

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARGARET'S CE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Newcastle-under-Lyme

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124268

Headteacher: Mr R. Whittaker

Lead inspector: Mr C Parker

Dates of inspection: 5th to 7th July 2004

Inspection number: 257785

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	271
School address:	Knutton Road Wolstanton Newcastle-under-Lyme
Postcode:	ST5 0HU
Telephone number:	01782 297760
Fax number:	01782 297764
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Levens

Date of previous inspection: 19th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

There are 271 pupils on roll; 143 boys and 128 girls. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special needs is very low. Four pupils have special educational needs and a further three pupils have statements. There is relatively little pupil mobility at times other than the start of the school year. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is low. The ward data and neighbourhood statistics show unemployment is marginally lower than the national average but, overall, reflects a picture very similar to the average for England. The children's attainment on entry is above average.

The pupils are taught by 12 teachers in ten classes. The school is on two sites; Year 5 and 6 pupils are taught in a Victorian building on the opposite side of the road from the main school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11897	Christopher Parker	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, design and technology
12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector	
27541	John Collins	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, music, physical education
27385	Kieran Heakin	Team inspector	English, history, geography, religious education, special educational needs.

The inspection contractor was :

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective school** where the headteacher and teachers have developed an ethos in which the pupils thrive. The pupils enjoy learning and are achieving very well because the teaching is very good and there is a commitment to high standards in all aspects of school life. The leadership, management and governance are all very good. The school is making the most of its available resources. Consequently, it gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The teachers motivate, interest and engage the pupils very effectively
- Behaviour is excellent and the pupils have exceptionally good attitudes to learning
- The headteacher has very high aspirations in all aspects of school life
- The curriculum is very well managed by the co-ordinators
- In most subjects standards exceed expectations; they are well above average in mathematics and science but not as high as they should be in writing.
- Art, music and sport are strongly promoted
- The accommodation is used very well, but the pupils and teachers work in very cramped conditions
- Links with parents are exceptionally effective

The school is far more effective than at the time of the last inspection. The teaching, and consequently standards, has improved significantly. The pupils are now challenged consistently in lessons. The monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of school life are well-established facets of the strong management of the school. The assessment arrangements are very good and there is careful tracking of each pupil's progress. The strategic planning is also very effective. The provision for art has improved dramatically and is now very good. The classroom accommodation remains cramped and continues to be inadequate.

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	E
mathematics	B	A	B	D
science	A	A*	A	B

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

Overall, **the pupils' achievement is very good**. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 have been either above or well above average for the last few years. Comparisons with similar schools were well above average in 2002. However, in 2003 they remained above average in science, but fell below average in mathematics and well below average in English. As a result of the dip in overall performance in 2003, the school set out to raise standards further and, in particular, to increase the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels. The inspection evidence and the preliminary and unvalidated results of national tests in 2004 indicate that the school has been successful in meeting this target. In English, one third of the pupils reached the higher level, a modest but clear improvement. In mathematics, the improvement was dramatic with six out every ten pupils reaching the higher level. Furthermore, in science two-thirds of the pupils reached the higher level, enhancing the already impressive

results. Standards in mathematics and science are now clearly well above average. The inspection evidence and the school's self evaluation show writing to be weaker than speaking and listening and reading where standards are well above average. Although standards in writing are above average, they are not as high as they should be.

The pupils' very good achievement is not restricted to the core subjects. They do well right across the curriculum, exceeding expectations in, for example, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT). The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

The pupils' **personal development is cultivated very effectively**. Their self-esteem and confidence are strongly promoted and their behaviour is excellent. They have exceptionally good attitudes to learning; they listen carefully and concentrate fully and show considerable care for others. Their attendance is also well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education is very good**. The teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and application to work. They motivate, interest and engage the pupils very effectively because the lessons have a rapid pace, are lively, challenging and enjoyable. Consequently, the pupils respond very well and learn effectively. The teachers mark the pupils' work in a manner that encourages improvement and indicates what they need to do next. They also provide an opportunity for the pupils to evaluate the extent of their learning. The **teaching is very good**.

The school provides a rich, interesting and comprehensive curriculum, in which ICT is used effectively to promote learning. A wide range of activities outside lessons considerably enhances it. The provision for curriculum enrichment is very good. The resources are well managed and organised throughout the school. The care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are very good. The pupils receive very good support and advice, and their views are used to excellent effect as an integral part of the school's development. The links with parents are exceptionally effective. The school works very effectively with the local primary schools and has a very productive relationship with the local secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher has very high aspirations in all aspects of school life. The relationship between governors and the senior management is very productive and aided by comprehensive monitoring of the quality of the teaching, the pupils' work and the increasingly effective analysis of performance data. The curriculum and the provision for special educational needs are very well managed by the co-ordinators. Teamwork is very strong and the professional development of the whole staff adds to its common understanding and sense of purpose.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents are very satisfied with the provision that the school makes for the pupils and hold it in high regard. Almost all of those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the teaching is good, that the children are expected to work hard and become mature and independent. They similarly agree that the school is well led and well managed. The pupils are

proud of their school and value the opportunities it provides for them, particularly the range visits, visitors, clubs and after-school activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in writing further
- Continue to seek ways of improving the classroom accommodation

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, the pupils' achievement is very good. Present standards are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In most subjects standards exceed expectations by the end of Year 6
- The pupils achieve high standards in art and design
- Their competencies in ICT well exceed expectations
- Standards in reading and speaking and listening are well above average, but standards in writing are not as high as they should be.

