

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GERARD'S RC JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103458

Headteacher: Miss B Peel

Lead inspector: Mr C Parker

Dates of inspection: 21st – 23rd June 2003

Inspection number: 257661

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	198
School address:	Yatesbury Avenue Castle Vale Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B35 6LB
Telephone number:	0121 747 2613
Fax number:	0121 747 4542
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Michael Knight
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

There are 198 children on roll, which is about average for a primary school. Twenty-one children have full time nursery places. The pupils are predominantly from Catholic families, although there is a changing profile showing a decline in the number of baptised Catholics amongst the younger children. About ten per cent of the pupils come from backgrounds other than white British and are mainly of mixed heritage. All pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average at almost one third. The proportion of pupils with special education needs is very low; only one has a Statement. The school community is very stable and there is little pupil mobility. Last year, for example, only one child left and two started at the school at times other than the beginning of the school year. Overall, the children's attainment on entry is broadly average.

The pupils are taught by 10 teachers in eight classes. Currently, there is one temporary teacher; a newly appointed literacy co-ordinator takes up her post in September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11897	Christopher Parker	Lead inspector	Science, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology
19692	Robert Folks	Lay inspector	
29703	Ray Barton	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, history special educational needs
2766	Rashida Spencer	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, English, music and physical education

The inspection contractor was :

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **good and effective school** where the pupils achieve well because the teaching is good. The headteacher leads and manages the school very effectively and develops a strong ethos in which the pupils thrive. Consequently, the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English are above average by Year 6, but standards in writing are not as high as they should be in Year 2
- Most of the lessons are interesting, engage the pupils and help them to make good progress
- The pupils behave exceptionally well and concentrate on their work
- They have good, positive attitudes to learning
- The children in the nursery make a very good start
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used widely enough across the curriculum
- The pupils personal development is good
- The strategic planning is clearly focussed and there is a drive for further improvement

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The curriculum is now consistently well planned. All aspects of ICT are now taught and the pupils have opportunities to use models and simulations. The financial management of the school is very strong and enables the governors to ensure they gain good value for money.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Overall, the pupils' achievement is good. The children make a particularly good start in the nursery, and by the time they reach the end of the reception year most of them are attaining the required goals in all areas of learning.

Last year there was a fall in the results of the Year 2 national tests. Previously they had been generally above average, but they slipped to average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. This was largely caused by the difficulty of recruiting a new teacher for Year 2. In 2004 the situation has been stabilised and standards are currently above average in reading and mathematics, but not as high as they should be in writing.

At the end of Year 6, the results have steadily improved over the last four years. In 2000, they were either below or well below average, but by 2003 they had risen to levels that were average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science. Comparisons with similar schools have also improved markedly. The pupils are making good progress through Years 3 to 6 because the teaching is consistently good. Currently, standards in Year 6 are average in mathematics, above average English and well above average in science. The pupils do particularly well in science because the teachers have strong subject knowledge and place a strong emphasis on experiments and investigations. Similar good provision for history

ensures that the pupils achieve well and that standards are above average by the end of Year 6. The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well.

The pupils have very good attitudes and take a full part in the life of the school. Their behaviour is excellent both in and out of the classroom and their confidence and self-esteem are developed very effectively. The **pupils' personal development is good** overall, particularly in respect of their spiritual, moral and social development, which are all very good. However, the pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about other cultures. Overall, the levels of attendance are average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and assessment are good.** The teaching in the nursery is very well planned and organised. Throughout the school, the teachers are clear about what they want their pupils to learn and they engage them very effectively in many lessons. The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are very good and, as a result, behaviour is very effectively managed. The provision and support for the pupils with special educational needs are very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting, but ICT is not used widely enough. The curriculum is enriched by the various purposeful visits that the pupils make.

The care, welfare and safety of pupils are very good. The school has very good procedures to ensure that the pupils work in a safe and secure environment. The teachers know the pupils very well, and in turn the pupils have trusting relationships with adults in the school. The tracking of the pupils' progress is very effective and careful monitoring ensures that they are advised, guided and supported well. Their views are sought, valued and acted upon. The induction arrangements for children starting school are very good. The school has very close links with the parents who are very supportive of the school. The school provides them with very good information. There are also very good links with the church, the community and other schools in the area and, as a result, the arrangements for transfer at the end of Year 6 are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The **leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher has a clear vision for the continuing improvement of the school. Data analysis is used very effectively to target areas where the school's performance can be enhanced. Consequently, the strategic planning is well focussed with the goals for improvement set out very clearly. The headteacher is building a strong teaching team, although difficulties in filling one vacancy have hindered some improvement activities, particularly in English.

