

INSPECTION REPORT

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106461

Headteacher: Mr A Poskitt

Lead inspector: Mr C Smith

Dates of inspection: 17th - 19th May 2004

Inspection number: 257384

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	453
School address:	Springfield Road Beech Hill Wigan Lancashire
Postcode:	WN6 7RH
Telephone number:	01942 231478
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Lucas
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is a large primary school catering for 453 pupils (241 boys and 184 girls) aged 4 to 11 years. The school has a nursery attached with 57 children attending part-time. The school takes children from a mixed community. Approximately 60 per cent of the children live in private houses and 40 per cent in rented accommodation. Eleven per cent of the children are eligible for free school meals, which is within the average range. Thirty-seven children (nine per cent) have special educational needs, of which six have statements. These figures are lower than average. Pupils' special needs are largely related to learning difficulties and a small number experience emotional, speech or physical difficulties. Most children are white and all are English speaking. However, the school also caters for a small number of children with mixed backgrounds. Pupil numbers have been stable over recent years and the movement of families in and out of the area has been low. The school has achieved 'Healthy' and 'ECO' school status for promoting healthy lifestyles and environmental awareness. There have been very few changes in staffing during the last two years but a new headteacher was appointed in September 2003. Children enter the school with a wide range of levels of attainment but, for the majority, it is typical for their age.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25211	Colin Smith	Lead inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education
9952	Lillian Brock	Lay inspector	
17685	Jeni Boothman	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage History Geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is fairly effective and provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are broadly at the levels expected. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and good in the Foundation Stage. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving with the recent change of headteacher.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching, learning and children's achievements are good in the nursery and reception classes;
- Achievement is inconsistent because pupils' different learning needs are not always fully met;
- Pupils achieve well in music and physical education and very well in information and communication technology (ICT);
- Pupils' investigation skills and creativity are weaker than their knowledge and understanding.

Satisfactory improvements have been made since in the last inspection, largely because of the recent injection of rigour and drive. Standards, teaching and learning have kept pace with national improvements. However, some of the previous inspection issues are only just receiving attention. Assessment procedures have improved, but there is still more to do to make full use of the information when lessons are planned. Inconsistencies have crept into teaching and learning because in the past, no one has taken sufficient responsibility for checking the work of the school. Senior staff now exert more control but subject leaders are still not sufficiently involved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	C	A	B
mathematics	B	B	A	C
science	B	B	C	E

*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.*

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Nursery and reception children are now achieving well and exceeding the levels expected in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their personal, social, mathematical, creative and physical development. They achieve steadily in literacy and language to reach the levels expected. Infant pupils make satisfactory progress, although they achieve better in Year 2. Declining standards in English and mathematics in Year 2 have rightly been the focus of attention. Positive action has lifted standards from the below average levels of 2003. Year 2 pupils are currently reaching average standards in reading and writing and above average standards in mathematics. Standards in Year 6 have risen well over recent years. The chart above suggests that pupils have not made enough progress in science since they were in Year 2. However, weaknesses in assessments made some years ago led to teachers over estimating the levels pupil had reached in science. Year groups vary considerably. The current Year 6 pupils (and Year 5) are achieving average standards in English, mathematics and science. In English and mathematics, pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve satisfactorily overall but their progress is uneven. On balance, pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding but their investigative skills and creativity in writing do not progress quickly enough. Pupils achieve very well in ICT and reach high standards because their ICT skills are used widely in the learning of other subjects.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attendance is good, pupils behave well and are eager to learn. They have responded positively to additional responsibilities to look after and represent other pupils. However, their independence in learning is still not as good as it could be.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is sound and teaching is satisfactory.

Teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes although there is scope to increase the challenge in children's individual reading. In Years 1 to 6, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The atmosphere for learning, in almost all lessons, is relaxed and purposeful. Resources, such as ICT, are used effectively to enable pupils to understand new ideas. However, in a third of the classes, teaching methods are too narrow and pupils do not have enough opportunities to investigate or to express their ideas and feelings in writing. In the best lessons, teachers use assessments well to provide work suited to pupils' different learning needs and good support is provided, particularly for pupils who find learning difficult. However, there are occasions when the more and less able pupils do not receive work at precisely the right level and their learning suffers. Pupils' learning of music and physical education is enriched through the good range of extra-curricular activities and some specialist teaching. Strong teaching of ICT boosts learning in several subjects.

Pupils are well cared for and their health and safety are paramount. They are given good personal support and a satisfactory start has been made in gathering and acting upon their views. Improved assessment procedures mean that teachers now have a good understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. However, targets for improvement are not always clearly communicated, particularly in the marking of their work. Consequently, pupils are not always sure of the way forward.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Governance is also satisfactory. Governors have successfully guided the school through a difficult period, which has left them stronger and much more involved in planning and decision making. All statutory requirements are fully met. The new headteacher has identified accurately where improvements are most needed and provided a coherent plan of action. Its effects are already evident in the improving standards in Year 2. A strong leadership team is emerging, intent on rigorous self-evaluation and eager to drive up standards. In the past, subject leaders have played only a minor part in developing and improving their subjects. Their awareness is growing but there is still more work to be done to ensure that subject leaders have a positive influence on teaching, learning and standards.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are satisfied with the education provided for their children and appreciate the openness that has accompanied the changing leadership. Most pupils have positive views about the school. Their involvement is increasing through projects such as the school's council.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that pupils' different learning needs are fully catered for in all lessons;
- Improve pupils' investigative skills in mathematics and science, and develop their creativity in writing;
- Ensure that subject leaders check the quality of teaching and learning and become instrumental in raising standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and good in the Foundation Stage. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are broadly at the levels expected in Years 2 and 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in the nursery and reception classes;
- Standards in Year 2 are beginning to improve;
- Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6, although satisfactory, is inconsistent;
- Pupils' creativity in writing and their enquiry skills are not developing quickly enough;
- Pupils achieve well in music and physical education and very well in ICT.