Commentary

1. For the last four years, the results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 have been either above or well above average. When compared to schools in similar circumstances, the pattern is the same, although in 2003 the comparison was average overall. Comparisons using prior attainment data in 2002 were well above average in English and mathematics and in the top five per cent in science but in 2003 they were well below average in English, below average in mathematics and above average in science. Overall value added measures for 2003 were broadly average in comparison to both the national distribution and similar schools. The results in 2003 appear to reflect some variation in cohorts rather than any inadequacy in the provision made for the pupils. However, as a result of the dip in overall performance in 2003 the school set out to raise standards further and in particular to increase the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in 2004.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.6 (29.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.2 (28.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.4 (31.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 77 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The inspection evidence and the preliminary and unconfirmed results of national tests in 2004 indicate that the school has been successful in meeting this target. In English, one third of the pupils reached the higher level, resulting in a modest but clear improvement. In mathematics, the improvement is dramatic with six out every ten pupils reaching the higher level. Moreover, in science two thirds of the pupils reached the higher level thereby improving on the already impressive results. In addition, the inspection evidence also shows that standards in mathematics and science are presently well above average. However, it also confirms the school's self-evaluation that writing is weaker than the other elements of English. Although standards in writing are above average, they are not as high as they should be. In speaking and listening and reading, standards are well above average.
3. The results of the latest national tests, observation of lessons and a scrutiny of their work show that the pupils are achieving very well and making very good progress as they move through the

school. This is the result of very good teaching, challenging activities, high aspirations, the very positive attitudes of the pupils and strong teamwork and direction. The very good achievement of the pupils is not restricted to the core subjects. They do equally well in, for example, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT). The improvement in the provision for and standards attained in art and design is considerable, and the pupils are now reaching high standards. ICT is used widely to support learning across the curriculum and, consequently, the pupils' skills and competencies well exceed expectations.

4. The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They achieve very well in relation to their individual targets due to very good teaching and very effective support from the teaching assistants.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils' personal development is cultivated very effectively and their behaviour is excellent. They have exceptionally good attitudes to learning and are proud of their school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils listen carefully and concentrate fully
- They show considerable care for others and their relationships are excellent.
- Their self esteem and confidence are strongly promoted

Commentary

5. In lessons, the pupils concentrate and contribute very well. They listen attentively and work very well both independently and collaboratively. Consequently, they enjoy learning. As part of their monitoring of the school's provision in each subject, the teachers discuss with the pupils how they feel they work best. One teacher's report concluded, *'Most prefer working independently as they can concentrate more and produce more work. The less able children prefer working either in pairs or in groups as they feel more confident in sharing their ideas and find it more fun.'* Opportunities for the less able pupils to work in this way are evident in the lessons and the pupils clearly appreciate their views being heard. All of the inspection evidence confirms that relationships within the school are very good and that they contribute significantly to the pupils learning and achievements.
6. The pupils are very well behaved at all times. In lessons, assemblies, when moving around the school and in the playground their behaviour is excellent. The parents are very happy with the standard of the pupils' conduct and are confident that any problems are dealt with immediately. Nearly all pupils are noticeably calm, mature, happy and consistently well mannered. As a result, the teachers are able to rely on them, for example, to work sensibly in small groups during lessons. The pupils' self-esteem and confidence are strikingly positive features. The Year 6 pupils, for instance, justifiably talk of the confidence they get from their teachers, who treat them as more grown up as they get older. The pupils consistently show respect and care for others, for example, they hold doors open for adults and are kind to peers who are feeling either unwell or left out. The older pupils exercise responsibility for themselves and others in a sensible way. When questioned in small groups, they listen calmly and with respect to different views expressed by others. They have a very well developed sense of right and wrong. They hold the rewards system in high regard and fully support school's sanctions, where needed.
7. The pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, together with the good opportunities for reflection in assemblies and lessons make important contributions to their very good spiritual development.

The pupils' understanding of their own culture is very good, aided significantly by direct involvement in the local church and community events. The pupils' multi-cultural development is also very well developed. For example, the religious education curriculum gives them a good appreciation of the major world faiths. Similarly, a multi-cultural week introduced them to aspects of Indian culture, such as cooking, clothing and dance. The programme also includes visits to a mosque and synagogue. The wall displays include examples of Indian and aboriginal art.

Attendance

8. The pupils' attendance has been consistently very good over several years. The table below provides attendance and absence data for the latest complete reporting year, when the attendance was well above the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.0	School data	0.0
National data	5.5	National data	0.4

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

The school has good procedures for monitoring absence and promoting high attendance. The parents ensure that the pupils attend school regularly and on time. Similarly, they provide good reasons for any absences. As a result, unauthorised absence is minimal.

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. The curriculum is broad interesting and very well taught. The pupils are very well supported in both their academic and personal development

Teaching and learning

The teaching, learning and assessment are all very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers motivate, interest and engage the pupils very effectively
- The lessons have a rapid pace, are lively, challenging and enjoyable
- The teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and application to work

Commentary

9. Throughout the school, the teachers have a shared commitment to providing all pupils with interesting and stimulating opportunities to learn and progress. The high degree of consistency in the quality of teaching and the approaches the teachers use bear strong testament to the effectiveness of the training, professional development and the teamwork engendered by the senior management. The recent introduction of interactive whiteboards into every classroom has added another dimension to the teaching and provided an added

motivation for the pupils. This was well illustrated in an art lesson where the pupils compared some of the techniques used by van Gogh and Hockney.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (8%)	17 (47%)	16(45%)	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.

10. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is particularly effective. Closely focussed work to enhance the pupils' skills, setting by ability and the consistent challenging of pupils of all abilities underpin the drive for higher standards. The teachers expect the most of the pupils, and this is very evident in lessons where the demands stretch them to achieve their full potential. Consequently, the work of the more able pupils is of a high standard. However, the very good achievement and progress of the pupils in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics are not yet matched in their writing. Nevertheless, the pupils are achieving well in their writing and the teachers are determined to make further improvements to ensure they reach the very high standards of which they are capable.

11. The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are very positive, and consequently the teaching and learning continue at pace without interruption. The pupils work hard, concentrate well and are very productive in lessons. They appreciate the manner in which the teachers encourage and promote enjoyment in learning. For instance, under the heading of 'What I like most about my school' one pupil wrote, '*The teachers encourage you...*' This applies equally to all aspects of their work, including the enhancement of their speaking and listening skills. A very good example was observed in a design and technology lesson where the Year 5 pupils were encouraged to give their views on the musical instruments they had made, and some did so quite eloquently. In many lessons, there is a strong emphasis on the correct use of vocabulary whether talking about 'meta-language' or 'genre' in English or 'universal indicators' in science. Many of the tasks set for the pupils have elements that either encourage independence or promote collaboration. In all lessons, the pupils respond very well.

12. At the end of almost every lesson, the teachers provide an opportunity for the pupils to evaluate the extent of their learning. In just a few minutes of questioning, the teachers are able to gain a clear picture of the extent of the pupils learning so that they can determine a starting point for the next lesson. They mark the work in a manner that encourages improvement and indicates what the pupils need to do next. The marking is aligned with precise target setting in English and mathematics and underpinned by very good record keeping that allows the teachers to plan the next stage of learning in all subjects of the curriculum. Homework is also used well to promote learning. Some of the oldest pupils use the school website to get further information about their homework.

13. The teaching of the pupils with special educational needs is very good. In lessons, challenging work matches their individual needs and they receive very good support from the teaching assistants. The special educational needs coordinator liaises regularly with the class teachers to review their progress towards set targets. The learning support assistants give the right balance of support, help and challenge to prevent the pupils becoming too dependent both in-class and in withdrawal groups. The good relationships and match of

challenge to ability enables the pupils to ask for advice and persevere. As a result, they make very good progress.

The curriculum

The school provides a rich, interesting and comprehensive curriculum. A wide range of activities outside lessons considerably enhances it. The resources are good but the classrooms are not big enough.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is used effectively to promote learning across the curriculum
- Art and music are strongly promoted
- The school is successfully involved in many sporting activities
- The accommodation is used very well, but the pupils and teachers work in very cramped conditions

Commentary

14. The school provides a broad curriculum which meets statutory requirements. All subjects are covered in depth through a well planned programme for each year group. The national strategies are used very well to plan work in English and mathematics. The pupils with special educational need benefit from good quality, carefully planned provision. Their individual education plans are carefully constructed by the special educational needs coordinator and the class teacher working together, so all teachers and support assistants are fully aware of the pupils' individual targets. These targets are reviewed regularly and adjusted accordingly. In Years 5 and 6, the school's setting system for literacy and numeracy benefits the pupils with special educational needs by enabling them to work in small groups on well-matched tasks and with good support. The school also provides support programmes for other pupils who need additional help. These programmes include Additional Literacy Support, Further Literacy Support and Springboard mathematics.

15. The school has compiled a register of pupils who are gifted or talented not only English and mathematics, but also in other areas such as art and sport. The promotion and monitoring of gifted and talented pupils has been identified by the school as an area for development.

16. The provision for curriculum enrichment is very good. The pupils benefit greatly from a range of visits and visitors that support and enrich their learning. For example, they visited Chester when studying the Romans and have benefited from working with an Indian craftswoman. In Year 6, a range of adventurous activities form part of a residential experience and make a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The school also offers very good artistic and sporting opportunities to its pupils, including inter-school football, netball, cricket and rounders, plays and concerts. The school choir is currently in final rehearsal for a production of 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'. The range of additional opportunities is extensive and includes clubs for mathematics, ICT, chess and Scrabble; there is also a film club that is often attended by more than a hundred pupils.

