

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bishop's Stortford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117425

Headteacher: Mr David Stacey

Lead inspector: Mr Douglas Hayward

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th May 2004

Inspection number: 257745

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	302
School address:	Great Hadham Road Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire
Postcode:	CM23 2NL
Telephone number:	01279 652576
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Lt. Col. Jack Fielder MBE
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is a large voluntary aided Roman Catholic school on the outskirts of Bishop's Stortford, in Hertfordshire. It serves an area of mainly owner-occupied housing. Fourteen per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, although only one is at an early stage of learning English. Children's attainment when they start school is usually in line with children at that age, and for some it is above expectations. Fewer than average pupils are entitled to free school meals. The percentages of pupils identified as having special educational needs and those with statements of special educational need are lower than average. The school was awarded an Achievement Award in 2002 and the Healthy Schools award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21234	Douglas Hayward	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Personal, social and health education and Citizenship Special educational needs English as an additional language
9173	Sarah McDermott	Lay inspector	
24137	Gail Robertson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Music Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Joseph's has a well-earned reputation for providing pupils with a **good** education. Teaching throughout the school is **good** and helps pupils to achieve **high** standards. Pupils' behaviour is **very good** in lessons and around the school. They are **very enthusiastic** about their work and want to do well. The school provides **excellent** opportunities for pupils to grow in confidence and learn to take responsibility. Leadership and management are **good** and have played a major part in helping the school to improve. St Joseph's provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good, and frequently very good, teaching helps pupils to achieve high standards.
- The headteacher's good leadership and management have helped the school to become popular and successful.
- From the time they start school, pupils are very well behaved and have very good attitudes to their work and school life.
- It provides very good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school has a very strong ethos based on positive Christian values in the Roman Catholic tradition.
- There are very strong links with parents. They are very supportive of the school and feel that it does a very good job.
- The school does not give pupils enough opportunities to learn about different cultures in Britain.
- Teachers' marking does not provide pupils with enough advice about how to improve their work.
- The school is a very caring place, but welfare recording systems are not well organised.

There has been **good improvement** since the last inspection. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised in the previous inspection and is much more effective than it was. Standards for seven-year-olds have improved each year, and last year's results are the best ever. Standards for eleven-year-olds remain high. The school has become much better at challenging pupils of all abilities to achieve the very best standards they are capable of.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

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

Pupils achieve **well** overall. Children have a very good start to their schooling and achieve standards **above those** expected by the end of their reception year in all areas of learning. They continue to **achieve well** in the infants and, by the time they are seven, they achieve standards **well above** those expected at that age. They continue their progress in the juniors and they reach standards in national tests that are **above average** in English and mathematics and **well above average** in science compared with standards in all schools. Pupils with special educational needs **achieve well** and attain standards similar to those of most pupils. This shows that the support that the school plans for them in classes and in small groups is very effective. Last year's national test results in Year 6, compared with other schools, were lower than in previous years because not quite as many pupils achieved the expected Level 4. This does not mean that the school's expectations were low.

In those tests far more pupils achieved the higher Level 5 standard in English, mathematics and science than in most schools nationally. There is nothing to suggest that pupils are not working as hard as possible. Pupils' skills in literacy are particularly good and they use them very well in many subjects. Numeracy skills are also used well in a range of subjects, for instance science, where they record their findings using graphs. There are good examples of pupils using information and communication technology effectively in other subjects.

St Joseph's makes **very good** provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is **very good** at helping pupils to develop their spiritual awareness. It makes **excellent** provision for helping pupils to become much more aware of moral and social issues. It is particularly good in helping pupils to take responsibility, help others, learn about right and wrong and develop their confidence and self-esteem. It is not as good at helping pupils to learn about other cultures, including those of different pupils who already attend the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** standard of education. **Good** and **very good** teaching has a positive impact on the progress that pupils make and the standards that they achieve. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and set challenging work so that they have to think and work hard. The level of difficulty is just right for them to learn and make progress. Work for pupils with special educational needs is very well planned and support assistants play an important part in the progress pupils make. Lessons are interesting and exciting and teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to work with others and develop their independence to try to find out answers to problems themselves. The curriculum is **good**. Well planned links between subjects show pupils that skills and knowledge learned in one subject can be used effectively in others. Many visits to places of interest take place and lots of visitors come to school. These make learning even more exciting. The school is a **very caring** place where pupils feel safe and secure, although administrative procedures are not as thorough as they should be. Children joining the nursery settle quickly and confidently. The school is genuinely interested in listening to pupils' views, so that it can improve how they learn.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher is highly regarded and provides **good** leadership. He is very well supported by his leadership team. They provide clear direction and are committed to raising standards and to making sure that the school constantly works hard to improve. The governance of the school is **very good**. Governors are extremely knowledgeable and use the budget very well to provide a high standard of education.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents **strongly support** the school. They think it does a very good job in providing a high standard of education and know that their children really like going. The school forms **good** links with the community and local schools. Pupils like the school very much.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- prepare pupils to live in a diverse multi-cultural Great Britain;
- ensure that teachers' marking lets pupils know how they can improve their work;
- keep well-organised records of pupils' attendance, accidents and medication.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good** overall. Achievement for infants has steadily improved and pupils are now reaching high standards. Junior pupils' results in national tests at the age of eleven have, for the last few years, been above those of many other pupils nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds achieve well, and often very well.
- Pupils have good literacy and numeracy skills, which are used well in a range of subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve results that are similar to those of other pupils in their year groups.
- Infant pupils do not achieve the higher levels that they should in science.

Commentary

1. Children come from a wide range of backgrounds and most have had some form of pre-school experience. Their attainment tends to vary from year to year. Nevertheless, many enter school with good experience in a number of areas and their attainment overall is above that expected at that age. For example, the language skills of many are well developed and they enjoy holding conversations with adults. Also, it is usual to see many children working and co-operating well together on tasks. By the time they start in Year 1 they achieve standards that are at least in line with those identified in the Early Learning Goals, and a significant number exceed those levels.¹
2. Infant pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well and, increasingly, very well (see table below). The school's results in national tests and assessments for seven-year-olds have steadily improved. The trend of improvement in infants' results at St. Joseph's over the last four years is above the national trend. Parents spoke enthusiastically about the improvement and attributed it to better and more focused teaching. In the most recent tests in 2003, results in reading, writing and mathematics were well above average. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was also well above average in writing and mathematics and very high in reading.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.5 (16.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.2 (14.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.4 (16.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 47 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

¹ Early Learning Goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning; for example, in language and literacy children should be able to write their own name and begin to write simple sentences.