Commentary

1. Children in the nursery and reception classes make good gains in almost all areas of learning. By the end of the reception year, they achieve levels beyond those expected in their personal and social, mathematical, creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children enjoy reading and talking about books. However, by the end of the reception year the levels they achieve in literacy and language are typical for their age, rather than higher.
2. Downward trends in the national tests for Year 2 pupils and the low levels achieved in 2003 were identified immediately as areas to improve by the new leadership team. Effective strategies were introduced to raise standards. Raising teachers' expectations, grouping pupils into ability sets and providing support for those who had fallen behind, has had a positive impact on achievement. Although not yet moderated against national results, the school's results for 2004 show a 15 per cent improvement. Standards in Year 2 are currently average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory and the concerns have been largely alleviated. There is still more to do, however, to raise achievement in Year 1 by tailoring the work more closely to pupils' different learning needs and setting challenging work for all of them.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.4 (16.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.7 (14.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.1 (14.7)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 62 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	29.0 (27.6)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.5 (27.6)	26.8 (26.7)

science	29.3 (29.3)	28.6 (28.3)
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There were 57 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Results achieved by 11-year-olds have been improving and increased significantly in 2003 to well above average levels in English and mathematics. The rise was partly attributable to an unusually capable group of pupils. Standards in science fell slightly because boosting their knowledge and understanding prior to the national tests was discontinued in favour of more attention being given to English and mathematics. The current Year 6 pupils are reaching average standards, as are those in Year 5. Overall, achievement in the junior classes is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is now measured accurately. Consequently, teachers can track pupils' progress and use the information profitably to set challenging and achievable targets. Pupils whose performance falters are quickly identified. Those with special educational needs benefit from the good support in withdrawal groups, although their needs are not always sufficiently recognised by class teachers. Consequently, they make satisfactory rather than good progress. More able and gifted and talented pupils are gradually receiving more recognition. Talented pupils make very good progress in music and physical education. More able pupils generally achieve well in mathematics, where they are taught in ability sets. However, in other subjects such as English and science, the more able pupils do not fulfil their potential in a minority of classes. These inconsistencies arise because teachers do not make full use of the assessment information available to provide work of a consistently high level of challenge. Girls and boys are now making similar progress.
4. Most pupils become fluent readers and writers and acquire good skills of mathematical calculation. These key skills are taught regularly, conscientiously and effectively and often reinforced well through homework assignments. However, pupils are neither as confident or proficient when asked to use and apply their skills in unfamiliar situations. For example, in mathematics, although pupils are confident using operations such as subtracting and multiplying, they are often unsure which operation to use to solve a mathematical problem. Similarly, although pupils do not have any technical problems in writing, they seldom write with flair and imagination. In science, pupils have a good understanding of living things, materials and forces; however, they are far more hesitant when asked to plan and carry out their own scientific enquiry. Pupils' skills of enquiry, investigation and problem solving and their capacity to write creatively develop well in some classes, but not in all. Some teachers do not place enough importance on pupils finding out for themselves and therefore do not provide enough activities designed to enable them to learn independently.
5. A combination of good teaching and extra-curricular activities ensures that pupils continue to achieve well in music and physical education. In both of these subjects, standards are above the levels expected and high standards are achieved in singing and instrumental work. Pupils' achievement in ICT is very good. Although standards are typical in Year 2, they are high by the time pupils reach Year 6. Very good teaching of ICT skills in the computer suite coupled with frequent opportunities to use ICT in the learning of other subjects, are at the heart of pupils' accelerating progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance, attitudes and behaviour are good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and pupils' respond well to encouragement to support others.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance and punctuality are good;
- Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are good;
- Pupils' independent learning and their appreciation of cultural diversity could be better;
- Pupils are interested in school life and relationships between them are good;

- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in their personal and social development.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.4	School data	0.5
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.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	356	4	0
White – Irish	5	0	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Black or black British – African	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
Preferred not to say	2	0	0

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

- Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good. Pupils move purposefully between lessons and no time is lost for learning. The personal development of children in the Foundation Years is good and they behave very well.
- Pupils arriving at school display pleasant and positive attitudes, which are sustained throughout the day. Most pupils show self-discipline and tolerance and behave well both at work and at play. For example, Year 5 pupils showed maturity in carrying out a traffic survey in the locality. There is no evidence of regular bullying or any other form of harassment. Pupils confirm that the rare incidents of unkind behaviour are dealt with promptly and sensitively.
- Relationships are good and pupils are happy to be in school. Pupils of all ages show a willingness to work together to solve problems. For example, Year 4 pupils worked together well in the ICT suite to create a tree diagram to help them to identify objects. Teachers and classroom assistants make pupils feel important and special by listening to them and taking notice of what they say. As a result, their self-esteem and confidence increases. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all that the school provides and are usually well supported.
- Pupils take their duties seriously. Pupil 'play leaders' make good 'teachers' in helping younger children to play games and resolving any disagreements. The school council is at an early stage of development, but its members are taking the ideas of their classmates to the meetings for consideration. The 'ECO' initiative is giving pupils a sense of pride in the school and enhancing their personal development. The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good and their cultural development is satisfactory. There has been

some improvement since the last inspection in raising pupils' awareness of other faiths and beliefs and racial equality is effectively promoted. However, there is still more to do to raise pupils' awareness of cultural diversity within our own society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The education provided is satisfactory overall. Children in the Foundation Stage receive a good education and infant and junior pupils benefit from very successful learning experiences in ICT, music and physical education. However, pupils from Year 1 to 6 do not have enough opportunities to discover and learn for themselves.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The procedures for assessing pupils' learning are satisfactory, though information is not used sufficiently to cater for their different learning needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the nursery and reception classes enables children to learn successfully;
- The work provided does not always match pupils' different learning needs;
- Teachers manage pupils well and have good expertise in ICT, music and physical education;
- Pupils' capacity to learn independently is not sufficiently encouraged.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 67 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	9 (13)	22 (33)	33 (49)	3 (5)	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.

