

INSPECTION REPORT

ST EDMUND'S AND ST THOMAS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Waterloo, Liverpool

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104928

Headteacher: Mrs Una Malcolm

Lead inspector: Mrs Paula Allison

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th January 2004

Inspection number: 257637

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 –11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	327

School address:	Oxford Road Waterloo Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L22 8QF

Telephone number:	0151 9285586
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Fr J Cullen

Date of previous inspection:	January 2002
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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in Waterloo, some six miles to the north of Liverpool. There are currently 327 pupils aged four to 11 on roll, making it bigger than other primary schools. There are more boys than girls and this imbalance affects some year groups quite significantly. Pupils are taught in 13 classes; there is no nursery. The school generally serves the local area, which is socially very mixed. Fourteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Pupil mobility is below average. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances of pupils are average.

Most pupils are of white British background, with a few from minority ethnic groups. All pupils have English as their first language. Children come to the school with a range of pre-school educational experiences. Assessments made as children enter the reception classes, indicate that attainment on entry is broadly in line with what is expected for children of this age. Three per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is well below average. This is much lower than it has been in the past. However, this figure does fluctuate from year to year. For example, 20 per cent of last year's Year 6 pupils had identified learning needs, which had an impact on the end of key stage results for that year.

The school occupies two sites, 100 metres apart, which has caused difficulties in the past with continuity through the school. The school was last inspected in 2002 and was judged to be underachieving. A follow-up visit in 2003 by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools indicated that the school was making good progress in eliminating the causes of underachievement.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21420	Paula Allison	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Music Physical education Foundation Stage of Learning
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17756	Heather Monaghan	Team inspector	English Science Art and design Design and technology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school that has, since the last inspection two years ago, improved considerably. There is no longer any underachievement. Standards are generally above average and pupils achieve well. The headteacher provides very good leadership and members of staff have worked together with determination to bring about the improvements. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and pupils' attitudes are very good. The school now provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher has brought about a shared sense of purpose and a clear drive towards improvement.
- Teachers have a good command of the subjects they teach and pupils effectively gain skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons.
- The very positive ethos of the school supports pupils and encourages them all to do well.
- Pupils like school and enthusiastically take part in all that is offered to them.
- The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities for all pupils, with a notable strength in the creative arts.
- Parents support the school well, but they do not always realise the importance of their children attending regularly or arriving at school on time.

Improvement has been very good. In the last inspection two years ago, older pupils were found to be underachieving because what they were offered in Years 3 and 4 did not build on their achievements in Year 2. Since then, a lot of work has been done to rectify the situation. This has been successful and now all pupils achieve well throughout the school. There is more continuity in teaching and the curriculum, and much more awareness of how individuals are progressing through the school. The development of the roles of the subject co-ordinators has been vital in this work. There have been major improvements in provision for information and communication technology. The school has set up very secure systems for tracking the progress of pupils. All health and safety issues have been addressed. With the very positive ethos and shared sense of purpose, the school is well set to improve further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. Most children in the reception classes are on course to reach the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. They make particularly good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world because of the quality of the learning opportunities that are offered to them.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 are above average and have been so for a number of years. Currently, standards in English, mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 are above average. The table above shows that, although standards in Year 6 last year were lower,

pupils usually reach the national average and are sometimes above this. The problem has been with pupils not achieving as well as they did in Year 2 and this is shown in the final column which measures their attainment against their prior attainment. *(In the subject of English, the school was in the lowest ten per cent in the country when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account).* However, all the improvements made are now having an impact. For example, recent developments in the curriculum and in approaches to teaching have made pupils much more confident than they were in mathematics. Currently, pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well and Year 6 pupils are likely to reach the school's targets, which would put standards above average. Standards in information and communication technology in Years 3 to 6 are much improved and are now in line with what is expected. There are particular strengths in speaking and listening throughout the school, and in pupils' performances generally, such as in drama or music.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils have positive attitudes to school; they work hard and co-operate with each other. Behaviour is very good. However, attendance is unsatisfactory and punctuality is a problem.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan carefully and engage pupils well in lessons. With this encouragement, pupils learn effectively and make good progress.

The curriculum is good, with particular strengths in the planning for literacy and numeracy and the range of learning opportunities that are provided, especially in the creative arts. The curriculum is enhanced by visits and visitors, as well as extra-curricular activities. Pupils are well cared for and supported as individuals, something parents value about the school. Links with parents are good. Links with the community, especially the parish, are very good. The school has close and beneficial links with the high school to which most pupils transfer.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has been instrumental in bringing about the changes that have had such a dramatic effect on the achievement of pupils. She is effectively supported by a dedicated team of teachers and other staff. The governing body has developed its role considerably and governance is now good. The school complies with statutory requirements. The school is well managed. The good use of systems for analysing data and monitoring pupils' progress means that the school has a much clearer picture of its performance and what needs to be done to improve further.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with the family atmosphere of the school, the care taken with their children and the way they are welcomed into the school. A few parents are concerned with bullying in the school, but the inspection team found that this was not a problem. Pupils are happy in school and like the range of learning activities provided for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Implement the clear plan that the school has produced for development for the future.
- Improve the rates of attendance and try to ensure that pupils get to school on time.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement throughout the school is **good**. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. This is a considerable improvement for Years 3 to 6 from the time of the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The underachievement found at the last inspection has been eliminated and achievement is now consistently good through the school.
- The good quality of provision in the reception classes enables children to make good progress towards achieving the goals they are expected to reach.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science remain high in Years 1 and 2 because of the secure teaching of skills.
- Achievement in Year 3 is particularly good; pupils are building well on what they achieved in Year 2.
- Standards in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 have improved particularly well.

Commentary

1. Children enter the reception classes from a range of different pre-school settings and have a wide range of skills on entry to the school. The good quality of the curriculum in the reception classes, and, in particular, the way in which adults respond to the needs of individuals, enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning. By the time they move into Year 1, most are well on the way to meeting the goals they are expected to reach. There are particular strengths in achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world because of the wide range of learning experiences provided for these children.
2. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is consistently good. The good quality of teaching ensures that pupils effectively gain skills, knowledge and understanding in their lessons, and they make good progress. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are usually above average, as the table below illustrates. Most pupils reach the expected levels and a high percentage reach above this, giving a high overall average point score. This has been the picture for a number of years, with, recently, some particularly good improvements in writing.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.8 (16.4)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.8 (14.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.9 (18.2)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 55 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. At the time of the last inspection two years ago, although pupils in Year 6 were doing well in their end of key stage tests, they were actually underachieving, which became obvious when their prior attainment levels were taken into consideration. Many pupils were not achieving as well as they did when they were younger. The reason for this lay in the lack of continuity between the two key stages. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 did not have enough information about the achievements of pupils in Year 2 and did not enable pupils to build on what they had learnt previously. The situation has now changed. The determination of the headteacher and the hard

work of the staff have resulted in much better achievement. There is significantly more continuity between the classes and, currently, pupils in Year 3 are achieving very well indeed.