3. The only disappointment is in the number of pupils achieving the higher level in science.² Despite very high numbers achieving Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics last year, the percentage achieving that level in science was average. This year the teachers' assessments show once again that fewer pupils are predicted to achieve Level 3 in science than in any other core subject. This is because too few opportunities are planned to challenge the more able pupils through investigative work (**see paragraph 58**).
4. Junior pupils' results in national tests have also improved and, over the last three years, have never been lower than above average in any subject. In 2003 results were above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science compared with all schools nationally. Their results, compared with similar schools and based on their test results at the age of seven, seem less impressive, with average achievement in science and below average achievement in English and mathematics.

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.3 (28.2)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	27.9 (28.0)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.1 (30.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. The school's own analysis of the results shows some very interesting information. Almost half of last year's group had late birthdays, had spent only one term in the reception class and most were boys. The results show that 85 per cent of pupils who had spent three terms in the reception class achieved Level 5 in tests, 75 per cent who had spent two terms in reception achieved Level 5, but only 41 per cent who had been admitted at the start of the summer term achieved Level 5. This analysis is supported by the fact that there is nothing in the work that inspectors scrutinised or in lessons observed that indicates that pupils are underachieving. Comparisons with similar schools in 2003 were lower than in previous years because slightly fewer pupils achieved the expected Level 4, supporting the school's own reasonable analysis. The analysis has spurred the school into developing more stringent forms of tracking individual pupils' progress as they move through the school and to monitor carefully the progress that various groups of pupils make.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and often achieve as well as their peers. This is the result of very careful analysis of their learning difficulties at an early stage and then writing individual education plans that are specifically designed for each pupil. They have very few, but easily measurable, targets so pupils themselves and adults who work with them can see if and when they achieve them. Support for them in small groups and led by a specialist teacher is very good and focuses on developing their proficiency in sounding out words, improving spelling and understanding what they read. This, in turn, builds their confidence and encourages them to try harder. Support from assistants for pupils in classes is also very good and helps pupils to work successfully in lessons, whether individually or in a large group.
7. Good lesson planning ensures that in subjects where boys have traditionally done better than girls, all pupils have equal opportunities to shine and achieve high standards. For example, in

² Levels - By the end of Year 2, when pupils are seven, they are expected to reach Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. If a pupil attains Level 3 then he or she is reaching standards above those expected for a child of his or her age. By the end of Year 6, when pupils are eleven, they are expected to reach Level 4 in English, mathematics and science. If a pupil is attaining Level 5 then he or she is reaching standards above those for a child of his or her age.

design and technology and in science girls often lead group investigative work. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully included in all aspects of the school's work. Only one or two pupils are at an early stage of learning English and they are supported very well in lessons, working closely with other pupils or with support assistants or parents when necessary.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **very good** attitudes and **excellent** relationships. Behaviour is **very good**. The school promotes personal development **very well**, with particularly strong moral and social development. Attendance is **good** and punctuality is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils love coming to school and take part very enthusiastically in lessons and extra activities.
- Pupils and adults get on extremely well together.
- The school is most effective in teaching pupils right from wrong.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- A strong sense of spirituality is evident throughout the school.
- The school does not do enough to introduce pupils to living in a diverse, multi-cultural United Kingdom.
- Attendance registers are not kept in a safe and central location.

Commentary

8. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They arrive cheerfully each morning and get down to their lessons very quickly. Their very positive attitudes are a great asset to their achievement. Of particular note is the pupils' independence and self-discipline in lessons. From a very early age the pupils organise themselves, find the right resources and get on enthusiastically with the activity in hand without interrupting their classmates. Pupils eagerly tackle new topics and tasks. In a very good English lesson when the teacher asked the pupils to find as many features of non-fiction books as possible, one girl piped up, 'I like a challenge!'. The very good range of extra-curricular clubs is very well attended. Many pupils willingly stayed on for choir and sang with verve and enthusiasm. Attitudes have improved even further since the last inspection.
9. Harmony pervades the whole school. Relationships are even better than at the last inspection. Pupils like each other's company and it is rare to see them falling out. Bullying hardly ever occurs and, if it should, is quickly and effectively nipped in the bud. The pupils do not treat the few pupils from different ethnic backgrounds any differently from other friends. There have been no racist comments. In lessons pupils collaborate very well to help each other learn. Teachers often organise the pupils very effectively to discuss issues and spark ideas with their talking buddies. Pupils look up to adults in the school. They are at ease in asking them for advice, yet are respectful and polite.
10. Behaviour in and out of school remains very good. There have been no exclusions. Staff have high expectations of good discipline and the pupils respond very well. In one or two lessons, where teaching is lacklustre, pupils can lose concentration. The school has a clear set of simple, understandable and consistently applied rules. However, pupils' understanding of what is right and wrong goes deeper than written rules. Throughout the school day pupils are given opportunities to develop morally, whether in lessons, assemblies or out in the playground. Younger pupils can understand how they would feel if a nasty action was done to them and older ones can empathise with those less fortunate at home and abroad.
11. The promotion of social development is impressive. It has improved significantly. Right from the start pupils are very effectively taught to be valuable members of the school community. In the nursery and reception classes there are lots of opportunities for children to share, take turns and look after their fellows. Pupils take on a wide range of jobs very conscientiously and with a strong sense of duty. The chain monitors are punctilious in unhooking the barrier to let

the parents into the playground at collection time. Pupils have been particularly thoughtful and caring in designing the memorial garden to Father Hanton and in planning the parents' waiting area, right down to providing a water bowl for family dogs!