10. Strong teaching in the nursery has continued since the last inspection. This has now been built on well with good teaching in the reception classes. Interesting and well organised activities are provided, which stimulate children's curiosity and encourage them to express their ideas creatively. Consequently, their physical and creative skills develop at a good rate, along with their increasing knowledge and understanding of the world. Effective use is made of assessing children's responses and progress to ensure that the activities provided are closely matched to their different learning needs. Teachers intervene well when children are actively exploring. Encouragement to talk significantly improves their speaking and listening skills. Mathematical skills are taught well, often through games, whereby children learn effectively to count and order numbers and shapes. The teaching of literacy and language skills is satisfactory. When reading, children are encouraged to predict events and look for patterns in words and letters. However, there is scope to increase the level of challenge in their individual reading.
11. The use of assessment to identify how successfully pupils are learning is improving and their learning is assessed carefully at the end of each school year. Outcomes are carefully analysed and collective weaknesses are identified. From this, pupils are grouped according to their levels of attainment and those requiring additional support receive good quality help in small groups. The headteacher and senior staff have rightly identified the need to improve assessment further. Currently, there are too many inconsistencies in the way teachers use the assessment information available. For example, in two thirds of the classes, the marking of pupils' completed work is good because teachers provide targets or pointers for improvement. In other classes, although pupils work is marked thoroughly, they are left

unsure of what they need to do to improve. Similarly, most, but not all, teachers adapt their plans in response to how pupils have responded in the previous lesson. However, there is more to do to ensure that the learning needs of the more and less able pupils are fully taken into account in all classes, when they are given assignments to complete.

12. In almost all classes, relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Discipline is firm and fair and pupils are encouraged to try hard in give of their best, which they usually do. Just occasionally, pupils are not sensitively handled when they chatter instead of listening. Consequently, noise levels rise further and little is achieved. This gave rise to two unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection, Teachers have a secure grasp of the different subjects. This enables them to explain clearly, and demonstrate and illustrate their teaching points effectively to move pupils' learning on. The aims of the lesson are always made clear and pupils' understanding of what they are expected to learn has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have good expertise in ICT, physical education and music. Consequently, lessons are often ambitious, quickly paced, and physically and mentally challenging. Pupils' positive responses are reflected in their good achievement.
13. Teachers are confident and effective when teaching the whole class. Some of the best teaching arises through in-depth class discussions on the different topics. Questioning is often probing and successful in making pupils think. In the best lessons, this is taken further and pupils are asked to explain their ideas or how they have arrived at a solution. However, whole class teaching is employed too often in some classes and is not balanced adequately with opportunities for pupils to find out for themselves. This is particularly true in science and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics. In English, pupils acquire competency in punctuation, grammar, spelling and handwriting through exercises but have comparatively fewer opportunities to write freely and develop their creative talents. The exception to this is ICT, where pupils' learning is rapid because they are encouraged to work independently.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum provided is satisfactory. The school continues to provide many good extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall and good in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Foundation Stage provision is good;
- There are insufficient opportunities for creativity and investigation from Years 1 to 6;
- Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) is satisfactory and improving;
- More needs to be done to cater for the needs of all pupils.

Commentary

14. Children in the Foundation Stage of their learning benefit from a good range of rich and stimulating learning experiences. In Years 1 to 6, all subjects are covered in sufficient depth. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding is better provided for than the development of their enquiry and investigative skills and creativity in English, mathematics and science.
15. The provision made for pupils' PSHCE is satisfactory overall but good in the Foundation Stage. The school has completed an audit to find ways of teaching PSHCE through all areas of the curriculum. This had led to the establishment of a school council and increasing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for duties around the school. The school has been awarded the 'ECO Schools Green Flag' in recognition of its work in caring for the environment and the 'Healthy Schools' award for promoting healthy living, sex and relationship education and teaching about the dangers of drug abuse.

16. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator supports teachers to enable them to provide helpful Individual Education Plans with clear targets to aim for. There are good examples of valuable support for pupils with special educational needs, especially in ICT and through withdrawal groups in literacy and numeracy. The needs of the gifted and talented pupils are just beginning to receive attention, although in music, physical education and ICT, the school has traditionally nurtured pupils' talents well. However, when lessons are planned a minority of teachers are still not catering well enough for pupils at the upper and lower end of the learning range to enable them to achieve as well as they could.
17. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport. Strong links with the community and the local secondary school ensure that every opportunity is taken for pupils to develop and extend their interests. Within school, pupils are introduced to new and worthwhile experiences through additional activities such as ICT, French and Spanish Clubs and the daily Breakfast and After School clubs. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and good in the nursery. Resources overall are satisfactory, good in physical education and the nursery and very good in music.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils are good. The provision for pupils' support and guidance based on the monitoring of their progress is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good induction procedures ensure that children settle into school quickly;
- Health and safety procedures have improved since the last inspection;
- Pupils form trusting relationships with adults and receive helpful personal advice;
- There is room for improvement in the monitoring of academic progress.

Commentary

18. The induction of children new to the nursery and reception classes is good and has improved over the last two years. Taster days are provided for parents and children and these are also offered to children who join the school at a later date. Pupils confirm that they find their new school welcoming and they settle well. Pupils explain that they feel safe and secure and this helps them to behave well and give of their best.
19. The school has improved its health and safety procedures including systems for dealing with medical issues and other incidents. Fire safety and site security are well managed. The procedures for child protection are good and all staff are aware of their responsibility to report any concerns. There are a very generous number of adults in school who are fully qualified in first aid procedures. Sex education and information about drug abuse is a good feature of the personal and social education programme. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have good support from the school nurse.
20. The school is now seeking pupils' views through the school council and this is beginning to have an impact on school developments. The 'ECO' initiative is a prime mover in this respect because pupils are contributing ideas on improving their environment. Pupils readily accept responsibilities around school and try to keep the school litter free. PSHCE has only recently been implemented but it is already having a positive impact on pupils' personal development. For example, Year 5 pupils had a meaningful discussion on why society needs rules and Year 4 pupils considered family relationships in different countries. The advice and guidance based on monitoring is satisfactory overall. However, teachers do not always set clear targets for improvement in response to pupils' written work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and the community are good. The partnership with other schools and colleges is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works effectively with parents and they are kept well informed;
- Parents appreciate being consulted and involved in decision making;
- Strong links with the community and with the high school enhance pupils' achievements.