4. The table below shows that Year 6 pupils have not been doing as well as they might do, although standards have often been in line with or above those achieved in other schools. This is set to change as the impact of the work that has been put in to raise achievement begins to be felt in the older classes. Pupils, generally, are making much better progress in lessons and are making up for what they have missed. Intervention programmes have been very effective in helping with this 'filling of gaps'. The school has set itself challenging targets based on secure data, and evidence from the inspection indicates that the school is likely to reach them and standards will be above average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.2 (28.1)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.9 (27.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.6 (27.8)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 66 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Achievement in mathematics is particularly good. This is as a result of changes to the curriculum and approaches to teaching, and teachers' higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Speaking and listening are well promoted through the curriculum and pupils are confident in performances, whether in drama or music. Substantial improvements to the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) have resulted in pupils achieving at least in line with what is expected. Pupils gain good skills in many subjects, for example, research in geography, and this is to be promoted more as the school makes changes to the curriculum it provides.
6. As they move through the school, most pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their own targets and achieve well. By the end of Years 2 and 6 the standards of most of these pupils are below average, although some pupils occasionally reach the expected levels. Higher attaining pupils are usually well challenged and achieve well, although in some subjects the planning for them is not always sufficiently focused on their achievement. Parents are very happy with the progress their children make in school and pupils themselves are proud of their achievements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' have **very good** attitudes to school. They behave very well in and around the school. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils like their school and work hard in lessons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through the positive ethos of the school.
- Relationships are very good.
- Attendance is well below average and a number of pupils do not arrive on time for school

Commentary

7. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They enjoy their lessons, listen carefully to the teachers and apply themselves well to the tasks set. Pupils are keen and eager to be involved in the life of the school and make the most of the available opportunities to learn. Pupils appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities the school provides and this is reflected in the numbers that take part in them.
8. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. The majority of pupils behave very well in lessons, and the few who need help in establishing good behaviour patterns are well managed by the staff and directed to tasks before their behaviour becomes a problem. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There have been a few concerns from parents and pupils about bullying in school. However, it does not seem to be a noticeable problem and pupils are confident that any instances that occur are quickly and effectively dealt with by adults. The school is in the process of reviewing its policy on bullying and this will give pupils and parents clearer guidelines on how to deal with any problems. The school is also approaching the issue very effectively through its programme for personal and social education.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	301	1	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	14	0	0

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

9. Relationships throughout the school are very good, which help pupils develop their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils work well in pairs or groups sharing equipment or ideas, for example, when they are working at computers in the ICT suite. Pupils with special educational needs get on well with other pupils and join in all the activities. All pupils, whatever their abilities, are very highly valued and included in all that is offered.
10. The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual development through its commitment to the values of the Roman Catholic faith that permeate the whole school. Pupils learn to respect people as individuals and celebrate the achievement of others. The emphasis on a family ethos and the teaching of right and wrong through religious education and personal, social and moral education, ensure that pupils know they are responsible for their own actions. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their social and cultural awareness. Visits to other places and visitors to school provide interest in and understanding of different cultures. For example, during the inspection, younger children learnt about Chinese food and traditions as they participated in and enjoyed a Chinese Banquet cooked by a parent.
11. The school has a problem with attendance. Attendance levels, as can be seen in the following table, are well below the national average and do not seem to be improving. The school has

effective systems in place to monitor attendance and involves outside agencies if there are any real problems. However, the general approach taken by the school to promote good attendance is not sufficiently rigorous. Parents are not told clearly enough about the importance of regular attendance and the impact that the odd day's absence here and there can have on continuity of their children's learning.

12. There is a similar problem with punctuality. Every day, a number of pupils arrive at school late and this can have an impact on the introductions to lessons. Whilst, sometimes, the distance between the two buildings can cause some pupils to arrive later than others, the school does not do enough to encourage parents to get their children to school on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School	6.9	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching is consistently **good**, the curriculum is wide-ranging and pupils are well cared for. The school has a good partnership with parents and links with other schools and the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The quality of assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults in the reception classes effectively promote children's learning through the activities they provide and their own involvement in them.
- Because teachers encourage and challenge them, pupils work hard and are productive.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach enable them to plan effectively for pupils to gain skills and make good progress in lessons.
- All pupils are involved in lessons; adults are deployed well to support individuals.