12. The school is very securely based on a strong Christian foundation. Pupils have many opportunities to develop spiritually, especially through assemblies, prayer times and religious education. In lessons pupils are encouraged to look beyond the material and enjoy the beauty and wonder of life as well as experiencing a real joy in learning. Pupils confidently grow in self worth and are proud of their school and faith. Without doubt the school is following its mission statement, 'to live, love and learn in a caring Christian community'.
13. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to appreciate other cultures and learn about peoples from other countries. However the school is not making the most of the interesting cultural backgrounds of a special group of pupils through their family links and celebrations. The school and pupils support many charities abroad, but there are not sufficient chances for pupils to learn about the wealth of cultures nearer to home in the United Kingdom.
14. The attendance of the pupils remains good. Last year's very low figures were unusual and do not represent the normally high levels of attendance. The school was forced to close for three days due to heavy falls of snow and lack of heating oil. It is very rare to have unauthorised absence, although more and more parents are taking their children out of school for holidays in the term time. Not only does the pupil going on holiday miss vital learning, but also disruption is caused to the teacher and other classmates as the returning pupil catches up on skipped lessons. The office staff are careful to follow up when pupils walking to school do not arrive, but do not extend this first day check to all pupils who are absent without known reason. Families know that registers are called promptly so nearly all pupils are brought on time for the start of the day. Registers are well maintained, but it is unsatisfactory that these important legal documents are not all kept in a safe, central place during the day and over night.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.1	School data:	0.0
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	217		
White – Irish	7		
White – any other White background	9		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	5		
Mixed – any other mixed background	7		
Any other ethnic group	2		
No ethnic group recorded	2		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good quality** of education, which helps pupils to learn and achieve well. The curriculum is varied and **well planned** and all pupils are included in every aspect of the school's work. The school's systems for assessment are **good**, but pupils' understanding of how they can improve is **satisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

Consistently **good**, and often **very good**, teaching helps pupils to achieve well. **Very good** relationships between teachers and pupils helps to create a climate where hard work is valued and pupils try their best.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching in all age groups.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants are used very effectively to help pupils achieve their best.
- Assessment systems are good, but marking does not help pupils to know how to improve.

Commentary

15. Teaching is better now than it was in the previous inspection. The proportion of lessons that are at least good has improved substantially, from 40 per cent to 89 per cent. The most significant improvement has been in the number of very good lessons, which has gone up from 8 per cent to 40 per cent. New teaching appointments, improved planning, a more shared approach to teaching and learning and more focused monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and senior staff are responsible for the improvements. Teaching is equally good throughout the school. This is the successful result of a definite focus on raising the quality of teaching and making it consistent throughout the school. The headteacher and leadership team have regularly monitored lessons and provided constructive feedback about strengths and areas for development.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 47 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	18 (38%)	23 (49%)	5 (11%)	0	0	0

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

16. Teachers are good at helping pupils to learn basic skills and then, as they move through the school, teaching them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills well to other subjects. This is a particularly strong aspect of the teaching and learning. The teachers are also good at making links between subjects so that pupils learn that subjects often overlap and that they can use the knowledge they have learned in different ways. This makes pupils' learning more interesting and meaningful. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn and in their lesson introductions no one is left in any doubt about what should be achieved in a specific time. Lessons are interesting and pupils enjoy their learning, and they also learn a great deal of useful information that helps them to achieve well.
17. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Classrooms are industrious places where pupils are expected to do their best. Teachers trust pupils to work hard and behave well. They give them responsibility to work in groups and individually and this provides very good opportunities for pupils to discuss, share ideas and learn from others. A range of stimulating activities provides good opportunities for pupils to link their work to literacy and numeracy.
18. Learning is often very meaningful. Teachers use a wide range of resources very well to capture pupils' interest. They understand that pupils learn best when their work is presented in different ways. For example, the use of World War II artefacts made the study of that period of history fascinating for pupils. Visits out and visitors to school help pupils to learn more effectively, because it makes their learning more important and memorable.
19. Learning is effective and stimulating for pupils of all abilities. Those with special educational needs are fully included in all activities. They are very well supported in small groups when they are withdrawn and this helps them to achieve well. They also receive good support from adults in classes, enabling them to keep up with work and concentrate. Teaching assistants offer very good support in classes where they work with individuals and small groups. They are very effective in helping pupils to concentrate and achieve the best standards they can. Teachers plan work well for higher ability pupils and extend the range of their work very well in many subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked hard to identify examples of complex grammatical features in a text. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, and the very few at an early stage of learning English, are supported well and fully included in all activities through carefully planned work.
20. The quality of assessment varies. The school has established good systems so that each pupil's attainment in English and mathematics is plotted and their progress tracked. Realistic targets are set, regularly reviewed and adjusted in the light of individual performance and achievement. However, teachers' marking does not clearly help pupils to learn. Although pupils' work is marked regularly, teachers' comments are not matched to pupils' targets and lack advice about how future work could be improved. As a result, pupils are not aware of what they should do to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. There are **good** opportunities for all pupils to learn and take part in a range of stimulating activities. The school makes **very good** use of visitors and visits to places of interest to provide pupils with rich and challenging opportunities. **Good** use is made of the accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides well for all pupils, and makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The School Association makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of the curriculum, resources and accommodation.

Commentary

21. Statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and areas of learning in the Foundation Stage are fully met. The development of pupils' personal, social and health education is firmly established throughout the school and includes provision for sex, drugs and alcohol awareness. The school strives to plan a wide range of exciting and stimulating challenges for pupils and the links made between different subjects are relevant and make learning more meaningful. Satisfactory, and improving, use is made of information and communication technology in some subjects, for example English and history, although its use is limited in others such as in science. Literacy and numeracy skills are used well to support other subjects.
22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. All teachers effectively plan for the needs of these pupils. When pupils are withdrawn for small group lessons, these are very well focused and matched to pupils' specific needs as identified in their individual education programmes. All pupils, regardless of ability, gender or ethnicity have equal access to the good range of extra-curricular activities.
23. There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn and take part in a large number of stimulating extra-curricular activities. These include sports and music as well as before and after school clubs. All are popular and well attended. The school makes good use of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school to provide children with rich and challenging experiences, which make their learning very exciting.
24. The School Association has significantly contributed to improvements in the school's accommodation and resources and these are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. There is a well-resourced library for younger pupils which helps them to develop positive attitudes towards literature and a very well-equipped computer suite which has given pupils more frequent access to programs. The school is very clean and well maintained and the ample outdoor space enables teachers effectively to develop pupils' sporting skills. The outdoor facilities for the Foundation Stage are not wholly adequate, as pupils do not have access to a climbing frame in the outdoor area.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **satisfactory** care, health and safety for its pupils. The provision of support, advice and guidance is **very good**. Staff listen to the pupils very carefully and involve them very well in the running of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have excellent trusting relationships with adults in the school.
- The pastoral support and care of the pupils is very good.
- Pupils feel that their views are genuinely valued.