Commentary

21. Parents are happy with the school's work. Good information about the school's policies and procedures is provided to parents through the prospectus, governors' report, regular newsletters and information on what children are learning. Reports to parents on their children's progress are satisfactory but parents would benefit from more specific information on what their children need to do to improve. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress. Parents appreciate the three consultation evenings and increasing opportunities to contribute to curriculum meetings.
22. Parents are consulted about a range of matters and most find that any concerns are dealt with effectively. The school provides a 'listening ear' for parents. There is a Parents' Forum which meets with senior staff each term to discuss a range of issues important to them and their views are taken on board. There is good support from volunteer helpers in the classroom and several parents work in school as part of their training as teacher assistants. Parents say their children are happy in school and that they receive enough information on their progress.
23. Links with the community are good. Wigan Warriors lead rugby training in school, as well as talking to pupils about bullying. Through the 'Football in the Community' scheme, Wigan Athletic holds training sessions in school. A local Judo Club runs classes for pupils during the spring term. Along with members of the community, pupils can attend the Kids United holiday club which keeps them active during out of school hours. There are close links with the church and the parish priests are regular visitors to the school. The 'ECO' initiative brings pupils into contact with a landscape gardener, grandparents and the Parks Department. All of these good links help pupils to be aware of their role in the local community. Links with the main receiving high school are very good mainly due to its close proximity to the primary school. Teachers from the high school take lessons in the primary school and Year 6 pupils visit and work in the high school on numerous occasions.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership, management and governance of the school are satisfactory. After a troubled period, the new headteacher, supported well by governors and key staff, is making valuable inroads into identifying weaknesses and raising standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The action taken by the new headteacher is helping to improve the school;
- The governors have guided the school through a very difficult period and gained in strength;
- The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and provides a rich learning environment;
- Subject leadership is still not strong enough to identify and remedy weaknesses.

Commentary

24. The new headteacher has introduced a collegiate style of leadership that has been much appreciated by the governors, staff and parents alike. He has a clear vision for the school but is eager to seek and accommodate the views of others. This approach has secured the commitment of staff and governors in developing the changes being made. Good support from the local authority and the archdiocese have helped in shaping the future of the school. Assessment routines are now established enabling checks to be made on standards through the school. Key areas for improvement have been prioritised and well targeted to ensure that changes are purposeful and manageable. For example, the goal of raising standards in Year 2 is already being realised. However, many initiatives have only been in place a short time and it is not yet possible to gauge their impact in raising achievement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,027,700	Balance from previous year	49,178
Total expenditure	975,701	Balance carried forward to the next	44,649
Expenditure per pupil	2,144		

25. Governors are now kept well aware of how the school is functioning and are developing a very clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They maintain a weekly check on school developments and on its finances. They are becoming increasingly involved in fulfilling their responsibilities for monitoring the work of the school and have ensured that all statutory requirements are met. They speak passionately about their determination to help the school to improve. The headteacher much appreciates the support, constructive criticism and informed advice that they provide. Financial management is good. The headteacher prepares options for the governors to consider in their deliberations on how the finances available can be best used to improve provision and raise standards. Leadership and management is intent on providing the best value within the resources available.
26. On balance the leadership and management of other key staff are now satisfactory. The school's senior management team is becoming a driving force and initiating positive changes throughout the school. The Foundation Stage leader has introduced much improved systems and procedures. Her team works very enthusiastically and successfully to deliver the Early Learning Goals, enabling children to get off to a good start. The infant key stage leader has also worked extremely hard to raise standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy in Year 2. The subject leaders for ICT and music provide good role models for other staff and for pupils. However, senior staff are well aware that the roles of other subject leaders have to be developed further to ensure that they gain a better awareness of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and exert a stronger influence on standards. There are still variations and inconsistencies in teaching, learning and achievement to iron out, sometimes within the same year group.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good.

Most children enter the nursery and reception with attainment as expected for their ages. Effective teaching enables them to achieve well. The goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception are exceeded in all but literacy and language. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support children who find learning difficult and are involved in all aspects of learning including planning and assessment. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The Foundation Stage has been completely reorganised to ensure that the curriculum is well balanced and imaginatively taught. Learning takes place in an environment rich in opportunities for exploration and discovery, both inside and outside the classroom. In reception, the quality of teaching is good and stimulating, making learning interesting and enjoyable. Assessment is used satisfactorily to inform planning, but the nursery and reception teachers do not always have quite the same understanding of the standard of achievement necessary for a child to progress from one stepping stone to the next, particularly in reading and writing.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's positive attitudes to learning reflect the good relationships;
- Inside and outdoor learning areas are carefully planned and well supervised.

Commentary

27. Teaching and learning are very good. Strong and wholesome relationships between all adults and children create a calm, safe learning environment. Teachers plan exciting activities to encourage children to explore and find out for themselves. This enables them to gain confidence and learn independently. Adults treat children with respect and reinforce good manners, which helps to promote self-esteem and good behaviour. Children work collaboratively and show maturity in helping others and sharing equipment. Those who make a hesitant start or find learning difficult are well supported. Teachers sensitively encourage them to mix with others and engineer situations to bring children together, particularly during outdoor and indoor play activities. Most children already take some responsibility for their own learning and readily make their own choices. They exceed the levels expected in this area of learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults work closely with children to improve their spoken language;
- Imaginative teaching using visual prompts engages children's interest in stories
- The level of challenge in the tasks provided does not always extend children's reading and writing skills sufficiently.