17. Throughout the school, the resources are well managed and organised and enhance the curriculum provision. This is particularly the case for ICT for which there is a very good suite

that is well used to support learning in many subjects. This large room was the former school hall and offers good working space. However, some classroom activities have to be carried out with military precision because there is so little space for the pupils to work in and no room for the teacher to move around. For instance, in art lessons the pupils often work standing up to give them a little more space, and in all rooms the teachers have to squeeze between tables to support the pupils when they are working. The classroom accommodation is wholly inadequate and on occasions it is very hot because of the lack of ventilation. Other aspects of the accommodation are good. There is a good sized multi purpose hall, good hard play areas and excellent grass playing fields. The available space is used very well and the interesting displays and stimulating use of interactive whiteboards contributes considerably to the pupils' learning. One pupil commented, *'I like the wall displays because they are decorative and bright.'*

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are very good. They receive very good support and advice. There are exceptionally good measures to involve pupils in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The parents rightly appreciate the very good care provided
- The induction arrangements are very good
- The school council plays a very effective role in school life

Commentary

18. All members of staff know the pupils very well through diligent daily observation and exceptionally positive links with parents. They act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle in. The school works very effectively to ensure the inclusion of all pupils, and as a result they feel safe, fairly treated and have a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults. The pupil survey confirms this and the parents appreciate the very good care provided. The formal policies and practices relating to first aid, health and safety and child protection are well considered and properly carried out. The levels of minor accidents, mainly in the playground, are very low. The arrangements for induction to Year 3 and the transfer arrangements to the High School are very effective.

19. The monitoring of the achievement of all pupils' is frequent, thorough and very effectively communicated to the pupils and their parents. Good work and attitudes are very beneficially recognised during the 'Celebration' assemblies. The Year 6 pupils say that the teachers expect them to behave in a more grown up way as they move through school and, consequently, they do. Subject targets and regular marking provide the pupils with helpful suggestions on how their work can be improved. This is underpinned by very effective system for the assessment and tracking of the pupils' achievements, particularly in the nationally tested subjects.

20. The exceptionally constructive relationships create a very positive atmosphere in which the teachers can seek the pupils' views. At the start of the school year, the pupils in all classes create a set of class rules. In addition, the School Council gives the pupils a real voice and influence on improvements to the school environment. The most notable recent achievement is the setting up

of a 'Buddy Bench' to the playground, and a member of the school council is always on duty to make sure no one is left out of the playground games. The pupils not directly involved in the council's work speak positively about its influence. The pupils are trusted with a wide range of responsibilities, and their opinions form an integral part of subject reviews. Not surprisingly, the returns of the pupil surveys show that nearly all pupils agree with the statement that school listens to their ideas. The inclusion of pupils' views through the school council and subject reviews gives the pupils an exceptionally coherent influence on school improvements.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's excellent links with the parents make a significant contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. Its links with the community are also good. The school works very effectively with other primary schools and has a very productive relationship with the local secondary school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The parents rightly express exceptionally positive views about what the school provides and achieves.
- They also make an important contribution to the successful partnership
- There are good links with the local church, public services and charities.
- The school benefits from its very active membership of the local partnership of schools.
- Good business and vocational links extend the pupils' experiences

Commentary

21. The home / school partnership is exceptionally effective because the school and the parents work on the basis that they have complementary roles in a shared enterprise. The success of the partnership is reflected in the unusually positive parental survey. The school's key contributions to the successful partnership include:
- The approachable demeanour and helpful, caring attitude of all staff
 - The 'weekly clinics' that guarantee a rapid response to any significant questions or concerns, and the subsequent quick and decisive action
 - The range and quality of the materials that enable the parents to support their children's learning at home
 - The termly curriculum outlines, regular parents' evenings and very good written annual reports
 - Sensible homework arrangements clearly outlined in the very well used homework diaries
 - The school website providing homework hints
 - The long-established use of surveys to ascertain the level of parental satisfaction on both specific and whole school issues. For example, parents of Year 3 pupils are surveyed each autumn to gauge satisfaction levels in relation to 'settling into' school.
22. The parents' key contributions to the successful partnership include:
- Ensuring that their children attend school punctually and routinely, leading to very good attendance
 - Very high level of attendance at consultation evenings, special assemblies and other events.
 - Many successful fundraising events organised through the FSM (Friends of St Margaret's) group. These events also contribute to the pupils' personal development

and the very strong sense of community that prevails, as the staff, parents and pupils work together

23. The local churches provide a key community link. Two vicars and a Church Army captain regularly take assemblies, and the pupils use the local church for Eucharist services. The pupils' learning benefits from a very good range of visitors and visits. Public services, such as the police, health and fire services enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Helped by the local education business partnership, Year 5 pupils run a business club. As a result, these pupils get real insights into the key functions and processes of a typical business. The pupils take part in a range of collections and sponsored events for local and national charities. The school plays its part as a resource in the local community. For example, dance and ballet groups use the hall. Many of the pupils are members of Brownie and Guide groups or junior football and cricket clubs, which also use the facilities.
24. The school is an active member of the local partnership of schools headed by the local high school and including the local nursery, infants, junior and primary schools. Regular meetings between the headteachers and their deputies are leading to common approaches to some issues and the sharing of good practice. There are particularly effective pastoral and curriculum links with the main feeder infants' school and with the high school to which most of the pupils transfer. Links are also well developed with the church high school that a minority join. Working with students from Stoke College, the Year 6 pupils cook or wait at a dinner party attended by their parents. The school takes part in sporting competitions and tournaments, providing older pupils with additional understanding of the local community whilst developing their sense of fair play and competition. It plays its part in supporting the training of pupils and students from other institutions. For example, student teachers, from the Crewe and Alsager campus of Manchester Metropolitan University, take part of their teaching practice at the school. The school also provides work experience for High School pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership, management and governance of the school are all very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has very high aspirations in all aspects of school life
- The curriculum is very well managed by the co-ordinators
- The relationship between the governors and the senior management is very productive
- The provision for special educational needs is very well managed

Commentary

25. The governors give the school their wholehearted support, and are concerned to ensure that the decisions they take promote further improvement. They support the headteacher and staff, but are rigorous in holding them to account for the school's performance. They steer the work of the school in the best interests of the pupils and in pursuit of ongoing improvement. The curriculum co-ordinators report their findings from monitoring activities to the governors and outline proposals for improvement. Every governor has oversight of a subject, and this not only keeps them up to date and fully involved but also allows them to

negotiate areas for improvement when the headteacher lays out his school development plans each year. A recent decision to lease an interactive whiteboard in every classroom illustrates very well the governing body's forward thinking and their commitment to best value. This decision has given further momentum to the school's drive for improvement.

