

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Northfield, Birmingham.

LEA area: City of Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103432

Headteacher: Mr Simon Dix

Lead inspector: Mr D Speakman

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> July 2004

Inspection number: 257608

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	405
School address:	Frankley Beeches Road Northfield Birmingham
Postcode:	B31 5AB
Telephone number:	0121 464 2364
Fax number:	0212 464 2666
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Michael Neylon
Date of previous inspection:	September 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This is a larger than average sized voluntary aided Catholic primary school that serves the local area with some pupils coming from outside the immediate vicinity. The social and economic circumstances of the pupils are average. An average number of pupils join or leave during the school year. About three quarters of the pupils are White British, with pupils coming from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. Above average proportions of pupils speak English as an additional language and are at the early stages of English acquisition. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below average and nine have a statement of special educational needs. These include moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behaviour, speech and communication and autism. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is broadly average. Although the range of attainment on entry to the nursery covers a wide range, pupils enter the school with below average attainment overall. The school has achieved the Schools Achievement Award in 2001, 2002 and 2003, the Quality Mark in 2003 and Healthy Schools Award in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20086	David Speakman	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology English as an additional language
9173	Sarah McDermott	Lay inspector	
18083	Judith Howell	Team inspector	Foundation Stage <sup>1</sup> Geography History Personal, social and health education & citizenship
34180	David Stanier	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education
29688	Michael Brammer	Team inspector	English Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
GL53 7JX

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<sup>1</sup> The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** school that provides a good quality of education and gives very good value for money. As a result of good teaching, good levels of inclusion and a very good ethos of care, pupils develop very good attitudes to learning, achieve very well and, starting from a below average base, attain well above average standards overall.

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

- The leadership of the head teacher is very good and he is effectively supported by the senior management team, other staff with leadership responsibility and very well by the governors.
- As a result of good quality teaching and learning at all stages of the school, pupils achieve well above average standards in mathematics and science, and above average in English.
- All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and those at different levels of attainment, achieve very well.
- As a result of very good provision for their personal development, pupils have very good attitudes towards school and their behaviour is very good.
- Assessment procedures are good, and information is used well to ensure that all pupils are provided with challenging work, but the quality of marking of pupils' work varies.
- Outdoor resources for children in the Foundation Stage are inadequate.
- Reference materials to support independent learning need further development.
- Opportunities for learning are of a good quality and benefit from very good levels of enrichment but lack some balance in provision for geography, for example, and secure cross curricular links.
- Some pupils are taken out of lessons for extra support or for musical tuition and so miss important teaching points.
- The school looks after its pupils well and this reflects its very caring ethos. Trusting relationships between all members of the school community are of an excellent quality.
- Links with parents and the community are very good and the school has very effective contact with other schools to which pupils move on.

The level of improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school was inspected in 1998 and since then standards have risen and the good quality teaching has improved with more very good and excellent teaching. Other areas of strength have been maintained. The school has responded to most minor issues raised in the previous inspection, although planned development in outdoor resources for reception children and in ICT is incomplete.

### 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	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A	A	A*	B

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

Achievement is **very good**. Pupils start nursery with below average attainment. Children achieve well and they meet the goals children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year in all areas of learning. In Years 1 to 6, all pupils continue to achieve well. Attainment in mathematics and science is above average by the end of Year 2, and by Year 6 is well above average. Standards in

English are above average at the end of both Years 2 and 6. Core skills of literacy are good in other subjects and very good in numeracy. Pupils achieve well in music, and standards are above average by the end of Year 2, and well above average by the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal development is **very good**. This is supported through very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' attitudes towards school and learning are very good and relationships in the school are excellent. The school's expectations of pupils' behaviour are extremely high and, as a result, their behaviour is very good. Attendance is good and pupils' punctuality is very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** with some very good features at all stages of the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to plan challenging and interesting activities, based on reliable assessment data. As a result, teaching meets all pupils' needs and encourages high levels of interest and enthusiasm for work. Teachers have exceptionally high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and the resulting very good quality of behaviour supports the very good achievement made by all groups of pupils throughout the school. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good; teaching assistants provide valuable support and are effective in what they do. Procedures for assessment are good and the information is used effectively to plan the next stages in learning in these areas. Pupils receive high levels of encouragement to do well and, as a result, develop good learning skills.

The curriculum is good. The school provides a broad, balanced and rich curriculum that has many areas of strength, including very good opportunities for enrichment and a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum lacks some balance in provision for non-core subjects.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the head teacher is very good. He has a very clear vision of the needs of the school which is based on rigorous and reliable school self-evaluation and analysis of assessment data. Plans for school improvement are very well thought out and very appropriate to the school's needs. The head teacher is effectively supported in this work by the senior management team and other staff with leadership responsibility. The governors support the work of the school and its development very well, and provide good levels of challenge. Statutory requirements are fully met. Together, the head teacher, staff and governors have developed good management systems that are effective in moving the school forward at a good pace.

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

Parents are happy with the school. They feel their children are making good progress and that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Parents are confident that their children are cared for and are expected to do their best. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents expressed an improved openness in the way in which the school is run. They feel well informed about how their children are getting on. Pupils have positive views about the school. They enjoy school and feel they are finding out new things. They are confident they will be well supported and listened to if they have problems.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The areas identified for improvement are of a minor nature and are:

- curriculum balance and cross curricular links;

- arrangements for the withdrawal of pupils from lessons for extra support and instrument tuition;
- outdoor resources and the play area for children in the Foundation Stage;
- quality and consistency of the marking of pupils' work;
- resources for pupils' independent research.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **above average** by the end of Year 2 and **well above average** at the end of Year 6. Achievement is good at all stages of the school and **very good** overall.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and meet the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception.
- Attainment in mathematics and science is well above average by the end of Year 6 and above average in English.
- All groups of pupils, regardless of gender, race or ability, achieve very well.
- Pupils achieve well in music and standards are good at the end of Year 2 and very good by the end of Year 6.

#### Commentary

1. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 have kept pace with the national trend of improvement and generally remain above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The picture is similar when compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to claim a free school meal. Inspection evidence, based on teacher assessments, lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work confirms that current attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average at the end of Year 2. This indicates a good level of achievement as pupils enter Year 1 with average attainment in literacy, numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world. The rate of improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory when standards in English, mathematics and science were above average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.6 (16.4)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.9 (14.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.7 (17.0)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 48 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. In 2003, results in tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Results have been generally well above average in all subjects since 2000. This has been maintained this year in science, where unconfirmed results are well above average and in English and mathematics, above average. Inspection evidence confirms the maintenance of high standards, with above average attainment in English, although in reading and listening, attainment is well above average. In mathematics and science, attainment is well above average. This is an improvement on the previous inspection findings, when standards were above average in English, mathematics and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (29.1)	26.8 (27.0)