Commentary

28. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are good features. Children achieve well in speaking and listening and are provided with a wealth of opportunities to share ideas and play imaginatively. Adults work well with small groups of children, developing their communication skills and use of correct vocabulary successfully. Teachers use questioning well to encourage children to listen carefully and explain their ideas. Big books are used imaginatively, often alongside real objects, to improve children's prediction and comprehension skills. For example, a real suitcase was packed in readiness for a story about a camping holiday. Children's achievement in reading and writing is satisfactory but there is scope for improvement. Some children read simple sentences and phrases independently and are on their way to achieving the goals expected by the end of the reception year. Others read mainly by using picture clues and predicting what may happen next. Teachers provide good support for shared and guided reading sessions, but do not ensure that individual reading books are at a sufficiently challenging level for the more able children. Letter formation for some children is not well developed and they do not grip the pencil correctly. Most children reach the goals they are expected to by the end of reception and some are able to write simple sentences. However, a minority of children still have some way to go.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources are used well to support children's mathematical understanding;
- Mathematical skills are taught well through other areas of learning.

Commentary

29. Achievement is good. Most children reach the goals expected of them by the end of reception and a fair number of them exceed expectations. Teaching and learning are good in the nursery and reception classes. Most children already count to ten before leaving the nursery and this provides a good foundation for learning in the reception classes. Children are motivated to learn through mathematical play, often linked to other areas of learning. Teachers make learning fun by using puppets, toys and wall displays, often challenging children to count the number of items. Less able children are well supported. Mathematical experiences are often extended into outdoor play where children can explore space and measure. In reception, the construction area is very well equipped, providing a stimulating area in which children are encouraged to experiment with shape.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links between areas of learning improve children's knowledge and understanding;
- The stimulating classrooms develop and extend children's curiosity.

Commentary

30. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well. Many children exceed the goals expected for their age. Good links are made between what the children already know and

new learning. They achieve well because of the exciting range of activities and opportunities. Visits to places like Martin Mere and Blackpool Zoo help children to learn about living things first hand. They have lots of opportunities for exploring materials, for example, by investigating which materials sink or float and are suitable for making a boat. They benefit from studying their own culture and comparing it with others, such as the Chinese New Year. Design and technology and computer skills are well developed, the latter both within the classroom and the computer suite.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective use of the outdoor areas improves children's physical development;
- Lessons in the school hall significantly improve children's physical skills.

Commentary

31. In the well equipped outdoor area, nursery children develop motor skills very successfully. Teaching and learning are good in the nursery and reception classes. Selective, challenging and purposeful activities are provided to develop and extend children's physical skills. Imaginative use is made of the good range of equipment. This encourages children to climb, balance and move along surfaces with increasing control and co-ordination. Reception children have access to a well equipped hall where they can develop their movement skills safely and learn to use space wisely. A wide range of tools and classroom equipment provides good opportunities for children to shape materials and develop their manipulative skills. Adults provide good role models by taking part; for example, they participate in the parachute activities. Children achieve well and many exceed the level expected by the end of the reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative role play enables children to mirror real life situations;
- Good opportunities are provided for children to explore different media.

Commentary

32. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well to exceed the goals expected in this area. There are many valuable opportunities for children to engage in creative and imaginative play, such as the jungle tent, shell garage, and play hospital. A wide variety of stimulating activities is organised each day, which constantly refresh children interests. Visitors to school enrich the curriculum, like the potter who helped nursery children to make the pot elephants. Children enjoy reciting rhymes and singing. Displays around the classroom show many examples of children's good quality work, using a variety of media.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Efforts to raise standards in Year 2 are proving successful;
- The assessments made of pupils' learning are not used consistently to provide work to match their different learning needs;
- Class discussions are developed well but opportunities for paired discussions are missed;
- There are too many inconsistencies in the teaching of writing;
- Pupils develop their literacy skills well through additional work in the computer suite.

Commentary

33. Standards in English are broadly average throughout the school, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall in infant and junior classes to reach the levels expected in Years 2 and 6. The decline in standards in Year 2 has been halted. Causes have been identified, actions taken and the current teaching in Year 2 is now stronger. However, the upward trend in Year 6, culminating in well above average results in 2003, is not likely to be repeated this year. This is a different and more typical group of pupils who are achieving average standards.
34. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The stronger features include teachers' good class control that enables pupils to work successfully without direct supervision. Lessons often begin with reminders about what pupils have learned previously. This helps them to build securely on what they already know. Classroom assistants work purposefully with small groups of pupils to move their learning on. Improved assessments are providing a clearer picture of the progress made by individual pupils and groups. Assessments made of pupils' learning from day to day are also receiving attention. However, not all teachers are using the information well enough to plan for pupils' different learning needs. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They achieve best in Year 6 where they receive specialist support for literacy. Where all pupils are set similar tasks to complete, irrespective of their different stages of understanding, the learning of the less and more able pupils is adversely affected. In the literacy lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' different learning needs were usually catered for well, more so in fact than is apparent from their written work produced earlier in the year.
35. Standards in speaking and listening are at the levels expected. Literacy lessons begin with discussions that help pupils to be aware of what they are learning. Most teachers are very skilled in asking questions that require pupils to think deeply. Where this is done, pupils find it easier to clarify their ideas. However, in some classes there are not enough opportunities for pupils to discuss and plan together. For example, pupils are not always asked to reflect on and improve their finished work, although their understanding of editing texts develops well through ICT.
36. Standards of reading in the infant classes have improved markedly this year. Pupils have developed good skills of breaking up words into their component parts. This helps them to work out those words that they cannot recognise immediately. It also refines their ability to spell. Many pupils throughout the school also benefit greatly from the regular home reading practice provided by their parents. The school libraries have been re-sited, reorganised and developed well and provide good sources for information. The subject leader recognises the need for them to be used more by the pupils.