The school's mission statement strongly reflects the Catholic faith. On this firm basis, the headteacher has successfully established an ethos and environment in which the pupils thrive. This is particularly evident in respect of their personal development. Likewise, the governance of the school is good. The governors both support and challenge the school effectively and their financial management is very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The pupils have pride in their school and great respect for their teachers. Generally, the parents are very happy with the school, and expressed only slight concerns about sports, extra-curricular activities, arrangements at lunchtime and the playground. The inspection team looked at all of these concerns. The playground is small for the number of pupils and there is no grassed area or sports field. However, the school uses the available space to best effect, and the lunchtime arrangements work well. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards of writing by the end of Year 2
- Extend the use of ICT across the curriculum

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, the pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in mathematics, above average in English and well above average in science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children make a particularly good start in the nursery
- Reading standards are above average by the end of Year 6
- Standards in writing are not as high as they should be by Year 2
- The pupils with SEN achieve very well
- Standards in science are well above average in Year 6 and standards in history are above average throughout the school

Commentary

1. By the time the children reach the end of the reception year, most are reaching the required goals in all areas of learning.
2. In 2003, there was a fall in the results of the national tests at the end of Year 2. Previously they were generally above average, but here they slipped to average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. The fall in results in 2003 was the result of a long-term illness and subsequent retirement of a teacher and the difficulties encountered by the school in recruiting a replacement. Before this the results compared favourably with the national averages. In 2004 the situation has been stabilised and standards are currently above average in reading and mathematics, but not as high as they should be in writing. The pupils are achieving satisfactorily in Year 2, but could make better progress. Currently, some tasks are often based on the use of worksheets that restrict rather than encourage learning.
3. The results at the end of Year 6 have improved steadily over the last four years. In 2000, they were generally either below or well below average, but by 2003 they had risen to levels that were average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science. Comparisons with similar schools also improved markedly and were above average in English and mathematics and very high in science. The pupils are making good progress through Years 3 to 6 because the teaching is consistently good. Currently, standards in Year 6 are average in mathematics, above average English and well above average in science. For instance, over half of the pupils attained the higher levels in last year's national science test. The pupils do particularly well in science because the teachers have strong subject knowledge and place a strong emphasis on experiments and investigations. The pupils develop their skills and competencies well in ICT lessons, but they do not have frequent enough opportunities to use and apply them in other subjects. The good provision made for history ensures that the pupils achieve well and that standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
4. Over the last few years, the results at the end of Year 2 suggest that boys do a little better than girls. However, at the end of Year 6 the position is reversed in English though the difference in the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics is minimal. Overall, however, the girls do marginally better than boys in national tests at the end of Year 6 but there is no evidence of any significant gender difference in the lessons.
5. The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well because the work is well matched to their needs and they receive support of a high standard. This same high quality support is also provided for the lower attaining pupils, raising their skills and

knowledge and preventing them from being designated as having special educational needs. Consequently, far fewer pupils than usual are identified as having special needs.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.3 (17.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.8 (16.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.4 (16.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (27.6)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.5 (27.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.5 (28.8)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils have very good attitudes and take a full part in the life of the school. Their personal development is good. Overall, the level of attendance is average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils’ behaviour is excellent
- Their confidence and self-esteem are developed very effectively
- The pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development are very good
- They have insufficient opportunities to learn about other cultures

Commentary

6. In lessons, the pupils concentrate and contribute very well. They listen attentively and work very well both independently and collaboratively. They enjoy learning. Relationships within the school are very good. This, combined with the very pleasant environment created by the school, contributes considerably to the pupils’ learning.
7. The pupils are very well behaved at all times. For example, their behaviour was exemplary when they had to go indoors because of a sudden downpour during a lunchtime break. They entered their classrooms, took out a range of activities and settled down to pursue them diligently. No harassment or bullying was seen during the inspection. The parents are happy with the standard of the pupils’ behaviour and are confident that any problems are dealt with immediately. This area has improved notably since the last inspection.
8. The pupils are taught to be independent from an early stage and have many opportunities to take responsibility and use their initiative. The Thanksgiving Mass, in which they played a large part, illustrated this well. There were four altar servers who assisted the priest extremely well during

the service and with Holy Communion. The older pupils went up in turn to introduce the service, to do readings and to lead prayers. The pupils also have a range of jobs and responsibilities that help with the daily running of the school, and which they perform sensibly and maturely.

9. The spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils is very good. The spirituality experienced during the Thanksgiving Mass permeates the daily life of the school. The pupils are taught consideration for others, forgiveness, understanding of feelings and emotions, matters of faith and moral issues. They understand their place and role in the life of the school family, their life at home and the wider community, especially the church. Educational visits help them to work and socialise very well together, and this is particularly true of the residential trips for the older pupils. The school gives the pupils a good knowledge of their own culture and faith in lessons such as art and music. However, there are too few opportunities to raise the pupils' awareness and understanding of the diversity of other cultures. The school is aware of this shortcoming and is taking suitable steps to redress it.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.4	School data	0.7
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.

10. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. In the academic year 2002-3, a lot of sickness in the school caused attendance to drop below the national average. The returns for this year show quite clearly a return to the former level, but the incidence of unauthorised absence is higher than average.

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The pupils are well taught, have a broad and balanced curriculum and receive very good support. Consequently, the quality of education is good overall.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are very effectively engaged in learning in many lessons
- The teachers are clear about what they want their pupils to learn
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good
- The teaching in the nursery is very well planned and organised
- Relationships and the pupils' behaviour are very good throughout the school