- Children new to the school are settled in very well.
- The recording systems for accidents and administration of medicine are not as rigorous as they should be.
- The absence of a separate welfare room makes it difficult to look after pupils properly when they are unwell.

Commentary

25. Pupils feel extremely safe, secure and well cared for in school. They are comfortable and at ease with school life and learning because they know they can turn to any number of adults if they have questions or concerns. The headteacher is an excellent role model. He is extremely visible and makes a point of being available to pupils at break and lunchtimes. The positive relationships between children and adults in the nursery and reception classes make a very effective foundation for high achievement. Trust amongst the pupils themselves is also high. The school has encouraged the setting up of friendship buddies so pupils can turn to peers or adults when they need a helping hand.
26. The pastoral care for each and every pupil is very good and has improved a great deal since the last inspection. Teachers and support staff make sure they are aware of any family issues that may affect the pupils' happiness and learning and invariably extend the very sensitive support to the whole family. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good attention and their parents greatly appreciate the care shown to their children. The teaching of personal, social and health education is now more consistent, although there is still scope to ensure that each class has a regular slot each week. At the end of the year class teachers are able to give parents a perceptive report on their child's personal development.
27. The school makes a point of involving pupils thoroughly in all aspects of school life. Pupils know that their ideas are taken very seriously so they become responsible and mature members of the school community. The council is very well run and is a democratic voice for all pupils. They are regularly asked their views via questionnaires and have had serious input into the question of trousers for the girls and the forthcoming pets' day. Pupils proudly take on a very wide range of jobs around the school from filling the water bottles to running the tuck shop. At the end of the year they have a very good opportunity to write on their report what learning they have enjoyed and what they have found hard. In lessons teachers invariably ask pupils to give their views on what they have learnt. However, although pupils with special educational needs are very clear about their targets for improvement, some other pupils are not well informed about their targets and do not know what they can do to improve their work.
28. The nursery and reception classes have very good systems to settle in new children to school life. The Foundation Stage liaises closely with the pre-school so young children know many of the adults and find friends before they make a confident move to proper school. Thorough communication with parents and a gradual start mean that the children are soon able to cope with daily routines and make the most of learning.
29. The practical side of care, welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school has made a great improvement in child protection and health and safety procedures since the last inspection. The site is regularly assessed for risks and any potential hazards are quickly remedied. There are now sufficient numbers of staff with first aid qualifications. The actual treatment of minor accidents is satisfactory, but the records of incidents and administration of medicine are not as rigorous as they should be to ensure quick and effective recall. Currently, accidents are not listed in a secure book, nor are the times, dates and amounts of any medicines given. The staff treat unwell pupils as effectively as they can without a special welfare room, but are hampered by the lack of privacy and easy access to running water.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **very good** partnership with parents. Links with the community, and especially with the parish, are **very good**. The school liaises **well** with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents support learning very well and are particularly keen to see their children achieve as well as they can.
- Very successful fund raising and regular practical help from parents is a great asset to the school.
- The views of parents are greatly valued and acted on.
- Annual reports do not give a sufficiently clear message on progress made in each subject over the year.
- The school works very closely and productively with the parish.

Commentary

30. The school and parents work together in a very strong partnership to help the pupils achieve well. This aspect has improved further since the last inspection. Parents feel that their children make good progress at St Joseph's. Right from the beginning, parents are kept well informed in how to help their children progress. The nursery and reception welcome packs give parents valuable information on letter formation and Early Learning Goals, as well as health and welfare advice. Nearly all parents turn up for the parent teacher consultations and are concerned to hear how their children are getting on. Parents are very good supporters of homework because they know when it should be set, when it should be returned and that it is relevant to class work. Good information about topic work and the curriculum gives parents a useful insight into teaching methods and lets them show an interest in their children's learning. Unfortunately the increasing number of times that parents take their children out of school for holidays in term time detracts from this otherwise very good parental support.
31. Parents are a very valuable resource themselves. The school is extremely fortunate in having a parent body that raises substantial sums to bolster the standard budget. Parents themselves raised every penny and constructed the sheds for storage of equipment for the younger pupils. Volunteers abound in the school. Not only do parents come in regularly to hear readers, help prepare resources or give assistance in the computer suite but they also turn up in good numbers to accompany trips and the residential outing.
32. The parents' strong support is very closely allied to the genuine welcome given to the parents by the headteacher and his staff. The headteacher values the parents' views and makes a point of sending out regular questionnaires. These are analysed carefully and outcomes fed back. Teachers listen carefully to any concerns parents may have about their children's progress and do all they can to find a satisfactory outcome.
33. Overall the school provides good information to parents. The regular newsletters and the website are very useful sources and give a true flavour of the school. The prospectus and annual governors' report now include all legally required information. Teachers keep parents sufficiently up to date on how their children are progressing through the parent teacher meetings. However, the annual reports, although they tell parents what areas have been covered, do not give a clear message on how the pupil has improved in each subject over the year.
34. The school has very good links with the local community. These have improved and extended since the last inspection. The headteacher knows the locality very well and is keen to involve St Joseph's in community events. Not only does the pupils' learning in geography and history benefit from local outings, but also the pupils give back by visiting the elderly at Christmas and harvest time. Business links are strong, especially for a primary school, with very productive links for ICT and science with Glaxo Smith Kline and the Harlow Scientific

Centre. St Joseph's name has been put on the map with the pupils' success in winning a competition to name the new Stansted Airport flyover. A particular strength is the close work with the Roman Catholic parish. The personal development of the pupils is greatly supported by visits from the priests and the involvement in masses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher's leadership is **good** and there is good delegation of responsibility, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Management of the school is **good**. The school has a highly committed and **very effective** governing body.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership is effective and parents think highly of him.
- Governors have a very good and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas to be developed.
- Good improvements have been made since the last inspection.
- The headteacher and governors spend the budget prudently to make sure pupils get a good education.