mathematics	29.8 (29.4)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	29.5 (31.4)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 48 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of attainment and, because some have limited speaking, language and social skills, their overall attainment is below that expected for children of this age. They achieve well and meet the expectations of the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning. Good achievement continues throughout Years 1 and 6 so that, by the end of Year 2, attainment is above average overall and well above average by the end of Year 6. This represents very good achievement overall. Pupils at all levels of attainment, those with special educational needs and those from other ethnic backgrounds, who speak English as a second language, achieve similarly well.
4. In English, pupils develop very good listening skills. They listen very attentively to teachers and other pupils and show very good levels of understanding, particularly of specialist vocabulary in other subjects, such as mathematics or science. Pupils speak well, clearly expressing themselves, although some experience difficulty in talking at length. Standards in speaking are good. Pupils are very good readers. They read confidently and with expression and interest. Their reading covers a wide range of authors from classical to popular and they read with understanding, being able to discuss their reading in detail. Standards in writing are above average. Writing covers a wide range of styles, including imaginative, poetry and records of experiences and visits. Spelling is usually accurate and writing is well set out into paragraphs, although not all pupils use adventurous vocabulary.
5. In mathematics, pupils have very good knowledge and understanding of number and of mathematics generally. The school ensures good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to real life situations and to develop good mental and oral skills. Combined with the development of a good range of strategies to answer problems, such as estimating answers, pupils have a very good command of mathematics skills. They use and apply their skills across the whole mathematics curriculum well and this supports the achievement of above average standards.
6. In science, there is clear emphasis on practical work. Pupils perform a wide range of experiments and investigations and use this method of learning effectively to extend their knowledge and understanding in other areas of science, such as growth, changes in materials and the effects of exercise on the human body. Pupils have a good understanding of fair testing and they know how to design experiments to investigate specific situations, predict results and then test out their predictions, clearly recording results and evaluating outcomes.
7. Standards in music improve steadily through the school, until by the end of Year 6, they are well above average. Music is given a high profile in the school and the school's practical skill based approach to learning gives all pupils the opportunity to develop a secure grounding in the core music skills of singing, listening, performing and composing, in addition to learning how to listen to and appreciate a good range of music. In other subjects inspected fully, standards are in line with those expected nationally.

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

Pupils have **very good** attitudes towards school, and their behaviour is **very good**. Provision for pupils' personal development, including provision for their spiritual, moral and social development is **very good**. The attendance of the pupils is **good** and their punctuality is very good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships in the school are excellent and are significant in helping pupils to learn effectively.
- The school's expectations of pupils' behaviour are excellent and, as a result, their behaviour is very good.
- Provision for their cultural development is good.
- The school is very rigorous and successful in promoting good attendance and punctuality.

## Commentary

8. Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and learning, enjoy school, and say that, ‘It’s a nice place, everyone’s kind and makes new pupils welcome’. Relationships in the school are excellent, and the ‘Playground Pals’ Scheme’, where pupils from Year 6 support Year 1 children in a range of playground games and activities, clearly demonstrates this. There are notices around the school outlining what pupils should do if they feel they are being bullied, and the school has an effective Anti-Bullying policy. They unanimously say that there is always an adult there to help should they have problems. Pupils’ successes are celebrated in classrooms, assemblies and in the ‘Golden Notebook’. The pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to school. They respond very well to activities planned to meet their needs
  
9. There is very good provision for pupils’ personal development. Pupils have opportunities for reflection not only in assemblies, and in music worship, but at other times in the day, such as registration. The new Prayer Room, where there are prayer triptychs that the children have made, shows the importance placed on creating opportunities to enable pupils to deepen their own spiritual awareness. There is a clear emphasis on moral development, and this is seen not only in assemblies, but in class rules. This is very effective in securing a very good standard of behaviour. Pupils’ very good social development is enhanced by a range of annual residential visits starting in Year 4, where pupils experience working alongside each other, and encourage one another in a wide range of challenging activities. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture, and the school constantly looks for opportunities to widen pupils’ knowledge of other cultures in lessons and displays.
  
10. The school has extremely high expectations of pupils’ behaviour, and all adults in the school support and challenge pupils to behave the very best they can, both in and out of the classrooms. In discussion with a range of pupils, they graded behaviour in school very highly, and were proud of their very good standards of behaviour. Lunchtimes are a social occasion, and children talk positively about school life, and how they like their teachers, and in them they have someone they would turn to if they were worried. There was one fixed period exclusion in the school year before the inspection.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

<i>Categories used in the Annual School Census</i>	<i>No of pupils on roll</i>	<i>Number of fixed period exclusions</i>	<i>Number of permanent exclusions</i>
White – British	240	1	0
White – Irish	29	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	17	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	9	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	3	0	0

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

11. Children take a responsible part in their school community from an early age, and look beyond it to support a wide range of charities, such as the Acorn Children’s Hospice and CAFOD. Pupils elected to the newly formed School Council were very pleased to have been elected, and wore their badges with pride. Pupils from each class who had been given the opportunity to work with the artist in residence on the Batik Triptych felt they had made a real contribution to the life of the school. Pupils are proud to represent their school in a range of sporting activities, and are very pleased to have these opportunities.
  
12. The attendance of the pupils has improved since the last inspection. It is now above the national average and compares very favourably with local schools. Expectations on regular attendance are very clear and well communicated to parents and pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school and each term a good number receive certificates for 100 per cent attendance. The vast majority of parents are conscientious in letting the office know the reason for their child being off school. The school has a very effective team to oversee the attendance of the pupils and a well maintained computer system allows the office staff to quickly identify and help the few pupils who have unacceptably high levels of absence. Nearly all pupils arrive at school well in time for lessons. The good attendance and very good punctuality contribute well to the pupils’ achievement.

*Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.0	School data:	0.3
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. Teaching, learning and the assessment of pupils’ achievement are **good**. The curriculum is **good** and benefits from **very good** opportunities for enrichment. The school provides **very good** levels of guidance and support for its pupils. The school has **very good** links with parents and the community, and with other schools.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are consistently good with many very strong features. All groups of pupils learn equally effectively. Assessment and its use in planning lessons are good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils; set challenging tasks and invariably expect exceptionally high standards of behaviour in lessons.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are of an excellent quality and form the basis of very strong levels of encouragement for pupils to achieve very well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan interesting lessons, supporting good learning habits and skills.
- Planning is good, based on good quality and reliable assessment data.

- Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and, combined with very good use of resources, sustain pupils' interest and motivation very well.
  - Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers and assistants are fully aware of pupils' learning targets.
  - Teaching assistants provide valuable support and are effective in what they do.
13. The quality of teaching is good at all stages of the school in English, mathematics, science, ICT and music. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Even though it was judged to be good then, the proportion of very good and excellent teaching is now higher.

***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 61 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	17 (28%)	24 (39%)	19 (31%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

14. Much of the creation of a very effective learning environment in lessons is based on teachers' very high expectations and the excellent relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, the introduction was particularly challenging, both in content and pace but was delivered with a good deal of humour. This immediately raised pupils' interest and set pupils high expectations of themselves, with all showing very high levels of enthusiasm in answering questions. Because the relationship between the teacher and the pupils was of an extremely high quality, pupils did not take advantage of the light hearted approach, but simply enjoyed the lesson.
15. Teachers also have very high expectations of the standard of pupils' work. Teachers share learning objectives with pupils at the beginning of lessons. This is good because pupils know what is expected of them. Setting arrangements for the teaching of mathematics to pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 enable teachers to focus closely on the learning needs of pupils and they consequently achieve well. In mixed ability classes, teachers are equally effective planning work for pupils at different levels of attainment. Teachers' expectations of pupils are therefore high, but well focused on their ability. Tasks are challenging for pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, higher attainers and pupils with English as an additional language. Planned learning activities are well rooted in the use of ongoing evaluation of pupils' progress in lessons. The time at the end of lessons is often used to check up on what pupils have learned, or to extend learning in preparation for the next lesson.
16. Pupils are taught well to use their knowledge and understanding, for instance, in mathematics and science, so there is a clear purpose to their learning. Teachers ask accurately pitched questions focused on pupils of different ability, and these are effective in furthering all pupils' progress and ensuring that they are all fully included in activities. The best questioning observed was vigorous and made pupils think carefully about the answers to their questions.
17. Planning is good. It includes teachers' use of a good range of teaching and learning methods, which suit pupils well and enable them to learn effectively. In mathematics and science, there is a strong emphasis on developing and using mental and investigative skills to support effective learning. Teachers encourage pupils to use and apply their knowledge and understanding in challenging activities.

18. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The pupils' needs are identified at an early stage. Individual education plans have precise targets. Pupils are well supported, both by the co-ordinator for special educational needs and by the learning support assistants.
19. Assessment procedures in the school are good and information is used effectively to ensure that all pupils are provided with challenging work to do. Older pupils have specific targets on which to focus, and this involves them effectively in their own learning. Procedures for assessment are good in the core subjects, and in other non-core subjects areas are based on assessments at the end of each unit. Assessment information is used effectively to plan the next stages in pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of prior learning in lessons. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, the teacher referred to work done previously, checked pupils' understanding of what they had covered, and then took the learning forward. Even though the previous inspection report highlighted inconsistencies in marking, the quality of marking in pupils' work does not yet always indicate to the pupil how the work can be improved.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **good** overall. The school supports the pupils' learning outside the school day and develops the range of their interests **very well**. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In the Foundation Stage, children make a good start and progress well because of the range of curricular activities organised for them.
- Balance in the curriculum does not always guarantee time for sufficient coverage in subjects such as geography.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good.
- The pupils' learning is enriched successfully through the very wide range of educational visits and visitors and the good range of out of school clubs provided by the school.
- Some pupils are taken out of lessons and, as a result, do not receive their full entitlement to all subjects of the curriculum.
- Good links with local secondary schools enhance the curriculum for pupils.
- Resources for pupils' independent research are under developed.

### **Commentary**

20. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is varied and interesting, incorporating all areas of learning successfully into broad topics and themes. The detailed planning makes a significant contribution to the children's good achievement.
21. The school provides a good curriculum that meets all statutory requirements and allows pupils to work with a wide variety of activities. However, subjects are not interlinked sufficiently well to help pupils understand that what they learn in one subject can be used to help them learn in another. The curriculum provided for pupils in Year 6 is focused on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and insufficient time is given to the teaching of other subjects, such as geography, particularly in the summer term. This is reducing pupils' access to a balanced curriculum.
22. The school supports the curriculum well through a very good range of educational visits and visitors. For example, a history theatre group visits the school regularly and enables pupils to experience life as it was during periods of history, such as the Victorians, Tudors and Ancient Greeks. Poets, authors, musicians and artists in residence provide pupils with a vast range of experiences that enrich their

learning in the creative arts. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit from annual visits to residential centres. The national Healthy Schools initiative has a high profile within the school and provides very good support for pupils' personal, social and health education. Focus theme weeks for subjects such as science and health raise the profile of subjects and are events that support pupils' learning well. There is a very good choice of out of school clubs, which are very well supported. These include badminton, netball, Gaelic football, athletics, chess, dance and music activities and contribute very well to pupils' cultural and social development. The school has been involved in a number of successful projects with the local secondary schools and a nearby teacher training college, which has enabled the school to use their resources and expertise to lift pupils' interest and capability, particularly with the sporting links.

23. As a result of clear leadership, the school has a very positive approach to inclusion. This is apparent in the good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. However, there are times when some pupils are taken out of lessons for extra support or for musical tuition and, as a result, miss important parts of lessons. Otherwise, provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Good use is made of outside agencies to support the pupils' learning. Pupils with emotional and behavioural problems are well integrated into the life of the school. When pupils are withdrawn from class at the same time each week, they do not receive their full curriculum entitlement. Good levels of support are provided for pupils with English as an additional language.
24. The school is well staffed with teachers and there is a satisfactory number of teaching assistants who give valued support to both the teachers and pupils. At the time of the inspection, the quality and quantity of accommodation were satisfactory. Inside, the new entrance hall and library are smart and professional and the whole building is very well maintained. There is currently an extensive building programme taking place, including five new classrooms, two computer suites with full access for disabled pupils. Most subject areas have satisfactory resources. Equipment for ICT is unsatisfactory because, currently, the recommended ratio is not met and not all classrooms have access to the internet. There is only a limited range of books in the new library, many books being in classrooms and there are plans to significantly develop computer based research resources. Currently, this restricts pupils' library and research skills.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are **good**. The school provides **very good** support, advice and guidance to pupils.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Particularly strong and trusting relationships mean all pupils feel very well looked after in school.
- Pupils are well involved in school life and their views are carefully listened to.
- The head teacher is very effective in taking the lead in thorough pastoral support for pupils.
- The health and safety of the pupils is paramount during the major building works.
- The information collected on pupils' academic needs is not always consistently used in class to provide work that is set at different levels to meet different needs.

### **Commentary**

25. The level of trust between the pupils and adults is impressive. Pupils say that they are very happy and secure in school, knowing that they can turn to any one of many adults should they have worries or concerns. Bullying is a very rare occurrence because the head teacher regularly includes the whole school in assemblies about getting on well together. Pupils know that the staff will do all they can to help them, whether they have a problem at home, have fallen out with a friend or are struggling with an activity in class. School routines are consistent and well understood, so the pupils feel comfortable within the framework of daily order. As one parent



commented, 'My son feels totally relaxed with the staff at school and so do I'. St Brigid's pupils are confident, at ease with school life and so achieve very well in their learning.

26. As at the last inspection, pupils continue to be safe and secure while in the school's care. The school is being particularly vigilant in ensuring the current building work impinges as little as possible on the pupils' education. First aid is effective, although the lack of a dedicated welfare room means pupils have to be treated in public areas and there is no comfortable place for recuperation. Minor accidents and the administration of medicines are well recorded for careful monitoring. The school is aware that further staff with first aid training are needed in the nursery and is negotiating deployment for next term.
27. The pastoral support and guidance given to pupils remains very good. Children new to the reception class are settled in very effectively. Each child and parent has a special interview with the class teacher to find out individual needs and children have plenty of opportunity to get to know their surroundings before they start school. The preparation provided to nursery children is not as thorough, but they make a satisfactory start and are soon able to cope with their half day. The provision of personal, social and health education is very good. Not only do pupils have a good, appropriate grounding in their knowledge of drugs, health and sex education, but also they have valuable chances to discuss moral and social issues in their 'circle times' and religious education under the guidance of the strong Catholic ethos. The head teacher plays a very important and close role in identifying the pastoral needs of each pupil. Since he arrived two years ago, he has interviewed every pupil, with note taken of likes and dislikes, talents and progress in the core subjects. Not only do pupils look forward to these interviews and feel very special, but also it gives the head teacher very useful background knowledge for well organised personal support.
28. The school has good systems to identify how each pupil is progressing in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Consequently, pupils are given work which is well matched to their individual needs. However, in other subjects, there is sometimes an insufficient range of activities for the more able and enthusiastic to be stretched and challenged. Pupils with learning difficulties or a limited understanding of English are given good direct assistance in lessons, but there should be a tighter link between the teacher's daily planning and the pupil's individual education plan to ensure consistent support across all subjects. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils with special educational needs well and have a real concern for their welfare.
29. Pupils are well involved in the work of the school. Although the school council is not yet fully functional, very thorough preparation has gone into researching the best structure, setting up the ballots and electing the councillors. Pupils have a good range of jobs, including the junior pupils' responsibilities as 'Playground Pals'. They have also been instrumental in achieving the Healthy Schools' Award by taking part in working parties to discuss the availability of drinking water. The school greatly values the views and ideas of the pupils, as demonstrated by the individual interview which each pupil has with the head teacher. Additionally, pupils raise significant charitable funds for the less fortunate. Pupils are becoming good citizens by learning to care for their community both in school and beyond.

