

INSPECTION REPORT

St John's Catholic Primary School

Burscough

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119681

Headteacher: Mr J D Barnes

Lead inspector: Mrs D M Lever

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th May 2004

Inspection number: 257711

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: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 90

School address: Chapel Lane
Lathom
Ormskirk
Lancashire

Postcode: L40 7RA

Telephone number: 01704 893523
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr R P McKean

Date of previous inspection: 23/03/98

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St John's is a voluntary aided primary school with 90 pupils aged between four and eleven years on roll. As such, it is smaller than the average primary school. Pupils' home backgrounds reflect broadly average socio-economic circumstances. The attainment of pupils entering the school shows annual variation but is broadly typical of that found nationally. Almost all pupils come from white British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below that found nationally. Most of these pupils have either moderate learning difficulties or specific problems affecting their learning. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs reflects the national average. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual time is broadly typical of the national picture. The school has recently achieved Investor in People, Healthy Schools and Artsmark awards. It offers daily childcare provision. In the last two years, the school has become a focal point of the local community, and parish links are now strong.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13132	Mrs Diane Lever	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Information and communication technology History Geography
9333	Mr Keith Schofield	Lay inspector	
2758	Mr Ian Jones	Team inspector	English Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language

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REPORT CONTENTS

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' 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	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	17
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	17
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	20
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. Standards are rising. Pupils make good progress and achieve high standards in many subjects. Teaching has improved and is good overall. Pupils enjoy school and, like their parents, value it highly. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good. The school is very well led, managed and governed. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- high standards, evident in much of the work in the Foundation Stage, throughout the school in English and mathematics and in older pupils' work in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design;
- excellent leadership provided by the headteacher in the last two years, and by the chair of governors working with a governing body of high quality over a longer period, that has been most effective in turning the school around;
- very effective management that underpins the drive to bring about change and improvement;
- very high expectations and teaching of a consistently good and very good standard;
- pupils who enjoy school, work hard and want to learn and do well;
- strong pupil/staff relationships, and the ethos of care embedded in the school's work;
- the very good support, care and provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- strong links with the local community, and especially with the parish;
- variable standards of handwriting and presentation that are often unsatisfactory;
- curriculum planning that does not always meet the needs of all pupils.

Following its last inspection, the school went into a period of decline that affected all aspects of its work. Action taken by the governing body in 2001 was very effective in arresting this downward trend. Improvement since then has been very good. It has been rapid since the present headteacher took up post in 2002. Standards are rising and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Assessment is now firmly embedded in everyday practice. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are transformed. The curriculum is now well planned. Parents have confidence in the school and the number of pupils on roll is rising. Governance, leadership and management are now very strong. The school building and grounds have improved greatly and are now attractive and well maintained.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Note: The results for 2003 relate to a year group of only 20 pupils and comparisons thus require cautious interpretation.

Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Four to seven-year-olds achieve well, and so do pupils aged eight and nine. Older pupils achieve very well, as do pupils with special educational needs.

The work seen during the inspection indicates that children in the reception class are likely to exceed the goals set nationally for five-year-olds in speaking and listening, number, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. They are on track to meet standards for personal, social, emotional and physical development, and other aspects of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

Pupils reach above average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Pupils reach similarly high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The standards they attain in ICT and art and design are above national expectations.

ICT skills are used very well in other subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are used well.

Pupils' personal development is good, as are their self-awareness and spiritual and cultural development. Attendance and punctuality are good, and behaviour is very good. **Pupils' moral and social development is very good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Teaching is particularly effective in Years 5 and 6, where pupils' rate of learning increases significantly. Effective systems for the regular assessment of pupils' progress are in place. Outcomes are used well to let pupils know how they can improve their work and to target and plan the next steps in their learning. The teaching support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they progress very well in their learning.

The curriculum is well designed and planned to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding, but less effective in building steadily on their developing skills in all subjects. Some pupils find difficulty in moving on from the reception class because the Year 1 curriculum takes insufficient account of their stage of learning. Imbalance in the time allocated to different subjects gives undue prominence to English and mathematics.

Care and support are good, as is pupils' involvement in the school's work. Links with parents are also good, and community links are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are very good. The excellent leadership and vision of the headteacher are key to the school's success. He gives direction and dynamism to the work of staff who are effective in raising standards. Very efficient management systems turn plans and intentions into whole-school action to bring about improvements. A very effective governing body, led by an excellent chair, makes a significant contribution to the school's achievement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the work of the school, holding the headteacher and staff in high regard. They appreciate the work of governors. Pupils are very happy at school. They feel valued by teachers, who give them good advice and support and expect them to work hard.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards of handwriting and presentation;
- further review subject time allocations, to more accurately reflect pupils' learning needs;
- continue the work done to improve overall curriculum planning, focusing now on transfer from reception to Year 1 and the steady development of pupils' skills as they move up the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. Standards attained in the Foundation Stage reception class are **in line** with those expected of children aged five. In Year 2, **standards in English and mathematics are above average. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average in Year 6.** Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising, due to improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Standards in ICT are above average in Year 6 and have improved since the last inspection.
- Standards of handwriting and presentation vary and are often unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. In 2001, the governors recognised that the school's performance had declined and that urgent action was needed to halt this downward trend. With the appointment of the present headteacher in 2002, raising standards became the school's first priority. Since then, all staff have worked with great determination and clarity of purpose to bring about improvement. The school's success is directly attributable to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher. He in turn has received very good support from the local education authority and a highly effective governing body led by an outstanding chair.
2. The attainment of the children now in the reception class was below that typical of children aged four when they entered the school last September. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and achieve well. This is because of the good teaching they experience from all adults, who work well as a team to plan stimulating activities that make learning fun. Work seen during the inspection indicates that children are exceeding the expected standard in speaking and listening, number, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. They meet the expected standard in reading, writing, shape, space and measures, physical and personal, social and emotional development.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.0 (16.0)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.4 (14.1)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	19.5 (17.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

The number of pupils in Year 2 in 2003 was small. The results indicated above, and findings based on an analysis of these results, need to be treated with caution.

3. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress, and reach above average standards in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection findings indicate that the performance of the current Year 2 pupils maintains the improvement seen in recent years, which is above the national trend. In 2003, standards achieved by pupils in national tests were well above average in reading and writing and very high in mathematics, as the table above shows. Pupils do much better in tests than those in similar schools. Pupils do well because of the good teaching and carefully planned activities matched to their needs that move them on at a brisk rate in their learning. Standards of handwriting and presentation vary and for many pupils are unsatisfactory.

- Standards in science are in line with those found nationally. This represents an improvement on those achieved last year when teacher assessments indicated that standards were below average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.0 (27.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.6 (26.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.8 (27.8)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

The number of pupils in Year 6 in 2003 was small. The results indicated above, and findings based on an analysis of these results, need to be treated with caution.

- In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue their good rate of progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where their progress is rapid and they benefit from the very good quality of teaching they enjoy. Year 6 pupils are attaining above average standards in English, mathematics and science. This shows good improvement on the results of recent years and tests in 2003 for English and science, when standards were average and below those achieved by similar schools. Only the better results in mathematics since 2001 lifted pupils' overall improvement trend to the level of that found nationally. The performance of pupils currently in Year 6 is all the more commendable given the amount of disruption these pupils experienced in their learning when they were in Years 3 and 4. The school's action taken to increase the number of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 is beginning to bear fruit.
- Year 6 pupils attain standards that are above expectations in speaking and listening. Standards of handwriting and presentation are varied and for many pupils they are unsatisfactory. High standards in ICT and art and design show significant improvement since the last inspection when they were in line with national expectations. Again, much of this improvement is attributable to the quality of teaching pupils have experienced in recent years, and especially in the current year. Improvement in ICT is particularly of note, and reflects the significant investment the school has made in the last two years in equipment and teachers' professional development.
- Standards in music, now in line with national expectations, show good improvement since the last inspection. Standards in history and geography are in line with expectations. Other subjects were only sampled during the inspection. Thus there is insufficient evidence available on which to base secure judgements about standards. Religious education was not included in the inspection.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and attain the standards they are capable of. The support and guidance they receive from teachers and teaching assistants is of very high quality. Staff are very skilled in ensuring that all pupils, regardless of their ability, are fully engaged in learning activities designed to meet their specific needs.
- Pupils' skills in English and mathematics contribute well to the progress they make and the standards they attain in other subjects. Pupils' ICT skills make a very significant contribution to their progress in all subjects. Pupils benefit from teachers' confidence in this subject, and enjoy using their own well-developed skills on a regular and daily basis.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

This aspect of provision has improved since the last inspection, and specifically in the last two years. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **good**, as is the overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good.
- Relationships between pupils themselves and with members of staff are very strong.
- Provision for social and moral development is very good.
- Action to promote attendance, especially to discourage unauthorised absence, is good.

Commentary

10. Improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school, which declined significantly in the years after the last inspection, has been a high priority since 2002. Pupils now want to learn and are keen to engage in all activities, working hard to reach their targets and improve their work. The very good standards of behaviour now seen throughout the school are due to the consistent approach and high expectations of the staff, who are firm but fair in their dealings with all pupils. One pupil has been excluded twice in the past year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
73	2	0
2	0	0

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

11. Relationships in this small school are very strong. Staff know pupils very well, and find time to take a personal interest in all pupils, rather than only those they teach. Pupils and adults alike treat one another with respect, and everyone feels valued as an individual.
12. The school's very strong ethos based on Christian values underpins its success in developing pupils' social and moral understanding. Pupils apply their knowledge of right and wrong to all aspects of daily life. They understand the need for rules in society and, through the school council, actively contribute to the creation of a set of rules for the smooth and harmonious running of their school. Pupils regard friends as of great importance to them. The school's use of a wide range of activities and groupings, including buddies, monitors, the school council and paired and group work in lessons, is powerful in building up pupils' social skills and awareness of the responsibilities involved in maintaining relationships and being a member of a community.
13. Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. They respond well to the school's good arrangements to promote punctuality to lessons and regular attendance. Parents work closely with the school by following the advice given about taking holidays during term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.4	School data:	0.2
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching, the curriculum and its enrichment, and accommodation and resources, are all good. The school's attention to pupils' care, welfare and guidance is good, as are links with parents. Links with the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall. In the reception class, it is good and sometimes very good. In Years 1 and 2, it is satisfactory with some good features. It is good in Years 3 and 4 and very good in Years 5 and 6. The quality and use of assessment is good throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory overall.
- Teaching meets the needs of all pupils very successfully.
- The quality and use of teaching assistants is very good throughout the school.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how they can improve.
- Expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work are varied and often too low.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	8	11	2	0	0	0

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

14. Improved teaching quality is the result of the recruitment of staff, including the headteacher and a newly qualified teacher, who are highly skilled, together with a successful programme of professional development that has increased the confidence, morale, knowledge and skills of teachers and teaching assistants. This improvement has led to the rising standards now found in the school, and represents very effective leadership and management by the governors and headteacher. Parents have confidence in the teaching their children experience, and pupils respect and value all teaching staff.
15. Teachers plan activities designed to meet the needs of all pupils, regardless of their ability. Thus, pupils with learning difficulties or physical needs are catered for by being given either skilled support or tasks adjusted to reflect their current stage of learning. More capable pupils are well catered for by questioning that probes their thinking and tasks that challenge them and give them responsibility for their learning. This focused response to the needs of each group of pupils in the school results in all pupils making good progress in lessons and achieving well.
16. Teaching assistants make a major contribution to pupils' learning, whether working with specific pupils or a larger group. Their very clear understanding of their role and their involvement in lesson planning, together with their extensive knowledge of the pupils, enable them to provide very focused support in a wide range of contexts. Their specific skills, such as their knowledge of ICT, how to assess pupils' learning and the strategies they use when dealing with pupils reluctant to engage in learning, benefit all pupils on a daily basis.
17. The quality of teachers' marking in pupils' books is very good, and leaves pupils in no doubt about what they must do to improve their work. Feedback by teachers to the class, and often to individual pupils, about how well they have achieved is a regular feature at the end of many lessons. The most effective teaching includes asking pupils to indicate how well they have understood new learning. Pupils are confident to say when they remain uncertain about the work covered. The effect of these strategies is to focus pupils' attention on the quality of their work and how they can make it better. Pupils' regular completion of written evaluations of how well they have met their targets, some of which they have chosen, is a further example of the school's successful assessment practice.