Commentary

11. Teaching is effective in ensuring that the pupils continue to progress and achieve well as they move through the school. The quality of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall. The children make a very good start in the nursery where the teacher and nursery nurse promote their personal and social development very well. The children make very good progress because of the extensive range of well-planned and exciting activities, some directed by the adults and others chosen by the children themselves. The adults are particularly adept in their interventions, asking questions and ensuring that all activities are purposeful. The children's progress is carefully assessed from the time they enter the nursery and throughout the whole Foundation Stage. In the reception class, the teaching builds satisfactorily on the very good start made in the nursery. There are many activities to challenge the pupils but the tasks are not always well matched to their needs. Consequently their progress is not as rapid.
12. The children make good progress in Year 1 where they learn and achieve well. They make good gains in their numeracy and literacy skills because the teaching is well focussed on these key areas. The use of clear targets to help the pupils to accelerate their learning is particularly effective, notably in writing. In Year 2, the teaching is currently satisfactory, but the pupils' learning has been disrupted by the school's enforced reliance on temporary and supply teachers because of the difficulties encountered in recruiting a new teacher. The teaching is ensuring the pupils continue to learn, but not at the rapid rate of which they are capable. For example, too many activities are constrained by worksheets that do not sufficiently challenge the pupils and restrict opportunities for them to express themselves fully in writing.
13. In Years 3 to 6, the teaching is consistently good and in some lessons it is very good. Here the lessons are consistently well planned, the approach is rigorous and the pupils gain confidence and engage fully in the tasks they are set. The teachers use their good subject knowledge well to plan lessons that are stimulating and interesting. This was evident, for example, when the pupils in Year 4 were finding out about the habitats of creatures, and in Year 5 when they were learning to control the sequence of traffic lights. In Year 6, there was very good use of oral reminiscences to stimulate the pupils learning and understanding of life during the Second World War. The lessons are interesting, purposeful, often lively and have a good pace; the pupils are continually involved and encouraged to concentrate by their teachers. The tasks are carefully modified to meet the needs of groups within the class so that the most able pupils are stretched and those with special educational needs are fully supported.
14. The special educational needs co-ordinator is very effective in supporting individuals and groups and shows considerable commitment and skill in enhancing the learning in lessons. The pupils with special educational needs are included in all activities. The teaching assistants, working under the direction of the class teacher, understand their roles in supporting the pupils in each lesson. They work well with the teachers to plan activities that enable the pupils to succeed and achieve their targets. The whole class sessions are used effectively to reinforce the content of the lessons and, in some cases, for the pupils to evaluate the extent of their own learning. Homework is also used satisfactorily to promote the pupils' learning.
15. The pupils' work is marked thoroughly and their knowledge and skills assessed. In most classes, the teachers make very useful written comments on the work, but not all give a clear indication of the next step in the pupils' learning. In some cases, the teachers raise questions about the pupils' work, but they do not consistently require either a response from the pupils or the correction of errors. The teachers use the information that they gain from assessment in planning tasks with the right amount of challenge, thereby ensuring that the pupils make good progress. The older pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. The assessment procedures are good and ensure that the teachers know and record those pupils who are reaching, exceeding or falling short of the standards expected.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	8	16	5			

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

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs
- All pupils have equality of access and opportunity, including those with special educational needs.
- The curriculum is enriched through a variety of visits experienced by the pupils
- ICT is not used widely enough across the curriculum

Commentary

16. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and the curriculum is balanced and broad. The provision for ICT has improved significantly and the pupils now develop their skills and competencies well. However, they have insufficient opportunities to use these skills in other subjects to extend and enhance their learning. The curriculum includes good provision for the personal, social and health education of the pupils and this will be extended further as the school's plan to introduce 'Circle Time' activities come fully into action. Sex education and the pupils' knowledge of drug misuses are approached mainly through the school's science curriculum. However, projects such as 'The Outdoors Against Drugs' (T.O.A.D.) and 'The Life Education Van' add significantly to the pupils knowledge.

17. The school is encouraging the use of discussion in lessons, so that the pupils can extend their speaking and listening skills in a social setting. A group of Year 6 pupils commented very confidently that they thought that this approach was, 'Good, as it helps you to come up with more ideas, find more information and lets you help each other'.

18. The school works hard and very successfully to include all the pupils in the curriculum. Those pupils who have special educational needs are very well supported by the teachers and learning support assistants, enabling them to take a full part in all lessons. The pupils' needs are assessed at an early stage, very good support is given and regular checks of progress are carried out. The pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans with clear specific learning targets that are known to the staff and used well.

19. The range and frequency of extra school activities is satisfactory. The activities range from sports, such as football and netball, to ecology and computer studies. The school also makes good use of a range of visits out of school and of visitors into school. They provide a valuable learning resource that is recognised by the pupils. During a history lesson, for instance, the Year 6 pupils commented that they thought that their visit to Birmingham Museum helped them learn more because, 'You actually see things, not just look in books'. Others talked of previous visits and visitors that they remembered. For example, some spoke enthusiastically about their visit to

Aston Hall when they were younger and could recall vividly how they dressed up and experienced being either a rich or poor person in Tudor times.