26. The headteacher has created a caring yet ambitious ethos within the school, which influences and inspires both staff and pupils alike. The commitment to quality is evident in the school brochure, reports to parents, the reception area and the friendly and welcoming manner in which all visitors to the school are greeted. Posters of thoughtful and inspiring quotations are displayed in corridors, and targets are displayed on classroom walls as a constant reminder of the headteacher and teachers' high expectations. The senior management team has created a high performing team with a common goal. By thoughtfully deploying skilful teachers, they continually influence and motivate their colleagues. Consequently, the teamwork is very strong, with the deputy headteacher and year co-ordinators overseeing the core curriculum very effectively. The professional development of the whole staff adds to the common understanding and sense of purpose of the teaching team.

27. Rigorous self evaluation based on the comprehensive monitoring of the quality of the teaching and the pupils' work is aligned with the increasingly effective analysis of the performance data. These processes are the cornerstones of the school's improvement strategy. They provide the information that results in activities to rapidly improve standards. The success of this strategy is evident in the significant rise in the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in mathematics this year. The school has now, rightly, turned its attention to raising standards in writing. As a result of a well-focussed school improvement plan and the overall drive for ongoing improvement, standards have risen in many areas, most notably in art and design. There has been very good overall improvement made since the last inspection.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	655 325
Total expenditure	629 863
Expenditure per pupil	2 324

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	23 345
Balance carried forward to the next	25 462

28. The school uses almost all of its available funds to the benefit of the pupils, and maintains a relatively small budget surplus. The principles of Best Value are applied in all areas of the school's work. This is well illustrated by the decision the governors to lease rather than buy an interactive whiteboard in every classroom whilst they assess the effect on the pupils' on the pupils' learning. The governors consult widely and are kept abreast of the parents' and pupils' views through regular contacts. The minutes of all school council meetings are circulated to the governors who also hold discussions with pupils as part of their subject monitoring activities.

29. The day-to-day financial management is very efficient and enables the governors and senior managers to carry out their monitoring functions effectively. The administrative staff

is very efficient; this allows the senior management to focus on continuing improvement and the teachers on raising the pupils' achievement still further.

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

ENGLISH

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The pupils' reading, speaking and listening skills are well above average, but standards in writing are not as high as they should be
- The teaching is good and as a result the pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- The leadership and management are very good

Commentary

30. Standards are above average in writing and well above average in speaking and listening and reading. The previous report stated that standards were satisfactory in all aspects of English. The school has made very good improvements, especially in speaking and listening and reading. The pupils achieve well overall, including those with special educational needs and higher attainers. There is no significant difference in achievement of boys and girls.

31. The pupils use a varied and extensive vocabulary and speak with interest and enthusiasm. They have many opportunities to speak and discuss during lessons and the teachers encourage them to use correct sentences when answering questions. Most of the pupils read with confidence and expression. They have books at home and some visit their local library. They enjoy talking about their favourite books and authors such as JK Rowling, Roald Dahl, Dick King Smith and Michael Morpurgo.

32. There have been good improvements in all areas of writing and standards are now above average but they are not yet as high as they should be. Most pupils write neatly in a pleasant joined script and standards of presentation are very good. Throughout the school, the pupils write for a variety of purposes, such as poetry, reports and letters. They develop their writing by the effective use of planning and drafting and use correct spelling and punctuation. The school is not complacent with these standards of writing and is working to raise them further.

33. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically since the last inspection and now ranges from good to very good. It is this improvement that has caused standards to rise so well overall. The teachers' planning is of a very good standard and the lesson aims are made clear to all pupils. The work is of a challenging nature at all ability levels and the pace is brisk. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils are working in sets for English and this helps the teachers to target smaller groups of pupils who need more help. The purposeful working atmosphere and very good relationships help the pupils to achieve well in English lessons. All teachers use ICT to develop and extend their lessons, and the interactive whiteboards and computers are very effective teaching aids to stimulate interest and enthusiasm.

34. There is a consistent whole-school approach to marking, and all the work that was scrutinised had helpful comments. All children are familiar with their termly individual

targets for English and are aware of what they need to do to improve their current work and standards. Assessment data is recorded for all pupils and their progress is monitored throughout the school.