18. Although teachers usually have high expectations of pupils, the standard of handwriting and presentation they accept varies and is sometimes too low. Too little attention is given to ensuring that handwriting skills practised in specific lessons are transferred to pupils' written work in all subjects. That pupils are capable of a higher standard of presentation is evident in the appearance and quality of work displayed in classrooms. The school has identified this issue, and has recently taken action to address it.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is **good** and meets all statutory requirements. There is **good** enhancement through extra-curricular provision. Resources and accommodation are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has improved significantly over the last two years.
- The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- All pupils are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum.
- The school provides a rich and varied programme of experiences for all pupils.
- Links across the curriculum help pupils make connections between subjects.
- The allocation of time to subjects and the curriculum provided for pupils transferring from the reception class to Year 1 do not take sufficient account of pupils' learning needs.
- Curriculum planning does not focus sufficiently on the development of pupils' skills as they move up through the school.

Commentary

19. The school now provides a curriculum that is broad, relevant and meets statutory requirements, enabling all pupils to achieve well in all subjects and areas of learning. During the last two years, policy documents and schemes of work have been established for each subject of the National Curriculum. A curriculum suitable for children in the reception class, introduced this academic year, covers in depth the areas of learning required for these children. These developments represent a major improvement since the last inspection.
20. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the whole curriculum. Individual education plans are detailed and clearly identify appropriate learning targets and record pupils' progress towards achieving them. Teachers' lesson plans reflect well-moderated assessments linked to individual targets. Consequently, pupils are fully involved in lesson activities that are skilfully adjusted to take account of their individual stages of learning, leading to high levels of achievement.
21. The school provides good quality enrichment of the curriculum. Over the last two years, the school has developed a rich and varied programme of experiences for all pupils. Visitors are very effectively used to bring specialist knowledge and skills to the school and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs is well attended and includes sporting, artistic and games activities, such as chess and the Spanish club. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about these clubs.
22. The school is developing the curriculum to help ensure that pupils are able to gain an understanding of links between subjects and use the skills and knowledge acquired in one subject to support learning in another. A good example noted in pupils' history books related to Years 5 and 6 pupils' study of Ancient Greece, when their geography map-work skills were well used to plot the routes used by Greek armies and traders.
23. Two years ago the school allocated extra time to the teaching of literacy and numeracy to support its efforts in raising standards in these important areas. The school is now very aware that it needs to review subject time allocations in light of its improving situation and the current

needs of its pupils. The inspectors consider that the school is correct in identifying this area for review.

24. At the start of this academic year, the curriculum for children in the reception class was changed to reflect national guidance so that it addresses more effectively the areas of learning recommended for these children. The school has adjusted the curriculum and the experiences of the children with considerable success. As a consequence, the curriculum offered to pupils transferring into Year 1 from the reception class does not now build sufficiently upon the pupils' previous learning. The school has identified this lack of continuity and plans to make suitable changes to the Year 1 curriculum by the start of the next academic year.
25. The school has come a long way in a short time in all aspects of curriculum development. It has put in place programmes for all subjects that take full account of the mixed-aged classes in the school, ensuring that the content to be studied is not inappropriately repeated by pupils during their second year in a class. The school uses national guidance to support the systematic development of pupils' skills as they move up through the school. However, the school's curriculum structure and guidance for supporting this development of skills remains an area requiring further improvement.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of care, guidance and attention to pupils' welfare is **good**, as is the school's involvement of pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with adults in the school.
- The school provides pupils with a safe and secure environment.
- The support, advice and guidance given to pupils are good.
- The school actively seeks, values and acts on pupils' views.

Commentary

26. All staff are highly regarded by the pupils and, because this relationship is very good, pupils feel at ease when approaching staff for personal advice. They are very confident that there is always an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns. This was confirmed by the questionnaires, completed before the inspection, when almost every pupil responded positively to the survey and especially to the question, 'Is there an adult you would go to if you were worried at school?'
27. The care and welfare of pupils has a very high priority and is well co-ordinated. Through the quality of its leadership, any risks identified are resolved quickly and effectively. Good procedures for all aspects of care, such as those for accidents and emergencies, ensure pupils are well looked after. During the current academic year, the school has made significant progress in developing care policies. All staff cater attentively for the needs of everyone. Parents share this view and say that their children are very well cared for and that the staff are very friendly and co-operative. The warm, safe and caring environment helps pupils feel secure and able to concentrate on their learning.
28. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well and are able to provide informed advice and guidance that support pupils effectively in their learning. This informal approach helps pupils feel valued as individuals and encourages them to make good progress. At a more formal level, records of pupils' personal development provide an accurate picture of their skills, accomplishments and any difficulties they have encountered as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well, outside agencies being appropriately involved in periodic reviews of their progress and future needs.

29. The school has created effective ways to consult its pupils, who know that their views matter, and told inspectors that adults in the school listen to what they have to say. For example, they are fully involved in helping to decide the school rules. The school council, made up of pupil representatives, meets regularly to discuss and make decisions about school issues. Working together with adults from various parts of the wider community, pupils have delegated members onto the Eco-Committee, which has been instrumental in changing and improving the outside area of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between school and home is **good**. Links with the community are **very good**, and links with other schools are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the community are a strength of the school.
- Parents have an increasing confidence in the school.
- Procedures for dealing with parents' concerns and complaints are very good.