Commentary

35. Improvements to the school since the last inspection now ensure pupils receive a good education. A major outcome of the headteacher's strong leadership is the high standard of pupils' achievement. The headteacher has worked with enthusiasm and commitment to develop the school's caring and inclusive ethos and reputation. He values his staff highly and knows and respects every pupil in the school and wants them to do well. There is an atmosphere of care, friendship and trust between the pupils and staff. This is really good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are seen as important individuals and are nurtured in order to develop the whole person as fully as possible. This is very good commitment to educational inclusion from all staff and governors to ensure that pupils reach their potential in academic and personal development.
36. The school monitors its performance well and uses the information to decide on sensible priorities for improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, and there is now systematic and effective monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning, the curriculum, and standards reached by its pupils. The headteacher and deputy headteacher collect a great deal of information about how pupils are doing and use this information well to identify priorities for school improvement. Strategic planning is now good and governors are closely involved at every level. All staff contribute well to the school development plan, drawing up plans to develop their management area or curriculum subject they are responsible for. Through the monitoring of the work of the school, the headteacher and governors are fully aware of the strengths and areas that require development. As a consequence, there is a strong commitment to staff with regard to their training and support.
37. Although many governors are relative newcomers, the whole governing body has a very good understanding of its place in the governance of the school. Governors are very keen to provide high quality support to ensure that the school can achieve its aims. This is a great improvement. The governing body is very well led so that it works effectively to support and challenge the school. They are involved in shaping the future direction in their discussions and confidently challenge the senior managers. They provide very high levels of professional expertise, work closely together and actively share information. This ensures that they are fully involved in shaping the direction of the school and critically analysing standards.
38. Financial management is very secure. Spending is closely linked to the school development plan and used to best effect. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators manage their own budgets well and identify areas that require funding. Parents have raised considerable

amounts of money to buy equipment and that has a considerable impact on pupils' learning. The day-to-day administrative and financial operations are effectively managed by the office staff who present a friendly, welcoming and efficient image which is greatly appreciated by parents and visitors alike. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	709,709	Balance from previous year	22,259
Total expenditure	711,209	Balance carried forward to the next	20,759
Expenditure per pupil	2,257		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is **very good** and has improved since the last inspection.

39. Children are very happy to come to school, motivated, excited and keen to learn. This is due to very good leadership and management by the Foundation Stage co-ordinator and the hard work and dedication of the staff. When children enter the nursery class they have a range of knowledge and skills that are generally above those expected for children of this age. They achieve well because teaching is never less than good. At the end of the reception year, children exceed most elements of the Early Learning Goals. The school has identified the need to develop the outdoor area. At present there is no climbing frame for children to develop their climbing and adventurous skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in the Foundation Stage with children attaining well above the expected levels by Year 1.
- There are excellent relationships between the children and adults, which ensure that learning is enjoyable.
- Children are well prepared to start school.

Commentary

40. This area of learning receives a very high profile and, consequently, children achieve very well. They have many planned opportunities to develop their self-confidence, to make choices and decisions and to become aware of the needs of others. The staff are excellent role models, treating everyone with respect, and encouraging children to give their own ideas and valuing what they say. The children show very good attitudes towards each other, and respond by eagerly taking part in all activities.
41. Children in the reception classes concentrate for long periods of time and show sustained interest and a desire to learn because the good range of activities are well planned and resourced. At lunchtime children show that they know how to take turns and ask politely for any help they need, confidently following the routines they have learned. Good teaching ensures that, when they leave the reception class, children exceed the Early Learning Goals in this area.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every opportunity is used well to develop children's language for communication.
- Children learn to become confident speakers, listeners, readers and writers.

Commentary

42. Staff use every available opportunity to promote language and speaking skills by encouraging the children to discuss and describe their activities. Children's confidence and the outcomes of their work and efforts show that they achieve extremely well. Adults are very good at

promoting listening skills by reading stories with expression and excitement to encourage the children to listen attentively. There are very good links between their big books and role-play activities to promote the use of language. There is a very good supply of attractive books and the children enjoy choosing and sharing stories, particularly with an adult. There is a very strong focus on learning the sounds of words and letters. Consequently children soon recognise their own names and those of their friends. The children enjoy learning skills to improve their reading and teachers think of enjoyable ways to teach letter sounds and words they will use frequently. There are already many children who are independently reading beginners' books.

43. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to develop a keen interest in writing. Teachers provide a very good range of writing activities where children develop skills from early mark making in the nursery to making books and creating stories in the reception classes. There are good supplies of paper, pens, crayons and pencils, and teachers carefully teach children individually on how to form letters correctly. By the time the children reach Year 1, they exceed the Early Learning Goals.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well planned and teachers have high expectations.
- Children are encouraged to use mathematical vocabulary properly.

Commentary

44. Teaching is planned carefully with high expectations of children's counting skills and their use of mathematical language. Planning successfully takes account of the needs of different groups of children and so provides all of them with achievable challenge and success. A clear emphasis on the use of mathematical vocabulary ensures children use correct language confidently when trying to solve mathematical problems. All activities are supported by a very good variety of equipment for sorting, counting and matching. Further imaginative support for children occurs through bright classroom displays that help children to count, recognise and order numbers and continue patterns. In the reception classes children are introduced to more formal mathematics. They build well on the knowledge learnt in the nursery and work hard and enjoy adding and subtracting, using different resources. They are mature enough to transfer this skill to their role-play, when they add up the money other children pay for hiring boats! Consequently children achieve well, with most reaching standards that exceed expectations for their age.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are good at providing children with numerous opportunities to explore the world around them.
- Good use is made of ICT to promote learning.

Commentary

45. Children play and explore confidently and are inquisitive and curious. They start in the nursery with good experiences of the world beyond their own homes. Well-planned activities provide a wealth of first hand experiences from which children extend their knowledge. They enjoy experimenting with materials like magnets and they are encouraged to use their senses. Children love working with hammers, drills, screwdrivers, wood, nails and screws and do so carefully. Through stories and celebrations, for example Chinese New Year, they are taught

about different cultures and beliefs. In the reception class, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding through well-planned topic work. Children enjoy using the computer and use programs well to paint pictures, confidently using the mouse and printing their results. Children are well on course to exceed the levels expected for their age.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the outside area in the nursery.
- The outside area for the Foundation Stage does not have adventurous climbing equipment.