20. The schools' accommodation and resources contribute effectively to the quality of education. Although the outside areas are small, the school is making good use of the space available. It has a good number of teaching and support staff, all of whom contribute well to the quality of education experienced by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare and safety of pupils are very good. Careful monitoring ensures that they are, advised, guided and supported well. Their views are sought, valued and acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very good procedures to ensure that the pupils work in a safe and secure environment
- The pupils are well known and have trusting relationships with the adults in the school
- The induction arrangements are very good
- The tracking of the pupils' progress is very effective

Commentary

21. The school has very good procedures for child protection that are sensitively and effectively applied. The Health and Safety procedures include regular inspections of the school by a governor and member of staff, and also regular and very efficient evacuations of the building. The First Aid procedures are also very good. All of these factors help to ensure a very safe environment for the pupils.
22. The members of staff know and care for the pupils very well. Each child has a number of adults to approach if they have any problems and the head teacher is always available. There is a strong "family" feel about the school, ensuring that every pupil has a part to play and is very well supported at all times. Outside specialist support complements this provision very well.
23. Careful tracking and monitoring ensure that the pupils receive good advice and guidance as they progress through the school. Consequently, their personal and academic development is nurtured and effectively overseen. The induction arrangements are also very good.
24. The individual work and requirements of the pupils with special educational needs are monitored continuously, regularly assessed and very well supported. The co-ordinator has established very good links with local secondary schools, who speak highly of her work in enabling these pupils to have the best possible start at their new school. The pupils also benefit from the good range of external agencies to which the school has access, including the special needs support service, the psychologist and speech and language therapists.
25. As the pupils play a large part in the school family, their views are considered on a regular basis and their requirements and needs are well taken into account. The parents feel that their children are well looked after in the school and that high standards have been maintained and improved since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very close links with the parents who are very supportive of its work. There is a very close relationship with the church and very good links with the community and other schools in the area.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good information for parents
- The arrangements for the transfer of pupils at the end of Year 6 are good

Commentary

26. Overall, the parents are very satisfied with the work of the school. They receive very good information in the form of regular newsletters and curriculum information sheets. The school prospectus is a very informative and well-presented document and is supplemented by an easy-to-read governor's annual report to parents. Many letters also keep them informed about events in the school and there is a parents' notice board in the school. The annual written reports on the pupils' progress and achievements are evaluative and identify areas for improvement. In two of the terms each year, there are formal parents' meetings and, in the other term, the parents are invited to make an appointment to see the class teacher if they so wish. In addition, the teachers are available for special consultation at any time. A small number of parents are involved in fund-raising several times a year. The proceeds either provide additional resources and equipment for the school or go to a selected charity. The school's partnership with the parents is another feature of the school that has improved since the last inspection.

27. The school has very good links with the community and understandably is closely associated with the church, which is next door. They pupils know the parish priest very well because this proximity enables them to visit the church regularly and because he is also the Chair of Governors. There are many links with local organisations, for example the Housing Action Trust, and the pupils make many excursions into the community to places such as the Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens, Castle Vale Arts Centre and the local swimming pool. In the wider community, Birmingham's extensive facilities, including museums, theatres and the Botanical Gardens, are very well used.

28. Links with other schools include the Catholic Cluster Group of Schools, the local Castle Vale schools and secondary schools in Birmingham and Castle Vale. Consequently, the transition arrangements are very good. There is a particularly close relationship with the local grammar school with sporting links through tag rugby and curriculum links in science and English.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The governance is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the continuing improvement of the school
- Data analysis is used very effectively to target areas for improvement
- The strategic planning is well focussed
- The financial management is very good
- The governors support and challenge the school effectively

Commentary

29. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is providing the direction to bring about continuing improvements. Her vision is articulated through the aims and expectations set out in the school

improvement plan. The goals for the year are stated very clearly and are based on an evaluation of previous year's activities. The plan is expressed succinctly and provides a very well considered structure for moving the school forward. The headteacher is also developing a strong teaching team although difficulties in recruiting for a vacancy have hindered some improvement activities, particularly in English. A new full-time teacher will join at the start of next term with a brief to accelerate improvements in English and return standards to levels of previous years. The headteacher is also successful in establishing an ethos and environment in which the pupils thrive. This is particularly the case in respect of the personal development of the pupils and is evident in the school's mission statement, which strongly reflects the school's Catholic faith. The new entrance to the school reflects its welcoming nature.

30. The leadership and management of the provision for the pupils with special educational needs are very good. The co-ordinator is very committed to the well being and progress of these pupils, and the school's commitment to them can be seen in their full inclusion in all its activities.
31. The governing body has an effective structure that allows its work to be conducted through formal meetings and committees. For example, the curriculum committee works with the co-ordinators, who make presentations to keep them abreast of developments. The governors clearly feel that this system is working well and allowing them to play their role in mapping the direction that the school is taking. They use the services of a consultant to ensure that their financial management is of the highest order and to provide them with comprehensive information and appropriate advice. This ensures financial management is very good and shows a significant improvement since the last inspection when the governors were not playing such an active role in assessing the value for money achieved by their decisions. The governors make visits to the school so that they build up a clear picture of how well the school is doing. In this way, they are helping to establish priorities for improvement and monitor the development activities to evaluate their effect.
32. The headteacher undertakes a range of self-evaluation measures. Her systematic and well focussed monitoring of the quality of the teaching gives an accurate assessment of the quality of the provision. Comprehensive data analysis, undertaken by the deputy headteacher, is used to track individual pupil's progress and provides information for the teachers to set targets for further improvement, although these are only linked to their performance management targets for key stage 2. The subject co-ordinators monitor the planning and check that the pupils' work is of the required standard. The headteacher also checks the pupils' work and uses any emerging issues to facilitate school improvement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	615,148
Total expenditure	587,696
Expenditure per pupil	2,968

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	15,976
Balance carried forward to the next	27,452