35. The subject co-ordinator is very effective and has a realistic understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development. She is proactive in monitoring teaching to improve standards. She is correct in currently focusing on improving standards of writing across the whole ability range. There have been good improvements in the quantity and quality of books in the upper school library. This provision is enhanced by the efforts of the enthusiastic teaching assistant who acts as library manager and also teaches library skills to groups of pupils. All the non-fiction books in the school are now colour coded and Dewey indexed to help pupils retrieve relevant information.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

36. This is a strong feature of the provision for English and the pupils have many opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills in other subjects. For instance, various pupils were observed developing their speaking and listening skills when 'hot seating' in history, discussing why Hindus are vegetarians in religious education and describing an Aboriginal journey picture in art and design. Similarly, many good examples of the pupils' writing can be found in the foundation subjects, such as the 'Letters from the Crimea' in a history lesson in Year 6.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average
- The teaching is very good
- The leadership and management are very good
- All groups of pupils are achieving very well

Commentary

37. The inspection evidence confirms the latest preliminary and unvalidated test results for 2004, which show that standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. They are now well above average with a high proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in the national tests. This is due mainly to the high quality of the teaching across all ages. All groups of pupils make very good progress, including those with special educational needs. The very good support that these pupils receive in class enables them to progress as rapidly as all other groups.

38. The teaching is generally very good and in some lessons it is excellent. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The lessons share a number of common characteristics. There is a very good pace to the learning based on well-timed activities that are precisely matched to the levels of abilities and concentration of the different groups of pupils in each class. This ensures that the great majority of pupils do very well and achieve much better than expected. All of the pupils are constantly challenged to explain how they are thinking and the methods they use to solve problems. A major feature of teachers'

questioning is the 'why question' that follows a pupils' answer. For example, in an excellent lesson seen in Year 3, the teacher was not satisfied with a simple direct factual answer, but pushed pupils to give more...'What other kind of base could a pyramid have other than a square?... What is the difference between a side and a face?' The pupils listen very well to their teachers and to each other and are eager to contribute to discussions. Another significant feature of lessons is the teachers' very effective use of the interactive whiteboards to enable all pupils to see clearly the focus of their learning. This helps their concentration and the work of the overwhelming majority of the pupils is marked by high levels of perseverance and application. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, the lower ability pupils were set the task of using from two to nine functions to complete a sum in which the input number was 5 and the answer was 16. By the end of the session, nearly every pupil was working with five or six functions and was looking forward eagerly to extending this in their homework.

39. The subject is very well led and managed by the co-ordinator. She has a very clear vision for the future development of the subject and has overseen the establishment of a very good system of assessment that has enabled the school to closely target individual and groups of pupils for improvement. All pupils and their parents are aware of these targets, which are constantly monitored by the school. The pupils also make very effective self-assessments at the end of all lessons that encourage them to look at how well they have done and what they need to do next in order to improve. The co-ordinator has created a very effective team to support the school's work in mathematics and provides an excellent role model for other staff and the pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

40. The school plans well for the use of mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, the use of measuring and data handling skills was seen in Year 3 science lesson when the pupils were testing the effects of exercise on the body, and in design and technology work on designing slippers in Year 5. The pupils are very capable in applying their knowledge and skills in measurements, calculations and problem solving.

SCIENCE

The provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average
- The teaching ranges consistently from good to very good
- The leadership and management are very good
- All groups of pupils are achieving very well

Commentary

41. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. The latest preliminary and unvalidated test results for 2004 show that they are now well above average with a high proportion of the pupils achieving the higher levels. The current inspection evidence confirms this. The improvements in the teaching and the current leadership and management of science are major factors in these significant improvements.

42. The quality of the teaching was consistently high across the school and ranged from good to very good. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use it very effectively to plan interesting and exciting activities for their pupils. All groups respond with great enthusiasm and are very well motivated to learn. A notable feature of all science lessons is the very clear focus on the correct use of vocabulary so that all the pupils are aware of the exact meaning of what they are learning. Very effective use of interactive whiteboards enables the pupils to focus on what the teacher is saying and doing. All the teachers are very effective in presenting the activities so that the pupils are able to settle quickly to their tasks. Their high levels of concentration and perseverance enable all groups of pupils to achieve very well as they progress through the school. The pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by the teachers and classroom assistants, thereby enabling them to achieve as well as other groups of pupils. For example, in a lesson in Year 6, the pupils were testing the pH values of a wide range of common household products. They all worked with great care and showed very good investigative skills. Despite the cramped conditions of the classrooms the teachers and support staff managed the activities very well. Careful questioning by the teacher allowed all groups of pupils to contribute their ideas and opinions and challenged them to explain and clarify their thinking. Similarly, in a Year 5 lesson on the sound proofing properties of materials, the teacher skilfully encouraged the pupils to explain and expand their answers so that their knowledge and understanding was extended well. Scrutiny of the pupils' work in Years 3, 4 and 5, showed that many of them are achieving above average standards. Very good use is made of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in the recording of investigations by all age groups.

43. The co-ordinator has created a very effective team to support the school's work in science. She has a very clear vision for the future development of the subject and provides an excellent role model for other staff and pupils. A very good system of assessment underpins the clear improvement targets for individuals and groups that are constantly monitored by the school. At the end of all lessons, the pupils also make very effective self-assessments in order to see how well they have done and what they need to do next in order to improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, standards well exceed the expected level
- ICT is playing an increasingly central role in the teaching and learning across the school
- The curriculum leadership is very good

Commentary

44. The pupils achieve very well in lessons and samples of their previously completed work indicate that they make consistently good progress. Around the school, there are many examples of work showing that the pupils' ICT skills are developing at a good rate. This is evident, for example, in the way that they communicate their ideas in the form of newspaper articles and when they present the results of science experiments in graphs. By Year 6, standards well exceed the expected level. The oldest pupils very confidently created web pages for young people or foreign tourists visiting Newcastle-under-Lyme by using a wide range of applications and software tools including an on-line translator.

