

INSPECTION REPORT

St. Francis Catholic Primary School

Ascot

LEA area: Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Unique reference number: 110029

Headteacher: Mrs Jackie Wilson

Lead inspector: Mr Rob Crompton

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th May 2004

Inspection number: 257646

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 children:	4 -11
Gender of children:	Mixed
Number on roll:	227
School address:	Coronation Road South Ascot Berkshire SL5 9HG
Telephone number:	01344 622840
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Brian Cafferkey

Date of previous inspection: 5th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves mainly Catholic families in the immediate parish and from further afield. It serves a socially and economically advantaged area. As they start school, children's level of social, language and mathematical development is above average. A small proportion of children have special educational needs, including learning and speech difficulties, and emotional and behavioural problems. One child has a Statement of Special Educational Need. A small number of children are from ethnic minority backgrounds and a few have English as an additional language. The number of children entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is above average. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2002 and the Investor in People standard was renewed in 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7230	Rob Crompton	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics Music Physical education
13874	Jane Chesterfield	Lay inspector	
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Information and communication technology Geography History
16971	Roger Hardaker	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Children’s attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	15
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	24

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school where children achieve very high standards. Children like school and behave **well**. Teaching is strong in the reception classes and Years 5 and 6 and satisfactory elsewhere. The school is **well led** and managed and provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average.
- Children benefit from the very good teaching in the reception classes.
- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is strong.
- Provision for children of different abilities is good.
- Children are very articulate but they do not listen well enough.
- Children's learning and personal development is enriched by a good range of extra activities.

Overall progress since the last inspection has been good. The school has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified by the last inspection, six years ago. Work is more closely matched to children's prior attainment, there is less reliance on worksheets and children have better opportunities to write across the curriculum. Standards have risen and children's cultural awareness has improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

As children start school, their language and mathematical development is above average and they are socially confident. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the world outside their home and immediate neighbourhood. They make good progress in the reception classes so that, by the end of the reception year, standards of attainment are very good. Almost all children develop above average literacy and numeracy skills and this provides a flying start for work in Year 1.

By Year 2, children are reaching well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and good standards in science, information and communication technology (ICT), history and design and technology. Achievement in most lessons in Years 1 and 2 is currently satisfactory, which reflects the quality of teaching. This rate of progress continues in Years 3 and 4 but accelerates in Years 5 and 6. Results of Year 6 national tests have been well above average in recent years and this is reflected in the very good standards seen during the inspection. In 2003, science results were in the top 5 per cent nationally. Attainment in the current Year 6 is well above average in English, mathematics and science and standards are good in ICT, art and design, design and technology and history. Overall achievement through the school is **good**, mainly because of the very good start children make in the reception classes and the increased pace of learning in Years 5 and 6.

Over the last four years, results in national tests (SATs) in Year 2 and Year 6 have been much better than those of similar schools. In 2003, Year 6 results showed that children had made very good progress since they were in Year 2.

Year 6 results

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

Science	B	B	A*	A
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Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

Similar schools are those whose children attained similarly at the end of Year 2

The school successfully supports children with special educational needs and they achieve well – many reaching average standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. A new initiative to ensure that the most able children are suitably challenged is working well. High flyers are generally meeting their potential.

Children have good opportunities to practise and develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and their ICT skills are used satisfactorily in other subjects. **Good** provision for children’s personal development results in good relationships. Children have positive attitudes to school and behave well due to the good provision for moral and social development. Improvements in provision for cultural development mean that children’s cultural awareness is now good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory with some good features. Attendance levels are excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Teaching is consistently good and often very good in the reception classes and in Years 5 and 6 where children respond well to the lively pace and the good level of challenge in lessons. Teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good in other year groups. Lessons are well planned and potentially interesting but teachers often have to spend too much time gaining and sustaining children’s attention. Learning is frequently constrained because children do not listen well enough. Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants who make a significant contribution to many lessons. They provide good support in helping children who have special educational needs, particularly for those with behavioural difficulties. The curriculum is good and children benefit from an interesting and enjoyable variety of experiences. There are good links with parents and other schools. Support and guidance for children are good but the level of supervision in the playground means that children are sometimes out of sight of an adult.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher provides good leadership and is supported effectively by senior staff who set a good example in their teaching. Governors have a good understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and support the school well.

PARENTS’ AND CHILDREN’S VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally happy with the school. Some raised concerns about the information they receive about their children’s progress and about the extent to which their views are taken into account. The school provides good opportunities for parents to have their say but few parents attend the weekly ‘surgeries’ held by the headteacher. Opportunities for informal contact at the beginning and end of the day are good. Information about the curriculum is readily available but written reports vary in quality. There is some justification for parents’ concerns about homework, as there are some inconsistencies in the way the school’s policy is implemented. Children have positive views and enjoy school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure more consistent quality of teaching across the school;
- improve children's motivation to listen and sustain attention¹.

