

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARGARET CLITHEROW RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Brent

Unique reference number: 101548

Headteacher: Mrs E McSperrin

Lead inspector: Mrs L Brackstone

Dates of inspection: 2th – 4th December 2003

Inspection number: 257780

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:	231
School address:	Quainton Street London
Postcode:	NW10 0BG
Telephone number:	(0208) 450 3631
Fax number:	(0208) 450 3729
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Boyle
Date of previous inspection:	4 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Margaret Clitherow is an average-sized primary school that caters for children aged three to 11 in one class per year group. There are 231 pupils on roll, representing a wide cultural mix from a range of backgrounds. These include white British, Irish and Polish, Black African, Caribbean and British and Asian pupils. All children come from Catholic families and most of these are from the parish of English Martyrs. Pupils mainly come from three local housing estates, one of which is in the process of being redeveloped. There is a small number of pupils from travelling families but there are no refugees or asylum seekers. Approximately one-fifth of pupils use English as an additional language and the most commonly used are Polish, French and Twi. Nearly one-third of the pupils have special educational needs: these include dyslexia, moderate learning, social and emotional and hearing problems. Children start Nursery on a full-time basis at the beginning of the academic year in which they will become four. Attainment on entry is well below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21872	Mrs L Brackstone	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage Special educational needs English as an additional language Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education
11096	Mrs M Davie	Lay inspector	
30669	Mrs M Sandercock	Team inspector	English Geography History
24254	Mr T Shine	Team inspector	Science
15011	Mrs M Wallace	Team inspector	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school. Through the excellent leadership of the headteacher, an outstanding team has been created that fully includes all staff employed by the school. This unique team ensures that all the needs of the children are successfully met. Consequently, by Year 6, pupils have developed into mature and sensible individuals. The consistently good quality of teaching enables pupils to achieve well. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent; overall management is very effective and governance is very good.
- The curriculum is very well planned and is enriched by an excellent range of activities.
- Standards in speaking and listening are above expectations by Year 6.
- Overall achievement is good throughout the school.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and procedures for checking and tracking progress are very effective.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and behave well.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils. It supports and guides them very well and always listens to the childrens' views.
- Links with parents, the local community and partner schools are very good.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection in May 1998. All key issues have been tackled and there have been substantial improvements in all aspects of school life. Despite the current dip in standards in Years 2 and 6, which is because of significant numbers of pupils with special educational needs in these two classes, standards have been improving over time. The curriculum now fully meets statutory requirements and lessons successfully include activities suitable for the different levels of abilities. Teaching and learning have improved. Checking procedures and support and guidance are now strengths of the school. Pupils' attitudes are now very good and this is as a result of very effective systems for personal development. The leadership and management of the headteacher, subject co-ordinators and governors have all improved since the last inspection

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Throughout the school pupils achieve well as a consequence of good teaching. Children start Nursery with levels of attainment that are well below those expected at age three. A high proportion of children start school with little or no knowledge of the English language and a significant number have varying degrees of special educational needs. Language skills are particularly weak. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage, but, by the start of Year 1 of the National Curriculum, standards are still below those expected in all areas of learning. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and standards are as expected in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics,

science and information and communication technology by the end of Year 2. Pupils maintain this good achievement in Years 3 to 6, sometimes with limited support from home. As a result, by the end of Year 6, standards are as expected in reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Very good achievement is made in speaking and listening, which is above average in Year 6. This is because the pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate issues with confidence and independence. There are no differences in the attainment between boys and girls or any particular ethnic group.

Pupils' personal development is very good. It is promoted through the very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and have very good relationships with their teachers and peers. They take full advantage of everything the school offers and this makes a significant contribution to their achievements. Pupils behave well in and around school. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils arrive punctually.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good education. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers effectively engage pupils' interest and this ensures that they are productive. Very high standards of behaviour are consistently expected and staff treat the pupils fairly. Very effective use is made of all staff and learning support assistants contribute very well to the quality of teaching in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and carefully plan lessons that will develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teaching methods are varied to meet the needs of the pupils, resources are used well to maintain concentration skills and homework consolidates learning well. Procedures to check and track pupils' progress are very good. The curriculum is very broad and is enriched by an outstanding range of opportunities. Very good use is made of links with parents, partner schools and the local community to extend pupils' learning experiences. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Resources are good, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is an excellent leader who in her quiet and determined way has gained the total commitment of all staff, governors, pupils and parents. Other senior staff lead and manage their areas of responsibility efficiently. The governors are an integral element of the school team and play an active part in ensuring that the ethos of the school is fully inclusive.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are completely satisfied with the school. Parents are provided with very good information and feel that all staff are extremely approachable. Pupils '*love the school*' and Year 6 will be '*very sorry to leave*' next year. They are so enthusiastic about their teachers and feel that the headteacher '*does a very good job*'.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- The school, governors, the local education authority and the Diocese of Westminster need to review the cramped and inadequate accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards of attainment on entry into school are well below expected levels in all areas of learning. Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage but by the start of Year 1 of the National Curriculum attainment is still below expectations. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6 and, by the end of Year 6, overall standards are as expected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening and by Year 6, standards are above average.
- Overall achievement is good.

Commentary

Standards on entry into school and achievement through the Foundation Stage

1. Children start the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected in all areas of learning. They achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes because the quality of teaching and learning is good. However, attainment is still below expected levels by the time they start Year 1 of the National Curriculum. This is particularly noticeable in their speaking and language skills. Four-fifths of the most recent Nursery intake started school using English as an additional language and they lack confidence in their communication skills. This has a negative impact on all other areas of learning. Children's needs are very quickly identified and they are supported very well on an individual basis. For instance, children who speak Polish as their mother tongue are given very good support by the headteacher and parents who speak this language.
2. At the time of the last inspection, children in the Foundation Stage were considered to reach the expected levels in all areas of learning except for physical development. However, despite nearly half of the school being on the special needs register at this time, attainment on entry was judged to be average. Therefore, it is not possible to make an accurate comparison with standards in the Foundation Stage at the time of the last inspection.

Standards attained and achievement made from Years 1 to 2.

3. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, standards attained in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are as expected by the end of Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are effectively supported through a very structured programme where their needs are constantly checked. Pupils are effectively encouraged to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well across the curriculum. For instance, teachers make very good use of a range of computer programs to reinforce language skills. Electronic mathematical games support counting skills and help pupils to recognise numbers. Information and communication technology is also used well to support literacy skills when pupils are required to read text from the screen.
4. At the time of the last inspection standards in listening, writing, mathematics and science were considered to meet expectations at the end of Year 2. However, reading, speaking and information and communication technology skills were judged to be below expectations. Therefore, standards in Year 2 have made good improvements since the last inspection.

Standards attained and the achievement made from Years 3 to 6

5. Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening and standards are above expected levels by Year 6. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are as expected and this represents good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, continue to achieve well because their needs continue to be carefully met through very good support from teaching assistants who work closely with them. Across the curriculum, effective links are made between literacy, geography and history when pupils use information and communication technology techniques to create newspapers, brochures and labels. In fact, their achievement is well supported by the pupils' computer skills.

Current standards compared to the most recent national tests in 2003

6. In the results of the National Curriculum tests of 2003 for pupils in Year 2, as illustrated in the table below, attainment was above average in mathematics and average in reading and writing. In comparison to similar schools standards were well above average in mathematics and above average in reading and writing. The drop in the standards of the current Year 2 is a consequence of a significant proportion of pupils in this class who have severe special educational needs and are working at a lower than expected level.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003¹

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.7 (16.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.6 (14.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.9 (18.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In the results of the National Curriculum tests of 2003 at the end of Year 6, as illustrated in the table below, standards were above average in English and science and average in mathematics. In comparison to schools with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards were above average in all three subjects. The high number of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 has been documented consistently over time and this explains the drop in standards as indicated by inspection evidence.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003²

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.7 (29.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.5 (28.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.4 (29.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 25 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Whole school issues

¹ All levels of the National Curriculum are awarded a points score. The average score for all pupils taking the test is used to grade schools in each year. The expected average points at age seven is 15.5. Tables are adjusted to reflect the national average score before grading. The grades are shown in the summary.