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

The school has a **very good** partnership with parents. Links with the community are **good**. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is providing very good amounts of information in a successful bid to make education more accessible and open to parents.
- The views of parents are greatly valued.
- The pupils' learning experiences benefit positively from very strong links with other schools and colleges.
- Annual reports are not all sufficiently consistent in giving a clear message to parents on how much their children have progressed in each subject over the year.

## **Commentary**

30. The head teacher and his staff are working very well to include parents as much as possible in the life of the school and their children's learning. Parents of new pupils, particularly those starting in reception, are given plenty of useful information about school routines and how to help their child's learning from home. The head teacher personally runs a very well received 'parenting' course for these families. Regular weekly newsletters provide a very good flavour of school life and the governors' 'Question Time' sessions give parents good opportunities to ask questions or raise concerns. Although parent teacher meetings are held in the hall, parents are free to go to the classrooms to look at work and displays by their children. Homework procedures are clear and consistent. They provide a valuable link with home by allowing parents to share learning and to chart how their children are getting on.
31. Annual reports give a good overview of what pupils have covered in lessons and are particularly perceptive on personal development. However, teachers are not all consistent in giving a clear message to parents on how the pupils have progressed in each subject over the year. Internal test results provided each term for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, keep parents well informed about the levels their children are achieving. Parents of children in the reception class receive very thorough reports, but the information on the progress of the children in nursery is not sufficiently comprehensive. The school has good links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are invited to attend meetings to review the pupils' progress although not all do so. The very good arrangement for the transfer of pupils to secondary school ensures a smooth transition.
32. The establishment of regular consultation is giving parents a very good voice in the running of the school. Recent school survey results and the inspection questionnaires show very positive appreciation of the school. They believe the school has become much more open and outward looking since the last inspection. Parents feel that they are real partners in their children's education and that they are valued by the school. As yet, only a few parents are taking up the opportunity to help in classrooms or to share their valuable talents and experiences with the pupils. Gradually, however, the volunteer pool is increasing.
33. St Brigid's has very useful links with a wide range of schools. Especially strong is the partnership with other primary schools for competitive sport. The school also works very productively with its local Catholic and county schools to benefit professional development and financial savings from bulk ordering. The majority of pupils move on very confidently to the nearby Roman Catholic secondary school. Transition is very effective because, not only do pupils have plenty of opportunities to get to know their new school and its staff, but also part of their mathematics, English and ICT learning straddles Year 6 to Year 7.
34. Links with the local community provide good opportunities to enliven the pupils' learning. For example, the useful relationship with Land Rover adds an extra dimension to the pupils' understanding of design technology. The school gives to the locality in return by letting the hall

to the Guides and Youth Group, amongst others, and by including the local elderly in choir visits. The very strong link with St Brigid's church is a vital component in the ethos of the school. Not only do religious education and collective worship benefit, but also the sharing of facilities and the contribution of church governors are positive assets.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. The head teacher provides **very good** leadership to the staff as they work to raise standards. The **good** management systems focus clearly on improving the pupils' achievement. The governors make a **very good** contribution to the running of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head teacher is a very good leader and ensures that there is a strong sense of direction in the school.
- The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and contributes very well to the progress the school is making.
- There are very good systems for evaluating the work of the school and for setting targets for future development.
- The subject co-ordinators generally lead their curriculum areas well.
- There is a strong team spirit amongst the staff and a firm commitment to meet the needs of all pupils.

### **Commentary**

35. The head teacher has a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do to develop further. This is shared and appreciated by other members of the senior management team so that teachers and pupils have very good role models. Parents have confidence in, and are very supportive of, the way the school is led and managed. The head teacher plays a key role in evaluating the work of the school. He meets children regularly to look at their work and to discuss their progress. He reviews each subject with its co-ordinator. The result of these meetings informs the school development plan and enables realistic targets for future development to be set. The progress made in carrying out the school development plan is reviewed at each meeting of the governing body. A strong feature of assessment is the Individual Pupil Review which the head teacher holds with each pupil over the year. Progress in English, mathematics, science and religious education is reviewed, and targets are decided upon. Pupils have the opportunity to reflect on what they have enjoyed and, following the review and target setting, the pupils' books are sent to the core subject leaders, so key staff are aware of what individual pupil targets for their next stages in learning are.
36. The strong team spirit amongst the staff means that all feel valued. They work together well for the benefit of all pupils. The teachers with responsibility for leading subjects work hard. In English, mathematics and science, and in other subjects that are a particular focus for the school, they observe lessons to check on standards. They monitor pupils' work and this enables them to identify areas needing development and to build on examples of good practice. They work closely with the governing body by making presentations to them. The work of the subject co-ordinators is supported by good arrangements for the professional development of staff and by good procedures to induct new staff to the school. Subject leaders scrutinise the results of National Tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, and this enables them to plan future work with teachers to address weaker areas of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Subject leaders monitor teachers' planning and observe lessons in these subjects. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

37. The governors' involvement in the school is very good. They support the head teacher in bringing about development and improvement by making a major contribution to the life and work of the school. Governors are confident and have a very clear idea of where the strengths and weaknesses lie in the school. They have very effective systems for monitoring the standards pupils attain and the budget. Through this, they are able to challenge and support senior staff and take a full part in development planning.
38. Since the previous inspection, the school has made good improvement. The pupils achieve well in each of the key stages so that standards for the oldest pupils are very good overall. The management of the school's budget is good. The secretarial staff give very good support in the day to day running of the school. Because of the school's low unit cost, it provides very good value for money.

### **Financial information**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	896,102	Balance from previous year	0
Total expenditure	857,635	Balance carried forward to the next	38,467
Expenditure per pupil	2,066		

## **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**.

39. Children enter the nursery part-time in the September after their third birthday and transfer to the reception classes in the September after their fourth birthday. They enter the nursery from a wide variety of backgrounds with speaking and language skills that vary quite widely. A significant number of children enter the nursery with limited social skills. From this below average starting point, children achieve well in all areas of learning and by the end of the reception year, most will meet the goals children are expected to reach. This is because the teaching is good overall and the curriculum is well planned to provide a good range of interesting and relevant activities, which are well matched to children's needs. This is especially significant in ensuring the good progress for children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.
40. The accommodation inside is good but outside facilities for children in the reception classes are unsatisfactory due to the lack of a separate secure outside play area. This has been identified by the school as a major project for development. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership for teachers and nursery nurses, who work together effectively as a team. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

- Children achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Very good relationships between children and adults ensure that children feel confident and happy.
- Children are not always given enough independence in the nursery.

#### **Commentary**

41. An above average number of children enter the nursery with below average personal and social skills. The good teamwork of the adults in the nursery and the clear boundaries set ensure that the children know what is expected of them, so that they quickly learn the correct way to behave. Routines are well established and children very soon feel secure and settle to tasks with a minimum of fuss. Children are encouraged to share and take turns amicably and put up their hands when answering questions. However, there are times when activities are too controlled and, as a result, the children's ability to initiate ideas for themselves is hampered. In the reception classes, they make rapid progress and, by the time they reach the end of the reception year, many children have reached the Early Learning Goals. All adults encourage the development of social skills in a variety of ways, such as encouraging them to work together in different groups and to support one another as they play. The children show interest in what they are doing, are engrossed in their activities and sustain concentration well. The very supportive relationships ensure children grow in confidence and learn to treat others with courtesy and respect. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as additional language are very well integrated and receive good support. They, and others, are helped to maintain concentration by the nature of the activities offered. As a result, many children sit quietly, listen attentively and are confident to try new things.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers and support staff take every opportunity to develop children's language skills and teaching is good.
- Children in the nursery are well prepared to move into the reception classes.