Commentary

30. The school works very closely with the wider community. In recent times, it has strengthened and extended its links with the parish, to the benefit of all pupils. Besides the contribution made by the parish to the Christian life of the school, social arrangements for parents and pupils, such as the "after-school club" that meets in the parish hall, add a further positive dimension to the relationship.
31. Some magnificent work has been undertaken by the Eco Committee to enhance the quadrangle. Extensive building and landscaping is involved in this project to design a sensory lighting effect around an outdoor stage and seating. The group meets regularly with representatives from pupils, the parish, a local education authority adviser and a builder. All give their time freely, which means, especially for the builder, many weeks of unpaid work. During the inspection, the resident artist, who is also a member of the Eco Committee, was busy every day creating an impressive outdoor mural.
32. Both at the meeting with inspectors and in their questionnaires and letters to the inspectors, parents consistently expressed their increasing confidence in the school and its leadership. Clearly, the school has changed in recent times and parents are only too willing to confirm this. As a result of such notable improvement, the number of pupils attending the school is rising.
33. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. Annual reports demonstrate not only the good knowledge teachers have about pupils but also inform parents about the work pupils have completed and their attitudes to this. However, the reports do not always provide parents with clear targets or guidance about what their children need to do to move forward in their learning. Day-to-day information is circulated via attractive, weekly newsletters. These are useful in keeping parents abreast of current activities in school and also making them aware of the social and fund-raising events organised by the parent-teacher association.
34. Teachers and other staff make themselves readily available to parents and carers who have concerns. Almost every parent who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire said they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, a problem or complaint. A similar number believe the school seeks the views of parents and takes account of their suggestions and concerns.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The leadership by the headteacher is **excellent**. The governance of the school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body, headteacher and staff work together as a highly effective team to raise the standards achieved by all pupils.
- The headteacher has demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities.
- The governing body, under the leadership of a very strong, determined and highly effective chairman, takes a full and active role in all aspects of the work of the school.
- Well-targeted improvement plans are being implemented with energetic determination.
- The management of the school is very effectively focused on supporting the drive to improve the attainment of all pupils.
- Finances are managed very carefully and are appropriately focused on the school's priorities, which are designed to raise standards.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	311,543
Total expenditure	328,773
Expenditure per pupil	3,355

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	13,955
Balance carried forward to the next	-3,276

Commentary

35. Following the last inspection in 1998, the school went through a very unsettled period during which the overall standards and provision declined to a very low level. The school was placed in a category of serious concern by the local education authority. The determined efforts of the governing body, supported very well by both the local education authority and the diocese, initiated a programme for improvement. As a major part of this plan, the current headteacher was appointed in 2002. Under his excellent leadership, assisted by all staff and the valuable support and guidance of the governing body, the local education authority and the diocese, the school has been turned around. It is now a very good, fast improving educational establishment. This represents significant improvement in such a short period of time.
36. The school has a very clear and accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, resulting from careful, systematic monitoring by the headteacher, staff and the governing body. The local education authority's reviews of aspects of the school's work have given additional clarity to the overall picture. Using this information, the school has developed a most effective action plan that exemplifies highly competent strategic thinking and a determination to improve. The headteacher has a clear view about what makes a very good school. He ensures that the main focus is on raising standards and meeting the individual academic and personal needs of all pupils. That the staff and governors share the headteacher's vision for the school ensures strong teamwork and a very clear sense of direction for its work and development.
37. At the time of the inspection, there were only four permanent, full-time teachers, including the headteacher in this relatively small school. As a consequence, each teacher carries responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the work of more than one subject or aspect of the school's curriculum. A relatively recent initiative involves a rolling programme whereby subject co-ordinators are provided with time to monitor the work and provision in their subjects or areas of learning. Currently, some subjects or areas of learning have not had their turn and, consequently, have not yet been monitored in detail. Co-ordinators fulfil their management responsibilities well, ensuring that resources and systems are in place to support teaching and learning. The headteacher and governors regularly monitor the overall quality of teaching and

learning in all subjects, which results in the school having a well-informed view of aspects of its work that need further development.

38. The headteacher manages the day-to-day work of the school effectively and ensures that it runs smoothly. This supports the teaching and learning processes as well as the implementation of the longer-term initiatives to raise standards. His management of the process of bringing about the improvements required, without overwhelming staff or diverting their efforts from their essential task of teaching pupils, has been exemplary.
39. The governing body fulfils its role very effectively and is led by an excellent chairman. Governors have a clear understanding of the achievements of the school and the challenges that it faces. Their decisions, based on first-hand knowledge, are well informed and well focused on priorities. They fulfil the statutory aspects of governance very well and play an active role in holding the school to account for the quality of education that it provides. They are always ready to question and challenge the school when necessary in fulfilling their role as its 'critical friend'. The school's finances are managed well, are guided by the principles of 'best value' and are targeted on supporting the school's improvement plan.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

40. The **good provision in the reception class** indicates clear improvement since the last inspection. Much of this has occurred in the past two years. Very well planned activities reflect national guidance on how the needs of young children are best met, and good procedures for assessing children's progress help adults plan the next steps in learning very precisely. Teaching and learning are good overall with some very good features. Children achieve well. They are on course to achieve, and in some respects to exceed, the goals expected by the end of the reception year.
41. Although children's attainment when they join the school is usually similar to that found nationally, the current children in the reception class varied widely in their attainment when they entered the class last September. Their overall levels of attainment were lower than is usually the case.
42. Strong leadership and management have built a team of adults who work together very well to provide all children, and especially those with special educational needs, with a rich, stimulating and enjoyable programme of activities that effectively supports the raising of standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy being at school and co-operate well together, sharing equipment and supporting one another in their learning.
- The support for children with special educational needs is very good.
- Adults are very good role models, demonstrating the high expectations they have of children.

Commentary

43. Teaching is good and all children achieve well. They are on track to achieve the standards expected by the end of the reception year.
44. Children's great enjoyment is evident in their excitement and enthusiastic interest in the wide range of stimulating activities provided. Whether planting seeds in the class garden centre, or delivering plants to customers on the bikes, trikes and trucks provided outside, they share materials happily and show consideration for each other. During paired work in the computer suite, they help each other find the correct symbol to change the colour they were painting with. They move around the school confidently, feeling safe and secure. Adults show great patience and perseverance when working with children with special educational needs, encouraging them to join in the activities and supporting them very well. In their dealings with each other and the children, adults demonstrate the very high standards of care, respect and behaviour they want the children to achieve.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children speak clearly and listen very well to adults and each other.

- Activities are stimulating, exciting and well matched to the needs of all children.
- Opportunities to practise writing skills are well planned.

