

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARK'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bredbury, Stockport

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106104

Headteacher: Mrs A J Whitehead

Lead inspector: Mr M H Cole

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th June 2004

Inspection number: 257793

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior and infant
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 3-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 315

School address: Redhouse Lane
Bredbury
Stockport
Postcode: SK6 1BX

Telephone number: 0161 430 3418
Fax number: 0161 285 8841

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Roberts

Date of previous inspection: 23rd February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This junior and infant school serves 277 boys and girls aged between four and eleven and a further 40 children aged 3-4 who attend the nursery class part-time. It is larger than average for a primary school.

Pupils' attainment on starting at the school, though varied, is generally well below average. The social and economic circumstances of parents are also below average.

By national standards the school has an above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Nearly a quarter of pupils are identified as having such needs, mostly in relation to difficulties in learning and/or behaviour. Twelve pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need; at 4 per cent of the school roll, this is an unusually high proportion.

A relatively very small proportion of pupils, about 4 per cent, is of minority ethnic origin but no pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3369	Mr M H Cole	Lead inspector	Design and technology Geography Music Science
1305	Mr B Rance	Lay inspector	
19994	Mrs L Bradley	Team inspector	Art and design English Foundation Stage ¹ History Religious education Personal, social and health education
22704	Mr G Williams	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL53 7JX

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¹ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also includes knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** school. The headteacher's outstanding leadership of a dedicated staff results in an excellent ethos of very positive attitudes and relationships amongst staff and pupils. Very good teaching is helping pupils of all abilities and needs to achieve well. The quality of the school's provisions for pupils is often very good and sometimes excellent. Very effective management is leading to marked improvement in the school, including the teaching and the achievement of pupils. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths are:

- the inspirational leadership of the headteacher;
- very skilful teaching which is exceptionally successful in encouraging all pupils to do their best;
- excellent provision for pupils' personal and social development which promotes very positive attitudes and excellent relationships with both adults and fellow pupils;
- very effective management processes that check the school's performance rigorously and ensure it is always improving;
- excellent provision of individual support and guidance for pupils in their learning and personal development;
- the good curriculum, including very good provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- very good links with parents and community.

There has been very good improvement in the school since its previous inspection in 1998. Since her appointment four years ago the headteacher has led the staff in a most effective long-term strategy for improvement. The good ethos found previously has been made still better and is now excellent. Significant past weaknesses in teaching, the curriculum and the management of the school have been tackled energetically and successfully. Teaching that was previously just satisfactory is now very good. The curriculum is now good and the management is very good. Pupils' achievement has been rising significantly even though the overall ability of pupils starting at the school has been declining and the level of special educational needs has been rising.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Throughout the school **pupils achieve well** as they respond with very good effort and interest to teaching which is consistently very challenging and very supportive. Much improved teaching is raising levels of pupils' achievement; during the inspection pupils were achieving **very** well in half of the lessons seen. However, the benefits of improved teaching and achievement have yet to feed through fully to pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. These test results should also be seen against the background of the well below average attainment of pupils when they started school and the high level of special educational needs amongst pupils. When these factors are taken into account pupils have done well in relation to their capabilities.

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

mathematics	C	C	C	C
science	C	D	C	C

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

Although Year 6 pupils' 2003 test results were close to the national average in mathematics and science and below average in English, these results were affected by a high level of special educational needs amongst pupils taking the tests. Detailed analysis of the way individual pupils' test scores compared with their earlier test results at age seven shows that the overall progress of these pupils was better than in most schools. The work of present Year 6 pupils shows the same picture of standards in English, mathematics and science as the 2003 test results. In other subjects inspected in detail, Year 6 pupils' standards are above the level expected for the pupils' age in physical education but below the expected level in information and communication technology. Standards in religious education reach the expected level. Past Year 2 pupils' test results and the work of present Year 2 pupils are generally below the national standard, especially in reading and writing. However, these pupils' work compares well with their individual capabilities. A highlight is pupils' achievement of average standards in information and communication technology. Pupils start in the nursery with attainment that is well below the national average, particularly in their communication and social skills and knowledge of the world around them. They receive very good teaching and achieve very well during nursery and reception class lessons. Nevertheless, a significant number fall well short of most of the learning goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. This reflects their low attainment on starting in the nursery but also, in many cases, their poor attendance. Pupils' excellent attitudes and relationships, and their very good behaviour, reflect the **excellent** provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Despite the school's best efforts, a few parents' lack of co-operation results in overall levels of attendance and punctuality that are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided is **very good**. This includes teaching and learning of **very good** quality. Lessons are almost always at least good and sometimes they are excellent. All aspects of teaching are good and most are very good. The ways teachers and support staff encourage pupils to behave well, try hard and develop confidence as learners are outstandingly effective. Teaching caters well for pupils of all abilities and needs, helped by good tracking of pupils' progress, especially in basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The school is quick to spot where pupils are achieving less well than they should and to provide necessary support. All school staff join in providing especially thorough care, guidance and support for pupils' work, behaviour and relationships. The school works hard to make good links with parents, and most parents respond well, giving effective support to pupils' progress and welfare. The good, broad curriculum is planned and presented in a stimulating way, includes excellent provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and is supported by a good range of additional activities outside lessons.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The headteacher's personal leadership is excellent. It shows very clear vision, very high expectations and inspires staff and pupils alike in a shared and willing dedication to doing their very best. Other key staff provide very good leadership in their areas of responsibility. Very good management includes rigorous processes for checking and improving the school's performance. The headteacher