¹ This is a target in the current school development plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children achieve **well above** average standards in the core subjects. Overall achievement in the reception classes and in Years 5 and 6 is **good**. It is **satisfactory** in other year groups.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average and are good in several other subjects.
- Achievement in Years 1 to 4 is satisfactory but there is room for improvement.
- Children in Year 6 have made well above average progress since they were in Year 2.
- Children achieve very good standards by the end of the reception year.

Commentary

1. The results of national tests in English, mathematics and science at Year 2 and Year 6 have been consistently well above average in recent years and much better than those of similar schools. Current standards in these year groups mostly reflect this picture. The oldest children read and write extremely well and have very good levels of numeracy, which helps their learning in other subjects. In science, standards are well above average in Year 6 and above average in Year 2. Children make good progress and reach good standards by Years 2 and 6 in ICT, history, art and design, and design and technology. Standards in geography are at the levels expected in Year 2 and Year 6. It was not possible to judge standards in music and physical education. Children with special educational needs achieve well. They are well supported in lessons and make good progress towards their individual targets. Where children are withdrawn from classes for extra support, they achieve very well. Similarly, children with the potential to do very well are generally being sufficiently challenged, although this does vary somewhat between classes.
2. Although standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average in Year 2, they are not reaching the very high levels of previous years. This is partly due to the difference in the characteristics of the year groups but also relates to the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2, where achievement is satisfactory but not matching the good achievement of previous years. The gains made by children in Year 6 since they were in Year 2 (known as the 'value added') have been well above average in recent years.
3. Children in the reception classes build well on their good levels of attainment as they start school and reach very good standards. By the end of the year, their social, physical and creative skills are well developed. Most children's literacy and numeracy skills exceed the levels expected and they have a very good knowledge and understanding of the world. Many confidently tackle work more typical of Year 1, with a few children far exceeding expectations.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
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Reading	18.5 (18.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	17.3 (15.5)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	18.1 (17.5)	16.3 (16.5)

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

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.4 (29.1)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.4 (29.5)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	31.5 (29.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 33 children in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Their attendance is **excellent** and punctuality is very good. Provision for children's personal development is **good**. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, with some good features. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision for moral and social development helps children to develop good social skills and mature attitudes.
- An increased emphasis on cultural development is paying off.
- When children find work interesting they work hard, but they are not always prepared to make sufficient effort to fully participate.
- The school expects and achieves very high levels of attendance.

Commentary

4. The school's Catholic ethos fosters a clear sense of children's responsibilities towards others. Friendship and care are frequent themes of assemblies and children are involved in drawing up classroom rules. The school council offers good opportunities for children to contribute to the life of the school and to develop a sense of social responsibility. Residential visits contribute much to children's social development and to their good relationships with staff. Children's personal qualities are enhanced by the school's good provision for sport and music. Children who were interviewed spoke enthusiastically about the extra activities they enjoy.
5. Following the last inspection, which identified weaknesses in provision for cultural development, the school has made good efforts to improve and children's cultural development is well supported. Visiting musicians and dancers have played an important part in extending children's awareness of cultural traditions. Children have enjoyed making and eating food and singing songs from a range of cultures.
6. Children's positive attitudes are evident in many aspects of school life. They come to school eagerly and enjoy good relationships with one another and with adults. They are proud of their school. In lessons, however, teachers sometimes have to work harder than usual to fully engage children. Some children appear to be quite happy to be spoon-fed rather than make an individual effort. This shows in the way children frequently miss things because they make little effort to listen. In some cases, this is because teachers do not catch children's imagination; in others, it seems that a few children are indifferent.

7. Levels of attendance are consistently very high compared with other schools nationally and this is difficult to achieve in a school of this size. Parents prize education and make sure that their children come to school regularly and on time. The school in its turn is stringent about chasing up absence and authorising term time holidays.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	3.0	School data:	0.1
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** quality of education. Its strengths are in the richness of the curriculum, the support and guidance children receive and the partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory**. It is very effective in the reception classes and good in Years 5 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships and detailed planning underpin teaching in the reception classes.
- The pace of learning in some classes is constrained because teachers have to spend too much time in sustaining children's attention.
- Teachers in Years 5 and 6 provide a significant boost to children's learning.
- Teachers track children's progress well which helps them to plan what to teach next.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for teachers and children.