Commentary

13. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection. Although teaching in Years 1 and 2 was good then, there were weaknesses in Year 3 to 6. These weaknesses, which were mainly linked to planning, have now been addressed and the overall quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. As a result, pupils learn effectively, make good progress in lessons and achieve well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (6%)	14 (29%)	23 (48%)	8 (17%)	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. Teaching in the reception classes is consistently good and often very good. Adults have a good understanding of the needs of young children and they provide a range of activities that interest and challenge them. Teachers effectively involve themselves in the activities, supporting and extending children's learning. Children learn well; they explore ideas, develop their interests and gain skills.
15. In all classes, there are positive relationships and pupils thrive. Teachers encourage and challenge pupils and insist on high standards of behaviour. They establish a good working atmosphere and pupils concentrate well, work with interest and enthusiasm and are productive. In two Year 3 numeracy lessons, pupils were learning about decimal notation and how to find change. The teachers constantly challenged pupils and pupils responded by trying very hard throughout the lessons. The teachers' encouraging approach enabled even the least confident to take part without fear of failure. A lively pace kept all pupils involved and concentrated on the tasks set. These lessons showed how the level of teaching has improved in this year group and how the higher expectations are helping to raise pupils' achievement.
16. Teachers have a good command of the subjects they teach. They plan carefully with clear learning objectives, provide clear explanations of ideas and use a level of questioning that challenges pupils' thinking. They make sure that what they are teaching builds on what pupils have already learnt and helps them move on to the next stage. As a result, pupils gain skills, knowledge and understanding and make good progress in lessons. Teachers also make useful and appropriate links between subjects so that pupils deepen their understanding.
17. Where there are any weaknesses in the teaching, it is usually to do with a lack of pace in lessons. Sometimes, the teachers' input is too long and doesn't allow pupils enough time to complete the tasks set for them. Although work is usually well matched to pupils' needs, there are occasions in some subjects when not enough thought has been given to how well the higher attaining pupils are challenged.
18. Overall, the quality of teaching in the school effectively promotes equality of opportunity. Teachers are usually very good at involving all pupils and setting work at an appropriate level so as to meet the needs of individuals. Adults, whether they are classroom assistants, students or parents, are deployed very well to support pupils and they make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. A good example of this is in Year 1, where some expert organisation and management ensures that adults are deployed in the best possible way for the optimum learning of pupils. In particular, the use of small groups in literacy lessons in this class, provides pupils with the opportunity to be closely involved and plenty of chances to develop speaking and listening skills. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers and support assistants work well together in order to provide work which is well suited to pupils' levels of ability.
19. Since the last inspection, the school has developed effective systems for checking and recording the progress of all its pupils. Assessments are made at the end of each unit of work and these, together with teachers' assessments and data from national tests, build a record of progress for each pupil. This information is used to set individual targets and to group pupils for teaching. It is passed on to the next teacher and, as a result, work planned now builds effectively on previous teaching and pupils' progress is consistent throughout the school. Teachers also use this data regularly to review the achievement of individual pupils and to

identify and support any who are not making the progress expected. Teachers have clear learning objectives for each lesson and usually share these with pupils. In the best lessons, pupils are aware of what it is they are expected to learn and are given the help they need to assess whether they have achieved it, for example, by having objectives put into words like, 'I can . . .'. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and comment on their achievement, but marking is sometimes not analytical enough for pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a broad and **very rich** curriculum. Resources are **good**. Accommodation is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned, broad and balanced.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities is good and opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum, particularly in the arts, are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and this helps these pupils to achieve well.
- The school makes good use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to help raise standards.

Commentary

20. The curriculum is well planned so that pupils build securely on their previous learning. This helps pupils to make good progress and to achieve well. The school uses the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well to help to structure and bring continuity to learning in English and mathematics. There is no undue repetition of work when pupils move from Year 2 to Year 3, as was identified at the previous inspection. Now, pupils maintain their high achievement as they move from one class to another. This is because the school has worked hard to improve planning, evaluation of the curriculum and deployment of staff. The impact of these improvements on the continuity of education is particularly strong in Years 3 and 4 and is increasingly evident in Years 5 and 6.
21. These significant improvements have been enhanced by recent curricular innovations that link the skills and activities of the curriculum in reception to that of Year 1, so that pupils receive a secure foundation for their learning. The school is also helping to raise achievement by placing an increasing emphasis on adapting the delivery of the curriculum to the learning styles of pupils. A further significant curricular innovation is the focus on the skills which are central to subjects, such as history, geography and ICT. The development of skills enables pupils to access and use the content of subjects more efficiently and to see clear links between subjects.
22. The curriculum is enriched by very strong provision in the arts, in such areas as choral and instrumental music and drama. The school has achieved the Artsmark as a recognition of this work. Very good use is made of visitors to the school, such as artists, musicians, theatre groups and drama specialists, who work alongside the pupils and extend pupils' skills. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to make educational visits to places of educational interest in order to extend their understanding. For example, pupils visit Southport as part of their work in geography, and work on the Tudors is enhanced by visits to Speke Hall. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities to support its work and a large number of pupils participate enthusiastically.
23. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and these pupils generally make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs have equal access to the

curriculum and the opportunity to succeed. Their individual educational plans have clear and manageable targets for improvement. The special educational needs co-ordinator oversees the provision well, ensuring that parents, teachers, classroom support assistants and outside agencies work together to meet pupils' needs.

24. The school is well resourced and pupils and staff have ready access to materials and equipment. Teachers have a good level of expertise and experience. Classroom assistants are deployed well to support the work of teachers and pupils. Staff are well supported by volunteers, including parents and friends of the school. The school has worked very hard to improve the quality and appearance of the accommodation. Investment in the refurbishment of classrooms and structural changes, such as a corridor in the infant building, has paid off in terms of staff and pupil morale and more effective delivery of the curriculum. Staff produce attractive displays of pupils' work in order to celebrate achievement and to improve the quality of the environment for everyone. They work tirelessly and successfully, and often at great inconvenience, to address and overcome the challenges created by the split site. They have shown clear vision and worked very hard to produce a whole-school approach to the curriculum and to develop a shared ethos, in spite of the difficulties presented by the siting and condition of the buildings.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of its pupils. Support, advice and guidance are **good**, and pupils' views are valued.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has taken effective action to improve procedures for child protection and health and safety.
- Pupils are well known as individuals and cared for by staff.

Commentary

25. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are now good. There are two nominated staff with responsibility for child protection and all staff have had training and guidance to raise awareness. Through the personal, social and health education programme, good guidance is available for pupils in taking care of themselves. Standards have been awarded to the school for its promotion of healthy eating to pupils. The school takes pupils' views into account. The school council is active and pupils are aware of its effectiveness and feel it is useful to meet with the headteacher to discuss issues.
26. All health and safety issues from the last inspection have been addressed and regular risk assessments take place. However, part of the older pupils' playground is unsuitable for a school and the uneven flagstones are a potential health and safety hazard for pupils.
27. Pupils are happy at school and they are confident that there is an adult to whom they can turn if they are worried. Parents are very pleased with the care and individual attention their children receive and are very happy with the arrangements for settling children into school when they first start in reception. Visits and the introductory lessons pupils experience at the high school, reassure and help the pupils look forward to the transition to the next stage of their education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **good** partnership with parents, who are happy with what the school provides for their children. Links with other schools and the local community are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Positive links with the local high school ensure that older pupils make a smooth transfer to their next school.
- The school has close links with the local community, particularly the church and its parish.
- Parents feel very welcome in the school.
- Communication with parents is generally good, although the school needs to adopt a more rigorous approach to improving pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