² All levels of the National Curriculum are awarded a points score. The average score for all pupils taking the test is used to grade schools in each year. The expected average points at age 11 is 27. Tables are adjusted to reflect the national average score before grading. The grades are shown in the summary.

8. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve well in relation their prior attainment because they are provided with an interesting range of activities that ensure that they work at their own level. There are no differences in the attainment of Polish, Black African and Caribbean and Asian pupils or those of mixed backgrounds, with all minority ethnic groups achieving as well as their white British or Irish peers. There are no differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and contribute significantly to how well they achieve. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and respond positively to everything the school offers.
- They make excellent gains in personal development supported very well by the school's strong Christian ethos.
- Pupils are confident that all staff will help them and treat them fairly.
- They appreciate the value the school places on their views.
- Behaviour is good.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to help around the school and take these jobs very seriously.
- A small number of pupils are late too often in the morning.

Commentary

9. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and are very involved in everything that is offered. By the time they get to Year 6, they are eager to learn, very focused on their work and, consequently, achieve well. This was shown when they were working with a visiting drama teacher whose expertise clearly enthused them. As a result, they listened to his instructions very carefully and demonstrated excellent attitudes and behaviour. Their own class teacher provided a very good role model to help improve their speaking and listening skills and their achievement was very good.
10. Pupils' personal development is very good. It is supported very well by the school's Christian ethos and very close links with the Church of English Martyrs. Pupils feel very confident that all staff will help them whether they have a problem with their school work or in their personal life and this strong sense of trust makes them feel secure and confident and is preparing them very well for the next stages in their education. Pupils' views are regularly sought through questionnaires, interviews and in school council meetings. They enjoy helping out around the school and appreciate the trust staff have in them, such as managing the office at lunchtime.
11. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This represents good improvement since the last inspection when social and cultural development was considered satisfactory. The principles of right and wrong are clearly taught and there are high expectations of good behaviour. As a result, behaviour is good. Girls and boys of all ages and races mix very well, the oldest ones taking a sensible attitude toward helping with the younger pupils, such as at lunch and in assembly. Pupils are very friendly and polite, as was shown when they proudly showed the inspection team around the school. They say that there is no bullying or racism in their school. Occasionally, outdoor play gets quite boisterous and pupils sometimes have difficulty lining up sensibly to get their food. In lessons, pupils are given plenty of opportunities to work together. For example, pupils in Year 1 developing their skills in an art and design lesson readily helped each other to choose, cut and glue materials to make self-portraits.

12. Pupils show compassion for children around the world, less well off than themselves, by enthusiastically helping to raise funds for charities. They say that they really enjoy singing carols at local residences for elderly people. Their cultural development is very good and well supported through work in religious education where they learn about a variety of world faiths. They also participate in activities such as the *'International week'*. During this event each class was linked with a country from around the world and found out about the customs, dress, food and art. This was the first in what the school hopes will become an annual event and was very well supported by pupils and their families.
13. Pupils' spiritual development is very good and strongly supported by links with the Church. Religious education is a high priority as is prayer and reflection and pupils treat these occasions respectfully. Assemblies are made special by the playing of music, often by the part-time music teacher and the site manager, the lighting of candles and the colourful displays to celebrate religious festivals. All staff attend assemblies and this helps pupils to understand their importance as a community experience. Celebration assemblies acknowledge good efforts by the pupils and boost their self-confidence.
14. Attendance rates are about the same as the national average and most pupils arrive on time for school. However, there is a small group who despite efforts by the school to improve their punctuality arrive a few minutes late on a regular basis and this means they are not making a good start to their day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.5
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

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background

Exclusions in the last school year

No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
40	0	0
35	0	0
11	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
12	0	0
37	0	0
24	0	0

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. Strengths include the very good curriculum and opportunities for enrichment, the high quality teaching and learning, the very effective use of assessment, pupil care, support and guidance and very close links with parents, the local community and other schools. Resources are adequate but the accommodation is unsatisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. It is of consistently good quality in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6. The procedures for checking pupils' work and tracking their achievement over time are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers encourage the pupils very well and plan interesting activities that will engage them in their work.
- High standards of behaviour are very consistently expected.
- Learning support assistants are used very well to support pupils.
- Teachers ensure that all pupils are treated fairly and are involved in all activities.
- Procedures to check pupils' achievement are very thorough.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	8 (26%)	17 (55%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.

15. At the time of the last inspection teaching was judged to be satisfactory and a significant minority of lessons were considered unsatisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during this inspection and nearly one-third of lessons seen were of very good or excellent quality. Consequently, very good improvement has been made since the last inspection.
16. Relationships between staff and pupils are really positive and this helps teachers to manage their pupils very well. Throughout the school, teachers plan their lessons well and ensure that skills are taught progressively. Intentions of the lessons are clearly identified and explained to the pupils. Teachers return to these intentions at the end of the session. Consequently, pupils know exactly what they have learnt and they understand how the session has contributed to the development of their skills. For instance, in a very good mathematics lesson the teacher clearly explained that the learning intention of the lesson was to ensure that the pupils would be able to use their knowledge of money to work out real life mathematical problems. She continually referred to the success criteria for the lesson, which meant that the pupils really understood what they were learning.
17. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and insist that the pupils' work hard at all times. They skilfully provide activities that maintain the pupils' interest and develop their concentration levels. This was evident in a Year 3 science lesson where the teacher's very high expectations of the use of appropriate scientific terminology had a very positive impact on the quality of learning experienced by the pupils. However, pupils are very keen to point out that '*there is a good balance between working hard and having fun*'.

18. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are secure in their understanding of their lesson contents. For instance, in the Nursery and Reception classes it is evident that the adults involved with these young children fully understand their needs and provide a good range of practical activities. A wide range of teaching methods is used effectively and these include individual sessions, group work and whole class lessons. This ensures a good pace of learning which maintains the interest of the pupils. For example, a part-time teacher takes groups of pupils for computer sessions in the new computer suite. The groups are small and her very good subject knowledge and skill ensures that the pupils' interest is maintained. This has a very positive impact on pupils' learning.
19. Very good use is made of all support staff to develop the pupils' knowledge and skills and teamwork is exceptional. Learning support assistants are committed, very well trained and form an integral part of school life. They provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This ensures that all pupils are fully included in the classroom activities and are treated very fairly. This was evident in a very good science lesson in Year 2 where pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, were supported very well. During this lesson, a learning support assistant worked with a group to develop their knowledge and understanding of forces. She used her questioning skills well and this enabled them to be fully involved in the whole class activity. In fact, in discussion with inspectors the pupils pointed out themselves that the school '*is very fair*'.
20. The school benefits from a very skilled site manager who involves himself in all aspects of school life. For example, he plays the trumpet in assemblies, takes an after school art club, helps regularly in class and has made all the furniture for the new computer suite. The pupils quite rightly refer to him as '*the best site manager ever*' and consider that '*he is superman*'.
21. On a day-to-day basis, teachers provide their classes with comments that help them understand how they are performing. All pupils are provided with targets in English and mathematics and, later in the year, these targets are reviewed, using the information that has been gained. New targets are then provided if felt appropriate. The school keeps very extensive and detailed records of pupils' attainment in English and mathematics and of the progress they make, as they move through the school. Very careful predictions are made about pupils' future performance using this information. The marking in books is good and teachers provide pupils with an understanding of how they can improve. Homework activities are also of good quality throughout the school and are linked to the work in class.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very broad and is enhanced by exceptional opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences over and above those statutorily required. Although resources overall are satisfactory, there are weaknesses in the accommodation which make it unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and the weaknesses identified in the last report have been eradicated.
- The highly enriched curriculum enables pupils to blossom as they go through the school.
- The good match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum enables pupils of all abilities to be given very good provision to learn well.
- Although there is a good computer suite, this has been created at the expense of the library area, which is one of a number of defects in accommodation.