Commentary

8. Children in the reception classes enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities. Daily activities ensure that they have good opportunities to learn through play and practical work. The balance between informal activities which children choose and more structured lessons is highly appropriate for these particular children because of their good levels of attainment as they start school. This is evident particularly in the mixed reception/Year 1 class. Teachers spend a lot of time in planning to achieve this balance. They are skilled in stimulating children, through using voices expressively and by providing highly appealing resources. As a result, children develop a good level of independence; they try hard and cooperate with one another. Teachers' genuine care for their charges is evident in the way they nurture children's overall development.
9. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and sometimes good. This variation in effectiveness is due to a number of factors. When teachers are sufficiently insistent that they have children's full attention, lessons are effective. In the most successful lessons, teachers are very confident about the subject matter and adopt a lively approach, all children are engaged and rise to the challenge of practical, creative tasks. In other lessons, teachers have to spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the few children who have emotional and behavioural problems. Despite the best efforts of teachers and support staff, this can hold up proceedings for the whole class.

10. There is a similar pattern to the teaching in Years 3 and 4. Although planning is good and teachers create stimulating classrooms, children are often slow to settle because teachers are not insistent that they have children's undivided attention or that they get on with their work straight away. Teachers provide insufficient independent work to enable the large class to be divided into manageable groups. At the moment, discussions at the end of lessons (plenaries) are not always productive because children have been working at completely different levels and gain little from hearing about one another's work
11. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is lively and interesting. Children rise to the good level of challenge in most lessons. They respond well to the high expectations of behaviour. Teachers are assertive when necessary; the atmosphere is purposeful but relaxed. Children enjoy a mature relationship with staff. They cooperate well with one another but there is healthy competition when appropriate. They take increasing responsibility for their own learning – as illustrated by the dialogue between teachers and children in the individual 'target books'. The quantity and quality of work in children's books illustrates the positive efforts they make to complete tasks and to present them well. They are increasingly making informed choices about how to record their work – for example, in the way they write up science investigations. Homework is set regularly in these older classes, in contrast to the inconsistencies in other year groups.
12. The level of detail in teachers' records enables most to set work with an element of challenge for children of different abilities. As well as information gathered during lessons, regular tests at the end of a series of lessons on a topic provide teachers with a good idea of who would benefit from extension work and who needs extra support. Teachers routinely evaluate lessons and adapt their subsequent plans in order to try different ways of motivating children.
13. An effective team of teaching assistants works in close partnership with teachers. They are particularly effective in supporting small groups within or outside the classroom. Support staff are well briefed by teachers so they know what is expected of the children they are working with. In some lessons, teaching assistants play a significant part in helping individual children to concentrate during class discussions. Teachers regularly draw on their observations of how children have got on and this valuable feedback contributes to assessment.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	6 (20%)	8 (25%)	17 (55%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. **Good** opportunities are provided to extend learning outside lessons. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision in English, mathematics and science leads to the high standards.
- There have been good improvements in the provision of ICT since the last inspection.

- Reception children benefit from a very good variety of learning activities.
- Children are well prepared for secondary education.
- There are good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum both in the classroom and after formal lessons finish for the day.
- Good resources support learning outdoors.

Commentary

14. Planning is particularly strong in literacy and numeracy and contributes to the high standards children achieve. Provision in science is good. A renewed emphasis on investigative work means that children are more actively engaged in learning and standards have risen. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in ICT and this had a significant impact on standards. Good provision for children with special educational needs enables many to achieve average levels by Year 6, which contributes to the overall performance in national tests. The teacher with specific responsibility for these children enables them to take a full part in the curriculum, adopting a lively and imaginative approach.
15. Children get a very good start to their schooling. Reception children benefit from a very good range of learning activities that help them to achieve well and prepare them well for the next stage in Year 1. As a result of the high standards they achieve in English, mathematics and science, children are prepared well academically to move on to secondary school at the end of Year 6. The school also prepares them well through the good provision made for their personal, social and health education and citizenship. Teachers of the older classes successfully enhance children's self esteem and raise levels of maturity.
16. School life is enriched through extra activities. There are good opportunities for children to participate in sport. For example, they are able to participate in football, tennis, netball, cricket and judo activities in after-school clubs. The school caters for other interests, for example in organising a computer club. Older children have a residential visit. Visits out of school and visitors to school also help enrich the curriculum as, for example, when a potter and a visiting artist come to school to work alongside children and when visiting authors come during book week to share their writing with the children.
17. A strength of the accommodation is the environment immediately outside the school. This is used effectively in art to enable children to sketch and paint observational pictures and it is used in physical education, science and other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Attention given to children's welfare and health is **good** but some issues of safety need to be addressed. Support and guidance for children are **good**. Involvement of and consultation with children are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between children and adults are good.
- Levels of supervision in the playground are low.
- The car park is a hazardous place for pedestrians.
- The school council is well established.
- Good induction means that the reception children settle in quickly.