Commentary

45. Teaching is good and children achieve well. They are on target to achieve, and in speaking and listening to exceed, the standards expected by the end of the reception year. This is because adults constantly emphasise the use of spoken language throughout the day, engaging in discussion and questioning children about what they think, feel and know about what they are doing. Children are encouraged to talk to each other about their work, and they are confident about joining in role-play, such as when they explored as a group the classroom “forest” for insects. At other times, they work alone and with concentration for quite long periods of time.
46. Opportunities to engage children in writing are well promoted, such as when they wrote care labels for plants, made a stock list in the shop and recorded customers’ purchases. Children are encouraged to leave each other messages on the whiteboard provided for this purpose. They do so confidently, and tell each other what they have written. Adults are skilled at making activities fun and join in whole-heartedly, which motivates children to take part. Children know that their work is highly valued, for example when a child was clapped for reading his caterpillar story to the whole school.
47. The range of resources, methods and activities used are well chosen to meet the needs of children of all abilities, enabling them all to have equal access to learning. More capable children are taught to recognise patterns of letters and how to change a pattern to create a new word. They are beginning to read words, phrases and short sentences with confidence, and clearly enjoy books.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of other adults is very effective in supporting and promoting learning.
- Adults are skilled at recognising opportunities for children to practice mathematical skills.
- There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-selected activities.

Commentary

48. Teaching is good and children achieve well. They are on target to achieve, and in number work to exceed, the goals expected by the end of the reception year. All children count confidently well beyond ten, and add in tens to a hundred. Most add on accurately. More capable children add two or three numbers together, including small amounts of money. All recognise numbers accurately and most write numbers correctly. They join in enthusiastically with the many activities, including songs, poems and stories, carefully chosen to practise and reinforce their knowledge of numbers.
49. All adults use their detailed knowledge of each child to recognise opportunities for further learning and to engage children in these activities, such as asking them to count how many children want an apple or a banana for snack time, and requiring them to fetch the correct number.
50. Given choices about which activity they want to do, many children choose to hunt for and count the beans in the sand tray, or to make patterns with flat shapes which they name. They clearly enjoy mathematical work and make a real effort to learn and do well.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well planned and exciting activities are fun, and children are very keen to take part.
- Adults are very clear about what learning they want to promote, and skilled in achieving this.

Commentary

51. Teaching is very good and children make very good progress. They are on track to exceed the goals expected by the end of the reception year. They use computers confidently and are proud of their skills. They name the parts of plants and describe what plants need in order to grow. They recall in detail the food they ate and the dragon dance they created to celebrate Chinese New Year.
52. Whether in the classroom, outside area, hall or computer suite, children work confidently and with great interest and enjoyment in the richly stimulating and very well planned activities provided. Adults are very skilled at recognising the best teaching methods and activities to help children move on in acquiring specific skills, knowledge and understanding.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of activities gives children many opportunities to practise and improve their skills in tasks requiring co-ordination and control of their bodies and especially their hands.
- Although adults take children outside regularly, lack of a specifically built and designed outdoor play area limits children's opportunities to explore using larger equipment.

Commentary

53. Teaching is good and children achieve well. They are on course to meet the goals expected by the end of the reception year. They show appropriate levels of skill in using pencils, crayons, scissors and brushes, and control the mouse well when using the computer. They clap simple rhythms accurately and keep a regular beat when playing untuned instruments to accompany their singing. Their movement demonstrates clear understanding of the different responses needed when they dance as bees and butterflies. A range of larger apparatus and equipment is incorporated well into planned outside activities, but the absence of a purpose-built outside area reduces the overall quality of such experiences.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very well planned activities designed to stimulate children's imagination and creative thinking are a strength of Foundation Stage provision.
- Children's attitudes to this aspect of their work are very positive.

Commentary

54. Teaching is very good and children make very good progress. They are in line to exceed the goals expected by the end of the reception year. Adults bring enthusiasm and a sense of fun to their participation in the activities they provide. This prompts children to join in happily and express ideas freely as they engage in imaginary situations such as running the garden centre and acting as doctors and nurses in the hospital. They use a range of materials including paint, paper, clay and fabrics to make models, pictures and patterns reflecting their thoughts, feelings and ideas. They use paint confidently and mix colours to achieve the effects they want. They sing enthusiastically and recognise loud, soft, low and high notes.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall provision in English has improved considerably over the last two years.
- Standards in English are rising.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning as a result of high-quality teaching.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- The standards of handwriting and presentation are very variable and often too low.

Commentary

55. The comparative data for the 2003 national tests for Year 2 pupils showed that standards in reading and writing were well above average. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year when standards were average. For Year 6 pupils, the data showed standards in English were average, although the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 5) was well below the national average. The data also indicated that pupils made less than the expected progress between Year 2 and Year 6. This was largely due to the disturbance these pupils experienced in their schooling as pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. The relatively small size of each year group – there are only ten pupils in the current Year 6 – has also to be borne in mind, and great caution is needed in drawing conclusions from the basic data.
56. The school has worked hard to raise standards in English, particularly in supporting the more able pupils so that they achieve at the higher levels. Half of the current Year 6 pupils are on target to achieve the higher level (Level 5) in this year's national tests. This is well above the percentage expected nationally and represents a considerable achievement. Inspection findings confirm the likelihood that the target will be realised.
57. Overall, standards in speaking and listening are above average and pupils achieve well throughout the school. They are confident, articulate and usually join in discussions very willingly, listening with interest to each other's views. Most teachers make very good use of question and answer sessions to develop pupils' skills. For example, in a music lesson with Years 1 and 2, the teacher encouraged the pupils to listen carefully to sounds and to share their ideas. They form opinions and express them clearly, often adding perceptive and relevant comments.
58. Pupils are mainly confident readers, developing their skills and knowledge systematically year on year. Most pupils read fluently and with good understanding. Standards are above average and the pupils achieve well. Younger pupils are introduced to a good range of reading material and are well supported in their learning by both teachers and teaching

assistants. These pupils are gaining very positive attitudes towards reading. Pupils in Year 6 talk knowledgeably about the types of books they like to read and about their favourite authors. They discuss books they have read that have been made into films. They conclude that it is more enjoyable to read the book because it contains more detail and requires them to use their imagination. Pupils describe how they find information in non-fiction books and how to use a library, speaking enthusiastically about the new school library and its computerised management systems.