45. The teaching observed was good overall, and excellent in one Year 5 lesson. In this lesson, the pupils' demonstrated competencies and confidence beyond their years because the lesson was set firmly in a curriculum context, had a very rapid pace and the very knowledgeable teacher challenged them throughout. In all lessons, the teaching assistant based in the computer suite provides both additional expertise and very effective support for the pupils. The pupils are grouped and the tasks matched to their abilities. In a lesson in Year 3, the teacher assessed and recorded the pupils' progress throughout the lesson and involved them in self-evaluation of their learning at the end.
46. There are interactive whiteboards to every classroom and all teachers have personal laptops. This provision has not only raised the profile of ICT in the curriculum, but also increased the teachers' confidence in using the technology to stimulate and interest the pupils and to raise the standards that they attain. These are key factors in maintaining improvement and further extending the use of ICT in the school.
47. The co-ordinator is giving very good leadership that is not only widening the range of the pupils' experiences, but also making a significant contribution to the school's development. His knowledge, skill, enthusiasm and support for his colleagues have ensured that the use of ICT is increasingly effective. The school website provides the parents with a wide range of information about the school and encourages their involvement in homework. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and under the leadership of the co-ordinator the school is very well placed to make even broader use of ICT in both teaching and learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

48. The school makes good use of ICT across the curriculum, and is seeking to broaden the opportunities for pupils further. There are examples of ICT being used in English, mathematics and science. There are also particularly good examples of pupils producing interesting artwork using digital images and painting programmes.

HUMANITIES

49. Two lessons were observed in religious education, one in history and none in geography. The pupils' previously completed work was sampled in all three subjects and discussions were held with Year 6 pupils.
50. In **history**, the inspection evidence shows that standards have improved and are now above average. Moreover, there are indications that the teaching and the pupils' achievements are also good. Good quality displays and timelines support the pupils' understanding of chronology. Resources are good and ICT is used to extend and develop teaching and learning. All work is marked to a good standard with helpful comments added. In the Year 3 lesson observed, the teacher used 'hot seating' to dramatically enhance the different viewpoints of Boudicca and the Roman Soldiers. This was a very good way of involving the pupils and engaging their interest. It enlivened the lesson and helped to improve their understanding. It also helped improve their speaking and listening skills. There are many examples of pupils' literacy skills being extended; for example, the Year 4 pupils wrote very convincing diary entries for Henry VIII and made mini booklets

about his wives. The Year 6 pupils' letters from the Crimea were written from the viewpoint of soldiers and nurses and were based on letters, reports and newspaper articles of the time. There are also many examples of pupils extending their literacy skills by researching various topics, such as Greek education and life in a Roman villa.

51. In **geography**, discussions with pupils and an analysis of their previous work indicate that the teaching and the pupils' achievements are good. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now above average. The pupils' work shows that they are well aware of their immediate environment through extensive studies of their local village, Wolstanton. They have compared the village to the seaside resort of Barmouth and have learned how the local Festival Park has been used for various industrial, leisure and retail purposes over the years. They have improved their research and writing skills through their study of the local high street. They have also studied towns in India and have extended their mathematical skills by comparing data on rainfall levels in Indonesia and Staffordshire. They have used ICT in finding information about the rainforests and rainfall levels.

Religious Education

The provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the last inspection
- There is very comprehensive curriculum coverage
- There are many planned visits and visitors to enrich the pupils' learning
- The subject contributes very effectively to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

52. The pupils' achievement is very good throughout the school, and by the end of Year 6 standards are well above the requirements of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus. This is an improvement on the last inspection when standards were above average.

53. The school benefits from regular visits by members of the local clergy, who lead worship, teach lessons and talk to the pupils. For various purposes, the pupils make many visits to local churches, including whole school Eucharistic Services at the local Methodist church. The Year 6 pupils also had a particularly enriching visit to Lichfield Cathedral to take part in the 'Open Door Project' when they experienced a Medieval Pilgrimage and took part in church craft workshops and hand bell ringing sessions. In previous years, the pupils have also visited the local Mosque and Synagogue.

54. Considering their age, the pupils have a very good understanding of the importance and power of prayer. In most classes, they have written prayers on a variety of topics including friendship, thanks, family and an end to war. The classes also have a worship corner where special books and artefacts are celebrated.

55. As they pass through the school, the pupils gain a very good knowledge of parables and stories from religious traditions. By the end of Year 6, they have a good factual knowledge of Christianity and the two other world religions included in the locally agreed syllabus. The

pupils are also aware of the broad perspectives of other major world faiths and know about the traditional artefacts, symbols and beliefs of these religions.

56. The teaching is very good overall. In one of the lessons observed, a local Church Army Captain talked to the pupils about the many ways of praying. The pupils examined some of the artefacts used and then after a period of reflection composed a prayer to share at the end of the lesson. Experiences like these make a very good contribution to the pupil's spiritual development. Throughout the school, there is a good deal of evidence of writing being used purposefully in religious education. The co-ordinator is very effective and is aware of the need to continue to improve assessment and monitoring.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

57. Four art and design lessons, one design and technology and one lesson in physical education were observed. Additional evidence was gathered from the teachers' planning, discussions with the pupils and scrutiny of their previous work. No music lessons were observed. A scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that all the requirements of the National Curriculum in these subjects are fully met. Discussions with the pupils show that they hold these subjects in high regard and are enthusiastic about the experiences they have.