Commentary

18. Staff treat the children consistently well. Throughout the day, there is always someone for children to turn to if anything goes wrong. Staff take their problems seriously and do their best to sort them out. Off-site visits are meticulously organised to help ensure children's safety. In the playground, though, the relatively low levels of adult supervision mean that staff do not always see everything that happens. Consequently, inappropriate behaviour is unnoticed. The school is currently reviewing playground supervision.
19. At the beginning and end of the day, the church car park is very busy as parents drop off and collect their children, both by car and on foot. Although drivers are careful, the lack of a pedestrian pathway means that parents and children have to thread their way through the moving traffic. This is especially dangerous at the entrance to the car park.
20. Consultation and involvement of children have been features of school life for nearly ten years, longer than in many schools. Weekly meetings of the school council mean that children's views are frequently heard so that they have a role in school development.
21. The new arrivals in the reception class soon find their feet thanks to the school's good procedures for their induction. The close liaison with the pre-school on the site is particularly helpful in making transition seamless for many of the new intake. Visits for children and parents, plus a system of staggered entry, also play their part.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnerships with parents and other schools are **good**. Links with the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and parents are good.
- Parents are keen to have the best for their children.
- Information for parents is good, both in quality and quantity.
- Close links with the church and the parish underpin the school's work.
- Good liaison with other schools helps children transfer easily.

Commentary

22. Staff are readily accessible to parents at the beginning and end of each day and they get on well with one another. In addition, the headteacher has a weekly 'surgery' where parents can see her without an appointment to discuss any concerns they may have. Formal consultation with parents, to gauge their opinions on a range of issues, has been well used in the past, but is not yet an established part of school improvement planning. Parents are anxious that their children should do well and are very supportive of their children's education.
23. Parents receive a wealth of information about what is going on at school, what their children are learning and how well they are doing. There are productive links with parents of children who have special educational needs. Parents and children are involved in reviewing how things are progressing. Each year, all parents receive the updated prospectus, which includes the annual governors' report. In addition, the curriculum map, the programme for personal, social, health and citizenship and diary of events handed out in September, give parents a very good overview of what will be happening during the

coming year. Regular newsletters along with other letters keep them up to date with events throughout the year. More guidance needs to be provided on homework and what to expect.

24. Some reports to parents on their children's progress are very well written. They explain clearly to parents how well their children are doing and what they need to do to improve and are expressed in plain English rather than jargon. This very good practice is not, however, consistent across the school.
25. The school works hand in hand with the church and the parish, so that the principles of the Catholic faith are at the core of everything it does. The school takes part in other community events, such as local art competitions. Despite its rather isolated position, good links have been made with local businesses. For example, children took part in a design competition organised by a local pharmaceutical company. Elements of one of the children's designs have gone into production. A local pizza company provides very practical support for work in design and technology. Regular visits to Windsor Great Park enhance learning in geography and science. There are good working partnerships with other schools. As well as the close relationship with the pre-school on the site, the school has developed good links with the main receiving secondary school, which is a specialist sports school. This means that the children's move to the next phase of their education is made easier and they are given greater sporting opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **good**. The headteacher provides strong leadership. The leadership of other key staff is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and the senior management team have clear priorities and a sense of purpose.
- Senior staff provide very good role models for teachers and children and are committed to helping all children to do as well as they can.
- The governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use their expertise well.

Commentary

26. The headteacher provides good leadership in ensuring that the school's high academic standards are maintained and that children's personal and religious development are carefully fostered. She is well supported by other members of the senior management team in establishing clear priorities for development. The commitment of all staff to inclusion contributes to the good ethos of the school. Staff appraisal and performance management are well established and are key factors in maintaining the school's high standards. The school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and the need to help staff to increase the motivation of some children. The induction of staff new to the school is good. The school's newly qualified teachers speak warmly of the help and professional support that they receive.
27. The chairman of the governing body shows strong leadership and a high level of commitment in support of the school. Governors are keen to serve the school's best interests and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through very effective self-evaluation. A strategic approach to development is evident in the very clear school development plan. Governors are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties. Financial planning is good. The governors set a carefully planned budget based on clear priorities and identified needs. The headteacher and governors have established clear oversight of the finances and are aware of the need to obtain good value when considering improvements and efficiency. The day-to-day administration of finances is highly efficient.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	517,910	Balance from previous year	13,006
Total expenditure	512,538	Balance carried forward to the next	5,372
Expenditure per pupil	2,429		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

28. The provision is led and managed highly effectively. Staff work very well together to provide a very good foundation for children's learning and personal development. The quality of provision has been sustained since the last inspection.
29. Planning is detailed and takes into account the good level of confidence that most children have as they start school. Activities in both classes are fun and purposeful so children become fully absorbed in learning. Meticulous records are kept to track children's progress and to provide new challenges for them.
30. The quality of teaching in each area of learning is very good. Through a combination of whole class, small group and individual work, children's learning flourishes and they achieve well. They come to school happily and eagerly. The indoor and outdoor areas contain a good range of stimulating resources. Standards are very good. By the end of reception, almost all children are on course to meet the goals that children are expected to reach and a large proportion are likely to exceed them.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults establish warm relationships with children so they feel happy and secure.
- Structured opportunities help to develop children's social interaction and independence.