28. Parents are supportive of the school and are pleased with what the school provides. They are given a good range of information in weekly newsletters. Although a few parents feel they do not get enough information on the progress their children make, most are very happy with the good quality of their children's annual reports and the opportunities they have to talk with teachers about their children. Parents feel very welcome in school and, through the open-door policy that the headteacher promotes, relationships between staff and parents are very good. This has a positive impact on how pupils view the school and their approach to their work. The school provides parents with information about the curriculum and the opportunities available to their children, but communication is not so effective in other areas, for example, some parents want to know about the guidelines for dealing with bullying and these are only just going out to consultation. Neither does the school spell out clearly enough why good attendance and punctuality are important.
29. The school has very close links with the parish church, and celebrations and social occasions are often held jointly, which further strengthens the partnership between the school and the local community and contributes to pupils' social development. The school encourages parents to work in school and many do this on a regular basis, contributing well to pupils' learning. The school has established good links with providers of courses for parents, for example, *Family Learning* and *Start Right*. School staff are working closely alongside these as they provide support for parents with young children. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator has established good partnerships with local colleges and the school makes an effective contribution to the training of students.
30. Families are well known to the school and children usually settle into school well, despite entering the reception classes from many different nurseries and pre-school playgroups. Very strong and effective links with the local high school, to which virtually all of the pupils transfer, ensure that older pupils make a smooth and positive move from one school to the other. Local schools, including those with Beacon status, have worked closely with this school, being instrumental in supporting staff through its recent developments.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is very good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determined leadership of the headteacher has given clear direction for the improvements that have been made.
- The deputy headteacher and other key staff have supported the headteacher very well in the efforts to eliminate underachievement.
- The governing body effectively upholds the values of the school and governors are now playing a more strategic role in determining the direction of its work.
- Subject co-ordinators are much more aware now of the standards achieved and quality of provision of their subjects through the whole school.
- The school's split site has been a physical barrier to improvement and staff still have to work hard to ensure continuity through the school.

Commentary

31. When the school was found to be underachieving two years ago, the headteacher had only been in post for a term, but was already aware that there were areas of the school's work that needed attention. She was judged, even at that time, to be providing very good leadership. The clear direction she was providing was recognised in both the local education authority report and the report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, as they monitored the progress the school was making towards improvement. She is still providing very good leadership, has ably steered the school as changes have been made and improvements brought about, and, in the process, has gained the confidence of staff, governors, parents and pupils.
32. The main problem that the school has is with the division between the two key stages of the school, caused by the physical barrier of the distance between the two buildings. Continuity of teaching and learning between Years 2 and 3 was weak and this resulted in pupils not building on their good achievement in Year 2. The headteacher has been determined to bring about change and, in the last two years, has given clear direction to improvements. She has been well supported by the previous and the current deputy headteachers and other key staff, such as the assessment, literacy, numeracy and science co-ordinators. They all provide very good role models in the quality of their own teaching and the hard work they put in to ensuring that the school now works as much more of a whole unit. Some important changes in teachers from one key stage to another, and some excellent support from other schools, have helped the staff to come together with a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to high standards. The improvements that have been made are impressive, and their impact is shown clearly in the very good achievement in Year 3 and the better achievement in Years 4 to 6.
33. The roles of subject co-ordinators have developed well since the last inspection and teachers are now taking much more responsibility for the standards and quality of teaching and learning in their subjects through the school. Liaison between the key stages is better and this is having a major impact on the continuity of delivery and the progress pupils are making. As well as the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, who have worked very hard to raise standards in their subjects, the co-ordinators for ICT, geography and personal, social and health education are also providing very good leadership.
34. Governors have always upheld the values of the school and they are proactive in helping to maintain the ethos based on the Catholic faith that is so important to the parents. As individuals, and as a group, they provide instinctive support for the school and its staff and have backed the headteacher in the changes she has made. They have developed their roles considerably and are now much more aware of strengths and weaknesses and are playing a more strategic role in terms of deciding direction and priorities for the school.
35. The school is well managed. The school carried out a very good self-evaluation at the time of the last inspection, in order to decide the action to be taken to raise achievement. Good systems, such as those of analysing performance data and tracking the progress pupils make, were established and have made a big difference to how much teachers know about pupils'

achievement and how the performance of the school is monitored. This action has been, and continues to be successful. One example of this is the much more realistic and useful target setting that now exists.

36. Despite the success of the action taken, there is, sometimes, not enough evaluation and consideration of what works and what does not. This is partly due to the fact that, after two years of inspection and change, the school is ready for a period of consolidation. The priorities the school has chosen for its current development, for example, the broadening of the curriculum and the focus on the role of governors, are appropriate; however, the means by which the outcomes of this action will be measured are not sufficiently clear. The monitoring of teaching and learning is developing in the school, but is currently not yet evaluative enough to provide useful feedback to teachers on how they can improve. All these issues have been identified by the school and are being addressed as part of the current development.
37. Financial administration and planning are good. The school has faced, and continues to face, difficult financial decisions, but, despite budget restrictions, resources have been used wisely on things that will make a difference. For example, refurbishment of the buildings and spending on resources provided an environment much more conducive to learning, raised the morale of staff and pupils and was a means by which parents recognised that things were improving.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	809,266	Balance from previous year	39,676
Total expenditure	794,943	Balance carried forward to the next	53,999
Expenditure per pupil	2,431		

38. The split site of the school has been a physical barrier to raising achievement and still causes problems for the school, for example, the access younger pupils have to facilities in the junior building. Staff have worked very hard to overcome the difficulties and to minimise the impact of the situation in order to ensure the continuity through the school that is so vital to improvement.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**. There are two reception classes and both teachers work together very well to provide a wide range of creative and imaginative learning experiences for all the children, making the best use of the individual interests and expertise of all the adults involved. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of how young children learn. Her planning, although not always as clear as it could be, is founded securely on providing for all areas of learning and is ultimately very effective in its response to the needs of individual children. Supporting adults are well deployed throughout the day and they make a very valuable contribution to the quality of children's learning. Although the accommodation is not ideal, being an old building in need of refurbishment, the adults work hard to make it into an exciting and stimulating learning environment in which children can develop. There was very limited observation of the Foundation Stage at the last inspection and the only comment was to do with children needing more opportunity to be independent. This is certainly not the case now, independent learning being a major strength of the provision.

The well-being of individual children is the priority of all adults in the reception classes. There is no nursery at the school and children come in having experienced a wide range of pre-school settings. This can cause difficulties when children first start, but the co-ordinator goes out of her way to make links with children prior to their entry. Parents are very closely involved with the process and they are extremely happy with how their children are helped to settle in. Assessments are made as children enter the school and all adults are involved with the continuous observation and assessment of children throughout their time in reception. This ensures that children's development is monitored and their personal needs are met. However, the information is not always used as well as it could be to help the teachers plan for the teaching of specific skills.