Commentary

22. At the last inspection, although the curriculum in general was judged to be broad and balanced, there were a number of weaknesses identified. In particular, statutory requirements in

information and communication technology were not being met; this was partly because the teachers and other support staff did not have sufficient expertise to teach all aspects of the subject adequately. There were also insufficient resources to meet the curriculum needs of information and communication technology. Other weaknesses in the overall curriculum included an unsatisfactory level of support in the Reception class and the links with the secondary schools to which pupils transferred at the end of Year 6 had not been firmly established. Statutory requirements are now met fully in all subjects including information and communication technology and teachers and other staff are confident teaching all aspects of the subject. The provision of support staff in the Reception class is now good and links with the local catholic secondary schools are well established. The heads of the receiving Year 7 visit the school regularly and arrangements are made for pupils in Year 5 to visit the secondary schools before they and their parents make their secondary school choices. In all, there is a clear curriculum overview for all areas of the curriculum. As a result, it is of high quality and is exemplified by an exceptionally good programme for personal, social and health education.

23. The headteacher is proud of the rich curriculum in the school and she is right to be so. Pupils are given opportunities, which they grasp keenly, to participate in an outstandingly worthwhile and varied programme of experiences additional to what is found in many schools. These include both enrichment of the taught curriculum and a raft of exciting arrangements both inside and outside the school day. For example, advanced skills teachers from local secondary schools visit the school on a regular basis to lend their expertise in teaching games in Year 6, drama in Years 3 and 6 and give support of high quality for those pupils identified as gifted and talented. This support enhances pupils' personal development very effectively. For example, partly as a result of their experiences in drama, pupils in Years 5 and 6 participated in an outstanding role-play during an exceptional assembly. They spoke very clearly and confidently and showed great maturity, all the greater in relation to their lack of confidence when they enter the school. In all, this proved to be an uplifting experience. Other activities that contribute to a high degree of enrichment include termly trips for each class, mainly in London to places of great interest such as the Toy Museum, the Science Museum and the Millennium Wheel. Other visits include those to the Tate Gallery and the Tate Modern and Year 2 have visited the Wallace Collection. Annual trips for the whole school include those to various zoos and to Littlehampton, which gave many children the first opportunity ever to see the sea. Year 6 attend an annual residential trip to the local authority training centre in Hampshire and recently Year 2 have attended it in June for a weekend visit. There is a wide range of clubs, such as chess and computers and for sport such as Kung Fu, gymnastics, football and netball. This completes a very impressive picture of stimulating activities for pupils, from which they benefit measurably as they progress through the school and become well-rounded citizens.
24. The curriculum is fully inclusive with all pupils having equality of access to every aspect of school life. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers ensure, through good planning, that all pupils have equal access to the rich curriculum. Good support is available to help pupils record their work. Interesting and stimulating extension activities are planned so that more capable pupils work at their own level. For example, Year 6 pupils, who are gifted or talented, have had the opportunity to work with a specialist teacher to produce a school magazine.
25. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good because all teachers have sufficient expertise in their subjects. On occasions, this is reinforced by outside specialists such as the advanced skills teachers and a music specialist who teaches all classes one day a week. A range of well-trained assistants reflect a good match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum. These resources illustrate the school's determination to include fully all pupils, whatever their needs, in the curriculum and the life of the school.
26. Despite the presence of a wonderful atmosphere in the school, the accommodation in many respects is unsatisfactory. This includes the unpleasant toilets, the cramped classrooms that restrict the ability of pupils to move around and the noise levels in some classrooms because

the screens between them make ineffective sound-proofing. The school has long-term plans to create a new library area to compensate for the inadequacies of the current one, most of which is now occupied by the new computer suite. This is an asset to the school and is used effectively. Resources, overall, are adequate for the needs of the curriculum. In some subjects, such as science, resources are good as they are supplemented by visits to a local secondary school where pupils use and become familiar working in a science laboratory.

Care, guidance and support

Care for pupils is very good and ensures they feel happy and secure in school. They are given very good advice and guidance as a result of monitoring their work and they are very involved in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very well taken care of.
- Procedures for health and safety and child protection are effective.
- Learning targets are used very well to help pupils improve.
- Both the toilets and a water leak are in urgent need of repair.
- Arrangements to help children settle when they first start school are very good.

Commentary

27. There is a very high level of care for pupils. All staff know them very well and have very good relationships with them, shown by the mutual respect which permeates the school. This helps children to settle quickly when they first start school and develop a lot of self-confidence, as they grow older. A caring tone is set as soon as parents meet with the headteacher and parish priest before their child starts school and expectations are shared. Assessment procedures are very good and learning targets used very well to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. Teachers make sure that pupils get work that matches their individual needs and that they are suitably supported in lessons. This ensures they make good progress during their time at the school. There are currently no pupils in care.
28. The health and safety of pupils is taken very seriously. The headteacher, governors and site manager conduct regular surveys to make sure that everything is in good working order and safe. The site manager lives very close to the school and this is helping to keep incidents of vandalism to a minimum. He is highly praised by everyone connected with the school for his dedication to ensuring that pupils are working in a safe and stimulating environment. The school is working very hard to try to get the water leak fixed, which is the result of the housing development next door and has placed the matter in the hands of their solicitor. Efforts are also being made to replace the children's toilets, which have deteriorated to an unacceptable state. Despite the very best efforts of the site manager to keep them clean and hygienic, their condition is poor and they are now in urgent need of repair. The infant boys' toilet is of particular concern because its smell permeates all rooms around it, which include the dining hall and staff room.
29. The role of welfare assistant is very ably filled by a long-standing member of staff who is well trained to look after the pupils and knows them well. Meals supervisors are also well trained, liked by the pupils and provide very good care for them at lunchtime. All staff have been trained to administer first aid and are aware of procedures to be followed to ensure child protection. The breakfast club is open to all pupils and children in the Foundation Stage have access to breakfast food all morning. This ensures that all children are able to start the day with a good meal.
30. The school provides very good levels of personal support to pupils with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The school works closely with other

agencies and support staff where necessary. Pupils are integrated well into classes and the special needs co-ordinator and the well-trained learning support staff effectively meet their needs.

31. Pupils' opinions about the work of the school are regularly sought. They get many opportunities to make their opinions known through the school council and these are highly valued. For example, concerns raised about the quality of school meals were addressed by negotiating with the caterers to cook the food on site to preserve its taste and the girls' request to wear trousers in the winter months has been allowed. Pupils have a high regard for all staff, particularly for the headteacher, in whom they have a great deal of well-deserved confidence.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are very effective and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements. Links with the community and other schools are also very effective and contribute very positively to pupils' development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information for parents is very good.
- The governors' annual report is missing some information and annual reports do not give enough information about progress.
- Children's learning targets are shared with parents.
- Parents are now invited to special needs reviews as required.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Links with the church are very good.
- Links with local schools are very good.