Commentary

31. Teachers and support staff help children to retain their high level of confidence, while at the same time coaxing them into being less self-centred. Children are very self-assured when offering ideas and expressing opinions during class discussions. When working alongside one another they are increasingly co-operative in sharing equipment and taking turns. When this occasionally goes wrong, staff deal with the children sensitively but firmly. The atmosphere is warm and friendly but there is a real sense of purpose. Children know where they stand because the boundaries for acceptable social behaviour are made very clear.
32. Board games are used effectively to help children to follow simple rules. The notions of right and wrong are frequently discussed, sometimes prompted by small incidents, where teachers put the onus on children to choose the right course of action. Children are gradually weaned away from calling out when asked to put their hands up or from talking out of turn when a teacher or classmate is speaking. Although some children still insist on having their say and find it difficult to listen, overall standards in this area of learning are good.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Systematic teaching of early reading and writing builds successfully on children's above average level of literacy as they start school.
- Children are successfully encouraged to use these skills in other areas of learning.

Commentary

33. Teachers carefully assess children's level of language development as they enter the school. Their good level of skill means that staff can plan work with a higher level of challenge than is typically found in reception classes. This was evident when children completed a range of tasks after they had read *The Rainbow Fish* from a large-format book with the teacher. They were delighted as the teacher distributed 'shiny scales' and they set to work enthusiastically. Most recalled the sequence of the story well and several children independently wrote complete sentences, including, '*One fish said to the rainbow fish in a tiny little voice. Please can I have one of your shimmering scales.*' Although not all the writing was as sophisticated as this, the overall level was well above that expected in reception, indicating very good standards in this area of learning.
34. Both classrooms have areas where reading and writing is encouraged and children can frequently be found browsing at books, 'pretend' writing or indeed reading simple texts and writing conventionally. Further opportunities for children to extend their literacy skills are routinely offered as children consult non-fiction texts and record the results of practical investigations. For example, before planting sunflower seeds they read about seeds and plants and subsequently wrote a sequential account of what they had done.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of practical activities helps children to grasp early mathematical ideas.
- Children enjoy learning and make good progress because the work is challenging.

Commentary

35. Teachers successfully build on the good understanding of number children have when they start school. Children enjoy a wide range of games and puzzles designed to consolidate their counting skills and teachers use every opportunity to refer to numbers during daily routines, such as taking the register. Children quickly learn to recognise numerals and to write them down. Work with counters helps them to identify 'one more than' and 'one less than' up to ten and beyond. Because of their quick pace of learning, they are soon ready for more demanding work. Many children have a grasp of addition and subtraction which is not typically found until well into Year 1. Counting in 2s and 10s provides a very good basis for later work on multiplication tables.
36. A good range of resources stimulates children's interest in shape, weighing and measuring. As well as knowing the names of two-dimensional shapes, they identify which are symmetrical. Children use the correct mathematical terms for three-dimensional shapes such as cuboid, pyramid and cylinder, again indicating very good standards in this area of learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of interesting activities supports children's learning.

- Challenging work moves children's learning forward at a rapid pace.

Commentary

37. Standards in this area of learning are very good. Much of the work is based on children's everyday experiences. Ideas of change over time are effectively developed through looking at their own toys and comparing them with the treasured toys of their parents. Nature is explored through well-planned walks through the local woods, when teachers draw children's attention to signs of the changing seasons. Back in the classroom, children eagerly look for growth in the sunflower seeds they have planted and gain a good understanding of the importance of sunshine and water. Early scientific ideas are very well taught through more conventional lessons on light, forces and other topics, when children are taught alongside younger children from Year 1. Children quickly learn computer skills and very confidently use simple word-processing and painting programs to create illustrated party invitations; some write at some length straight to the screen, choosing font sizes and colours. They skilfully position images of buildings and roads to design their own towns on screen. In all these activities, the level of challenge is high. Teachers not only question children about what they have done but place great emphasis on what they have learned. Most children make good attempts at recording what they have found out, using pictures, diagrams and sequenced sentences.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good facilities for physical development are used well.
- Children's manipulative skills are very well developed through frequent work with classroom tools.