There has been a lot of effort recently to make the transition from reception to Year 1 as positive as possible, especially for the youngest group to transfer. A system for the sharing of facilities is working well and ensures that these pupils still have access to, and are able to benefit from, a more practical curriculum during their time in Year 1.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good, children achieve well and most are on course to reach the expected goals, well able to enter Year 1 as confident learners.
- Children develop good relationships with the adults who care for them.
- The range of activities provided for them encourages children to make choices and become independent.

Commentary

39. Children enter the reception classes with a wide range of pre-school experiences and, as a result, they are at quite significantly different stages in their personal, social and emotional development. Some are very confident and cope well with the school environment, whilst others have difficulties, even with such things as fastening their own coats. The adults work well with this and sensitively provide the support and encouragement that individuals need. Children soon develop very positive relationships with the adults who care for them and communicate effectively with them. Some are less confident in interacting with other children.

40. A major strength of the provision in the reception classes is the opportunity for children to become independent learners. Adults provide a wide range of activities and encourage children to make choices and pursue their own interests. They also recognise the importance of role-play in children's personal development and use a lot of imagination in providing for this. Children are highly motivated and show a high level of involvement with their chosen activities. They are soon able to select materials and resources and work independently. During one session, two boys were observed working with a very high level of concentration and co-operation as they combined a range of construction equipment to make a complex road and railway system. In another room, a girl chose a book and, sitting on cushions in the book corner, began to turn pages and was soon thoroughly absorbed in the story that was unfolding before her.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good and, although most children achieve well, not all are on course to reach the expected goals.
- Children have a lot of opportunities to listen to and enjoy stories.
- Adults take every opportunity to encourage conversation and extend the use of language.
- Mark-making develops well, but writing skills are not always taught effectively.

Commentary

41. Children enter the reception classes with a wide range of communication skills. Some are already confident talkers and develop their skills well, soon able to explain their ideas and recall their experiences. Some, however, are very reticent and find it difficult to communicate with others. Adults provide many opportunities for children to speak and listen to others in small and larger groups, for example, as they share their news. Adults are skilled at making the most of every opportunity to encourage children to talk. During the course of the day adults involve themselves in activities and engage children in conversation. They ask questions, so as to extend the use of language.
42. There are always parts of the day when stories and songs are shared and children enjoy listening and taking part. In one class, the teacher read from a book well known to the children and made very good use of toy animals to involve children and encourage them to join in with the bits of the story they knew. In another class, children joined in enthusiastically with the words and actions of a favourite song, 'Wobbly Tooth'.
43. Children are encouraged to experiment with writing through mark-making and most confidently attempt some form of communication on paper. Some children recognise sounds and letters and are beginning use these in their own writing, so they can at least start a word with the correct letter, but very few are at the stage of writing recognisable words or forming letters correctly. With more focused planning, the children who are ready to move on to this stage could be taught these skills more effectively.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and children achieve well, but not all are confident enough with numbers to reach the expected goals.
- There are many opportunities for children to use mathematical language in their activities.
- Focused activities are not always matched to the needs of children.

Commentary

44. Adults provide a range of activities that have been carefully planned to encourage children to use mathematical language. For example, children compare the sizes of bricks and match cups to saucers in the home corner. One group sorted through a huge bucketful of three-dimensional shapes, having been asked by the teacher to find the cylinders. Eventually they managed this and the teacher then encouraged them to make models with card cylinders. In this kind of way, children are gaining an understanding of mathematical concepts, which is giving them a secure base for their further mathematical development.
45. Most children are beginning to use mathematical language in the context of their activities, but they are not at the stage of recognising numbers or working with them in a more formal way. More focused activities are provided for children to gain basic skills, such as counting, but these are not always well matched to the needs of children. For example, one group had counted out ten animals and were being encouraged to use 'more' and 'less' as they took some away on the throw of a dice. This was too difficult for some of the group and they lost interest.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and children achieve very well. They are well on course to reach the expected goals.
- A very varied and imaginative range of experiences is offered to children.
- Activities are linked closely to children's interests.
- Children become confident in using computers.

Commentary

46. This is a very strong area of the Foundation Stage provision. Adults go to great lengths to provide a wide and varied range of experiences for children so that they develop a knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Resources are used imaginatively and planning is very responsive to the interests and needs of children. The commitment of the co-ordinator to helping children develop their own interests inspires the adults to provide activities that are based on first-hand experiences and observation. For example, the current topic of Chinese food has involved children visiting a restaurant and Chinese supermarket, taking part in a Chinese Banquet and having a Chinese Takeaway as a role-play area. Throughout this topic, resources have been used imaginatively and children have gained a wealth of new experiences.
47. A parent, working with the children in the preparation and eating of the banquet, was excellent provision. She encouraged children to talk about what they saw and tasted; the textures and changes they observed. Children were fully absorbed in the activity and successfully gained new knowledge and understanding that they were able to talk about later and act out in role-play. Cooking has become a regular and very effective feature of reception class life, enhanced

lately by the purpose built preparation area. The commitment of the parent involved with this is a valuable resource, making a positive contribution to children's learning.

48. Children have very good access to technology. They independently use a listening centre on a regular basis and were observed using a tape recorder to record their own voices. They explore a range of programmable toys. They have a lot of access to computers and are very confident in their use. A group of children spent some time in the computer suite. They independently chose games from a selection and proceeded to play them with dexterity and enjoyment. Some were fitting missing pieces into a picture, whilst others matched socks and shoes. They all had secure control of what was happening on screen and knew how to move from one game to another.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

It was not possible to observe this area fully during the inspection, mainly because of inclement weather and the hall being temporarily used for other activities. However, it is obvious that children are usually provided with appropriate opportunities to be physically active. During the one observed session, children were using a large outside area to ride scooters and bicycles. They showed a good level of confidence and control. The designated outside area is accessible, but needs adult supervision. It is fenced off and secure, but has an unsuitable surface and is not imaginatively resourced with the play equipment that young children need. Indoors, children have access to a range of tools and other small and large equipment. In one session, children were absorbed in rolling out 'play doh' and cutting out shapes using a wide range of different cutters. An adult was effectively helping them to develop their skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; children achieve well and are well on course to reaching the expected goals.
- Children are provided with opportunities to explore and experiment with a wide range of materials and media.