Commentary

32. Partnership with parents is very good and contributes significantly to the pupils' achievements. The school deems good communication with parents to be of utmost importance and gives them a good deal of very high quality, clear information to help them keep abreast of their child's life at school. They are kept well informed by fortnightly newsletters, religious education newsletters, which show the high commitment placed on pupils' spiritual development, curriculum booklets and meetings such as those held to discuss the National Curriculum standardised tests and residential trips. They have many opportunities to see teachers and any other staff informally, ensuring that small problems can be sorted out quickly and three formal occasions annually to discuss their child's progress.
33. Annual written reports give parents a good deal of information about what their child has been learning and what they need to do to improve. However, they do not all give them enough indication about how much progress their child has made over the year. The governors' annual report is informative, but is missing some of the required information. For example, it reports on the professional development staff have undertaken during the year, but not on the impact this has had on teaching and learning. Additionally it does not report on the school's plan to improve accessibility, which is a requirement.
34. Parents' views are regularly sought both formally and informally and they are very satisfied with the school. They show their support by their high level of attendance at school functions, such as the very large number who turned up at the pre-inspection meeting to share their very positive views. Their help is greatly appreciated by the school when pupils go on trips or walk to the church. Parents are also very supportive of the Friends Association, which is currently buying the old, leased computers for use in the classrooms. This, along with the installation of a new computer suite has appeased parents' concerns about the amount of access their children were getting to computers.

35. The school liaises closely with parents whose children have special educational needs. The individual education plans are shared with those parents who attend regular meetings and reviews. There is good communication with parents who use English as an additional language with interpreters being provided if needed.
36. Links with the Church of English Martyrs are very close and contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. The priest visits the school often. For example, during the inspection the local priest led two uplifting Advent Liturgies that were also attended by a number of parents and grandparents. Pupils attend mass each Friday on a rota and receive first communion instruction at the church from parishioners, some of whom are also school governors.
37. Links with other schools are very good and give pupils opportunities to benefit from the specialist teaching of advanced skills teachers. For example, Year 6 pupils learned *'how to make a convincing argument about why we should keep Christmas'* in their weekly drama session with a teacher from a local secondary school and pupils in Years 5 and 6 have worked on producing a newspaper with a teacher from another partner secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher is an excellent leader. The leadership of other key staff is good and the school is very well managed. The governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has extremely high aspirations for the staff and pupils.
- The very good teamwork amongst staff and governors promotes an excellent ethos in the school.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is managed very well.
- The leadership of other key staff is good.
- Excellent strategic planning ensures that the school has a very clear vision for the future.
- There are very good procedures for evaluating the performance of staff.
- Very good governance ensures that the school is very effective.
- The day-to-day management of finances is excellent and supports the very good use of the funds available.

Commentary

38. The headteacher is an inspirational and visionary leader, who has extremely high aspirations for the staff and pupils in the school. These aspirations are not only for academic achievement, but also for nurturing the whole person, so that pupils and staff can be fulfilled and happy people living by the highest Catholic principles. Under her leadership and guidance, the school lives out its aims and has an extremely strong Christian ethos. The headteacher's own extremely high level of commitment and determination to ensure that the pupils in her care get the best deal has played a significant part in bringing about a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Her empathetic management of change, leadership of the curriculum and example as a role model are exemplary.
39. The level of teamwork is very good amongst all staff and governors. There is a very strong sense of belonging to a mutually supportive team and this contributes significantly to the school's excellent ethos. Everyone is treated with respect. All the adults in school provide excellent role models ensuring a fully inclusive school, where each person is of equal value to any and every other, whilst each recognises their own unique contribution. Teachers enjoy working at St Margaret Clitherow School and although there are local problems about recruitment and retention, the positive ethos ensures that the school retains staff well and has

managed to find high calibre teachers, albeit sometimes on temporary contracts, whenever a vacancy arises.

40. The deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators give good leadership in their areas of responsibility. They have a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further. As a result of changes in personal circumstances, there have been several changes in the key staff team and some are in the early stages of developing their roles. Notwithstanding this, their very high level of commitment to the aims of the school and clear understanding of their role ensures that they support the headteacher very well. English, science and information and communication technology are very well led and managed. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the role of co-ordinators was not fully developed. They now have a strong sense of purpose and share the vision for the school. All staff influence their colleagues and their pupils in very positive ways. They ensure that pupils are well equipped to face the next stage of their life, that they can speak out confidently and know themselves to be valuable people.
41. One co-ordinator manages very well the provision for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. She organises all paperwork very well, ensures that the targets on individual education plans are met and endorses the school's commitment to the full inclusion of all pupils. This co-ordinator is also responsible for the deployment of the learning support staff who work very closely with her.
42. Excellent strategic planning ensures that the school has a clear and detailed programme for future development. Extremely rigorous self-evaluation is an integral part of the school's programme so that there is a secure basis for amending the plan to meet future needs. The plan provides for the headteacher and subject co-ordinators to check the quality of provision across the school and the process is very thorough. They observe lessons, check teachers' planning and compare and analyse test results and pupils' work in an effort to strive for achievement and standards that are the very best they can be. Extremely good use is made of the local education authority's detailed analysis of test results. These compare the performance of boys and girls as well as those from all ethnic groups. Arising from this excellent evaluation, the strategic plan enables the school to take prompt and effective action to address any perceived needs. An extremely good level and quality of training is provided for all staff. The provision of additional support for those pupils who need it and the renewal and purchase of learning resources are very prudently considered to obtain value for money.
43. Very high quality performance management procedures and very good induction for new staff, ensure that staff are confident to meet the demands made upon them as they work together to support the achievements of pupils. The school has the capacity to be an effective provider of initial training for teachers but, although contacts with training establishments are fostered, no students currently visit the school for long-term training and there are no positive plans for the immediate future.
44. The governance of the school is very good. Governors are very supportive of the school and use their personal expertise to help to shape the future direction of the school. They are very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in preparing the development plan and ensuring its success. They share the vision for the school and work diligently to ensure that parents and pupils get the best they can from the school. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met and that the school lives out its inclusion policies. The ethos for teamwork is ensuring that in spite of financial constraints, the teachers' workload agreement is being sensitively managed. Governors' involvement at every level supports and positively contributes to the effectiveness and ethos of the school.
45. At the time of the last inspection, there were weaknesses in long-term budgetary planning and the finance committee was not acting as a critical friend. The role has developed very well, with full involvement in comparing what the school provides and achieves so that clear strategies can be set in place. Governors and staff discuss the spending plans and governors

challenge spending decisions well, when they feel it is necessary. Specific grants are used very well. For example, funds for the pupils with special educational needs, travellers, those from ethnic minority groups and who have English as an additional language, are very well spent. Finance plays a major part in the planning, with governors carefully considering how to spend in order to achieve best value. Many costs in running the school are minimised due to the employment of very good staff. All staff, including excellent administrative staff and the excellent site manager are very valuable assets. They enable governors to get very good value in terms of provision, time, resources and improvements. All staff work hard to save money, many volunteering for extra duties and working to improve the accommodation in their spare time.

46. The bursar manages the day-to-day financial administration of the school extremely well and this supports the very good use of the funds available. There are exemplary procedures in place and very effective use is made of new technology. As an essential part of the staff team, the bursar works closely with the headteacher and finance committee of the governors and keeps them fully informed of financial affairs. They work together to obtain best value in spending. This is extremely supportive and ensures that the school keeps within its budget whilst making maximum use of the funds available.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	739,940
Total expenditure	682,900
Expenditure per pupil	3,035

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	35,987
Balance carried forward to the next	49,780

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has been well maintained since the last inspection. Preparation for Year 1 of the National Curriculum is effective. The children enter the Nursery on a full-time basis at the start of the year in which they will be four and continue their Foundation Stage education in the Reception class at the beginning of the year in which they will be five. Children start Nursery with levels of attainment that are well below those expected. This is because their speech and language is so poor and this has a negative impact on all other areas of learning. By the time they reach Year 1, all children have achieved well, but standards in all areas of learning are still below the expected levels. This is mainly because there are weaknesses in the children's speech and language development. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good and this has been well maintained since the last inspection. Adults enthusiastically encourage the children in their learning and generally insist on high standards of behaviour. Children's progress is carefully checked and tracked and this ensures that they achieve well. The curriculum is based on a nationally recommended programme of work. There are a good number of adults employed in the Foundation Stage who work very closely together as a cohesive team. Staff make good use of the outdoor areas, which are safe and secure and used as an integral part of the school day.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of the Reception Year, children's development is below what is usually found.
- Very good teaching ensures that personal and social development is promoted in all activities.
- Children are very positively taught the value of belonging to a small and caring community.
- Adults provide very good role models so that very good relationships are promoted.