59. Standards in writing are above average and pupils achieve well. This represents an improvement, and results from the decisive action taken to raise standards in writing. Fifty per cent of the current Year 6 pupils are working at levels in writing that are well above those expected for their age. The pupils' work illustrates well the range of writing forms they use, including examples of extended narrative, poems, reports and letters. In a lesson about pronouns, pupils in Years 3 and 4 demonstrated a secure knowledge of sentence construction, and by the end of the lesson the older pupils were able to use a range of pronouns in different contexts with confidence.
60. The quality of handwriting and presentation is very variable and ranges from poor to very good. The analysis of pupils' work indicates that some have made very little progress in their handwriting over the last academic year.
61. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in all aspects of English. The valuable and consistent support provided for them in lessons by teachers and teaching assistants helps them to be fully involved in all lesson activities. Teachers' lesson plans identify specific activities for these pupils, building on what they already know and can do and, taking full account of the pupils' individual education plans, successfully moving them on in their learning.
62. Three lessons were seen in English, one in each class. Teaching ranged from good to very good and resulted in pupils making consistently good progress and achieving well. This evidence, together with other evidence gained from talking to pupils, looking at their work and examining teachers' planning and school documents, indicates that the teaching of English is of a high quality and promotes effective learning. The teaching observed had many strengths, foremost of which was its effective promotion of brisk rates of learning. This resulted from the teachers' concern to plan work and activities addressing all pupils' individual learning needs. Use of a wide and varied range of teaching styles helped to hold the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Pupils' behaviour was very well managed, leading to a calm, purposeful working atmosphere and a climate for serious learning.
63. The subject is now well led and managed. All aspects of English are monitored, including plans, teaching and pupils' work. A policy and scheme of work have been introduced and successfully guide teachers' planning. Teaching assistants are often involved in the planning of activities and are always well prepared for each lesson. Staff training and support from the local educational authority's literacy consultant has clearly improved the effectiveness of teaching. Greatly improved resources, including this year's creation of a highly valued and popular new library, help to ensure that the curriculum reflects national requirements.
64. At the time of the last inspection, many aspects of the provision for English were found wanting. During the last two years, the school has addressed all the issues raised and has made significant improvements. This is a considerable achievement in such a short period of time and is testament to the determination of the whole school to raise standards and improve the overall quality of pupils' education.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. The school effectively develops pupils' language and literacy skills in other subjects. In all lessons seen, pupils were provided with opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion and question and answer sessions. Opportunities for pupils to write in

other subjects are being developed well, resulting in many examples of pupils producing good pieces of extended writing in subjects such as history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in the last two years has been significant and standards are rising.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to mathematics support their learning very well.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support from staff of high quality.
- Assessment procedures provide a clear picture of pupils' progress and achievement.
- The curriculum, although much improved, does not reflect pupils' needs in all respects.

Commentary

66. Following its last inspection, when several aspects of provision in mathematics were identified as in need of attention, the school went through a difficult period when standards fell markedly and little progress was made in bringing about the improvements needed. In the past two years, the present headteacher has worked tirelessly with staff and governors to halt this decline and bring about a range of improvements. These include bringing structure to long-term planning through the introduction of schemes of work reflecting national guidance. In each class, pupils now move forward in their learning regardless of their age or ability. Analysis of the curriculum then being delivered led to further improvement as weaknesses, such as work relating to data handling, were remedied. Training for teachers gave them greater confidence and more secure subject knowledge. The success of these actions can be judged by the rising standards and the good quality of both teaching and the curriculum now evident.
67. The 2003 national test results for Years 2 and 6 show that pupils did better in mathematics than in English or science. Standards were very high in Year 2 compared with both the national average and the performance of similar schools. In Year 6, standards were well above the national average and in line with those attained by similar schools. Inspection findings confirm that current standards are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. The small size of individual year groups - the present Year 6 consists of only ten pupils – does mean that comparison with previous year groups must be approached with caution, but the overall trend is definitely showing improvement. Since they were pupils in Year 2, pupils now in Year 6 have achieved well. Their good rate of progress is all the more commendable given the difficulties they experienced when they were in Years 3 and 4. Their rate of progress has increased markedly in the last two years.
68. A problem encountered two years ago was pupils' poor standard of behaviour and reluctance to learn. Prompt and effective action taken to address this has resulted in restoration of the school's strong ethos and the high expectations of staff, as seen in pupils' now very good behaviour and eagerness to work hard and make progress. Pupils are very proud of what they achieve and value the many opportunities to learn that they are given.
69. The quality of teaching and learning is now good overall. It is satisfactory, with some good features in Years 1 and 2, good in Years 3 and 4 and very good in Years 5 and 6. This represents further improvement since the last inspection. The needs of all pupils are mainly well met through carefully planned activities well matched to their capabilities. Due to the very good quality of the support they receive from enthusiastic, knowledgeable and skilled staff, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve the standards they are capable of. More able pupils relish the challenges made to them through time-restricted tasks, questioning that probes their thinking and the frequent use of problem solving. Occasionally, the work given to pupils who find mathematics difficult is similar to that given to more capable

pupils. Without support, they struggle to understand and complete the work, and their progress slows down as a result.

70. To address the issue of too little time being spent on teaching mathematics, identified by the last inspection, the school increased the daily amount of time allocated. This was appropriate to the needs of pupils at that time. The school is aware that further adjustments now need to be made, reflecting improvements achieved. Following the successful introduction of a curriculum designed to meet the needs of five-year-olds in the reception class, the school also recognises that the curriculum pays insufficient attention to these pupils' needs when they transfer into Year 1.
71. The subject is well led. Regular monitoring by the subject co-ordinator and a designated governor provides a clear picture of standards, progress and the quality of teaching and learning. Effective whole-school procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress are used to good effect and provide an accurate picture of pupils' achievement. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of being directly involved in evaluating their progress and setting targets for improvement. The school's policy on marking ensures that teachers' precisely worded comments make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Teachers reinforce numeracy skills well in other subjects of the curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Links with ICT are very good, and pupils' skills in ICT are practised regularly in mathematics lessons. Examples seen include programs used by Years 5 and 6 pupils to support their work on reflective symmetry, and the use of a program requiring pupils in Years 3 and 4 to identify two-dimensional shapes by their properties.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising.
- Provision in science has improved considerably.