Commentary

49. Adults provide children with a variety of opportunities to explore different media and try out materials. Children are given time to experiment and follow their own imagination without adult intervention. This is a real strength of the provision. For example, children were making masks for a celebration, but they were given a free hand in decorating them. They had access to a wide range of materials, such as glitter, coloured paper and shapes. Children spent a long time choosing and sticking and working out their ideas until they achieved what they wanted. They were very pleased with their efforts. They are given the opportunity to use different paints and mark-making tools. One girl spent a long time covering a page with different coloured splodges, choosing the colours and filling the spaces carefully. She was given the space and opportunity to complete this piece to her own satisfaction. There are many other opportunities for children to use their imagination, for example, in role-play they play alongside others, acting out their own experiences.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- Progress is now more consistent through the school.
- Standards in reading are particularly good.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills and this contributes to their success in writing.

Commentary

50. Standards in speaking and listening are good throughout the school. Pupils speak confidently in oral lessons and have a wide vocabulary. For example, pupils in Year 1 described a 'vicious starving tiger' and in Year 3, used words such as 'spectacular' and 'iridescent'. Teachers use a range of strategies to encourage pupils' oral participation in lessons and to help them explore the behaviour and motives of characters in the books they read. For example, in Year 1 'hot seating', where pupils respond to class questions in the role of a book character, was very effective in developing empathy with various fictional characters.
51. Standards in reading are above the national average throughout the school and this is evident in the test results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Since the last inspection, the school has increased considerably the resources for teaching reading. The school now has a good structured reading scheme for younger pupils and a wide range of reading books that appeal to all older pupils. The school's monitoring of reading standards shows that there has been a significant improvement in the standard of reading, especially in Year 5. All pupils are taught the skills of reading very well. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils were observed learning a range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words, and, in a lesson seen in Year 5, pupils were taught the advanced skills of skimming and scanning. Younger pupils take books home regularly, so that parents and carers can be involved in their children's learning at home. This is effective in encouraging pupils to read and in helping to develop their confidence.
52. The school has put a strong emphasis on the teaching of writing. Pupils keep a literacy progress book, which contains examples of their writing and shows good progress being made. Teaching now builds effectively on work in previous years, which is an improvement since the last inspection. For example, in lessons seen during the inspection, pupils used planning sheets which increased in complexity from Year 2 to Year 3 and were particularly useful in helping pupils structure their writing. Pupils write with confidence and enthusiasm because their work is based on stories they have studied and because they find the selected contexts exciting. For example, pupils in Year 6 all achieved very well when writing an imaginary letter or diary as characters from Macbeth.
53. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a secure understanding of the literacy strategy and employ a variety of teaching methods. They use a range of imaginative approaches that motivate pupils and encourage them to work hard. All teachers plan lessons well. They assess the levels at which pupils are working accurately and use these assessments to set targets and to plan work that is appropriate for the range of abilities within the class. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make general and supportive comments, but marking is often insufficiently analytical and does not give pupils enough understanding of what they have done well and how they could improve.
54. The leadership and management of English are good. The co-ordinator has a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and is currently well supported by the deputy

headteacher, who has brought her own expertise into the school. Some particularly useful work has been done in the moderation of the assessment of pupils' writing, so that pupils' progress can be accurately tracked through the school. The school carries out a range of assessments each year and analyses the data to identify any pupil not making the expected progress. Specific support programmes are put in place for these pupils and the results monitored. The success of all of this work is shown in the good achievement of pupils and the improvement in standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Pupils' language and literacy skills are used well across the curriculum. For example, in science lessons, pupils are able to work together effectively because they can confidently discuss and record their investigations. In a geography lesson, pupils in Year 5 were able to use reference books efficiently to find information about rivers. Although pupils gain reasonable skills in word processing and can use a computer to produce pieces of written work suitable for different audiences, they do not have enough opportunity on a regular basis to use computers to draft and edit their written work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and pupils achieve highly.
- Continuity has improved from the last inspection.
- The school makes good use of assessment.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Problem-solving skills are very thoroughly developed.

Commentary

56. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection, when there was a lack of continuity, particularly in the transition from Year 2 to Year 3, leading to underachievement amongst the older pupils. Staff have worked hard over the last two years to address this issue and the good achievement of pupils shows how successful they have been. Assessments of pupils' work in mathematics are now used well to help with planning, with identifying areas of general and individual weakness, with setting targets for improvement, and with the checking of pupils' progress. This gives teachers a clear idea of where pupils are and what they need to do in order to improve. The movement of some teachers from one year group to another, and opportunities for teachers to review the work of pupils across the whole school, mean that they have a clear understanding of progression throughout the school. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and all teachers and support staff share a commitment to raising standards and ensuring the continuity of work in mathematics. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.
57. Skills in problem-solving have been very well developed. Because there is a whole-school approach to raising standards in these skills and because the quality of teaching is very good, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Year 2 pupils accurately use a range of strategies for solving problems with the addition and subtraction of money and measurement. Year 3 pupils use their reading skills well to solve problems using the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and set challenging problems for their peers. By Year 6, pupils solve increasingly complex problems in all aspects of their mathematical work because they are carefully taught the steps to take in clarifying their

understanding and in organising their calculations. Pupils have clear targets for their work and they understand what they need to do in order to improve. This helps them to make good progress.