58. **Music** is very well supported by the school, both within the curriculum and beyond it. The school provides a wide range of musical instruments, woodwind, brass and strings, to enable many pupils to have good specialist teaching that enables them to reach standards that are above average overall. Musical clubs and a choir provide further opportunities for all pupils. In collective worship, the pupils sang with clarity, enthusiasm and enjoyment. Annual 'productions' such as 'Oliver Twist', 'The Wizard of Oz' and the current 'Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat' involve large numbers of the pupils and are eagerly anticipated by their parents. Evidence from the folios of work of the older pupils shows that they can compose their own music and by the end of Year 6 can evaluate different kinds of music sensibly and critically.

59. At the time of the last inspection, the pupils' attainment in **physical education** was above that expected nationally and current evidence suggests that this is still the case. The outdoor facilities have recently been improved by the addition of a new hard-surface area, which was used to good effect in the one lesson seen. This was a good lesson in which all the pupils were able to practice and refine their skills of throwing a variety of balls and bean bags. They were enthusiastic, worked hard to improve and celebrated the success of others as much as their own. The teaching was good with careful instruction and demonstrations by the teacher so that all the pupils were able to achieve well over the time of the lesson. The pupils' physical skills are significantly enhanced through a very wide range of clubs, including netball, football, cricket, athletics and cross-country running. The opportunities for the pupils to participate in out-of-school sporting activities are also very good. Nearly all pupils can swim 25 metres by the time they leave school, and Year 6 pupils experience outdoor and adventurous activities as part of a residential visit.

60. The pupils have a good range of opportunities to develop their skills in **design and technology**. Their books show they produce their designs through sketches, annotated and detailed diagrams and modelling. They test out their designs and seek improvements, for example, by reinforcing and strengthening their shelters in Year 6. Their work on footwear illustrates well their use of research and the consideration given to appearance, cost, function, comfort and safety. In this project, they also explored different joining

techniques and carried out a very comprehensive evaluation of their finished product. Evaluation and improvement were also important features of one good lesson seen in Year 5 where the pupils were working on each others finished products to see how they could be enhanced. They worked well and the teacher structured and managed the activity well so that the pupils could utilise the instruments they had made in the forthcoming production of 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'.

Art and design

The provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high
- The teaching is very good
- The leadership and management of art and design are very effective

Commentary

61. By the end of Year 6, the quality and standard of the work produced by the pupils significantly exceed expectations. Throughout the school the pupils achieve very well because the teachers give them interesting and exciting opportunities to develop their skills, techniques and knowledge. The provision for art and design has improved dramatically since the last inspection. This is due to the enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership of the co-ordinator who has, through training and curriculum development, elevated the profile of art and design to a position where it makes a considerable contribution, not only to the pupils' learning, but also to the overall ethos of the school.

62. Permanent and temporary displays of the pupils' work form interesting and attractive focal points in all public areas of the school as well as the classrooms. A recent "Art Day" when each class studied the work of a particular artist illustrates very well the high value placed on the subject. In Year 4, for example, the pupils drew upon the work of Marc Chagall by developing their own dream sequences through literacy, drama, digital photography before drawing all the elements together in a finished piece of work. In Year 6, the pupils explored the work of LS Lowry as a stimulus for their own pencil and pastel figure drawings and created atmospheric prints of industrial landscapes. Another Year 6 class used Umberto Boccioni's 'Unique Forms of Continuity in Space' very effectively as a basis for their own sculptures. They have also explored movement in the work of Matisse.

63. Through a wide and varied curriculum, the pupils acquire the skills and techniques they need. Their sketchbooks show very well the range of media they have used and the emphasis placed on line, tone, colour and texture. The development of techniques is evident in lessons. For example, in Year 3 the pupils were using printing blocks they had made themselves to create wallpaper and textiles to their own designs. In Year 6, the pupils analysed work of David Hockney and Vincent Van Gogh by looking at the way line, colour and texture were used to create depth. They worked on a clay tile with a range of tools to use line and texture very effectively.

64. There is a considerable commitment to this work amongst the teachers. The results of their training courses are displayed in the corridor alongside the pupils' work, thereby highlighting the importance they place upon to the subject. They also show considerable

skill, as well as commitment, to the management and organisation of lessons which have to be carried out in classrooms where the available space is wholly inadequate. High standards are achieved in spite of this considerable barrier because the pupils' behaviour is excellent and their response so very positive.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

65. The **personal, social and health education** lessons are both informative and extend the pupils' personal development. In one lesson, observed the community policeman and a passive drugs dog handler led a very good session to raise the awareness of the use and misuse of drugs. The visitors worked very well alongside the teacher in a very successful series of activities that significantly extended the pupils knowledge and understanding. In Year 6, the pupils discussed very maturely how the choices that we make could be a challenge. For example, they considered whether or not they should follow a group of friends doing something they knew to be wrong. The teacher led this discussion sensitively and skilfully involving pupils who confidently shared their views with the class. Personal, social and health education makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' individual development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
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	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).