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

33. The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is good overall and very good in the nursery. Their attainment on entry is average, but as a result of this good provision they achieve well. Nearly all the nursery children go on into the reception class. Very good planning, organisation and effective teaching by the nursery teacher and the nursery nurse enable children to get a very good start in all areas of learning. Their progress is satisfactorily maintained in the reception class in most areas of learning and, by the end of the Foundation Stage, most children either reach or exceed the early learning goals. However, their progress could be accelerated if their previous learning was developed more systematically.
34. The children enjoy coming to the school and settle well because of the good relationships between parents and staff. The daily routines, rules and expectations are quickly established and the children's behaviour is very good. The nursery curriculum is broad and well balanced. Well thought out and useful links between the areas of learning feature strongly in the planning. The members of staff are skilled in leading the children towards learning, referring to the theme and allowing them to move happily between formal and exploratory play. The system works well and there are many examples each day of children being engrossed in their learning and happy to share their experiences with others. Systematic and regular assessment enables the staff to keep a detailed record of each child's learning needs. There is a well presented portfolio of work for each child, which is passed on to the reception teachers.
35. The quality of teaching is good overall. Children are managed well and soon begin to acquire basic skills in reading, writing, counting and sorting. Very well planned activities, and clear explanations, help nursery age children to work for a considerable time on each activity. The nursery nurse intervenes expertly and moves their learning on.
36. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about the provision for the children's **physical development** but in the brief examples seen in the nursery it was good. No physical development lessons were observed in the reception class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for the children's personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good planning and management provide a secure and consistent learning environment
- The children are confident and relate well to each other and other adults

Commentary

37. The children will either reach or exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Very early on in the nursery, the children are helped to understand simple routines and rules. The calm atmosphere encourages them to behave responsibly and treat each other with respect. The equipment is used carefully and most children will tidy away when asked. They role-play happily together in the home corner, co-operating, sharing and taking tasks seriously. For example, in the role-play area, which was designated as an 'airport', they put swimming costumes on top of their

clothes and rubbed themselves with sun tan lotion, ready for their holiday! In all activities, the children work for considerable lengths of time, either with friends or alone. These good learning habits serve them well when they enter the reception class.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The nursery staff set high standards in speaking and listening.
- Every opportunity is used in play activities to develop language.

Commentary

38. The children make rapid progress from the time they enter the nursery. The teachers have many effective ways of engaging children's interest and harnessing their enthusiasm. An appropriate emphasis is placed on developing children's listening skills, and by the time they reach the reception class they have a good knowledge of phonic sounds for their age. They are beginning to match these to initial letters of words. By the time they leave nursery, many are reading simple text with confidence and enjoyment. Most parents provide valuable support by participating in reading practice at home.

39. Whole class literacy sessions focus on reading and the enjoyment of books. The reception children enjoyed reading 'Goldilocks' despite the fact they knew the story well. The teacher selected a range of words for them to match in the text. This was a useful activity for some, but did not extend those who already had good knowledge of more demanding words. By the end of the reception class, the children make good progress in writing. Those with the greatest skills can write complete sentences unaided, including full stops and capital letters in the correct places. Other children are still developing their writing skills and need the teacher to scribe for them, and a few need more structured support than they are receiving at present. Most will achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for the children's mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning in the nursery are very good
- There is good emphasis on basic number skills in the reception class

Commentary

40. As a result of very good teaching, the children in the nursery achieve well in this area of learning. Most can count up to five and many can continue beyond this point. In a paired activity, the children were able to select cubes to match correctly the numbers shown on dice, and select a number plate to match the dice. The more able could count on and comment that five and one is more than five. In another activity, the children showed that they knew the names of common shapes, including a hexagon. The nursery staff is well briefed. In each activity, they reinforce the central learning objectives, and hence the children's knowledge is consistently and securely consolidated. The children enjoy learning about number and shapes, and gain a great sense of achievement in using their skills in a wide range of appropriate activities, such as shopping. In the reception class, their skills and knowledge are reinforced and consolidated well in various contexts.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The provision for the development of the children's knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good curriculum plan supports the children well
- The resources are used well to develop understanding

Commentary

41. The teachers skilfully provide many activities to excite and interest children. Well thought out links connect different aspects of their learning. The class theme of making journeys to the seaside and countryside gives the children opportunities to work together. They gain good awareness of different places, what is required for travel, the influence of the weather and many other aspects. For instance, there was no dawdling for the young traveller who recently visited Honolulu. When asked what would she need, her list included a passport, money, clothes and a suitcase! Others used a large-scale road map and were beginning to talk about pushing their cars up or down a hill and round a bend. Each week the nursery staff set up a "real life" situation, such as the 'airport', and put in appropriate resources to make the play meaningful and challenging. These activities are extended in the reception class where the children learn to draw a simple shape of a classroom and add important features. Consequently, the children make good progress and most will either reach or exceed the early learning goals in this aspect of the curriculum.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision for the children's creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children sing very well
- They move with confidence and skill

Commentary

42. The children enter the Foundation Stage with physical and creative skills well developed for their age. The teachers provide a useful range of activities, but need to offer more opportunities for painting and the use of a variety of materials. The children move with confidence. They organise themselves well when sitting on the carpet or steps, arrange themselves in a circle and move to work in small groups with equal ease. The children have a good awareness of their surroundings and, although space is quite tight, they work well together. They enjoy using the large apparatus and are increasing and improving their physical and emotional development.