58. Teaching is very good. Teachers effectively teach basic number skills and pupils gain confidence in using a range of mental and written computational strategies. They are encouraged to devise their own methods of working or to use strategies such as partitioning, counting on, or doubling. They work eagerly and enthusiastically because teachers welcome their efforts. They know it is safe to learn from mistakes and, because skills build securely on what has gone before, they make good progress as they move through the school. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide comments which are supportive and help to identify areas for improvement. For example, in Year 3 the teacher suggested: 'Try checking your answer using a different strategy - partitioning or bridging through multiples of 10'. Although pupils usually present their work neatly, this is occasionally inconsistent and sometimes impedes accuracy.
59. Teachers have a very good understanding of mathematics and of how pupils learn. Teachers plan their work carefully and share lesson objectives with pupils so that they know clearly what is expected. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well because teachers plan work which is well suited to their levels of understanding. In Year 2, for example, pupils' skills in the addition of money, using partitioning, were extended because higher ability pupils were challenged to use larger amounts. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs, were supported by the classroom assistant, and used coins and smaller numbers. Teachers manage pupils very well and pupils sustain their concentration and enjoy their work. In the excellent teaching seen in Year 5, for example, the teacher engaged in an ongoing dialogue with pupils. She used humour effectively and ensured that pupils worked at a very brisk pace so that they were inspired to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of perpendicular and parallel lines and to achieve very highly.
60. The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator makes a significant contribution to the high standards achieved by the school. She has a very good understanding of the subject, a clear vision for how to raise standards and supports staff well. Her management skills are very good. She works hard to organise and analyse assessment and to set targets for improvement for individuals and for the whole school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. The school makes good use of mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum. This helps pupils to give a relevance to their work and helps to deepen their understanding of the other subjects. In science, pupils handle data to record their investigations, and in history they extend their understanding of the passage of time when they use time lines. In geography, pupils produce graphs of land use and make use of their skills with coordinates in map reading.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good emphasis on practical work and investigations.
- Teaching strategies work well and ensure that good learning takes place.
- There are useful links made with other areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

62. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection and progress is now consistent throughout the school. Currently, pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are on course by the end of the year to reach levels that are above those expected. The subject is well planned through the school and continuity from year to year is secure. The school has reviewed the teaching programme to place an increased emphasis on scientific enquiry and has identified a progression of investigative skills. This means that pupils are given work that builds on their previous learning and they make rapid progress in developing skills. All teachers have analysed and moderated samples of work from pupils in each year group in order to standardise judgements and support continuity of teaching and assessment across the school.
63. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan thoroughly and prepare their lessons well. They employ a range of teaching strategies that capture pupils' attention and there is a good balance between teacher-directed and independent activities. Good questioning skills encourage pupils to recall earlier learning and build on what they already know. Pupils have a good understanding of scientific concepts and their relevance to everyday life, as illustrated by some Year 6 pupils explaining forces in the context of football. A good supply of resources means that there are many practical opportunities for pupils to learn through first hand experience.
64. Work prepared is usually appropriate for pupils of all levels of ability and helps them learn. More able pupils are capable of working at higher levels, but teachers do not always plan adequately for this and their expectations of what these pupils are to achieve is not always clear. Pupils record their observations predictions and findings in their own words and pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and classroom assistants, who help them to record efficiently so that written work is completed.
65. There are many examples of coherence of teaching through explicit links between science and other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 test materials to make a waterproof hat for Barnaby bear who travels widely in all weathers and this helps pupils learn about other countries. Work on the safety of medicines is explored in personal, social and health education during an interview with the school nurse. Circuits and switches developed in Year 4, are used in torches made in design and technology.
66. Leadership and management in science are good. The whole-school focus on assessment has led to improved record keeping and analysis and use of assessment data. A question-by-question analysis of Year 6 test results has highlighted areas of weakness in pupils' understanding, as a result, the teaching of these concepts has been revised and the teaching programme modified for future years.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been substantial improvement in provision since the last inspection and pupils throughout the school are now achieving well.
- The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject very effectively.
- In carefully planned lessons, pupils gain good ICT skills and understanding.
- Teachers make very good use of the ICT suite and of interactive whiteboards in their classrooms.
- Effective links are made between ICT and other subjects, but pupils do not have enough opportunity to use ICT on a regular basis to support their learning across the curriculum.

Commentary

67. At the time of the last inspection two years ago, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were making good progress and achieving standards that were above expectations. However, in Years 3 to 6 pupils were not building on those skills. As a result, pupils were underachieving and standards were lower than they should have been. In the last two years, substantial improvements have been made to resources, teaching, the curriculum and assessment. Achievement is now good throughout the school and standards in Years 2 and 6 are at least in line with what is expected for pupils of this age. This equates to very good improvement.
68. Pupils gain a range of ICT skills and they learn how they can use them in other subjects. Because of a much more carefully structured curriculum and better teaching, pupils develop their skills through the school, always building on what they have learnt previously. This is a significant improvement from the situation at the time of the last inspection. For example, Year 2 pupils confidently use menus to search for information that they need. By Year 6, pupils can search websites to collect information and are able to refine their searches to make the task more efficient. At the same time, they can transfer their findings to a separate document.
69. Pupils' attitudes to ICT are very good. They are interested in what they are doing and work with concentrated effort on tasks they have been given to do. They collaborate well as they work in pairs at a computer, planning between them what they should do next and discussing any problems they have. When asked for their views, many pupils said that what they liked best about the school was ICT, working in the computer suite and using the whiteboards in their classrooms.
70. Teaching is now good throughout the school. Teachers are confident in their own ICT skills and they plan effectively. They make the best use of the sessions in the ICT suite, for example, by using the digital projector for demonstrations so that all pupils can be involved. They keep a fast pace, so that pupils have sufficient time to complete the tasks they have been set and provide support for those pupils who need it. It is as a result of these sessions that pupils are so rapidly gaining skills. For example, in one lesson, Year 4 pupils were taught how to use 'turtle logo'. Very good questioning during the introductory session made pupils think hard and they were able to work out which way the turtle had to turn and how far it had to travel. Although the task they were given was challenging, by the end of the lesson most had managed to control the turtle by giving appropriate commands.
71. The ICT co-ordinator has been the prime mover in this significant improvement. She provides very good leadership with a strong sense of purpose and high aspirations. She manages the subject well, providing support and guidance for teachers and constantly evaluating performance and planning for the future. She has received excellent support from a local Beacon school, both in terms of resources and expertise. She has been given time to audit and reorganise the curriculum and has used this effectively to bring about the improvement in provision. For example, the success of the introduction of a model for lesson delivery can be seen in every lesson and in the good achievement of pupils. She is now working on assessment systems that will not only allow her to track the progress of pupils through the school but will help teachers plan more accurately for individual needs and involve pupils in the assessment of their own work.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. Teachers are currently using interactive whiteboards to very good effect to enhance their teaching and pupils' learning. For example, they use them during introductions to literacy lessons so as to involve all pupils. Teachers also make very good use of digital cameras so that images can be shared in lessons. Through the carefully structured curriculum, definite and useful links are made between ICT and other subjects so that pupils understand how they can use their ICT skills. For example, Year 6 pupils were refining their research skills so they could use them to gather information for their geography topic. Year 3 pupils used design software to plan a layout for equipment that they could use in gymnastic lessons.
73. Unfortunately, because they have limited access to computers in their own classrooms, pupils do not get enough opportunity to practise the skills they have learnt and use them regularly to support their learning in other subjects, for example in data handling in mathematics or word processing in English.