### **Commentary**

42. Most children are on course to attain this Early Learning Goal by the end of the reception year. This shows good achievement as many children start school with below average communication and language skills. In the nursery, the children are given many opportunities to talk and listen. However, there is a minority of children in the nursery who still need encouragement to talk with others while at play, rather than play alone. When given the opportunity to share their ideas and news with an adult, they sustain attentive listening and respond with relevant comments. By the end of the reception year, most children express their own ideas well. Learning new vocabulary is a priority in the reception classes and staff take every opportunity during the activities to develop the children's vocabulary through probing questions, so that they have to think and choose appropriate words to describe what they are doing. Dressing up clothes and imaginative play areas are used effectively to stimulate communication between children. Children particularly enjoy acting out stories and enthusiastically use stick puppets to re-tell the story of 'The Little Mermaid'. Those children with English as an additional language are effectively encouraged to learn new vocabulary and become increasingly confident to speak with others and to the whole class.
43. Children make a good start to reading in the nursery. Activities, such as looking at pictures, matching them to words and learning to recognise the sounds of letters, are carefully planned and prepare children well for entry to the reception. In the reception classes, the development of reading skills has a high priority and many children are beginning to read simple texts with developing fluency and use picture clues and sounds to tackle unfamiliar words. Good use is made of sentence makers to support children's reading and writing skills. Children in the reception classes have many opportunities to express themselves by making marks on paper, such as 'writing' postcards home and booking a holiday at the travel agents. However, there is less evidence of this good practice occurring in the nursery class. The work from children in the reception classes showed good achievement, with a good number of children successfully writing simple sentences independently.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well in their counting and number recognition.
- Learning is made enjoyable and develops children's ability to solve practical problems.

### **Commentary**

44. Teaching and learning are good. Regular sorting activities, number games and action songs are successful strategies for promoting children's learning in the nursery. Good teaching in the reception classes helps all children to extend their knowledge and understanding and achieve well. As a result, the majority of children are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals for mathematical development.
45. The reception teachers have imaginative ideas to enhance children's learning. During one well planned activity, the teacher skilfully used a story about a fisherman who, after being out fishing all night, had to count and sort all the fish ready for delivery to the market. To extend this further, the teacher involved children in a problem solving exercise, as the fisherman lost some fish and they had to think of a way to work out how many had gone. In this session, children were developing their mathematical ideas well to solve practical problems involving counting and comparing.
46. By the end of the reception year, most children have gained sufficient knowledge and understanding of number to count and recognise numbers beyond the level expected for their age with good levels of confidence and accuracy. The more able children are recording simple addition sums to 20. Their use and understanding of everyday words, such as 'more than' and 'less than', when talking about numbers are well developed. The children's previous work showed that they had made a good start in recognising coins and understanding the language of time and measurement.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A wide range of interesting activities is planned to promote learning in this area.
- Role-play is used well in the reception classes to deepen and extend children's experiences.

### **Commentary**

47. Overall, the good quality teaching successfully promotes children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The children make good progress in the reception classes and most children will achieve the Early Learning Goals in this broad area of development. A good variety of interesting activities are planned well to stimulate children's curiosity and enhance their understanding. For example, the children were shown a collection of objects to choose which they would take on a safari holiday. During this activity, the teacher encouraged the children to give reasons for their choice and talk about features of the place they were going to. Role-play is also used well to increase children's knowledge and understanding of everyday life. Play areas are converted to enable children to use their imagination, for example, by visiting a 'travel agent', where they book a holiday before getting ready to go to the seaside. All children have the opportunity to observe natural living things and, by the time they leave reception, they know a lot about the natural world and have developed appropriate scientific skills to investigate objects that float or sink. Children in the nursery begin to gain an understanding of the past as they celebrate birthdays and special events.
48. A particular strength in the nursery is the children's use of computers where they have clearly learned to use the mouse competently to create brightly coloured pictures. In the reception classes, children learn how to make a programmable toy move in different directions. Their awareness of religious and cultural traditions is suitably enhanced through stories and through role-play activities. A strong sense of their own religious beliefs and customs is very well promoted through religious education lessons and through the school's strong Catholic ethos.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

49. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards. Analysis of teachers' planning and work on display shows that most aspects of this area of learning are well thought out but the children's attainment and achievement in the reception classes are hampered by the lack of access to a dedicated play area where they can play with large pieces of apparatus and equipment. The reception teachers do, however, set up relevant activities in the playground to provide children with a range of experiences to support their physical development. They also have physical education lessons in the school hall and outside. These were not observed during the inspection. There is a safe outside play area attached to the nursery which provides children with a suitable range of opportunities to enable them to gain confidence and extend their skills in running, climbing and in using wheeled toys. The time outdoors is timetabled and, in general, the planned opportunities support the physical development of children well. Most children were seen to move with suitable control and increasing confidence as they clambered over the equipment and rode the tricycles. In terms of their physical development overall, evidence available indicates the children achieve satisfactorily.
50. Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their manual skills in the nursery and reception classes, for example, by handling dough, filling containers in the water tray and completing simple jigsaws. They are provided with a suitable range of pencils for drawing and different tools for painting and printing. As a result, by the end of reception, the children demonstrate increasing skill and control in the use of scissors, glue sticks, construction sets and puzzles.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The overall provision is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good opportunities for imaginative play in the reception classes.
- Children in the nursery have too few ongoing free choice activities.
- Opportunities for music enrich the children's experiences.

### Commentary

51. Good teaching and learning enable children to achieve well and meet the goals they are expected to reach in their creative development by the end of reception. In the nursery, children have the opportunity to experiment with texture and colour. For instance, when painting, they learn to make the colour green by mixing the blue and yellow paints and by pulling string through the finished painting, they create attractive patterns.
52. Teaching is good overall and children in the reception classes use a range of different materials to make animals and trees for an Amazon rainforest, and with pasta and shells, make necklaces for mermaids. There is a wealth of opportunities for imaginative play in the reception classes which encourage the children to participate, and there is a lot of fun when they do. For instance, when going on a seaside holiday, there is a great deal of laughter as they dress up in a selection of swimming costumes. Adults provide sensitive support to the children while they play, without dominating their activities. In the nursery, however, the organisation of learning opportunities for children to use their imagination is limited and there are too few opportunities provided for children to choose a play activity for themselves or for adults to spend time with the children as they play. As a result, many children play alongside rather than co-operatively with other children. The organisation in the reception classes enables all children to experience the activities on offer.



53. Children benefit from a weekly lesson with the music specialist in the school. She is building up their skills in music successfully as well as helping them to gain an enjoyment for the subject. During the week of the inspection, children also had the added enjoyment of working with a visiting group of musicians when they learned to play instruments with increasing confidence to make loud and soft sounds on a given command.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good and this helps pupils to learn well, attaining above average standards.
- Pupils develop very good listening and reading skills
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils help their learning.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' cultural development.
- Pupils make little use of information and communication technology to draft and edit their work.