43. In the classrooms, the children demonstrate good control when using pencils, crayons and other writing and drawing tools. They hold pencils correctly and take great care when colouring. They show good hand-eye co-ordination and considerable confidence when using scissors to cut difficult shapes, such as arms and legs, before joining body parts. During water-play, they use various containers to measure water carefully.

44. In a very good music lesson, the nursery children sang in tune and followed the time with their instruments. They also clapped and moved their bodies rhythmically to the tune. They have a

large repertoire of songs, which they have memorised. The two teachers made this session fun and took every opportunity to reinforce a number of important skills, such as counting, listening and celebrating each other's achievement. As a result, the pupils' achievement was high.

ENGLISH

The provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in Year 6 is above the national average and most pupils achieve well
- Reading is taught well
- Last year, staffing instability slowed the pupils' progress in writing in Year 2

Commentary

45. Standards in reading in Year 2 have improved from average to above average since last year. In writing, standards have improved from below average to average, but the pupils are not achieving as well as they could given that the standards were very high for the previous three years. Over the past two years, standards in Year 6 have improved consistently from below average to above average. The teaching of the pupils who have special educational needs is very good, particularly when there is focused support for them in lessons.

46. Throughout the school, the pupils' speaking and listening skills are good. In the junior classes, well-planned lessons ensure that the pupils have many opportunities to develop their speaking skills. For example, the use of 'emotional blackmail' by a character in a story was used as a basis for the pupils to address this subject in paired discussion. Through role-play and 'hot seat' activities, the teacher invites the pupils to share their 'dilemmas', and their responses reflect a growing maturity. Sensitive teaching, based on mutual respect and trust, enables the pupils to articulate some personal and emotional issues clearly and eloquently. They are offered a range of contexts and subject matter to discuss, including topics such as 'The killing of whales'. This allows the pupils to learn to accept and respect other people's opinions and to qualify their own views accordingly. They also learn to summarise the main points of an argument. Good, lively teaching stimulates their interest and challenges their preconceived ideas. Overall, the pupils in the junior classes make very good progress in speaking and listening.

47. The pupils make good progress in reading as they move through the school. Standards are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Most pupils have a secure grasp of the sound of letters and also use contextual clues and pictures to help them tackle unfamiliar words. Most pupils are given opportunities to make choices and are encouraged to read and enjoy books both in school and at home. Starting from the nursery, the parents often comment in the reading diaries, thereby establishing an effective home/school partnership. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read accurately and confidently. They are enthusiastic readers and express opinions about authors and their styles. For instance, one pupil said that R.C. Shine's story, 'The Nightmare Room', was full of Americanisms while another claimed that 'The Woeful Second War' diaries made everything seem immediate. Generally, the pupils have a wide vocabulary and a good understanding of what they read; the more able pupils also have a good grasp of what is inferred. They enjoy choosing their own books; though some need guidance by the teacher in selecting appropriate books. The lack of a public library in the neighbourhood and limited library facilities in the school, result in

the pupils getting insufficient opportunities to develop library skills, research techniques and the use of an index and classification system.

48. By the end of Year 2, the pupils' attainment in writing is satisfactory, but not yet high enough. This is largely because the pupils have insufficient opportunities to write in a range of styles, such as reports, poems, factual accounts, imaginative and creative extended writing. The overuse of worksheets limits opportunities for pupils to give extended responses and impacts adversely on their handwriting and presentation. For example, there are still many pupils who do not write in a consistent joined script. They have, however, learned the correct basic grammatical structure of sentences and their simple punctuation is usually correct. The pupils' progress is steady, but the pace could be accelerated.
49. By the end of Year 6, the pupils make significant progress in writing and the standards reached are above average. Pupils in Year 6 write in a wide variety of styles. They enjoy using interesting vocabulary and are developing their own personal styles. They also know how to improve their writing by editing and re-drafting. Their progress in Year 3 is substantial, and the quality, quantity and range of their work are very good. Across the school, spellings are regularly taught and tested, and the juniors make good use of dictionaries in lessons. Standards of handwriting and presentation are showing good improvement as the pupils move up the school from Year 2.
50. The teaching is satisfactory in Year 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The teachers have a good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy. As a result, their lesson plans have clear learning objectives and usually the activities are matched to the range of abilities in the class. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well and good assessment ensures their work is matched to their learning needs. A strong, enthusiastic team, particularly in the juniors, ensures that the lessons are taken at a brisk pace. The pupils have many opportunities to express opinions about texts, stories and articles. The teachers have secure subject knowledge and their teaching is good. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the teacher expertly highlighted the importance of formal and persuasive language, taking time to focus on a range of demanding vocabulary. This confident teaching consolidates previous work and facilitates new learning effectively. All the teachers have high expectations of behaviour and their relationships with pupils are very good. This has another positive influence on the pupils, encouraging them to produce work of a high standard and to work hard. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and their comments are generally encouraging. However, their remarks are not always focused on how pupils might enhance their work. This is an area for further improvement in the school's development plan.
51. The new literacy co-ordinator will start next term. In the interim period, the management of the subject has been carried out by the headteacher. She has a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has ensured that all areas requiring improvement are in the school development plan. She has provided very good leadership.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Language and literacy are used satisfactorily to support work across the curriculum. Good examples were seen in the junior classes where an emphasis on note taking, skimming and summarising develops the skills required in a range of subjects, particularly in history and geography. However, there is as yet inadequate use of computers to extend and develop literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good overall
- The teachers make good use of the teaching assistants
- The pupils complete a good amount of work
- In Years 1 and 2, there is an over-emphasis on the use of worksheets
- The quality of the teachers' marking is inconsistent across the school