37. Leadership and management of the subject have not been effective in recent years. Teachers have largely been left to set their own standards. They have worked conscientiously and planned, in pairs, to make the best use of the literacy strategy. However, no one had been responsible for checking and improving the quality of teaching and learning through the school. Consequently, inconsistencies have arisen which hamper pupils' achievement. In over half of the classes, teachers capitalise on any opportunity to improve pupils' writing. For example, Year 3 pupils designed party invitations and Year 2 pupils wrote beginning chapters of a story. Pupils enjoyed these tasks and made good progress because they could see the purpose behind them. However, in a minority of classes, there is a strong reliance on giving the pupils exercises to complete, rather than encouraging them to express their own ideas, at length, on paper. To some extent this improves their skills but limits their creativity. The marking of pupils' books is equally variable. Where it is best, the work is analysed, assessed and pointers given for improvement. Subject leadership is satisfactory but only because recent changes in senior management have focused more attention on how pupils are achieving. Senior managers have discovered for themselves that progress in writing is uneven, both within and across some year groups, and have concluded rightly that improving the use of assessment has the potential to drive up standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

38. Satisfactory links are made between English and other subjects. Pupils frequently use their skills in reading and writing to research information and produce reports and accounts in subjects such as history and geography. Some teachers are very imaginative in improving pupils' language skills in other subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils are studying environmental issues and producing written explanations for others to read. However, such opportunities are missed in other classes. The relationship between English and ICT provides a good example of effective learning, particularly through word processing and presenting information in different styles for different audiences.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvements have been made in Year 2 but there is still more to do to raise pupils' achievement in Year 1;
- Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is uneven because of the differences in teaching;
- Pupils' calculation skills develop more quickly than their capacity to solve mathematical problems;
- Effective steps have been taken to analyse and improve results but checking the quality of teaching and learning is not strong enough.

Commentary

39. Measures to raise standards in Year 2 have been successful. The current Year 2 pupils are now achieving above average standards in mathematics and the former weaker achievement of girls is no longer apparent. Year 2 teachers now expect more of their pupils, provide challenging tasks and cater well for their different learning needs. This is why both the more able and less able pupils have made significant gains in their learning. That said, there is still more to do to raise the level of challenge in Year 1. Pupils here are still given too many worksheets to complete, which are not sufficiently well matched to their different levels of understanding. This hampers their learning and makes it harder for them to see the progress they are making.
40. The current Year 6 pupils are attaining average standards, as are pupils in Year 5. Pupils' achievement between Years 3 and 6 is satisfactory. However, changes in the leadership are

also beginning to exert a positive influence on teaching and learning in junior classes. For example, pupils' learning is more rigorously assessed and their performance is carefully tracked. Additional support is being more effectively targeted towards those whose learning falters. This enables pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory progress in lessons and even quicker progress when they are withdrawn for intensive group assistance. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching particularly in Years 2 and 6, and examples of good practice in most year groups. Lessons begin with brisk mental starter sessions, which significantly improves pupils' quick and accurate recall of number facts. Operations such as subtraction and division are taught well and pupils are encouraged to find short cuts, try different methods and, in the best lessons, explain their ideas to the class.

41. Inconsistencies in teaching make it harder for pupils to progress as smoothly as they might. Pupils are taught in ability sets. The more able ones benefit the most. They work at a quick pace and respond well to the greater demands made upon their learning. Consequently, most of them reach levels that are higher than expected for their age. On balance, the teaching of the upper sets is stronger than that of the lower sets, particularly in the extent to which pupils' individual needs are catered for. This is evident in the way their work is marked, which often gives pointers or targets for improvement. Teachers' written comments, such as 'I can see that you do not fully understand this but we will return to it later in the week', show that assessment of pupils' learning is being taken into account in the planning of future lessons. This quality of assessment is not as evident in the lower sets and there are occasions when pupils begin the next page of textbook without having fully understood the previous work. The teaching of calculation skills is mainly good and this ensures pupils' knowledge and understanding of number and shape is very secure. However, guiding pupils to know when and how to use their skills to solve mathematical problems is not taught thoroughly enough. Consequently, pupils' skills of investigation are not as strong as they should be. Subject leadership is satisfactory and is strengthening in the area of analysing and improving pupils' performance. However, checking the quality of teaching and pupils' written work is not sufficiently rigorous to identify and eliminate the inconsistencies.

Mathematics across the curriculum

42. Mathematics is satisfactorily linked to the learning of other subjects. Pupils typically use their mathematical skills in mapping in geography, interpreting results in science and measuring in design and technology. However, much stronger links have been forged between mathematics and ICT. Pupils' skills in handling numerical data are well developed because of the good opportunities to work on computers.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's enquiry skills are not as good as their knowledge and understanding;
- The information gained for assessing pupils' learning is not used sufficiently to cater for pupils' different learning needs;
- There are good links between science and ICT;
- Subject leadership is improving and the weaknesses have been identified correctly.