Commentary

47. Many children start Nursery with personal, social and emotional skills well below what is usually found. Many still work in isolation and have not reached the stage where they relate to other children and share experiences. In this area of learning, children achieve well. Very good teaching ensures that by the end of Reception, their skills have improved. Although most do not reach the early learning goals across the wide area of personal and social development, some have an appropriate understanding of what it means to belong to a small and caring school community and are beginning to absorb its rules about fairness and consideration. Staff work very hard to nurture these important and all-pervading personal and social skills. They are invariably very patient and calm and provide very good role models. Adults strongly encourage consideration for the needs of others and help children to learn how to share. The wide range of tasks is invariably used to encourage personal and social development and adults use praise liberally to acknowledge good responses. In Reception, children begin to help each other tackle tasks like changing from tee shirts and shorts, back into school clothes and are thanked for doing this. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1, some children co-operate with one another pleasantly. However, many still find it difficult to work as part of a group and wait their turn for their teacher's attention.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of the Reception Year, children's development is below what is usually found.
- Teaching is encouraging and well focused on children's needs.
- Teachers talk to children with respect, nurturing their confidence as communicators.

Commentary

48. Teaching in this area of learning is good and children achieve well in developing their communication skills. However, due to the generally very low level of skills evident on admission to Nursery, the vast majority will not achieve the early learning goals by the end of Reception.
49. When children enter the Nursery, many still communicate using gesture, though some use simple statements. Good teaching incorporates many opportunities to encourage children to speak and listen. Well-focused play activities in Nursery provide good opportunities to try out their own ideas in words. In one session, a small group of children, rolling cars along the floor and down slopes, were also provided with different surfaces to use. The teacher encouraged them to touch and describe the surfaces, prompting with words like smooth, rough, carpet and sandpaper, though many of these words were clearly outside their experience. In both the Nursery and the Reception class, adults use a wide range of opportunities to talk to children in small groups or individually and respond sensitively to their needs. They show respect and use a good range of vocabulary when talking to children. The high level of encouragement ensures time for thinking so that children gain in confidence and achieve well. Singing and repeating familiar rhymes is an important part of each day, giving children confidence to join in and articulate aloud. In Reception, many join in with grace before lunch and most join in to sing '*I like the flowers*'; an action rhyme, which they all enjoy.
50. Children in the Nursery share books with adults individually or in very small groups. They recognise details in pictures but many cannot yet turn the pages nor pretend to sequence the story and still rely very heavily on having an adult with them. Teaching in this area is good. Adults sit patiently, pointing out features and helping children understand how interesting and exciting books can be. One child, who had very little English, was well supported in turning the pages, pointing to and reciting numbers and learned very quickly because the adult with her spoke her mother tongue. In Reception, children enjoy stories. They are engrossed listeners, even when sharing a whole school storytelling experience from a visiting storyteller. However, their skills relating to reading are underdeveloped and the vast majority do not reach the early learning goals by the end of Reception.
51. Many children join the Nursery with very poor writing skills. Many have very little control of early writing tools and some do not yet attempt to make marks. A good range of materials is provided to support their development and adults are sensitive to their needs, but until their speaking skills and understanding of how writing is used to communicate information are more highly developed, most see no reason to write. Some are aware that marks show their name. In Reception, the recognition of each child's name is consistently promoted, written words are shown for a range of purposes and a writing table is provided. Visual prompts are provided, too, when children use the computer suite. The large display screen is used to remind children what symbols and simple words mean. This range of visual prompts gives good support in ensuring that children realise that writing conveys meaning and some children use the large markers independently in the writing area to make marks and give them meanings. However, the development of writing skills is well below what is usually found at this age.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children who use English as an additional language are supported very well.
- Teaching is good.

Commentary

52. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage but, despite good quality teaching, standards are below recommended levels by the start of Year 1. This is because the children start school with such poor mathematical skills. Their vocabulary is particularly weak with very few nursery children able to recognise simple two-dimensional shapes. However, most reception children identify squares, rectangles and triangles. Nursery children count to ten when they are supported by adults and also use their hands to help them. Children who use English as an additional language are supported very well and this helps them to gain confidence. Reception children enjoy learning to count using stimulating computer programs and the more capable work out simple addition problems. Very good use is made of number rhymes in both the Nursery and Reception classes to develop and consolidate their numeracy skills.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well.
- Reception children make good use of the computer suite and benefit from specialist teaching.

Commentary

53. Children start the Nursery with poorly developed skills in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They achieve well during their time in the Foundation Stage because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers plan interesting activities that motivate and stimulate the children's curiosity. In the Nursery, they enjoy exploring materials such as dough, water and sand. They express their likes and dislikes through facial expressions and by using a range of different sounds. For example, a small group of children were observed whisking egg whites to make meringues. Their expressions were gleeful as they watched the clear liquid turn into a frothy mass. In Reception, the children particularly enjoy playing with water and talk to each other as they watch objects sink to the bottom of the transparent tank.

54. Teachers provide a good range of resources that are accessible to all children. A small number of children start the Nursery with a good understanding of how to use a range of tools for different purposes. For instance, one child knew exactly how to use scissors. However, many of the children do not even know which way up scissors are held. They are developing their confidence when they use glue pens and sticky tape. In Reception, the children carefully use shape cutters to make pretend biscuits from play dough and use them in their creative play.

55. Children in the Nursery show an interest in the computer when supported by adults. However, because of lack of space, the position of the computer, in a thoroughfare very near to an outside door, is not conducive to maintaining the concentration of these young children. Reception children make good use of the computer suite and specialist teaching enables them to achieve well. They access simple mathematical programs on computers and this supports

the development of their numeracy skills, such as counting from one to 20. Teachers respond well to their needs and this helps them achieve well.

56. Children in the Nursery are developing an ability to talk to adults about day-to-day events in their life. They become excited about firework celebrations and have a developing awareness of the importance of Christmas. Children in Reception talk about their friends and family but have minimal awareness of their local environment or of different cultures and beliefs.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a secure outdoor area but part of it is not level and floods easily.

Commentary

57. Children develop their skills well in the Foundation Stage. For instance, in the Nursery they use their hands to create flags from paper, straws and joining materials. They make Christmas cards and show a developing confidence when they use crayons, pencils and glue sticks. Children in the Nursery move around the available space independently and are slowly developing their responses to music. However, many show weak co-ordination skills when they climb up the stairs in the well-equipped outdoor area. Reception children show greater confidence using tools but have yet to understand the need for safety. For instance, they were observed using hammers and saws but had little awareness of safety issues. They move freely around both the indoor and outdoor accommodation and have started to negotiate obstacles such as cones and hoops when they run around the playground. Despite the fact that the outdoor area is safe and secure, the surface is uneven and has a tendency to flood after rain. This has a negative impact on the achievement of the children. For example, children were observed developing their co-ordination skills using plastic hockey sticks and small balls. However, the area they were using had large puddles on it and this meant that, as they ran with their balls and sticks, they were continually going through a very large amount of water.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well.
- Teachers provide an exciting range of activities.

Commentary

58. Children in the Nursery use their imagination when they play in their '*Ice House*'. However, because of their poorly developed speech and language their creative play tends to be in isolation. In Reception, the children use play dough to make pretend food and enjoy imaginary conversations using telephones. The children in Nursery start to sing simple songs such as '*head, shoulders, knees and toes*' but their performing skills need to be supported by adults. In Reception, the vast majority of children join in singing action rhymes and songs, which have been well chosen by their teacher.
59. Teachers in the Foundation Stage value the individual efforts of each child and provide positive praise for all. Nursery children enjoy painting and drawing but not all know their colours and

are still developing their pencil control skills. Reception children confidently make marks on paper and more capable children draw distinguishable face shapes, which have recognisable features.