Commentary

38. The combination of regular lessons in the hall and more informal opportunities for physical development means that children gain increasing control of their bodies. Their physical development is better than expected by the end of the reception year. Children move over and under apparatus carefully and most balance well. When running around the hall, they are aware of other people and have a good sense of the space around them. They play adventurously outside on the large logs, tree trunks and more conventional climbing apparatus. Much classroom work involves drawing, cutting and gluing and children frequently use staplers, hole punches and sticky tape. They develop a high level of control of these tools; for example, cutting out is very accurate. Children's manipulative skills are much better than is typical of the age group.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy a wide variety of activities that stimulate their creative development.
- Children make good progress because skills are taught systematically.

Commentary

39. The reception classrooms are alive with children's creative efforts. Using materials, including fabric, card, wool, glitter and play dough, they create imaginative collages, such

as their recent pictures of *Elmer*. A variety of materials was used very well as children created 'aquariums' for rainbow fish. The teacher motivated the children extremely well and successfully encouraged their individual efforts. Given this freedom, they showed remarkable initiative in creating an under-sea effect. Where appropriate, children are taught specific skills which they can later use in their work. For example, children in the younger class were shown how to mix paint, with the result that they achieved some satisfying results when painting the facial background for portraits. As a result of the very good provision, children reach very good standards.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the time children leave school they are articulate and they read and write very well.
- Teaching is lively and inspiring in Years 5 and 6.
- In other parts of the school expectations of some teachers are not high enough.
- Teachers give children good opportunities to write at length in several areas of the curriculum.
- The subject is led and managed well.

Commentary

40. Children in Year 2 and Year 6 are attaining standards that are well above average in reading, writing and speaking. In the national tests in 2003, the proportion of children reaching the higher levels (Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6) was well above that achieved by similar schools. Standards in listening are also well above average in Year 6. Listening skills are average in Year 2 but do not match the standards reached in other aspects of English. Children in Year 6 are articulate, speak confidently to adults and clearly express their ideas and opinions. They are keen to answer questions but they are also eager to ask them. Most write at length for a wide range of purposes, generally spelling words correctly and presenting work neatly. They enjoy reading and discuss books knowledgeably, expressing preferences for authors and styles and types of text. Some write very good book reviews. Most Year 2 children read independently and write imaginatively. The quality of handwriting though usually satisfactory does not always match the quality of content. Children in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well overall because of the very good gains made in Years 5 and 6. Year 1 children in the mixed reception/Year 1 class are making good progress. Overall achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory.
41. Children in Years 5 and 6 have good attitudes to learning. They are responsive, listen intently and concentrate well. They benefit from strong teachers who have high expectations and who provide challenging work. In Year 5 this is particularly well structured. Children successfully write at length, they maintain quality reading journals and these give a good focus to reading. Handwriting is taught regularly and there is regular emphasis on teaching spelling. As a result, children in Year 5, like those in Year 6, are making very good progress. Teaching in Years 1 to 4, although overall satisfactory, is not as strong as in Years 5 and 6. Teachers use resources well and skilfully question children to assess their level of understanding and to take their learning forward. However, teachers' expectations of behaviour are sometimes not high enough, which leads to social chat during working sessions and cuts down on the amount of work completed.
42. The subject is led and managed well by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher. She is a good teaching role model and gives good support to other teachers. She has instigated successful improvement since the last report. Children write at length both in English lessons and in other areas of the curriculum such as religious education and history. Computers are used well; children use their skills in word-processing to good effect. Good progress is being made in the endeavour to provide greater challenge for higher attaining children and the very able, especially in Years 5 and 6.

Literacy across the curriculum

43. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is a strong feature, enabling children to develop and strengthen these skills effectively. Children are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas in writing in a range of different subjects, such as science, history, geography and design and technology. They do this well. For example, Year 3 design and make photo frames and evaluate them in an imaginative way. They pretend to be the recipient of a frame given as a present and write back a letter of thanks extolling its virtues or otherwise. In their history studies, Year 6 children write down at length their thoughts and feelings about how they perceive life was like in a Victorian school. Opportunities are sometimes missed to extend literacy skills by giving children undemanding tasks; for example, in a geography lesson a group of children simply copied down text instead of writing independently. Discussions give children valuable practice in expressing their views clearly and concisely and provide good preparation for them to transfer their opinions and thoughts to their writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong emphasis on numeracy provides a solid foundation for work in other areas of mathematics.
- Children rise to the high level of challenge in Years 5 and 6.