#### **Commentary**

54. In the 2003 national tests, pupils at the end of Year 6 attained results that were well above the national average. This level has been maintained for reading and listening and inspection evidence shows that, when speaking and writing are taken into account, standards for all pupils are currently above average. The good standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained and this represents a good level of improvement since then. Younger pupils achieve well. They leave the Foundation Stage with standards in line with expectations and reach good standards by the age of seven. Older pupils achieve well because when they leave the school they have very good standards in reading and listening and have maintained their good standards of speaking and writing. This also represents very good achievement since the Foundation Stage, when children enter with below average language and literacy skills.
55. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and achieve well against the language and literacy targets in their individual education plans. Provision for the few pupils with English as an additional language is managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator, supported by the local education authority. These pupils are progressing well in acquiring English language skills and they are achieving well.
56. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to listen to other pupils and adults in the school. Younger pupils do this well and older pupils listen very well, both to their teachers and to their peers. This reflects their growing maturity and is seen in the responses they make. Standards of speaking are good. Pupils have a good understanding of the specialist vocabulary they need for subjects like design and technology, science and mathematics but they do not easily express themselves at length. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to discuss points that occur during lessons.
57. The very good standards that older pupils attain in reading are evident from the confident way they discuss favourite authors, like Philip Pullman, J.R. Tolkein and Jacqueline Wilson. They read widely, belong to local libraries and use the internet for information to support their learning. This makes a very good contribution to the pupils' cultural development through visits from poets and authors, the context of lessons and the books the pupils read themselves. They also have a very good level of understanding, as shown when Year 6 pupils discussed and appreciated the feelings of the characters in the autobiographical text, 'There is a Happy Land.' Younger pupils read well. They understand what they are reading and observe punctuation. Their reading record is an effective link between home and school and parents support their progress well. There are not enough books in the school library to encourage independent learning across the curriculum.

58. The pupils' attainment in writing is above average. Pupils are presented with a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes and using diverse styles. Higher attaining pupils respond well to these tasks and their writing in Year 6 shows that they write very effectively, using appropriate styles for different purposes. Their writing includes creative fictional writing, factual writing or re-telling stories in their own words, basing their work on texts such as, 'The Diary of Anne Frank'. Most pupils use imaginative vocabulary effectively. They organise their work accurately into simple or complex paragraphs, which include appropriate punctuation and accurate spelling. Older pupils record visits to Birmingham Council Chamber and to Alton Castle that reflect the very good provision the school makes to enrich the curriculum. Average and lower attaining pupils have the same writing opportunities and most use paragraph structure well, but do not use adventurous vocabulary to good effect. Grammar is generally used accurately but sometimes more complex rules are not effectively applied for example, subject and verb do not always agree. Younger pupils write poems, retell traditional tales and write instructions well. They spell accurately and increasingly add details that make their writing lively.
59. Teaching is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan a good range of meaningful opportunities for pupils to learn English language skills. These are effectively managed and delivered to support the good achievement pupils make. Teachers manage the pupils very well and encourage them to do their best. As a result, pupils have very good attitudes to work and their behaviour is very good in lessons. They work hard and this has a positive effect on their learning. Planning is good and teachers use the Literacy Strategy framework effectively and confidently. The pupils' work is marked regularly but teachers do not always comment sufficiently on its quality in a way that helps pupils to improve or helps them know how well they are doing.
60. At present, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use a computer to draft and edit their work. The school does not have enough computers, although this will be remedied once the new computer suites are opened and stocked. The leadership and management in English are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a realistic assessment of the current situation and has plans for further development. However, she is too new to the post to have made significant impact as yet.

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

61. This is good and a good range of opportunities is given to pupils to write at length in other subjects, including history, geography and religious education. For example, pupils in Year 4 keep a diary during a school holiday in preparation for writing in the style of Samuel Pepys describing the Great Fire of London. At all ages, pupils have a good understanding of vocabulary that is specific to subjects, such as science. This supports their learning well.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils are very well managed and they learn in a calm and effective learning environment.

- The curriculum is good and all areas of mathematics, including using and applying knowledge and understanding, are well provided for.
- Setting of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 is effective and helps teachers accurately focus work for pupils at all levels of attainment to ensure good levels of challenge.
- The subject is well led and there are clear plans for further improvement.

### **Commentary**

62. As a result of a good start in the Foundation Stage, most pupils enter Year 1 having achieved the standards set by the Early Learning Goals. This good level of achievement is maintained throughout the school and above average standards are reached by the end of Year 2 and well above by the end of Year 6. This is consistent with the results of the national tests, which have been consistently well above average at Year 6. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to be above average by the end of Year 6.
63. Good teaching and learning throughout the school make effective use of a good assessment programme, so that learning is able to build on a clear understanding of what pupils have achieved and what they should learn next. Different levels within the activities are planned for pupils of different attainment so that all can move forwards confidently. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are taught in ability groups so that teachers can accurately and effectively focus on the learning needs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them effectively so that pupils at all levels of attainment and at all stages of the school achieve well, resulting in very good achievement overall. This is a feature of all lessons, even in mixed ability classes, where teachers plan for all levels of attainment effectively so that different groups of pupils achieve, irrespective of ability year on year. Teachers make activities interesting and, in the best lessons, planning is of high quality and ensures that a wide range of mathematical skills is covered. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson where pupils started using large numbers in mental calculations and these skills were soon transferred to calculating percentage and decimal parts of amounts, solving everyday problems competently and confidently.
64. An important feature of the good quality of teaching is the very good management of pupils. This means that they are invariably very well behaved and they have very positive attitudes towards their learning. This enables the creation of a very effective learning environment, in which pupils sensibly get on with their work and enables teachers and teaching assistants to support focus groups effectively and without being distracted.
65. An established co-ordinator and one recently appointed effectively lead the subject in collaboration with each other. Due to staffing circumstances, they have to take on board responsibility for analysis of assessment data. This they do willingly and have developed strategies to ensure high standards are maintained and any identified weaknesses are addressed effectively. Their good subject knowledge and good ideas about how to lead and develop mathematics in the school support improved provision and high standards well.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

66. Mathematics skills are used well across the curriculum. The success of the initiatives to extend pupils' ability to apply the skills learned in mathematics is particularly evident in their work in science and in their handling of data and graphs when using databases.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6.
- The good quality of teaching and learning is supported by teachers' very high expectations and very good management of pupils.
- There is a very clear emphasis on experimental and investigative science, which supports pupils' knowledge and understanding, and this results in pupils developing very good skills in this area of science.
- Assessment data is used effectively to target work well to pupils' individual needs.
- Developmental marking, which would further raise standards, is not yet an established feature of ongoing assessment
- The leadership and management of science are very good.