Commentary

73. Standards in Year 2 are average and in Year 6 are above average. This represents improvement over the 2003 test results, when Year 2 were below average and Year 6 were average. Overall, pupils now achieve well. Following the last inspection, standards in science declined, but over the last two years they have gradually improved. From talking to pupils and looking at their work, there are very clear indications that this improving trend is set to continue. Pupils in Year 6 are currently working at levels above those expected nationally for their age.
74. Only two science lessons were observed, one in Class 2 (Years 1 and 2) and one in Class 4 (Years 5 and 6). Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about the overall quality of teaching in science.
75. In the Class 2 lesson, the good teaching seen led to all pupils making clear gains in their scientific knowledge and understanding. The teacher skilfully managed the lesson activities to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their age or ability, were fully involved and able to move forward in their learning at a good pace. Pupils were encouraged to use their skills of observation to classify plants, identifying which parts provide food. Older pupils were presented with more demanding tasks, requiring them to determine whether the edible parts grew underground or above the ground, and were fruits or vegetables. In addition, they were

asked to predict whether the edible parts would grow if dried and planted. Teachers' planning indicated that the pupils would undertake an experiment to test their predictions in a future lesson.

76. The teaching in the lesson observed in Class 4 was excellent. The very detailed plan provided a strong structure for the lesson. At each stage, the teacher's energetic enthusiasm and fast-speaking delivery captured the pupils' imagination and created a sense of urgency to tackle the interesting range of scientific activities, specifically designed to meet the learning needs of all pupils. For example, following the very lively, fast moving introduction, which contained moments of great humour, one group moved to work in the computer suite. Here, under the very well prepared guidance of the teaching assistant, the pupils dissected flowers and examined the separate parts under the digital microscope that was linked to the computers. Using the greatly magnified images, which were projected onto the interactive whiteboard, the pupils were able to identify accurately each part of the flower. They saved the images to their individual computer files and printed them for reference for their future studies. The pupils found this a very exciting, yet quite a magical, experience. In this session, the pupils made huge and memorable gains in their scientific understanding and knowledge. These pupils are achieving very well.
77. There is clear evidence that the subject is now well led and managed. The weaknesses identified by the last inspection have been fully addressed. A science policy and scheme of work, based on national guidance, are now in place. The subject co-ordinator has monitored all aspects of the subject at all levels, and has used the information gained to guide and focus further improvements. Teachers' plans show that there is good coverage of the different elements of the subject. Resources have improved and are now sufficient to support the teaching of all National Curriculum requirements.

Example of outstanding practice

Years 5 and 6 science lesson studying the fertilisation of plants

Following the stimulating and exciting introduction by the class teacher, a group of pupils moved to the ICT suite with a teaching assistant. They brought a business-like precision, but also suppressed excitement and anticipation, to the task of very carefully dissecting lilies with scalpels. The moment when, having placed a minute part of the flower under the computerised microscope, the pupils looked up and saw a huge projection of it on the inter-active whiteboard, opened up new windows of experience and learning. Pupils' sense of awe as they identified each small part, such as the hairs on the stamen and particles of pollen dust, was matched only by their huge enjoyment. The magic continued as they used their ICT skills to save the images to their own files and create greatly enlarged coloured prints to be incorporated in their future work. The intensity of their exploration, and the discovery of the unsuspected but great beauty of the plant's parts – unlike anything they had seen before – gave them a first-hand and powerful learning experience together with a memory that will last a lifetime.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in the last two years has been very good.
- ICT is very well led and managed.
- Pupils achieve well and standards in Year 6 are above those expected nationally.
- The use of ICT in other subjects is very good.

Commentary

78. The need for extensive action to improve provision and standards in ICT was evident when the school was inspected in 1998. Improvement dates from 2002 when the newly appointed headteacher's determination to address outstanding issues led him to take on, among many

other initiatives, co-ordination of ICT. He leads and manages the subject very well. The creation of documents to support teachers' planning, training for staff, an ICT suite with timetabled use, a school website and the purchase of a range of equipment, including new computers, an interactive whiteboard and upgraded software to assist curriculum planning, are beginning to bear fruit. Money is set aside for further training and equipment.

79. In the meantime, standards are rising and in Year 6 are above those expected of pupils aged eleven. This is due to the higher profile now given to ICT and the work of teachers and support staff, who demonstrate confident and skilled use of ICT in their teaching, and recognise the many opportunities to use it as an effective tool to promote pupils' learning. Based on the ICT lessons seen and the teaching of ICT in other subjects, the overall quality of teaching is good.
80. The skills pupils acquire in the reception class are built on soundly in Years 1 and 2 where progress is satisfactory and pupils attain the standards expected by the time they are aged seven. The rate of progress accelerates in Years 3 and 4 and is rapid in Years 5 and 6 because of teachers' very good subject knowledge and personal competence in ICT. Pupils are confident users of the Internet and competent in word processing. They choose the most appropriate search engine relevant to each task, and interrogate a database with clear understanding of its purpose. They take digital photographs and download them via disk and cable. They adjust material on the school's website, correspond with pupils in Spain via e-mail and create presentations using available software. The advanced knowledge and skills of an older pupil are put to good use in the responsibilities given him to load programs, and model computer operations to the benefit of his peers.
81. Good assessment techniques are used on a daily basis. Older pupils' regular completion of individual assessment sheets at the end of lessons to record what they have learned are checked by the teacher or support assistant and represent very good pupils' self-evaluation and personal development.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. The last inspection identified the need to raise the status of ICT and to arrange for pupils to use computers more frequently to support their learning across the curriculum. Although little action took place until two years ago, since then it has been decisive and improvement has been significant. Teachers are skilled in recognising how ICT can be used as a tool for learning in all subjects, and pupils enjoy the many opportunities to practise and develop their skills. Extensive use is made of the Internet for individual and group research in subjects such as history, English and geography. Younger pupils use appropriately selected programs to design and paint pictures in the style of different artists.