Commentary

46. There are well-planned activities for the children to play outside and to take part in activities that contribute well to their physical development. For example, children constructed buildings with large different sized boxes, which also contributed well to their mathematical knowledge and their personal and social skills. They enjoy playing on the wheeled toys and the other range of good outdoor equipment, but there is no climbing apparatus and, therefore, no opportunities to develop climbing skills. Many children come to school able to use scissors, pencils, and paint brushes correctly. Teachers show children how to use their skills and get on independently. They successfully develop children's fine hand control and good teaching ensures the children's physical development is above expected levels by the time they are ready to start Year 1.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Children have lots of good opportunities to explore and experiment with many different media to help their creative skills.

Commentary

47. Many children start with good levels of skill. Staff plan good opportunities for children to try out their own ideas and successfully develop children's abilities through good questioning, support and well-timed intervention. A wide range of resources are available for creating pictures and patterns and children are given time to experiment and explore. Children mix paints well and they create interesting models. Their concentration is very good. They sing enthusiastically and attain very high levels of musical understanding when taught by the music specialist. They are confident and enjoy music making very much. Role-play is supported effectively and the adults extend children's imaginative play by well-timed intervention. This stimulating environment with well-organised and good quality resources is a big improvement since the previous inspection. Their creative development is above expectations when they enter Year 1.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching of reading and writing helps pupils to achieve well.
- Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their speaking skills.
- The subject leader has been very effective in raising standards in English.
- Very good links with other subjects means that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to become successful writers.
- Marking does not always help pupils to know what they have to do to improve.

Commentary

48. Pupils' achievement is good and they reach standards above those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. They achieve good standards because the subject is taught very well and pupils enjoy a wide range of reading, writing and speaking and listening activities. English has a high profile in school and pupils use their skills well in other subjects on a regular basis. Standards were also above average in the previous inspection. All pupils achieve well and no difference in achievement was noted for pupils from minority ethnic groups, the few at an early stage of learning English, or boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because work is well planned for them and they receive good support from the specialist teacher where they get the opportunity to work in small groups. They also benefit from well-planned, daily sessions that help them to learn letter sounds and improve their spelling. This helps them to feel confident about attempting reading and writing activities independently.
49. One of the reasons why standards are so high across the school is because of consistently very good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this helps them to plan work that is interesting and challenging. Content is taught in a logical sequence so pupils are able to build new learning on to what they already know. This makes it easier for them to acquire and use new skills. Activities are well matched to the individual needs and abilities of pupils and this motivates them to work hard and to achieve well. Because the planning is good teachers are able to keep the pace of lessons brisk and pupils do not get bored. Assessment is used effectively to track pupils' performance and pupils' work is marked regularly. However, the marking is not as good as it could be because it does not include comments about how pupils can improve their work.
50. Pupils' oral skills are developed very well throughout the school. Teachers give a significant amount of time in lessons for pupils to discuss their work with each other. This enables them to use their speaking and listening skills to help them learn. Teachers also plan for pupils to work collaboratively on projects. As a result pupils express themselves clearly in a range of situations, listen to others' contributions with courtesy and respect and ask and answer questions politely and confidently.
51. The good leadership and management of English have improved teaching and learning. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, well organised and a very good teacher, so she leads by example. She supports colleagues well by offering clear guidance, monitoring planning and observing lessons. The informative feedback she provides helps them to improve their teaching. She has led the school in a very successful project to improve the quality of pupils' writing. This has had a positive impact on the raising of standards. Her vision and high expectations have helped staff to focus on literacy throughout the school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. The use of language and literacy skills across the curriculum is a very strong feature of the work of the school. Pupils use their skills as writers very well in subjects such as history and design and technology to write detailed accounts. Pupils in Year 6 write sensitively and with emotion about how it would have felt being a child evacuated during World War II, whilst younger pupils write an accurate set of instructions on how to grow sunflowers. Pupils also use their literacy skills well when publishing their work, using information and communication technology to good effect.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards have remained high.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school.
- The co-ordinator leads the subject very well and is a very good role model for teachers.
- Teachers' marking of books does not inform pupils what they need to do to reach their targets.

Commentary

53. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and, as a result, all pupils achieve well. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, higher attaining pupils and the few pupils with English as an additional language, achieve well because they are given well planned activities, which are well matched to their abilities. Standards are high and have remained high. Pupils are confident in using appropriate operations to solve problems. Year 6 pupils work logically and can clearly explain their methods of working with sharp, precise reasoning.
54. Teaching and learning are good across the school, including in mixed-age classes. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and expectations are high. Teachers often use humour and learning is fun. Teachers plan interesting lessons well and explain clearly to pupils what they will be learning in the lesson. In very good lessons, teachers then ask pupils what success criteria will be used to judge their learning. Teachers have very good mathematical knowledge. This helps when working in mixed-age classes so that the higher attaining pupils are challenged and stimulated. For example, in a very good lesson, Year 5 pupils played a game of probability, extending their knowledge well, whilst the lower attaining pupils and those in Year 4 built up a scale of probability using the correct terminology. The teacher's explanations were excellent, and probing questions helped to elicit pupils' ideas. Teachers are good at planning opportunities to use ICT and make good use of the available software and resources. This is helping pupils' achievement.
55. Assessment in lessons is good, but teachers' marking of pupils' work is nearly always praise and pupils gain little from it. Personal targets do not always make it clear to pupils what they should be working towards and how they can improve. Leadership and management are very good and have helped to analyse the information from assessments, identified where pupils did not do so well and introduced strategies to improve standards. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning effectively and has started to carry out supportive observations of the teaching and learning. She has identified valuable training for teachers to ensure their confidence is high in mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is good. Pupils use graphs and tables well in science. For instance, recording the height a plant will grow in a week, or drawing up tables and graphs in geography when pupils conduct a traffic survey. There are also good links with ICT as seen in Year 6, when pupils learning about crystals looked at highly magnified shapes

produced when crystals grow. They see that salt crystals form in a cube lattice and sugar in rhomboid shapes. The mathematics co-ordinator is looking to develop more links throughout the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Junior pupils have many very good opportunities to carry out exciting investigations.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Science weeks have an important impact on pupils' attitudes to science.
- Infant pupils do not carry out enough investigations.
- Good links have been established between school and industry to develop science.