60. Children in the Foundation Stage respond well to the well-organised activities that encourage them to use their range of senses. For instance, they are encouraged to experiment with a wide range of materials such as flour, water and sand. This helps to stimulate their feelings.
61. The good quality teaching and the rich curriculum helps the children to achieve well in this area of learning. However, their creative skills are still below expected levels by the start of Year 1 of the National Curriculum.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 2, in 2003 standards were above those in similar schools.
- Standards in Year 6 in 2003 were well above national averages.
- The quality of teaching throughout the school is good.
- Good use of literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Leadership and management in the subject are very good.
- Information and communication technology is well used as a tool for learning in the subject.

Commentary

Standards

62. National comparative data for 2003 shows that in Year 2, standards in reading and writing are broadly in line with the national average and are above those in similar schools. The inspection found that standards in the current cohort of pupils are average, which is similar to those found at the last inspection. All pupils including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well because pupils starting Year 1 have low literacy skills. Year 6 tests in 2003 show standards in English to be well above the national average and in comparison with similar schools. However, although all pupils are achieving well, the current cohort is not performing at the same high level. Over half of the pupils in this cohort are identified as having special educational needs or English as an additional language and it reflects this good achievement that standards are average. This is similar to those standards found at the time of the last inspection. There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups, or between boys and girls since the school keeps a very keen eye on the progress made by all pupils.

Speaking and listening

63. Lessons provide very good opportunities for speaking and listening so that pupils become very confident speakers by the time they reach Year 6. Throughout the school, introductions to lessons, explanations and discussions are very well used to encourage pupils to speak and listen. Pupils enter the school in Year 1 with speaking and listening skills below what is expected for their age. The intensive input from teachers, which invariably encourages and values pupils' oral contributions, ensures that standards in this important area are above average by the time they reach Year 6. Teachers use sensitive questioning techniques and give good opportunities for pupils to enhance their vocabulary by the use of key words in each subject. Throughout the school, drama is valued as a confidence-boosting activity and this

has a significant impact on ensuring that pupils become articulate. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 speak confidently, if not always fluently and make suitable responses to questions. Throughout the school, achievement is very good in this area. All Year 6 pupils, including less capable pupils, express their opinions clearly and discuss each other's ideas with a developing awareness of other points of view. All are very confident when speaking to their peers or adults and become very involved in discussions.

Reading

64. Reading standards are average in Year 2 and in Year 6. Although standards are below average on entry to Year 1, pupils throughout the school achieve well because:
- All staff work hard to support pupils, placing a heavy emphasis on ensuring that pupils enjoy a wide range of books and read regularly to an adult.
 - Teachers inject enthusiasm and expression into their own reading and prompt pupils to make sure they remember to do the same.
 - Parents support the reading programme well; homework books show that many hear their children read regularly.
 - All pupils have the opportunity to borrow books from the library. It is well organised and books are categorised and labelled clearly. A visiting adult ensures that pupils are well supported in choosing books at an appropriate level, which helps to involve them in the text.
65. Year 2 pupils enjoy books and know the difference between fact and fiction, recognising that non-fiction books have contents lists. Pupils with special educational needs recognise familiar words and carefully decode simple unknown words using their knowledge of letter sounds. The consistent approach to reading through the school ensures that in Year 6, pupils, including those with special educational needs, read expressively. More capable pupils can talk about their favourite authors and can summarise stories, using their reading skills to tackle difficult and complex text.

Writing

66. Attainment in writing is average in Year 2. Pencil control and writing skills when children leave the Foundation Stage are limited and teachers work hard to promote pupils' involvement so that all pupils, including those who find learning difficult, achieve well. By Year 2, more capable pupils can sequence sentences and instructions, using full stops to separate them. Attempts at poetry writing produce good results and in sentences, verbs can usually be changed correctly to adjust tenses by adding endings. Individual support ensures that less capable pupils write simple sentences using a capital letter at the beginning, like '*I eat the apple*', though as yet full stops are not used consistently. By Year 6, writing is average overall, though individual pupils reach the standards they should and achieve well. More capable pupils are already making notes using a range of techniques; and write short biographies and autobiographies as well as expressing opinions clearly and writing for a specific audience. However, the school is aware that there is a need to encourage these older pupils to develop their skills further and write at length. Across the school, the secure use of the National Literacy Strategy ensures that achievement is good. Pupils tackle tasks confidently and teachers' regular reminders about using punctuation and good handwriting mean that work is generally neatly presented and pupils take a pride in what they do.

Teaching

67. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory overall; this has improved considerably. Teaching throughout the school is good with teaching in Year 6 being very good. Teachers plan lessons well and usually keep pupils on task by ensuring that lessons move briskly from one activity to another. However, occasionally, in Years 1, 2 and 3, where pupils' concentration span is short, there were lessons when pupils were sitting on the carpet for too long. Although teachers' management ensured that behaviour was good, so that other pupils

were not disturbed, some pupils lost concentration. During group task sessions, very effective teaching assistants support small groups of pupils with learning difficulties and individual pupils with specific language needs very well. This ensures that their achievement is as good as that of others. They complete their tasks with enthusiasm and care, so that although sometimes they are not as skilful as others, for example in forming their letters or writing sentences, their work is positively helping them to achieve their individual targets. Throughout the school, teachers have very good assessment procedures in place and use them very well. Teachers know their pupils well and have targets for individuals and groups and marking is usually useful in helping pupils to see how they can improve. This is particularly so in Year 6, where frequently, a dialogue is developed between the pupil and the teacher, giving pointers for improvement by trying out new ideas or by editing work. This is extremely helpful in ensuring that pupils achieve the best they can and makes a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement as they prepare for the next stage of their education.

68. The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning is good with some very good examples seen. Talented pupils have worked with a visiting teacher to produce a school magazine; pupils have useful opportunities to edit, use punctuation and make labels to develop their word processing skills and Year 6 pupils were observed accessing an information program to decide on arguments for and against animal rights issues.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. The school's very effective management has ensured that although the co-ordinator has been absent, the development plan continued to be implemented. Pupils' assessment tests are analysed very carefully to identify areas for individual and school improvement and results are analysed and studied to determine trends amongst different groups of pupils, so that any specific needs can be tackled. The plan for development considers the purchase of specific resources, the deployment and use of teaching assistants and the training of all categories of staff to support improvement. The school has set challenging targets based on their thorough knowledge of the performance of Year 6 pupils as they have moved through the school. Last year's targets were achieved and exceeded slightly, an indication of the very secure management and very good teaching in Year 6. At the time of the last inspection, the content of lessons was judged unsatisfactory. This issue has been addressed very securely; improvements based on the use of the National Literacy Strategy have been implemented so that pupils have a wide range of language and literacy experiences.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Language and literacy are well used across the curriculum. Teaching positively encourages the use of books, texts and the Internet for reference in subjects like geography and there are very good opportunities for pupils to express their opinions and listen to each other. Teachers listen carefully and clarify what pupils mean to foster pupils' understanding. In this way, they help pupils to achieve well across a range of subjects. Writing in different forms is encouraged so that pupils use lists and tables to record information, for example in history and science. Writing opportunities are well used to improve the standards of information writing and there are usually good reminders about the presentation and punctuation of work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Resources are good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

Standards

71. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are as expected and this is a similar picture to the last inspection. However, achievement in relation to prior attainment has improved considerably. This is because attainment on entry was judged to be average at the last inspection. However, it is now considered to be well below expected levels. In comparison to the National Curriculum tests of 2003, standards have declined in Year 2 but have been maintained in Year 6. This is because the number of pupils with special educational needs is much higher in the current Year 2 class. Both boys and girls achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language also achieve well. This is because teaching assistants support them well in small groups. Pupils who have particular mathematical talents also make good progress because they are clearly identified and provided with extension activities that fully challenge their ability.
72. In Year 2, the more capable pupils recognise a multiplication sign and use a 100 square to work out mathematical problems. They understand basic mathematical vocabulary such as '*smallest, between and largest*'. Average pupils have a secure knowledge of number bonds to ten and recognise the values of a range of coins. Less capable pupils count up to ten and are developing their understanding of odd and even numbers. In Year 6, the more capable pupils are familiar with the use of decimals in real life problems such as those associated with bricklayers and carpenters. They handle data with confidence and understand the concept of probability. Average pupils multiply numbers competently and have a good understanding of equivalent fractions. Less capable pupils are developing their knowledge of fractions and work out the area of a shape.