Commentary

44. Strong leadership and management have led to a renewed impetus in mathematics, which has helped to sustain high standards since the last inspection. In the national tests in 2003, the proportion of children reaching the higher levels (Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6) was well above that achieved by similar schools. Teaching is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Each classroom now has a mathematics area containing displays of mathematical vocabulary, number squares, puzzles and practical apparatus. Additionally, children's interest in the subject is being stimulated by teachers' increasing use of resources. Children are interested in numbers and want to do at least as well as their classmates. In the best lessons, teachers use white boards or number fans so that they can see at a glance which children answer questions correctly. The pace of learning slows when teachers ask the whole class a question and then spend too long seeking a response from individual children. Levels of numeracy are very good overall however, and this helps when children tackle problems involving money and time or when they measure length and weight. By Year 2, standards are above average. Children confidently use their numeracy skills to interpret information from graphs and to extend their understanding of larger numbers, for example, to count in 100s or 1,000s.
45. The quality of teaching moves up a notch in Years 5 and 6. This was exemplified in the lively pace of a lesson in Year 5 when children were accurately exploring the relationship between fractions and decimals. Their extremely good knowledge of multiplication tables came to the fore as children worked in pairs, setting each other questions. Higher attaining children were quick to spot patterns emerging because of their underlying numerical understanding. A good level of challenge was evident also in Year 6, when children were investigating holiday information, such as accommodation and flight costs. They drew on their considerable skills in calculating to solve problems to two decimal places. Work in these children's books indicates well above average standards across each area of mathematics. Children independently construct frequency tables, choosing appropriate class intervals; they understand statistical terms such as the mean, median and mode and are beginning to use algebraic expressions. The level of work on area,

angles and negative numbers is also indicative of the well above average standards achieved by Year 6.

Mathematics across the curriculum

46. Children have good opportunities to consolidate their skills in other subjects and to use them in different contexts. They measure and record their results of investigations in science, using a good range of graphs and tables. Projects in design and technology, such as the construction of pizza boxes, demand accurate measuring skills. Links with ICT occur when children explore angles using a floor robot, but there needs to be a closer relationship with work in mathematics and ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and have risen since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 with the result that children achieve well in these classes.
- A good curriculum is now in place but more could be done to promote children's cultural development.

Commentary

47. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. They are above average at the end of Year 2 and well above the national average at the end of Year 6. In the teacher assessments and national tests in 2003, the proportion of children reaching the higher levels (Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6) was well above that achieved by similar schools. Children in Year 2, for example, have a good understanding of the principles of a fair test. They use equipment safely and accurately write up their results in a scientific style. Their above average knowledge and understanding of materials enables children to classify them into groups according to their properties. Very good standards in Year 6 are evident as children carry out a range of investigations, reach sensible conclusions about what is happening and independently present their data. A particular strength is the way children evaluate what they have done and suggest ways to refine their investigations.
48. Teaching and learning are good overall. There are significant strengths in teaching in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. Teachers carefully plan lessons to make children think, observe and draw conclusions about the evidence they have seen. Class control is very good and no time is lost because of misbehaviour. Across the school, children generally show interest in science and have good attitudes to work. The previous inspection reported that teachers made too much use of unchallenging, poor quality worksheets. This has been corrected. Children are now given good opportunities to develop their own writing and recording styles. Consequently science makes a good contribution to children's literacy and numeracy development.
49. The previous inspection drew attention to the lack of a comprehensive curriculum plan. The curriculum now provides a progressive and coherent programme for children. Driven by good leadership and management, the weaknesses identified by the last inspection have been corrected and the provision has improved since then. However, little attention is given in lessons to the wide range of cultures and traditions from which scientific thinking comes, thus restricting children's cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and have risen since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good where ICT is taught as a separate subject and satisfactory when ICT is approached through other subjects.
- Strong leadership and management have helped to raise standards.

Commentary

50. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and standards are now good at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. Children achieve well across the school. By the end of Year 2, children operate computers with considerable confidence. They save their work and retrieve it on future occasions. They control a directional robot by programming a sequence of instructions and are skilled in using early painting programs to create colourful images. By the end of Year 6, children build on this good base to organise and present information in a number of ways. Year 5 children, for example, produce interesting and colourful multimedia presentations. Year 6 children use their knowledge of ICT to assess its impact on the outside world – for example, by using sensing equipment and discussing its use in alarm systems.
51. In ICT lessons, children learn the basic skills well and apply them to other tasks. Where teaching is good, teachers give clear instructions about what children are expected to do and are confident enough to help where children make mistakes. Not all teachers have this degree of confidence however. Children's progress is tracked reasonably well but the use of assessment information to ensure that all children learn all the necessary skills over time is inconsistent. As a result, the school cannot yet be sure what skills have been learned and which have not by the time children are in Year 6. The subject makes a good contribution to development of children's literacy and numeracy skills.
52. The subject co-ordinator has shown good leadership and management in developing the subject. He has provided particularly good support for teachers in lesson planning and in acquiring good quality resources. The co-ordinator and senior staff have a clear view of what still needs to be done and have good strategies for achieving their targets.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

53. The use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. In English lessons children use ICT to correct, edit and improve their work. ICT is used in science lessons to assemble and log data from investigations. The use of websites to find information is developing in a number of subjects; for example, the school's Intranet identifies links to various children's authors, which helps in the study of literature.