Commentary

43. Pupils achieve steadily overall and standards are at the levels expected in Year 2 and 6, as they were at the last inspection. Pupils cover a wide range of topics. By the end of Year 2, they have good knowledge of the main parts of plants, materials and forces and use terms such as 'pushing', 'pulling' and 'stretching' correctly. Year 6 children have a good understanding of electrical circuits and the operation of switches. They discuss the working of the human circulatory system knowledgeably and explain correctly how drugs affect it. However, across the school, pupils' enquiry skills are not as good as their knowledge and understanding. For example, younger pupils make realistic predictions about what might happen but they do not link these sufficiently to what they observe. Year 6 pupils are unsure of the order of activities needed to start a new investigation and do not readily use technical vocabulary, such as 'fair testing', 'variables' and 'evidence'. This, in part, is attributable to teachers telling pupils too much and not encouraging them to make their own discoveries and record their findings. As one Year 6 pupil commented, 'We do quite a lot of writing from the board.'
44. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Where teaching is stronger, the assessment of pupils' learning is used well to plan the next lesson and to cater for pupils' different learning needs. In these lessons, teachers link new learning well to pupils' previous knowledge and adapt their lessons according to pupils' understanding and confidence. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, the teacher changed her initial plan when she realised that pupils were not ready to carry out their own experiment until they understood more about trial and error. Support for teaching of children with special educational needs is satisfactory but inconsistent. In good lessons, teaching assistants work closely with these pupils to ensure that they understand what they have to do and the language used. However, in a Year 6 lesson on 'Drugs and their effect on the human body' there was little evidence of planning or support for the children; consequently they had difficulty in following the instruction sheets provided. Opportunities for pupils to formulate their own enquiries are sometimes suppressed when teachers talk for too long and tell pupils what is likely to happen. For example, Year 1 pupils listened to the teacher for 40 minutes, by which time there was very little time for practical activities.
45. Pupils acquire good scientific knowledge and strong links between science and ICT strengthen this further. For example, Year 2 children could interpret a bar chart showing different forms of exercise correctly. 'We like rugby the most.' said one girl pointing to the tallest column. Year 2 pupils show confidence in using a database to classify animals according to their characteristics. Through the use of ICT, Year 5 pupils learnt that by changing or controlling variables scientific tests could be made fair. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader provides a good example of how to teach science effectively. The areas of weaknesses in investigation work are well understood and strategies are being implemented to share good practice and improve teaching and learning. Highlighting for development the areas of the school's scheme of work that are likely to enhance pupils' enquiry skills represents a promising start.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has helped to raise standards since the last inspection;
- Infant pupils learn effectively but getting to and from the suite is a barrier;
- All aspects of ICT are covered well and taught thoroughly;
- Very good teaching in the computer suite significantly increases pupils' learning;
- ICT is used very well in the learning of other subjects.

Commentary

46. Standards are well above average by Year 6. Very effective subject leadership has led to the rapid rate of improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have learned from the very good example set of how to make maximum use of the suite and they have been well supported in developing their own skills and confidence. Consideration is now being given to greater access to the ICT suite for infant pupils with a view to raising their achievement further.
47. Infant pupils have less time on computers than juniors, partly because time is lost getting to and from the suite. This is largely why standards in Year 2 are at the levels expected rather than higher. Nevertheless, infant pupils cover a wide range of topics from basic word processing skills in writing stories and poems, to using the 'Colour Magic' programme to develop skills in graphics. Year 1 pupils are beginning to classify information and re-interpret it to produce bar charts. Year 2 pupils have good knowledge of how to search for information using a CD-ROM and know how save and retrieve their work.
48. Junior pupils use the suite at least twice each week. One visit is used to learn and practise new skills and procedures and a second visit, later in the week, to apply their skills in learning other subjects. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils used an ICT programme to research about sound insulation. Junior pupils become very proficient across a wide range of skills and applications. For example, they develop competence in control technology in Year 5 and show a high degree of achievement in being able to predict and explore simulations using an exciting 'control' program. Year 3 pupils show equal confidence and interest while working on how to use choice and options on a 'Badger Trail' simulation programme.
49. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers often ask pupils to demonstrate their understanding using the large 'smart' board. This works well because all pupils can see and join in with the discussion. For example, after some probing questions about the last lesson, the Year 1 teacher commented, 'Don't tell me, come and show me on the board.' Teachers encourage pupils to work independently or in pairs and expect them to try to solve their own problems. For example, Year 6 pupils were challenged to research and gather information about different locations using the Internet, CD-ROM or library books. They were then expected to produce their own brochure. This proved to be a very successful project, resulting in competence in importing text and graphics to create original presentations and in encouraging mature learning styles. Teachers assess pupils' work effectively as their learning progresses and lesson planning shows a high degree of support for pupils' different learning needs. All pupils benefit from this, particularly those with special educational needs. The learning support assistant is invaluable in setting up the programmes and sensitively supporting both the less and more able children, while working closely with the class teacher to improve their achievement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

50. The school is well advanced in using ICT in other areas of the curriculum and the subject leader has produced a list of programmes for subjects and year groups. For instance, Year 6 pupils research mountain areas linked to geography and Year 2 pupils develop graphics skills through their 'Mondrian' style artwork.

HUMANITIES

Only two **geography** and two **history** lessons were observed, which is not enough to make a judgement on the provision in these subjects. Discussions with pupils and an examination of their work indicate that in these subjects, pupils achieve steadily, as they did at the time of the last inspection.

Commentary

51. In geography, the 'ECO' project provides good opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the environment and conserving resources. Field visits are used to good effect to enrich learning about localities beyond school, such as Coniston and Worthington Lake, where studies of water projects are undertaken. The subjects leader has only recently taken responsibility for history and geography, so checking of teaching and learning is only just beginning.
52. In history, planning identifies opportunities for links with other subjects, especially ICT. In one of the two lessons observed, pupils brought in information from the Internet as part of their homework and used this to research the life of Francis Drake. Literacy skills were developed well as they extracted information from a non-fiction text in order to produce a timeline of important events in Drake's life. Children showed a good knowledge of Tudor times and could recall details about other periods in history. Resources are used effectively and visits to places outside school, like Astley Hall, enrich the curriculum.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Only two **design and technology** lessons were seen, which is not enough to make a judgement on provision. However, four lessons in **art and design** and four **music** and **physical education** lessons were observed. Along with discussions with pupils, there is sufficient evidence to evaluate the provision in these subjects.

Commentary

53. In design and technology, pupils' work indicates that they are acquiring skills and knowledge at the levels expected for their ages. For instance, Year 4 pupils are able to distinguish between what works well and less well and explain the reasons. They enjoy investigating, for example, ways in which a picture frame can be made to stand up and learn new words such as 'rigid' and 'tripod' as they discuss options. This introduces a thoughtful aspect to their work. Pupils are also encouraged to consider and discuss the intended user's needs and opinions. For example, when designing photograph frames, pupils talked about who the frame was for and how this might affect the design. Pupils produce accurate and carefully labelled designs and have a secure understanding of the different materials that can be used, for various purposes.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are interested in the subject and work with sustained concentration;
- Sketchbooks are not used sufficiently to encourage pupils to experiment with techniques;
- The art room provides an exciting and well equipped resource for the junior classes;
- Art and design is increasingly being used to develop the pupils' multicultural awareness.