Commentary

53. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2, but average at the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, over the past four years there has been a good rise in standards at the end of Year 6 and the school has improved well since the last inspection. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.
54. The quality of the teaching in all year groups except Year 2 is good. At the moment, the Year 2 pupils are being taught by a temporary teacher and the quality of the teaching is satisfactory. The teachers usually have very high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and encourage them well. The pupils respond very positively and show enthusiasm and a motivation to learn. Throughout the school, the teachers' marking is supportive of the pupils' efforts, but it does little to develop their understanding of how to improve their work
55. The teachers plan the work of the teaching assistants well, thereby enabling them to use a variety of strategies that help the pupils to understand their work. They place a good emphasis on practical learning and language so that all pupils are included in the lesson activities and make very good progress
56. The pupils' presentation of work is generally good and is an obvious source of pride for them. The amount of work that the pupils produce is consistently good across the school and all aspects of the mathematics curriculum are covered. The school is placing an appropriate emphasis on problem solving activities and collaborative learning. These two aspects of the work are helping the pupils to understand the skills that are needed in solving problems. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils need greater opportunities to record their work in their own ways rather than filling in many prepared work sheets.
57. The subject leader is developing her role well. She is committed to raising standards of achievement and has made a good start in identifying some areas that will lead to the further improvement of standards across the school. Her monitoring of the teaching and the standards of the pupils' work is progressing well. The assessment procedures are good and continuing to develop, and the information gained is being used satisfactorily. Overall, the leadership and management of this subject are good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. There are satisfactory opportunities for the pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in subjects such as design technology, geography and science. Although information and communication technology is being applied in mathematics, its use needs to be extended still further.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of science is good overall
- The curriculum is well planned and organised
- Investigative science skills are very well developed in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

59. Standards in science are broadly average at the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Although no lessons were observed in Year 2, a scrutiny of the pupils' work shows they are making satisfactory progress, for example, in their knowledge of food groups and the human life cycle. The pupils in Year 1 have good opportunities to investigate and experiment with push and pull forces and the effect they have, for example, on a child's scooter or a doll's pram. The various aspects of investigative and experimental science are developed very well in Years 3 to 6. For example, the pupils have good opportunities to construct tables, explain results and develop an understanding the criteria required for a fair test. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils' can give reasons for the predictions they make and are able justify their choice of methods. Consequently, the pupils develop a very good knowledge and understanding in science as they move through these years and are achieving well.

60. The teaching was good overall in the lessons seen. It was particularly strong in Years 3 and 4 where the pupils were challenged, questioned rigorously and engaged in purposeful activities. In Year 3, the teacher used her good subject knowledge very effectively to involve the pupils in an investigation to discover which types of soils drain the best. The pupils made decisions about the resources and methods that they would use, and some groups arrived at unexpected conclusions. The teacher used this very skilfully to help the pupils to evaluate their methods and, ultimately, to recognise that inconsistencies in their tests had made the results unreliable. A very good discussion led the pupils to explain the reasons for their initial predictions. In Year 4, the pupils used the school grounds to investigate the habitats of plants and animals. The teacher also developed this lesson very well by drawing out the similarities and differences in the habitats of creatures found in the playground area and those found in the wild area.

61. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator, who has a comprehensive knowledge of the school's provision for science. The assessment and recording system is thorough and the co-ordinator has carried out a question-by-question analysis of the pupils' responses in the national tests to identify the areas where further work is needed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are competent and confident users of ICT
- ICT is not yet used across the curriculum as extensively as it should be

Commentary

62. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. The pupils are now given opportunities to develop a broad range of ICT skills, including control and monitoring. They are confident and approach the tasks they are given with enthusiasm. The inspection evidence indicates moderate use is made of the ICT facilities to support learning in other subjects and that there is scope for much greater application and integration right across the curriculum. Nevertheless, the pupils are achieving the standards expected of them by the end of Year 6. They have access to resources in the ICT suite as well as in their own classrooms. The ICT suite is well equipped except there is no means of demonstrating to a whole class except by the use of a 17-inch monitor, which is wholly inadequate.
63. In Year 1, the pupils are learning to display information in different ways using bar charts and pictograms. They have also created labels using different fonts, styles and colour. In a lesson in Year 2, for instance, the pupils thoroughly enjoyed finding information from CD Rom dictionaries and encyclopaedia. They demonstrated an appropriate level of skill in loading software and selecting options. In Year 5, the teacher taught the pupils how to write a procedure to instruct traffic lights to change in sequence by controlling the outputs to the red, amber and green lights. In Year 6, the teacher worked with a group of higher attaining pupils to enable them not only to control the output to a lighthouse light and foghorn, but also to react to the input from a light sensor so that the lighthouse would work automatically when it became dark.
64. In all of the lessons seen, the teaching was good and provided the pupils with appropriate opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge. The teachers have undertaken extensive training in the recent past to help them to make more effective use of the resources they have available. It is clear that their confidence in teaching ICT are grown significantly since the last inspection. The subject is well led.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