Commentary

57. Junior pupils achieve very well in science and they enjoy their work very much. They reach standards well above those expected at the end of Year 6. They find science stimulating and exciting, as well as very thought provoking. They achieve higher standards than in the previous inspection. Boys and girls achieve equally well and thorough planning ensures that both genders have good opportunities to lead groups and contribute ideas. Pupils with special educational needs, as well as those who are more able, are provided with suitably challenging activities that help them to achieve very well. The school's results in national tests for eleven-year-olds over the last three years have been well above average or in the top 5 per cent nationally.
58. Infant pupils achieve satisfactory standards overall in science, although the number achieving the expected Level 2 is far higher than in many schools. Their achievement is in line with that in the previous inspection. Pupils cover a very wide range of science topics and their work is often well linked to other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve standards similar to those of their peers and recording often provides them, and the very few pupils at an early stage of learning English, with opportunities to develop their vocabulary.
59. When teachers emphasise the experimental aspects of science, junior pupils find learning exciting and they talk enthusiastically about what they have learned. They gain great enjoyment from the many opportunities to carry out practical work and opportunities to discuss their ideas. The results of experiments and investigations have far more impact than simply recording what the teacher tells them, and help them to remember what they see and learn. With older pupils in Years 5 and 6, the impact of the hands on approach to science was clearly evident in their work. It contains well thought out hypotheses and focused methods of investigation, based on sound scientific principles. The significant percentage of junior pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in 2003 reflects its strong emphasis on pupils being able to select suitable approaches and base their predictions on scientific knowledge and understanding. This would not have been possible if the teachers had not focused on this approach to learning in their lessons.
60. Teaching is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which helps them to answer questions confidently and accurately. The ability to answer pupils' questions about forces or habitats and use subject vocabulary correctly is most important. Teachers also develop good links between science and other subjects, and especially literacy and numeracy. The quality of results in some investigations depends entirely on how accurately junior pupils measure times and quantities. Their work is extremely well presented, so that hypotheses are easy to read and conclusions are very well presented. Pupils learn not only to draw correct conclusions, they learn how to work well in pairs or small groups, and have to be prepared to listen to others and put forward their own ideas in a way that is scientifically convincing enough to persuade others. The weakness in science for infants is that too much work is

recorded on commercially produced worksheets, so that science often becomes a writing or colouring exercise. Not enough challenge or variation is provided by involving pupils in investigative work, in the same way that is so successful for many juniors.

61. The subject is well led and managed. Good use is made of information and communication technology in some classes, although monitoring equipment is not yet used extensively. When ICT is used very effectively, items such as digital photographs from computer-linked microscopes are very effective in illustrating the findings of investigations. Very good links have been established between industry and the school to foster pupils' interest in science. Science focus weeks, which have been funded by companies, have been extremely effective in raising pupils' interest in science throughout the school, as have visits by performers to illustrate specific scientific concepts.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recently opened computer suite has had a positive impact on raising standards and teachers' confidence.
- Good use is made of pupils' skills to develop multi-media presentations.
- Computer programs are not used consistently to support learning in other subjects.
- The computer suite is not fully used during the day.

Commentary

62. New, reliable hardware in a purpose-built computer suite has made a big difference to the development of pupils' skills and how well they achieve. Infants and juniors achieve the expected standards for seven and eleven-year-olds, although in some aspects of the work for juniors, such as their ability to use multi-media presentations, pupils achieve higher than expected standards. Previously, standards were below expectations, so good improvement has been made and the potential of ICT to support other subjects is gradually being realised. Computers in classes were not consistently used in all classrooms. Where they were, they were effective in supporting the extension of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, often speeding up pupils' recognition of number bonds or helping to improve their recognition of letters and words.
63. Pupils are confident users of technology. Many have access to computers at home and sometimes make good use of them to complete projects. Few pupils said that they used the Internet, although all were aware of the possible dangers and all parents have signed an Internet safety policy. The school's own web site is well laid out and informative. Older pupils are using it to develop their own very good multi-media presentations to new parents to add to the information they receive before their children start school.
64. Teaching is never less than good and occasionally very good. Access to modern hardware and effective professional development has boosted teachers' confidence and skills significantly. Their knowledge of the programs they use is thorough and they are confident enough to be able to help pupils very quickly if they get stuck.
65. Subject leadership and management are good. Opportunities are being taken to seek specialist advice about how pupils' skills can best be developed and just what they are capable of achieving. The suite is not yet fully used during morning sessions, because current timetabling arrangements have not been finalised. This is not an efficient use of such an effective resource, although the school plans to make more use of it in the near future. Currently, pupils with special educational needs do not have timetabled access to the suite in addition to their allotted class time. This is a missed opportunity to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills and encourage a different approach to learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. The school has become far more aware of the potential of technology, although it is conscious that more can be done to develop the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. Digital thermometers and cameras have been used very effectively to collect evidence and raise pupils' interest. In some classes, teachers have made very good use of computers to develop pupils' skills and interest in other subjects, and have shown just what is possible. Computers in those classes are regularly in use, regardless of the subject, and used very well to develop expertise in all the required elements of the National Curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

67. No lessons were seen, therefore no secure judgements on pupils' achievement or on the quality of teaching and learning can be made. Previously, standards were judged to be in line with national expectations for both infants and juniors.
68. The well-organised subject manager's file, teachers' plans, pupils' work, photographs and displays indicate that a broad curriculum has been organised. Discussions with pupils indicate that they enjoy geography and that teachers are good at making links with other subjects. Displays of work show how topics covered include elements of history, English and mathematics. They also demonstrate a high level of concern for improving the local environment. Pupils have used their geography skills very well to develop a nature trail and woodland path for all pupils in the school to use. In addition, they have developed a safe and attractive waiting area for parents and young children to use at the end of the day.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of enthusiastic and imaginative teaching.
- Good links are made with literacy.
- There is sometimes too much reliance on worksheets for infants.