HUMANITIES

History

During the inspection a limited amount of work was sampled and only one lesson was seen. A significant feature of work throughout the school is pupils' increasing confidence in using a range of sources and evidence in order to extend their skills of historical enquiry. Teachers ensure that pupils learn to use these skills to access and extend their knowledge of the content of the periods studied and, as they move through the school, become increasingly independent young historians. In Year 2, pupils accurately compare the use of diaries and portraits in eliciting information about life during the reign of Charles II. Older pupils visit Wigan Pier, use census returns and compare the lives of rich and poor during Victorian times. In Year 6, teachers have created an authentic period shop so that pupils develop insights into life during the Second World War. The subject is well co-ordinated. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject and works hard to support staff and pupils in developing their historical skills.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- There is good continuity in the development of the skills of the geographer through the school.
- There is a good emphasis on practical work and use of the locality.
- The co-ordinator's very good subject expertise enables her to lead and manage the subject very well.

Commentary

74. Only one lesson was seen in Years 1 and 2, but evidence from scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers, indicate that, by the end of Year 2 standards are above average and pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 6, standards are also above average and pupils achieve well.
75. The school focuses its work on the skills of geography so that pupils become more confident in their use as they progress through the school. Because the quality of teaching is very good and teachers ensure that pupils build securely on previous work, most pupils, including those

with special educational needs, make good progress. Teachers make work interesting so that pupils want to learn. In Year 1, pupils make pizzas, talk about the country of origin and discuss the sources of the ingredients. They use post cards and photographs of Dublin, create their own maps and listen to the story of 'Barnaby Bear' in order to extend their understanding and knowledge of places. By the end of Year 2, pupils have extended their skills in the use of maps and deepened their understanding of the social and environmental effects of extending transport systems.

76. Teachers ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop their fieldwork skills, by visiting places such as Southport and Croxteth Hall. In Year 3, pupils make good use of the local area in order to increase their knowledge and skills. They know about local places and occupations and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of land use and compare this to another locality. They carefully consider environmental issues, such as traffic and pollution, and use maps and routes accurately and record their observations.
77. Pupils have a good understanding of how to conduct geographical research. For example, in a lesson observed in Year 6, the teacher reminded pupils of note taking skills and provided them with a good range of secondary sources such as maps, atlases and books so that their knowledge of places and the nature of natural disasters was increased. This was further extended when the teacher made very good use of the interactive whiteboard to refine pupils' research using search engines.
78. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and a clear vision of how the subject is to develop in order to raise standards. She supports colleagues well and checks work and planning very effectively in order to make improvements.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The subjects of **art and design**, **design and technology**, **music** and **physical education** were sampled. It was not possible to make judgements about overall provision, but the evaluations below are based on the few lessons observed, pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff about the work in school.

Evidence from lessons, from work displayed around the school and from discussions with pupils indicates that standards in **art and design** are at least in line with national expectations. Year 5 pupils enjoyed making coil pots and effectively used a range of techniques. They were able to evaluate their work and discuss improvements that could be made. Year 6 pupils sketched people in action, approaching this challenging task with enthusiasm and confidence. Throughout the school, pupils' work is displayed well, showing the value placed on their achievements.

Evidence from the many examples of pupils' work in **design and technology** on display, and from talking to teachers and pupils indicates that standards in Years 1 and 2 are good. Pupils in Year 1 had used levers to make moving pictures, starting with a simple sliding mechanism and progressing to more complex mechanisms using split pins and moving pivots. A comprehensive display of work showed pupils' successful use of equipment for cutting, colouring and joining. These skills are developed further in Year 2 and pupils had made a range of finger and glove puppets, using fabrics joined by sticking and stitching. They were finished creatively using a very good range of additional materials such as wool, buttons, beads and sequins.

The planned curriculum for Years 1 and 2 pupils is good. Teachers use a nationally recommended scheme of work and this is effective in ensuring that all aspects of the subject are taught at an appropriate level. Resources for teaching are good and the new facilities for teaching food technology are used well. The creative management of time, resources and classroom assistants allows infant pupils to be taught very effectively in small groups and all achieve well in relation to their ability.

Provision for design and technology in Years 3 to 6 was not good enough at the time of the last inspection. The school has recently appointed a co-ordinator and introduced a scheme of work, but there was not enough evidence from pupils' work to judge how effective these measures have been in improving the standards achieved by the older pupils.

The school has a tradition of good provision for **music** and, although this could not be observed during the inspection, the views of parents, pupils and documentary evidence indicate that it is indeed a strength of the school. Pupils have a lot of opportunities to take part in concerts and other musical events in and out of school. Those with aptitude are given the chance to learn to play an instrument and peripatetic teachers play a major role in the school. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils being able to perform and take part, whether this is in music, speaking or drama. This is an effective enhancement of the curriculum and contributes well to pupils' personal development in terms of a growth in confidence and self-esteem. For example, during the inspection, an excellent drama session taken by an advanced skills teacher from the local high school was taking place and some very high standards in pupils' dramatic involvement were being achieved. This is currently a regular occurrence and is highly valued by the school and the pupils involved.

Three lessons in **physical education** were observed and from these observations and from scrutiny of the co-ordinator's file, it is apparent that a satisfactory curriculum is in place. The teaching observed was mainly good. In a Year 6 gymnastics lesson, good use was made of demonstration to help pupils improve their performance. In a Year 5 hockey lesson, ball passing and receiving skills were taught carefully and effectively. Pupils made good progress during this well-organised session. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in out-of-school sporting activities. These are very well liked and there are plans to extend the range further, thereby involving even more pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school's curriculum planning for personal, social and health education and citizenship is very good. The teaching of this area of the curriculum is becoming firmly established and, combined with the teaching of religious education, has a positive influence and contributes effectively to the relationships within the school. In lessons, issues that are important to pupils, such as making friends and dealing with problems, are dealt with and pupils have the opportunity to share their experiences and discuss how they feel. The co-ordinator for personal, social and health education and citizenship is very enthusiastic and has a positive influence on the teaching in the school. In her excellent lesson, pupils confidently talked about the issue of bullying and how they felt about it. She had established an atmosphere in which pupils were secure enough to be able to talk freely and discuss the issue openly.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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