Commentary

54. Standards are at the levels expected, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do most pupils. The subject is taught each alternate half term. However, opportunities are being found for art to be developed in other subjects. This is good, as some pupils gain more confidence through their art and design than through other subjects. Pupils enjoy the subject and respond well to the creative opportunities provided. They are keen to discuss their work and are proud of it.

55. Pupils' do not use their sketchbooks sufficiently to develop and refine their skills. They are not encouraged enough to experiment with tone, shading and colour mixing and to incorporate these techniques to improve their work. Some classrooms are small and restrict practical activities. However, a larger room has been set aside as a base for art and design. The room is full of samples of work and stimulating objects, which helps to inspire creativity and there are good resources for immediate use.
56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A good feature of lessons is the teaching of art through other cultures. Consequently, pupils acquire a good appreciation of how artists' work is influenced by the time and place in which they live. This is evident in their studies of designs by William Morris, Chinese floral prints, aboriginal art and the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh. Older pupils discussed a range of European artists knowledgeably and explained their reactions to them. Salvador Dali inspired the strongest responses, as he would have wished!

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards in singing and instrumental work have been maintained since the last inspection;
- Strong subject leadership is a driving force in providing many additional musical activities, which significantly influence pupils' achievement.

Commentary

57. The school's strong tradition in producing high quality music continues. Infant pupils achieve steadily and reach the levels expected in learning how to listen attentively to identify and create patterns of sound. Year 1 pupils begin to understand what composing means by adding their own sounds to accompany a story. Once pupils enter Year 3, their achievement accelerates. Many begin to learn to play musical instruments. A large number of Year 3 pupils, for example, already play recorders to a good standard. Good teaching in Year 3 builds well on pupils' growing enthusiasm because the tasks provided are well matched to their different learning needs. For example, the more able musicians use pitched instruments, such as recorders and xylophones, to explore and perform ostinato patterns, whilst those not as knowledgeable in reading music, compose patterns using non-pitched instruments. Although one music lesson was unsatisfactory because of too much noise and weak control, the vast majority of teaching is good and often very good. Specialist teaching in some of the junior classes ensures that many pupils benefit from the very good expertise available. Lessons characteristically begin with a voice and body warm up. Pupils are thoroughly prepared and understand exactly what they are aiming for. High standards are expected and achieved, in both singing and instrumental work. Lessons move along swiftly and include a good balance of learning new skills and having time to practise them. Pupils benefit from listening to good singing. This, along with lively accompaniment and precise conducting, enables them to sing or play recorders, in two and three parts, impressively. Good achievement through most of the junior classes enables pupils to reach high standards.
58. Very effective subject leadership is reflected through dedication and high ambition for the school. One of the strongest features is the importance attached to performing. Many opportunities, in and out of school, are provided for pupils to sing and play instruments for different audiences. This stimulates their desire to practise and improve and attracts large numbers to join the choir and recorder groups. Many eventually move on to play other instruments such as keyboard, saxophone, guitar, violin, flute and brass. Frequent lunchtime and after school sessions are provided to enable pupils to prepare for concerts. Pupils with musical talents are very well catered for. Musical evenings are provided for parents but the

school's good musical reputation goes beyond the immediate locality and performances have been staged at a regional level. It is noticeable that when proficient musicians play complex pieces in the school hall, other pupils watch and listen in awe. It is easy to see where the next batch of musicians will come from and to understand why so many pupils are developing a love of music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well, particularly in games and swimming;
- The school's strong sporting traditions enhance pupils' personal development;
- The involvement of community sports groups makes a significant impact on achievement.

Commentary

59. Good teaching of physical education begins early in the infant classes. Imaginative and purposeful teaching in Year 1, for example, prompted pupils to add creativity to their dance movements after observing how jelly moved on a plate. In all lessons, the purpose of warming up and working together is consistently reinforced. Consequently, pupils acquire a good understanding of the importance of exercise in adopting a healthy lifestyle and the value of teamwork in competitive sport. Teachers are confident in coaching specific skills. For example, Year 5 pupils are making the most of their weekly visits to the local athletics track, through effective teaching of how to sprint, long jump and throw discus and javelin. Teachers make good use of demonstration to illustrate the correct techniques. In lessons, pupils learn to evaluate their own work and make constructive comments about the performance of others. Hence, they understand how well they are achieving and how best they can improve. A combination of learning new skills with frequent opportunities to improve and perfect them, enables pupils to achieve well and reach levels higher than expected by Year 6. Standards in swimming are also good. Virtually all pupils achieve the 25 metre standard and many pupils move on to achieve distance and proficiency awards. The school has four swimming teams and a string of successes in local swimming galas.
60. The school is heavily involved with the local sporting community. Pupils benefit from weekly football and rugby coaching, with players from the local teams running well organised courses in and after school. These sessions make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of how to use space, how to control and pass a ball accurately and tackle opponents safely and effectively. Their understanding of fitness, adherence to rules and the strategies of attack and defence develop at a good rate. The plethora of extra-curricular sporting activities provided, which include rugby, football, skittle ball, cross-country running, athletics, swimming, baseball, cricket and golf, are very popular with both boys and girls. Good provision is made for Year 5 and 6 pupils to participate in residential visits, where their skills, talents and interests in outdoor activities, such as canoeing and orienteering, are nurtured. The physical skills acquired across the very good range of sporting activities are reflected in pupils' good control and co-ordination in lessons and in the school's impressive collection of trophies.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

61. Through citizenship, children are taught to reflect on how society operates. This was evident in a lesson about rules that enable communities to function. Visitors to school, such as Victim Support and Police Liaison Officers, support the citizenship curriculum well. Pupils are also examining family and working life within other cultures and comparing them to their own experiences. This is successful in helping pupils to understand the importance of roles and relationships. A school council has been established and pupils understand how people are elected to represent the community as a whole. Pupils are gradually beginning to grasp how collective decisions are made, although the council is still heavily dependent on adult guidance.

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	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
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	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
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	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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