Commentary

69. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy an interesting range of activities associated with Tudor times. They have studied the Great Fire of London in depth and have a good understanding of the factors that influenced the rebuilding of London. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have studied World War Two and have a keen knowledge of what life was like in the period.
70. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to interpret the curriculum in an enthusiastic and imaginative way so that pupils enjoy finding out about the past. Pupils in Year 3 thoroughly enjoyed taking part in their own version of the Olympic Games as part of their study on the Ancient Greeks, while pupils in Year 2 used historical artefacts very effectively to bring their learning to life.
71. Pupils make very good use of their reading and writing skills in finding out about people and events of the past. Teachers make good links with literacy by emphasising pupils' speaking and listening skills and they plan well for the development of pupil's information retrieval skills in order to find out information from a range of sources. There are very good links made with writing. Pupils in Year 6 have completed thoughtful and sensitive war diaries. These include a range of writing such as letters, diary entries and mock newspaper accounts, all to a high standard.

72. There is not enough opportunity for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to develop their own recording skills, as there is a heavy reliance on worksheets. This means that opportunities to develop links with other subjects such as English, mathematics, art and ICT are missed. The worksheets do not always match pupils' needs and abilities well, so that some find them too hard while others find them too easy. As a result, pupils can lose interest and lack motivation for the task.
73. The leadership and management of history are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has not long taken responsibility for the subject and has only just begun to monitor teaching, learning and standards in the subject.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

74. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection, so no judgement has been made on provision in art and design. In the previous inspection standards were judged to be in line with expectations.
75. A scrutiny of displays of pupils' work around the school indicates a satisfactory curriculum. Art is often planned as part of a topic linked to other subjects. This sometimes means that the range of art work is more apparent in school at certain times than at others. Displays in one or two classrooms were of a high quality. For example, the pastel sketches that pupils in Years 5 and 6 had drawn and good quality sculptures, using clay and plaster. High quality work such as this promotes real awe and wonder from observers. However, this aspect of work around the school, in two and three dimensions, is not sufficiently well developed, although art work in the Foundation Stage classes provides a stimulating insight into the activities that children take part in and shows what can be achieved. Pupils' sketchbooks are infrequently used and do not generally show any logical development of their ideas or the development of skills.

Design and technology

76. No lessons were planned during the inspection, so no judgement has been made on provision in design and technology. In the previous inspection standards were judged to be lower than expected. The evidence from inspection suggests that considerable progress has been made in improving provision in design and technology throughout the school and that the subject co-ordinator has played an important part in raising achievement.
77. Pupils experience a good range of opportunities to work through a design and technology project, so that all the elements of designing, making and evaluating are fully included, and sufficient time is allowed for them to complete good quality finished items. Good links are made between design and technology and other subjects, so that pupils can see the relevance of their tasks within a project. For example, the juniors applied their scientific skills well when making moving models, including the use of circuits and switches. Photographic evidence is used very well to record the different stages of pupils' work and their good quality finished items.
78. Evaluations of their finished work are thorough, realistic and thoughtful. This aspect of their work is important to the co-ordinator and carefully prepared worksheets prompt pupils well into considering how well they have done and what improvements they would make in future. Older pupils write lengthy evaluations, often with detailed sketches, and make good use of their writing skills.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and thoroughly enjoy music making.
- Specialist teaching has a significant impact on pupils' achievement.

Commentary

79. The specialist music teacher, who is the co-ordinator, uses her musical expertise very effectively in teaching all classes in school. She has high expectations of what pupils can achieve, even from the reception class, so that pupils learn increasingly complex skills as they move through the school. This was evident in a Years 5 and 6 lesson when pupils could write their own lyrics for a themed song. Standards in music remain higher than expected, as in the previous inspection.
80. The teacher is skilful in her methods of teaching different age groups, ensuring she has good resources and a lesson planned appropriately for the age group and ability. The co-ordinator's confidence in singing is reflected in the enthusiastic tuneful response of pupils in hymn practice and in lessons. Infant and junior pupils achieve standards above those expected, as they did in the previous inspection.
81. The curriculum is well planned so pupils' skills are built upon and fully developed. The school is fortunate to have specialist peripatetic teachers and other staff who are willing to offer their services to the school. As a result, the school has a wonderful choir and singing club and an ensemble of recorder, violin and piano players. By the time pupils leave school they have the opportunity to perform in front of their peers and in school concerts. This year the choir performed in the Royal Albert Hall. Visitors to the school further enrich pupils' appreciation of music.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong swimming programme organised by the school.
- Pupils take part in many sports games.

Commentary

82. Pupils in the infants achieve satisfactory standards. It is not possible to report on standards for juniors because of limited evidence. Currently each class is taught physical education to meet the latest guidance on curriculum time. A scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with teacher and pupils suggest that all strands of physical education are taught regularly. No judgement on standards was made in the previous inspection.
83. Games, gymnastic and dance lessons take place regularly and swimming is provided throughout the year to all pupils, including those in one of the reception classes. Teachers assess and record pupils' achievements and in the dance lessons seen, pupils were reaching satisfactory standards as a result of good teaching. They showed fine co-ordination and good control of their movements. Teachers were confident to demonstrate and pupils watched and evaluated each other's work. In all lessons seen, pupils exercised vigorously and enjoyed their lessons.
84. A range of competitive activities, including football, netball, cricket and extra-curricular games activities, enhances the curriculum for older pupils. Boys and girls take part in competitive

fixtures against other local primary schools. They are well coached, are proud to represent their school and show a very well-developed sense of fair play and sportsmanship.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is well planned into a range of subjects.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to grow in confidence and to develop independence.
- The school's very strong ethos emphasises the importance of caring for each other.

Commentary

85. The programme of work covers all required areas. There are very good opportunities for pupils to discuss sensitive issues. The arrangements for sex and drugs education are well established and thorough. The school's curriculum helps pupils to understand the importance of their role as citizens. Not only does it teach important concepts such as rights, responsibility, decision making and democracy, but it also uses the everyday life of the school extremely effectively to reinforce these messages. The school expects every pupil to take some responsibility for its smooth running, whether this be through preparing the hall for assembly, helping the youngest children to settle in or respecting the needs of others around them.

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	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
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	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).