Teaching

73. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and are skilled in teaching the basic numeracy skills. Lessons generally move at a productive pace and good use is made of the time available. Teachers continually challenge pupils and always expect very high standards of behaviour. This was evident in a very good Year 6 lesson where the teacher really motivated the pupils with real life problems to solve. They were very interested in the lesson and the mutual respect was clearly valued by both staff and pupils alike. This also promoted their personal development very well. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and carefully check and analyse pupils' progress through regular assessment procedures that are of very good quality. This enables them to meet the needs of each pupil in their lessons. This was evident in a very good lesson in Year 6 where pupils used a traffic light system as a self-checking procedure. The classroom assistant who supported them very well also very well met the needs of individual pupils. Good use is made of a wide range of resources. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 3 the teacher encouraged the pupils' understanding of fractions by using pies to illustrate halves and quarters. Good use is also made of computer programs to consolidate mathematical concepts.

Leadership and management

74. The subject is led and managed very well. The quality of teaching is monitored on a very regular basis and the co-ordinator has a very clear view of mathematical standards across the school through scrutinising work and teachers' planning. Test papers are rigorously analysed and weaknesses are quickly identified, then linked into whole school development plans. Resources are adequate and are readily accessible to all staff.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well across the school. Good use is made of mathematical vocabulary to extend the pupils' language development and data handling supports well science investigations and experiments. Pupils make good use of computer programs to support and develop their mathematical thinking.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well in Year 6.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The subject is very well led and resources are good.

Commentary

Standards

76. The 2003 National Curriculum test results of pupils in Year 6 indicate that pupils are achieving very well in the subject as they attained above average results compared to the national picture and attained results that were well above those in similar schools. Work in the books of the current Year 6 and in a lesson observed, is not up to this high standard but shows the pupils are working at levels broadly typical for pupils of a similar age. This discrepancy is more apparent than real, as the present year group has a high proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register and the judgement on the standards in this cohort does not take account of the intensive preparation, including booster classes, that the school undertakes in the spring term, in readiness for the tests; all of which suggests that the school's confidence that standards will continue to improve, is well placed. All groups of pupils in this class are achieving well when compared with their attainment when they entered the school. Work in pupils' books shows they have a satisfactory understanding and knowledge of the areas of study covered. Most pupils are able to record their conclusions, but pupils' books indicate that there is a tendency to rely too much on worksheets and there is not enough opportunity for pupils to write up their experiments at length, although such examples do exist. In a very good lesson in Year 6, pupils increased their levels of knowledge and understanding of the use of filters to separate solids from liquids. In this lesson, pupils were achieving very well as they were working at the limits of their capabilities. Many pupils have a better understanding than their written work indicates, but they find it hard to write down their observations. Work in pupils' books in Year 2 shows they are working at levels broadly typical for pupils' ages. Given that there are two pupils awaiting statements and another pupil is newly arrived from overseas with very little English, these pupils are achieving well.

Teaching

77. Teaching is very good in Year 6 and is good, overall. In Year 2, a very good lesson was seen, but the work in pupils' books suggests that the general teaching level here is good overall. Marking in this class, for example, is often rather cursory, consists mostly of ticks and is not very helpful to pupils in their learning. In the very good lesson in Year 2, in which pupils were learning that pushes or pulls are examples of forces, the teacher asked rigorous questions to stretch pupils' thinking. The lesson was very well planned with the learning objectives clearly set out, so that all pupils were clear about what they had to do. In Year 6, planning was very good and included very effective use of resources, such as magnifying glasses and jam jars containing a solution from the school pond. The teacher had very good relationships with her class and showed an ability to lighten the atmosphere with a joke so that pupils enjoyed learning, while all the time managing the class very well without losing control. As a result

there was a very good atmosphere for learning in this class. The teacher emphasised technical vocabulary well, for example, 'sediment', 'suspended' and 'decant'. She asked very good questions by which she was able to check on all pupils' levels of understanding and their existing knowledge. Pupils enjoyed the process of scientific enquiry and made very good progress in their learning. In two other lessons observed, teaching was good in Year 3 and satisfactory in Year 4.

Leadership and management

78. The leadership and management of science in the school are very good. The co-ordinator is very experienced, has devised a clear action plan for the subject and is available to give support to other teachers when needed. Generally, arrangements for checking on pupils' progress and understanding are good and teachers keep good records. The curriculum for the subject is very good. An interesting wild-life area has been created, that includes the pond. Provision for Year 6 is particularly good. The five-day residential course, that takes place in February for this year group, has science as its main focus. Resources for the subject are good overall, although the budget is tight, and are supplemented by visits to the local secondary school on a regular basis that gives pupils the experience of working in a 'real' science laboratory, and using additional resources.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the new computer suite.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

Standards

79. Standards attained at the end of Years 2 and 6 are as expected and achievement is good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when standards were below national expectations and the requirements of the National Curriculum were not being met.
80. Most pupils in Year 2 have appropriate mouse and keyboard skills, which enable them to enter, save and retrieve data. In their word processing work, they confidently use the return key, delete and choose suitable text from the screen to help them with their tasks. Pupils also confidently use a painting program to make interesting drawings and pictures. By Year 6, the pupils use information and communication technology appropriately to organise and present their ideas. They show confidence and enjoyment when using computers. Most pupils are able to use the Internet to find out information to help them with their work. They know and understand the functions of icons on the toolbar and use these to edit and save their work. More capable pupils use multi-media facilities to create presentations, such as for their work on mountains in geography.

Teaching

81. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are challenged well by high teacher expectations and this ensures that all pupils achieve well. The good range of activities planned builds effectively on the pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Teachers share the intention of the lesson and this ensures that the pupils understand exactly what they are going to learn and what they need to do to improve. Planning procedures are secure and firmly based on a nationally recommended scheme of work. This ensures that pupils gain their skills consistently.

Leadership and management

82. There is very good leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinator understands the need for a very structured approach to ensure that provision is secure. She has led training for teachers and learning support assistants to help them develop their computer skills. The co-ordinator ensures that information and communication technology has a high profile in the school. For instance, she encourages the teachers to display vocabulary related to the subject prominently in their classrooms. The budget is managed very well; the new well-resourced computer suite has been purpose built by the very talented site manager at a fraction of the actual commercial price. However, it is positioned in a thoroughfare that is shared by other groups of pupils. Noise from computer programs distract these specialist groups and the movement of individuals through this area, at times, affects the concentration of the pupils involved in the information and communication technology activities.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

83. Pupils use their information and communication technology skills well to enhance their work in other subjects. In Years 1 and 2, they use a range of different programs to support their learning in literacy and numeracy. For example, spelling programs support the development of their literacy skills. Pupils in Year 3 have created brochures for a medieval castle that involved cutting and pasting pictures found on a popular computer program. Year 5 pupils have used their computer skills well to make plans of the school. Year 6 pupils made good use of a money program to reinforce their problem solving techniques.