### **Commentary**

67. Standards in science are above average at the end of Year 2, and are well above average at the end of Year 6. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained at the end of Year 2, and have improved at the end of Year 6. This agrees with the results of national tests this year, which are well above average. This is an improvement on judgements made on attainment at the time of the previous inspection, when standards were above average. Pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language, achieve well at all stages, resulting in very good achievement overall.
68. Pupils' progress in use of technical vocabulary is good. Their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and correct scientific vocabulary are developed effectively throughout Years 1 to 6. For example, children in Year 2 were able to give accurate detail of how butterflies eventually emerge from a chrysalis, and they described clearly the process as metamorphosis. In a Year 4 class, pupils accurately described the conditions for fair testing. In a Year 6 class, pupils suggested that a solution that they had made was 'opaque', that it could be filtered and that this would produce a residue in the filter paper. This describes expected outcomes at Year 6.
69. The quality of teaching is good, and is characterised by good subject knowledge, clear planning, very good pupil management with high expectations of behaviour, and good use of assessment information. Clear introductions to lessons provide pupils with a secure understanding of what they are doing. There are high expectations of all pupils from teachers, and the impact of this in lessons is that pupils make good progress in the tasks they are set. Teachers used a good range of techniques to engage the pupils' interest, including a wide range of teaching and learning styles which often clearly demonstrate the importance of science in everyday life. For example, in one very good lesson on light and reflection, Year 1 pupils acted out the role of a school crossing patrol, and luminous work jackets were used to illustrate that materials reflect light. There is a good level of challenge and pace, and pupils responded well, learning new skills and acquiring knowledge quickly. Investigative approaches to learning science are very well promoted throughout the school. Pupils make very good progress in developing these skills, and, by the time they reach Year 6, they know how to design appropriate investigations to answer a particular question. In doing this, they make hypotheses detailing what they think the outcomes will be, choose appropriate resources to check their predictions and give explanations of why things happened.
70. The good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to use a range of effective questioning techniques, which involved all pupils. In the lessons seen, teachers directed more difficult

questions to the higher attaining pupils. Those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language were included, and challenged, through an appropriate level of questions. In the best lesson, pupils' answers were used by the teachers to take all pupils' learning forward.

71. Ongoing assessment of pupils' work and progress following completion of units of work is well established in the school, and science assessment data is used effectively to target work well to pupils' individual needs. Teachers use the information gained effectively to ensure that pupils at all levels of attainment are provided with work at an appropriate level, which they can cope with, but which is still challenging and moves them on at a good pace. Pupils are involved in deciding their targets for the next steps in learning. This enables them to know how well they are doing and encourages them to take on responsibility for their own learning. Scrutiny of work indicates that the quality of marking of pupils' work varies, and does not consistently show how they might improve their work.
72. The leadership and management of science are very good, with a science co-ordination team which works very effectively. Clear understanding of how to manage and resource science throughout the school is based on very good subject knowledge, and in-service training of staff in investigative science has improved the attainment of all groups of pupils in this aspect of science. Their monitoring is effective and the school has a good idea of how well individual pupils are achieving. Books are seen by the science co-ordinator, and pupils see the head teacher as part of the individual pupil review process, and share what they have been doing in science.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school does well to maintain average standards for pupils by the end of Year 6 in spite of limited resources.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The accommodation and resources for the subject are under development within the current building programme, in order to provide much improved resources. .

### **Commentary**

73. The achievement of pupils throughout the school is satisfactory and standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. This is the same as at the time of the previous inspection and, therefore, the level of improvement has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In spite of limited resources, teachers have been able to provide sufficient ICT experience so that all pupils achieve satisfactorily. The pace of work is generally brisk, with each pupil challenged to work hard and learn well, achieving as highly as they possibly can. This means that there is sufficient time for all pupils to build satisfactory skills through hands-on experience. As pupils progress from year to year, teachers ensure that a secure skills base is established and used to consolidate computer skills. The curriculum is well designed so that knowledge and understanding deepen as pupils progress through the school. Year 6 pupils, for instance, recalled work in Year 5 on spreadsheets before moving from simple data handling to using a spreadsheet program to solve mathematical problems.

74. The good leadership given by the subject leaders has been particularly evident during this period of building development and in their planning for the future setting up of two computer suites. As well-skilled and knowledgeable teachers, they have very clear ideas and great enthusiasm for future development of ICT as a subject in itself and as a cross-curricular enrichment for other subjects. They have ensured that all teachers have had training, particularly to gain the skills necessary to make good use of use ICT resources and programs in their classrooms, along with the confidence to do so. This means that pupils are able to prepare their own multi media presentations, for example, and use the opportunities provided through the internet access to make their work in other subjects more meaningful and relevant.

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

75. The subject leaders have worked hard to ensure that the scheme of work is matched to the resources available and support to pupils' learning in other subjects and ICT is used satisfactorily to support learning. Pupils are also given good opportunity to reinforce computer skills at these times

### **HUMANITIES**

Geography was sampled. Insufficient evidence was gathered to make secure judgements about the overall provision. Two lessons were seen, pupils' work was analysed, photographic evidence was seen and discussions were held with pupils. History is reported in full and religious education is subject to a Section 23 inspection.

76. In **geography**, pupils in Year 2 have satisfactory knowledge of their own area through work in school that is supported by visits in and around their own locality, which help them to create simple maps and gain an understanding of the use of keys. They develop a wider sense of the world through the study of places beyond their locality, but, in general, find it more difficult to locate countries on a map of the world. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. Most pupils are stretched by the challenges that the teachers give them. For example, in the Year 3 lesson, pupils developed a good awareness of how the weather affects their choice of holidays, using a weather forecast made by a local broadcaster. Through a very imaginative approach, the teacher made learning both relevant and enjoyable. The teacher asked pupils to consider who would need to know this information. In small groups, the pupils researched the five-day weather forecasts of different places around the world and, using the information, produced their own good quality weather reports to try and persuade the class to choose their destination for a holiday. In Year 4, the challenge was to consider how people could improve the environment. The pupils made very good progress through the teacher's very good use of resources and the questions she used to make them think deeply and come up with ideas of recycling and re-using waste that would normally be thrown away. However, there was very little evidence in the workbooks of pupils in Year 6 to show that they are building on this good start and applying the skills acquired to new learning. Currently, the time allocated for the subject in Year 6 is inadequate and there is not sufficient time for pupils to develop more demanding high level geographical skills in order raise standards further.

### **HISTORY**

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

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

- The work provided interests the pupils.
- Pupils have a secure knowledge of the periods of history that they have covered but their ability to interpret historical events for themselves is weaker.
- There are good links with literacy and pupils' social and cultural development is fostered well.

- A very good range of visitors and visits enriches the subject.

## Commentary

77. Overall, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectations in Year 2 and in Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The analysis of pupils' work confirms that most pupils are making satisfactory progress. Standards are similar to the previous inspection and improvement is satisfactory.
78. In the lesson seen in Year 1, the teacher made good use of photographs of seaside holidays from the past, and of the present day, to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding of chronology. The pupils were fascinated to see a film of people on holiday in 1890 and 1910 and used the information to compare the clothes worn then with those worn by people now. Pupils' work in Year 2, including a history book of their own life, shows that they have an emerging sense of time and order. Their understanding of what life was like for the people of Ancient Egypt is developed well by using books, pictures and artifacts for research. This makes a good contribution to pupils' learning skills. In Years 3 to 6, pupils build satisfactorily on their previous knowledge and understanding of different periods of British history. Pupils in Year 4 have gained a real sense of the Tudor period and understand that life in a country mansion differed greatly with that of living in the city of London.
79. Teachers use the subject effectively to promote literacy skills. For example, in the lessons observed in Year 5, teachers provided pupils with articles about the Olympic Games relating to both ancient and modern Greece, which they used to extract information to find out answers to questions, effectively contributing to the development of research skills. The methods used allowed pupils to work together and support one another in their learning, effectively promoting collaborative learning skills. Throughout both lessons, pupils were attentive and listened respectfully to the ideas of others. Past work of pupils in Year 6 shows that they have studied Britain since 1930 and gained a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the life and times of people who lived in the past. They show particular interest in the 1960's as they consider the significance of the life of John Lennon and the Beatles. However, there is less evidence of pupils following a line of enquiry in depth and going beyond the facts to interpret the effects of change.
80. Visits to places of historical interest, such as Selly Manor House, Harvington Hall and the many visits from a history theatre group, 'Timezone', enhance pupils' learning well. Their understanding of social and cultural differences is developed well through history. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear overview of standards through scrutiny of pupils' books and matching the work to the planned curriculum. As a result, she has produced a suitable action plan for the development of the subject.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Insufficient evidence was gathered to make secure judgements about the overall provision in art and design, design and technology and physical education. Two lessons were seen in art and design, three in design and technology and only one lesson was observed in physical education. In addition, pupils' work was analysed, photographic evidence was seen and discussions were held with pupils. Music is reported in full.