HUMANITIES²

It is not possible to judge overall provision in **geography** because no teaching was seen. Children's work indicated that standards are in line with expectations by Year 2 and Year 6. Children's books show that they do not make the same good progress in geography as they do in most other subjects. They could be achieving more. Not as much time is spent on geography as on history. Due to changes in the leadership of the subject, monitoring of the provision has not been rigorous enough to reveal and correct these deficiencies.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6.

² As the school is voluntary aided, religious education is inspected separately.

- Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

54. As a result of effective leadership and management, good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and well above average at the end of Year 6. Children achieve well over their time in school. By the end of Year 6 children write in good detail and at length about such topics as working conditions in Victorian times and about the development of transport during that period. They develop strong research and interpretation skills over their time in school.
55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Where teaching is at its best, teachers have strong strategies to deal with the weak listening skills of many children and this helps children to concentrate and improve their learning. The school has good resources for history and these are used well by teachers to bring the subject to life, providing children with a good idea of what life was like in other times. Children are given opportunities to research and interpret information and to study different accounts of the same historical events. Children develop their writing styles and produce longer pieces of work during history lessons. Their work is regularly marked and corrected but the use of marking to give children advice on how they can improve their work is inconsistent.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

56. Due to timetable arrangements it was not possible to judge overall provision in these subjects as not enough lessons were observed to evaluate the overall quality of teaching. One lesson was seen in art and design and two in design and technology, together with a range of work in both subjects. Two lessons were seen in music and children were heard singing in assemblies and singing practice. No lessons were seen in physical education but brief observations were made of extra-curricular activities.
57. Children in Year 5 were interested and enthusiastic during a good lesson in **art and design**. They produced a fabric collage exploring a story studied in their literacy work. The quality of their work was good. They produced carefully constructed design sheets and they cut out, pinned and sewed with considerable care and accuracy. Work in sketchbooks, paintings and other children's work on display indicates that standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are good. Children are given a good range of experiences in art. They paint, draw, sketch and make models. They are introduced to the works of a range of artists and they are encouraged to try out their techniques and styles. For example, Year 5 children produced good quality paintings after the style of Andy Warhol, as did Year 3 in their pictures in the style of Alberto Giacometti. Effective links are made between art and literature. Year 5 children have produced good quality work both in terms of drawing and writing using the work of Colin Thompson as a stimulus for both activities.
58. In **design and technology**, one lesson was seen in Year 1 and one in Year 3. In the Year 1 lesson, children were making model buildings having first drawn plans. Children spoke confidently about their models and described what they were designed for and how they worked. In the Year 3 lesson, children worked well to a design brief to make boxes in which to package a pizza. The good level of attainment seen in these lessons was reflected in children's previous work, which indicated above average standards in Year 2 and Year 6. Planning, design and evaluation are especially strong features of children's work.

59. Following the departure of the subject co-ordinator, the school has found it difficult to sustain provision in **music**. Good efforts are being made to improve things; a new teaching programme has been adopted and a teacher with musical expertise has been appointed. Instrumental tuition remains a strength, with children learning the piano, guitar and woodwind instruments. Visiting musicians, playing instruments from a range of cultures, enliven the provision but music does not feature strongly in daily assemblies. Children sing tunefully enough but dynamics are not varied sufficiently to express the meaning of the words. No reference is made to the music played as children enter and leave, so opportunities are missed for them to develop listening skills or to express their preferences. The lessons observed in Year 2 and Year 6 were satisfactory with children reasonably keen to participate. Teachers need more help in selecting resources from the new programme in order to get the best from it.
60. Planning in **physical education** indicates that all aspects of the subject are included. The take-up of extra-curricular sporting activities is good and children take part in competitive tournaments with local schools. Physical education is a popular subject and children talk enthusiastically about the range of games and sporting activities they enjoy. This was certainly evident during the judo lessons after school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

61. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching and learning in these areas of work, but the policy and planning are good. The policy accurately reflects the practice within the school. Children's personal, social, health and citizenship education is developed both in day-to-day lessons - for example, the safety issues relating to work on circuits - and through extra-curricular provision, such as clubs and residential trips. The school council plays an important part in provision for the oldest children. Children's awareness of the dangers of drugs is raised effectively and there is a good programme of sex education.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	2
Children's achievement	3
Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	1
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	4
How well children learn	4
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets children's needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Children's care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for children	3
How well the school seeks and acts on children's views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).