HUMANITIES

Geography and History

Provision in geography and history is **good**. Two geography lessons and two history lessons were seen and displays and pupils' work were examined.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' depth of understanding about their current work is good.
- Teaching is invariably good with one excellent lesson seen.
- The range of approaches enthralls pupils well.
- Opportunities for pupils to extend their speaking and listening skills are fully exploited.

Commentary

Standards

84. The standards achieved by pupils are as expected in Year 2 and in Year 6 and have been maintained since the last inspection. In discussion, pupils showed a reasonable level of knowledge and skills for their age. However, the depth of understanding about particular aspects of history and geography is good. Pupils in Year 2 understand the conditions under which Florence Nightingale lived and worked, acting out scenes involving dialogue like, 'You women shouldn't be here!' and 'My bandages are dirty.' By Year 6, they can discuss in depth, the arguments for and against developing unspoilt mountain areas.

Teaching

85. Teaching is invariably good and this is an improvement since the last inspection, when teaching in geography was satisfactory. There was no judgement about history, but there was insufficient emphasis on using appropriate language. This has now been remedied; in both history lessons, the teacher used and displayed a rich selection of historical terms to stimulate

and involve pupils. Lessons are interesting and well managed, engaging pupils so that they stay on task. Teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 is very good.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching was observed in geography in one lesson in Year 6. Over half of the pupils had special needs or English as an additional language and the focus of the lesson was arguments for and against allowing an entrepreneur to develop a mountain village for tourism.

The lesson was very well prepared. A crisp introduction using a range of photographs, recapped key vocabulary relating to mountains and tourism. A short, timed brainstorming session for mixed ability groups followed, as pupils teased out the arguments. Because pupils had worked together regularly and relationships within the classroom were extremely good, time was used extremely productively. The ethos for inclusion in the class was excellent. All pupils knew that their views would be valued. Each group produced a very good range of ideas and these were listed and categorised by the teacher. Some noted financial concerns, some, environmental and others, social concerns. The teacher's knowledge of each pupil's capabilities was excellent; questions were asked and clarifications made at precisely the right level so that pupils achieved very well, and a good level of new information was also introduced in the discussion.

Two of the pupils, one of whom had special needs and both of whom were confident speakers were selected to sit in the 'hot-seat' during the debate that followed. The teacher set the scene very carefully; her tone of voice indicated the serious nature of the discussion and as a result, pupils slipped into character quickly. The teacher encouraged pupils to think very carefully and articulate questions clearly before raising a point. As a result, pupils raised very pertinent issues, like traffic congestion, litter pollution, job creation, more money and the lack of space, clearly and confidently. The teacher's management was excellent. A very thoughtful and reflective debate ensued because the teacher was encouraging, sensitive and supportive.

The lesson ended with a vote to decide the way forward for the village. The 'entrepreneur' was disappointed to be rejected and true to character, released a negative tirade, which was received in good part. However, the need to keep the environment clean and healthy had persuaded the 'villagers' that this course was not for them! An evaluation of what had been achieved showed that the learning objective had been very securely achieved.

86. Pupils enjoy their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and based on mutual respect for others' ideas and equal consideration of every viewpoint. Teachers make regular assessments of what pupils have learned and these are very well used to group pupils for tasks in the lessons that follow. The range of approaches to teaching promotes interest, gains pupils' attention and keeps them absorbed in their work. In Year 2, the lesson included looking at a map of Europe; discussion about modes of transport; a short video showing the conditions Florence Nightingale met; a short opportunity for groups to act out scenes in the hospital and a hot-seating opportunity, with the teacher in costume as Florence. Pupils enjoyed this immensely and left for playtime reluctantly. In Year 5, a good range of resources like photographs and a relevant computer research program were used to stimulate interest and supplement knowledge. These opportunities make history and geography live whilst pupils are in school and contribute significantly to developing speaking and listening skills and enhancing pupils' confidence.

Leadership and management

87. Co-ordination in the subjects is good. Plans, displays and pupils' books are checked to ensure that the curriculum is covered and pupils achieve what they should. Class visits to a range of interesting venues are arranged. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the visits, which support learning well.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

88. Two lessons were seen in music and art and design, one lesson was observed in design and technology and no lessons were seen in physical education. Inspectors spoke to co-ordinators and pupils and looked at teachers' planning and pupils' work. However, it was not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in these subjects
89. Examination of work displayed around the school and in sketchbooks indicates that the work planned in **art and design** is interesting and linked well across the curriculum. This has been well maintained since the last inspection. For example, Year 4 have used drawing skills well to create portraits of Tudor monarchs in their history sessions. Year 2 pupils have made textile collages using a wide range of materials such as net, sequins, felt and cotton fabric. This reinforces their scientific work on different types of materials. The after school art club, which is organised by the site manager and a learning support assistant, provides extended opportunities for the pupils to develop their art and design techniques. For example, they have made colourful roses using flannel, have created clay busts and painted in the style of Van Gogh. Pupils talk very positively about the after school club and it is clearly evident that it has a very positive impact on the pupils' social and cultural development.
90. In discussion with pupils it is clear that in **design and technology** lessons pupils are gaining a suitable understanding of the use of appropriate tools, techniques and materials. Pupils in Year 6 have used a range of techniques and designed and made masks that linked with their work on play scripts. In the one design and technology lesson observed, teaching was judged to be good. This was because the teacher provided the pupils with a detailed demonstration on how to make biscuits. The pupils had a good understanding of why they were making biscuits and clearly knew that their designs could change in the making process. Throughout this lesson the pupils' behaviour was good and they remained focused and keen.
91. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 were observed preparing for their Christmas production in **music** lessons. A music specialist took these lessons. He had good subject knowledge and this was evident when he carefully ensured that the pupils' voices were warmed up. The lessons moved at a good pace and the specialist teacher had high expectations of performance. The pupils sang enthusiastically and Year 3 pupils successfully combined a sequence of simple dance steps with the songs. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were heard singing tunefully in the Advent Liturgy. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 sang with good awareness of expression and rhythm in their Advent Liturgy. For pupils in Years 3 to 6, learning is enhanced through the school choir and the opportunity to learn to play a range of musical instruments. Concerts and musical productions are a very important feature in the life of the school and this contributes positively to pupils' overall musical experience.
92. During the inspection no lessons were seen in **physical education**. A study of teachers' planning shows that appropriate coverage is made for the subject during the year. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 attend swimming lessons each summer term and it is expected that by the end of Year 6, most pupils will be able to swim the nationally recommended 25 metres. Physical education for older pupils is very well enhanced through extra-curricular activities, including netball, football, gymnastics and Kung Fu. The annual residential trip affords good opportunity for pupils in Year 6 to develop their physical skills through participation in a wide variety of sports.
93. The leadership and management of the subjects are good overall. The co-ordinators ensure that planning is monitored for effective coverage and share their individual expertise to effectively improve teacher security in the subjects. Curriculum provision has improved since the last inspection. Schemes of work are now in place, providing appropriate guidance on progression in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social, health education and citizenship

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning ensures progression from the Nursery to Year 6.
- All pupils benefit from regular circle time and personal, social, health education sessions.

Commentary

94. The school's provision for teaching personal, social and health education including drugs awareness and sex education is very good. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection, therefore no judgment can be made on the quality of teaching and learning. However, the one lesson observed in Year 6 showed that pupils are benefiting from well-planned provision, which is very relevant to their needs. For example, these pupils were discussing how to deal with peer pressure and made very sensible suggestions about how this could be done. Pupils are learning about the importance of healthy lifestyles and encouraged to talk about their feelings in circle time. In sex education, they are sensitively learning about the changes in their bodies and how to take care of themselves. The school council gives them very good opportunities to learn about democracy and citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
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	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
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	2

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).