81. In the two **art and design** lessons seen, and work on display, standards are above average. Pastel drawings of fruit in Year 6 show good observational skills, with clear attention to shape, tone and detail. Displays of half-photographs that pupils have completed, using a range of media, again demonstrate good observational skills, choice of appropriate media and attention to detail. Displayed work shows good progress in developing key practical skills as pupils move through the school. Art and design makes a significant contribution towards the spiritual



and cultural development of pupils, as seen in the value placed by the whole school community on the Triptych created in conjunction with an artist in residence. The art portfolio confirms that pupils use an extensive range of media and learn to appreciate art from diverse cultures, such as Aboriginal Art on display in Year 1 classrooms. The leadership and management of art and design are effective. There are clear plans for the art co-ordinator to monitor provision to ensure standards are maintained.

82. In the **design and technology** work seen, pupils attain as expected for their age. In the lessons seen, there was clear guidance from teachers to pupils to use the design process of plan, do and review. In the Year 3 lesson, pupils were asked to design a healthy snack, as part of a series of lessons about food from different European countries. The room was well prepared with a range of materials for making an Italian snack. Pupils referred to previous work they had done on preparing food from France, and then they were encouraged to think how they might choose ingredients, being prompted to use a range of their senses. The lesson made a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development through an introduction to Italian food and learning to pronounce the names of the foods they were going to choose. There were good links with science as pupils discussed the texture and healthy eating. Pupils talked to their partners about what they were going to make, and eventually how they might have improved their snack. Pupils demonstrated good speaking and listening skills and turn taking. In Year 2, pupils investigate wheels and axles as part of a longer series of lessons in which they are to design and produce a wheeled vehicle, satisfactorily learning about simple mechanics. The school has identified design and technology as an area for development in the Autumn Term 2004, and the school is well placed to put these plans in place, in order to enhance the quality of provision throughout the school. Leadership and management of design and technology are satisfactory. The subject leader has not yet had sufficient opportunities to monitor teaching and learning.
83. In **physical education**, all pupils have the opportunity to achieve the national standard for competency in swimming and almost all achieve this award. In the one lesson seen in games, teaching and learning were good, and all the pupils were actively engaged. Standards in this lesson were satisfactory. The teacher showed a good knowledge of the subject, and enabled the children to meet the lesson aims, with a clear focus on warming up, and relaxing after the session. Children were organised effectively into teams in order to keep all active throughout. Good questioning and evaluation from the teacher raised pupils' awareness of standards and helped them to improve their performance.
84. The subject leader is enthusiastic, very well organised and leads the subject well. A comprehensive scheme of work provides clear guidance. The school provides a rich curriculum. All pupils have opportunities for residential experiences where they undertake Adventurous Activities in Years 4, 5 and 6. Participation in orienteering, climbing, abseiling, cycling and trekking develops pupils' physical skills well. In addition, there is a wide range of extra curricular games opportunities, including judo, tag rugby, tennis and Gaelic football. This adds to the rich curriculum and contributes well to pupils' personal development

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Music teaching is good and benefits from the expertise of a music specialist.
- There is good curriculum enrichment, which further develops pupils' experience, knowledge and understanding in music.

- Music makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life of the school.
- The leadership and management of music are good.
- The school's good resources are used effectively to give pupils valuable practical experience.

### **Commentary**

85. Music sessions are mainly taught by a specialist music teacher, with class teachers remaining to support their classes. This means that pupils have access to very good teacher knowledge, providing them with accurate teaching, and with high expectation of their learning. Consequently, pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6.
86. Music is given a high profile in the school and lessons take place in the music room, which is very well equipped with a wide range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. These are used effectively to give pupils good opportunities to develop very good instrument playing skills. This has a direct impact on pupils' good achievement. There are good planned opportunities for curriculum enrichment, which provide further good opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. These range from stimulating live performances and workshop sessions, which are held for pupils throughout the school, to individual music tuition. A high number of pupils take advantage of these opportunities. Singing in a music worship session was sensitive, tuneful and pupils were committed to performing at a high level. Pupils in Year 4, who sang solo verses, showed skill and confidence in these performances, and they were supported by all the pupils taking part in the session. This was very much an inclusive activity in which the contribution of all was valued. The atmosphere in the hall was often reflective and moving, and music clearly makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual life of the school.
87. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and is skills based, enabling all children to have a good grounding in the core musical skills of singing, listening, performing and composing. The specialist teacher's very good subject knowledge and teaching skills result in significant gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding of music. It also enables them to teach accurately. By the end of Year 6, most pupils sing complex compositions. Teachers maintain a good pace in lessons, to ensure all pupils remain on task. Older pupils respond well to musical challenges to extend their listening and rhythmic skills, and work together to produce short improvised performances, which they obviously enjoy.
88. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn musical instruments in school, and these opportunities are open to all. Tuition is provided by specialist instrumental teachers, and recorder teaching for all pupils from Year 2 is planned. There is a good range of other extra curricular opportunities to support the good provision in music. These include choirs and musical tuition.
89. The leadership and management of music are good. There are good opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor provision, ensuring good curriculum coverage and very good opportunities for curriculum enrichment. There are good plans for further development and music is part of the ongoing school development plan.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

There is not enough evidence to report on this area fully.

90. Personal, social and health education is given a high priority in the school. It makes a very good contribution to establishing excellent relationships between everyone in the school. Its success

is reflected in pupils' very good attitudes to learning, which support their very good achievement. The comprehensive scheme of work links well to other subjects. For example, work in design and technology on foods is linked very well to the national *Healthy Schools* initiative, which is given a high profile in the school. The school has recently received *Healthy Schools* recognition. Sex education is sensitively taught through the school's 'Family Life' policy that links closely with the religious education programme. The Catholic ethos of the school underpins all its work and the importance placed on pupils' personal development.

91. The school has participated in a wide range of health education events that make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, the 'Health Education Caravan' visits the school and a representative of 'Life', a charity that looks after severely disabled babies, spoke to Year 6 pupils about the growth of a baby. Throughout this talk, all pupils listened attentively with great respect and maturity.
92. In the one 'Circle Time' session observed, where pupils in Year 2 were considering what they like to do with their friends, the teaching, learning and achievement were good. Pupils felt sufficiently at ease to be able to share their thoughts and concerns openly due, to the sensitive questioning and response of the class teacher. Pupils they feel confident that they can discuss any problems with any adult in the school, as they will always be listened to.
93. The newly formed School Council is providing many opportunities for pupils to be involved in the running of the school and developing their awareness of citizenship. Visits from local dignitaries, such as the Lord Major and a local Member of Parliament further support their understanding of the meaning of citizenship. As pupils get older, teachers give them increasing responsibility, preparing them well for the next stage of their education. Pupils in Years 6 are given added responsibilities of becoming 'Playground Pals'. They receive training for this position and have a very clear sense of responsibility when carrying out the role, adding to the harmonious atmosphere at break times.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### Inspection judgement

### Grade

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the head teacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

