were seen in art or design and technology. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgment about provision in these subjects.*
84. In **art and design** the work seen indicates broadly average standards at Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils use a range of materials and equipment, although little three-dimensional work was seen. Pupils look at the work of famous artists and try to work in similar styles, like the pictures in the style of Monet. However, sometimes this work is inaccurate, as in the case of some work in the style of Mondrian which featured patterns of triangles. This suggests that management of the subject, while broadly satisfactory, does not include rigorous enough checking of the quality of teaching and learning.
85. In **design and technology** too little evidence was seen to make secure judgments although pupils talked with enthusiasm about their past work, when they designed shelters, card cars and hats for special occasions. In Year 4 pupils designed and made books with moving parts which were of a good standard and in Year 5 pupils had studied biscuits prior to designing and making their own. Management of the subject is satisfactory.
86. In **music**, pupils were observed in Year 1 only, although the whole school was heard singing both in assemblies and in singing sessions. It is clear from the extent of music-making activities that music is highly valued throughout the school. Singing is above expectations in Years 1 and 2 and well above expectations in Years 3 to 6. The examples of music making activities from tapes of school productions also indicate good standards. Infants sing expressively and with enthusiasm. Juniors sing tunefully, with very good awareness of breathing, diction and dynamics and obviously enjoy singing. The rendition of *Moon River* by

the choir was excellent. There are many opportunities for pupils to perform in public, including performing on national television. The school takes care to ensure all pupils are included in music making activities. In the Year 1 lesson observed, teaching was good and standards above average, with good learning taking place. Leadership of the subject is very good. The music co-ordinator is a music specialist. She organises many enrichment events, including the choir, orchestra and recorder tuition. She has high expectations and generates a real sense of fun and enjoyment. Pupils also have external tuition in a range of instruments. All these musical experiences highly enhance pupils' social and cultural experiences. The positive picture has been maintained since the previous inspection. Resources are good.

87. In **physical education**, planning and discussions with teachers and pupils show that all strands of the subject, including outdoor and adventurous activities, are regularly taught. This is the same picture as at the time of the previous inspection. Two lessons were observed, (in Years 2 and 5). One was satisfactory and one was good. Standards were average in both and pupils were enthusiastic. The learning support assistant was used well to support a child with special needs and as a result the pupil was fully included and made good progress with learning. The numbers of pupils who attain 25 metres in swimming is above expectation. Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social development. There are netball, football and badminton clubs and good opportunities for older pupils to take part in inter-school competitions. There is a good partnership with a local secondary school for dance workshops. Accommodation and resources are good. There is a good size hall and a large stage for dance events. Many pupils identify physical education as one of their favourite subjects. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator organizes a range of enrichment activities but does not have the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning. The co-ordinator is currently in the process of applying for an Active Mark Award for the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

88. *No lessons were seen in PSHE and the subject was sampled.*
89. PSHE is integral to the curriculum and to the life of the school. The headteacher and all the staff have established a caring community where every pupil is valued. Assemblies place great emphasis on pupils taking personal responsibility for their actions in the various social contexts in which they find themselves. Many pupils develop their sense of personal responsibility further by undertaking duties around the school and are proud of what they do. Teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to develop socially through working in pairs and in groups in different subjects. Subjects such as ICT promote pupils' independence well. However, the school has not yet completed a written policy so that there is not a consistent approach to PSHE. Education about matters relating to health, including smoking, drugs and alcohol, is part of pupils' work in science. Governors have approved the school policy for sex education.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The effectiveness of management

5

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