HUMANITIES

83. **Religious education** was not part of the inspection brief. Although **history** and **geography** were sampled, there is insufficient evidence from which to make secure judgements about provision in these subjects, as only one lesson was seen in each case. Indications from pupils' work are that standards meet national expectations, as was the case at the time of the last inspection.
84. In **history**, Year 2 pupils have some awareness of how long ago various people lived. They describe what homes were like in the past and compare them with homes today. They have studied the lives of famous people such as Florence Nightingale, and know why they are important figures. Pupils in Year 6 use the Internet extensively to research the past, such as when they studied Ancient Greece. Good links are made with geography as pupils study maps and chart the routes travelled by armies and sea traders. Pupils' study of Britain since 1940 demonstrates their ability to organise their work and manage its completion to a given timescale.

85. In **geography**, pupils in Year 2 describe some of the similarities and differences between Burscough and Tocuaro in Mexico. They use mapping skills to design a route through a nearby town, and classify different locations by type. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of how erosion can affect physical features of the landscape. Their detailed knowledge of the rain cycle extends to an awareness of the related implications for different environments.
86. In the last two years, much work has been done to improve the curriculum for history and geography. Policies and schemes of work, based on national guidance, have been introduced. These are effective in providing teachers with a coherent framework from which to plan weekly lessons that ensure the breadth and range of pupils' knowledge and understanding. There is insufficient guidance for teachers about how to promote the steady development of pupils' history and geography skills.
87. The quality of teaching observed was good in one lesson and very good in the other. In lessons, pupils move on briskly in their learning, and a variety of activities keeps pupils interested and involved. The teacher's very good knowledge of history and enthusiasm for the subject were put to good use in stimulating pupils and making real demands on their thinking and concentration, resulting in very significant gains in their understanding of what a Victorian school was like.
88. The potential of the local area as a useful geography resource is well exploited. Whether visiting the nearby pond, areas of the school site itself or the nearby River Douglas as a basis for a local study, pupils have good experience of fieldwork as a major element of their geographical study. Visits to more distant sites, including Manchester Airport and Min Y Don in Wales, further enrich the curriculum. This is an improvement achieved since the last inspection, as is the use of ICT as both a stimulating teaching tool and a source of research material for pupils. Good use is made of pupils' English skills when they discuss their work, record their findings following exploration of different environments, and read texts in a variety of forms as part of their research. Teaching emphasises geographical vocabulary well, and pupils are confident to use the correct terms when completing their work.
89. Pupils' direct involvement in the Eco-Committee gives them a clear understanding of the responsibilities involved in maintaining and developing the school environment. Reports to the whole school and displays relating to the committee's work are effective in raising all pupils' awareness of these issues.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

90. These subjects were sampled during the inspection, but not in sufficient detail to make secure judgements on provision. No lessons were seen in design and technology. One lesson was seen in art and design, and two in each of music and physical education.
91. In **art and design**, the standards attained by pupils in Years 1 and 2 meet national expectations. Older pupils in the school, particularly in Years 5 and 6, are producing work of a high standard. In one lesson observed, these pupils were creating very realistic animal masks out of papier-mâché. Prior to this lesson, each pupil had used the Internet to research the head of the animal they were going to create, downloading relevant pictures and producing high quality design sheets, noting special features, colours and details of proportions. The teacher's expectations were very high, pressing pupils to strive to produce their very best work. The pupils' sketchbooks provide an interesting record of their art and design work and demonstrate a wide range of techniques and skills, which are developed systematically as they move up through the school. Art and design is well planned and is enriched by after-school art clubs and the involvement of a visiting artist who, for example, has worked with the whole school to create a tile mural representing aspects of school life. Provision for art and design has improved greatly over the last two years, and standards are rising.

92. The analysis of planning, the subject policy and pupils' work in **design and technology** indicates that National Curriculum requirements are met and that standards are close to those typically found for pupils of this age. During the last two years, resources have improved and the school has introduced an informative policy and guidance for the subject. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and plan work that successfully builds upon pupils' previous learning. The design and technology co-ordinator has undertaken a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the subject and, as a result, has a good understanding of the standards currently achieved and what action is needed to raise standards even higher. This positive picture represents a notable improvement since the last inspection.
93. The school is developing its provision for **music** very well and current practice represents a considerable leap forward since the last inspection. The introduction of a policy and supporting guidance is helping to ensure a consistency of approach across the school. The headteacher and a peripatetic music teacher undertake most of the music teaching. Their very good subject knowledge and skills are having a positive effect upon pupils' learning across all aspects of the subject. The school has a choir that sings well and, on occasions, sings to groups in the community. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn to play musical instruments, including the recorder, flute and clarinet. During a rehearsal when pupils played as an ensemble, they demonstrated skills appropriate to their age. In the music lesson observed, the Years 1 and 2 pupils took part in a lively session, in which they participated with enthusiasm and gained a good understanding of how to order sounds within a simple structure and to represents sounds with symbols.
94. The provision for **physical education** has improved significantly since the last inspection. A policy and a scheme of work, based on national guidance, have been introduced and provide very good support for teachers in planning programmes of work that develop pupils' skills and knowledge progressively as they move up through the school. Planning indicates that the time allocated for physical education reflects national guidance at both key stages and that pupils experience all aspects of the subject appropriately. Statutory requirements are now fully met. A very good range of school clubs develops pupils' skills further and includes competitive games with other schools, netball, football, tag rugby, judo and cricket.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

95. The school's relatively new programme for personal, social and health education is good. This area of learning is taught with confidence throughout the school, both as separate topics and as part of the broader curriculum. During one lesson with the Years 1 and 2 class, the pupils considered where it might be safe and unsafe to play. An interesting and lively discussion, skilfully managed by the teacher, ensured that all pupils had an opportunity to take part and gain a good understanding of the main safety issues. Pupils throughout the school develop their skills and knowledge well through a wide range of activities that are well planned and taught. The school makes very effective use of visitors to provide specialist input to support and enhance pupils' learning in areas such as drug abuse and keeping healthy.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
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	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
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).