65. There are some examples of pupils using ICT to support learning in other subjects. For instance, in Year 3 they have created fact sheets about preventing tooth decay. Similarly, in Year 4 they have used image-processing software to produce stained glass windows in art. In Year 5 and 6, there are examples of graphs in science and the use of spreadsheets. However, too little use of ICT is integrated into the pupils' learning in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

66. Three lessons were seen in history, but none in geography. The pupils' work and the teachers' planning were scrutinised and discussions were held with the older pupils. On the evidence available, standards in **geography** are broadly in line with expectations. The pupils in Year 6 talk confidently about their work and show secure knowledge of features such as rainforests. From an early age, the pupils' learn mapping skills and acquire an understanding of the nature and purpose of map keys. The higher order mapping skills required for the use of ordnance survey maps and an understanding of grid and contour lines are less well developed. The sample of work shows that an appropriate range of topics is covered and that there is good use and development of literacy skills in this context. From an early age the pupils are encouraged to write in their own words, using the knowledge that they have gained.

History

The provision for history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the teaching is good
- A good range of visits enhances the curriculum
- The pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills.

Commentary

67. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are better than those expected nationally. The pupils talk confidently about their past and present work in history and show a good understanding of most elements of the curriculum. The Year 6 pupils understand what life must have been like in the 'Blitz' and talk confidently about conditions in the 1930's and 1940's. They talk enthusiastically about their visit to Birmingham Museum in connection with their latest history topic and say that it has helped them to learn more. They also remember a visit to Aston Hall when they were studying the Tudors in Year 4. They talk of the visit in some detail and show the lasting effect it has had on their knowledge of the Tudor period.
68. The quality of the teaching is good overall. The teachers' classroom management is good and the pupils are actively engaged in learning experiences that are suitable for their ages and abilities. For example, in a very good history lesson in Year 4, the pupils were motivated by the enthusiasm of the teacher when she was telling them about life on board a Tudor ship. The follow-up research activities were interesting, enjoyable and well matched to the abilities of the pupils. This high level of enthusiasm was also evident in a very good Year 6 lesson when the research activities arranged by the teacher led the pupils towards a greater understanding of how we should always question the, accuracy, reliability and usefulness of evidence sources. One group commented that the copies of old newspapers from the period of the Second World War may not be reliable sources, and linked this view to the reliability of present day newspapers.
69. Throughout the school, the pupils make good use of their literacy skills in their history work. They sometimes write as if they are characters from a particular period, such as a sailor in Tudor times, or write detailed descriptions of the process of Egyptian mummification. All pupils are given the opportunity to show in their own words their knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying.
70. The subject leader is at an early stage in monitoring the quality of the teaching and the pupils' work. The subject leader realises that the use of information and communication technology is under developed at the moment. At present, the leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The improvement made since the last inspection has been good.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

71. No lessons were observed in either art and design or design and technology. The following comments are based on scrutiny of a range of the pupils' previously completed work
72. The **art and design** work on display is of a good standard and reflects an appropriate range of experiences provided for the pupils. The pupils in Year 1 have produced hedgehogs from clay and made ladybirds by decorating large pebbles. In Year 2, the pupils' work shows careful observation and drawing of plants with a good level of detail in the leaves. The pupils have also been working with textiles and producing tie dye patterns. In Year 4, the pupils have used line and colour very effectively to recreate aboriginal rock paintings. In Year 5 the pupils have used

paint to create interesting textured backgrounds for silhouettes. The oldest pupils have produced their own abstract art in the style of famous artists. This work shows a good degree of experimentation with line and colour.

73. In **design and technology**, the curriculum is now taught in blocks of time that alternate with art and design and allow the pupils an opportunity to plan, make and evaluate their finished products. An appropriate range of work is on display. For example, the younger pupils have designed boats that they have tested to see if they float or sink. In Year 3, the oldest pupils used their knowledge of simple pneumatics to create 'moving monsters'. Currently, the pupils are using rigid structures made from wood and card to create a chassis for a wheeled vehicle. They have added axles, wheels and motors to propel them. In ICT, they are learning how to control inputs and outputs which allow the higher attaining pupils to control their vehicles using a computer controlled interface. By the end of Year 6, the overall quality of the finished products is in line with expectations.
74. **Music** is taught with good support from the external agencies, which allows all aspects of the curriculum to be covered. The music teacher has worked hard to provide teachers with a revised scheme of work. Standards in singing are good. Each year the school has a big production, and the children are enthusiastic about taking part and singing. They sing well, keep in tune and even the nursery age children accompany the pianist successfully keeping the beat with their simple instruments.
75. In **physical education**, one good lesson was observed in which the teacher used her good subject knowledge effectively to improve the pupils throwing, striking and fielding skills. Good preparation and clear instruction helped the children to participate fully in the lesson. The school is supported well by the local grammar school, which is also a sports college. A teacher and pupils come to the school to lead games activities and occasionally the pupils travel to use the grammar school's facilities. This is particularly important as the school's outside games area is very limited. The new, enthusiastic subject co-ordinator has revised the curriculum plan and has identified an ambitious list of development activities for the future.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

76. The curriculum enhances the personal, social and health education of the pupils particularly within its religious education provision. This will be extended further as the school's plan to introduce 'Circle Time' activities come fully into place.

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	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
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	2
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	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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