gives very strong and knowledgeable support to the development of the teaching and curriculum. School staff are enterprising and imaginative in their shared determination to improve the school. Governors perform their roles well and give good support to the school's strategic thinking about improvement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school and no concerns are raised by a significant number of them. Pupils say they like school and feel they are well cared for by the staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has no weaknesses, but it could raise standards further by:

- further improving curriculum planning and assessment of pupils' progress so that in all subjects they have the very good quality already achieved in English and mathematics;
- continuing to seek ways to encourage parental co-operation in ensuring pupils' full attendance and punctuality.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Overall standards are **average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school pupils are responding to challenging teaching with high levels of interest and effort and achieving very well in lessons.
- Year 6 pupils' 2003 national test results showed they had made good progress since they were tested at the end of Year 2.
- The oldest pupils' attainment in physical education exceeds the standard expected nationally.
- Achievement is consistently good regardless of differences in pupils' abilities, gender or background.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in relation to their individual capabilities and the individual targets set for them.

Commentary

1. The work of present Year 6 pupils shows the same picture of standards in English, mathematics and science as the 2003 test results. This is to say that standards in mathematics and science are in line with the national average. In English they are below average, although the 2003 test result was very close to the average level.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.5 (27.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.0 (27.6)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.8 (27.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

The average points scores for over 90 per cent of schools are in the range 23 - 31 points.

2. In all three subjects, however, pupils' achievement over the long-term is good for both the previous and the present Year 6 groups. They are judged to have achieved well because they started at school with attainment which was well below average and a relatively high proportion of them have been identified as having special educational needs. Moreover, pupils' low attainment on starting school, and the special educational needs they have, related especially to language and literacy skills. When the 2003 Year 6 pupils' overall test results are compared with their scores in tests at age seven they are found to have made above-average progress compared with pupils of similar age across the country.
3. This has been a rapidly improving school and as a result past test results and long-term measures of progress do not do full justice to the very good achievement seen at first hand in lessons during the inspection. In the majority of lessons, pupils respond keenly and with high endeavour to teaching which is both very challenging and very supportive. Achievement in the school is improving significantly although the full benefits of this are

too new to be fully apparent in test results. The trend of improvement is also hidden in test results because of a downward trend in the attainment of pupils starting at the school and an upward trend in the level of special educational needs. These trends are evident in the school's very detailed analysis of attainment on entry and of pupils' progress. Although there has not been a marked change in standards since the previous inspection there has been notable improvement in pupils' achievement and in the rates of progress they make. This is the result of very effective monitoring, evaluation and development in the school's work and the resulting high levels of consistency and quality in teaching and learning.

4. In physical education, pupils have started school at less of a disadvantage and few are hindered by special educational needs in this subject. Good achievement in this subject has helped the oldest pupils to attain standards of work above the nationally expected level. Standards in information and communication technology are currently below average for the oldest pupils because of past weaknesses in provision for the subject. The provision is now much improved and pupils are now achieving well in information and communication technology but the oldest pupils have not had the benefit of the new arrangements for long enough to make up fully for slow progress in their earlier years.
5. Inspectors collected sufficient evidence to make an overall judgement of the oldest pupils' standards in only one other subject, religious education, and here pupils' good achievement results in standards that match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus².
6. In recent years, the Year 2 pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests have fluctuated considerably from year to year and, in 2003, results in reading, writing and mathematics declined to a level well below the national average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.0 (15.0)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.3 (13.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.5 (16.1)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. These results partly reflect pupils' low attainment on starting school and a high level of special educational needs amongst the pupils. However, the school also acknowledges that pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 in recent times has been affected by a considerable number of staff changes. Accordingly, the school made improving achievement in Years 1 and 2 a top priority for 2003-4, and the evidence from the inspection is that this has been very successful. In lessons seen, and judging from the evidence of pupils' past work, these pupils are now achieving very well across the curriculum in relation to their capabilities and needs. Because of pupils' low attainment when starting school, and the special educational needs many have, present Year 2 standards in reading and writing are well below the nationally expected level, and they are also below the expected level in mathematics and science. However, these younger

² The inspection focused on the main subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education, together with physical education. Work was sampled in other subjects but no overall judgements of provision or standards in these subjects are made.

pupils have benefited from the newly improved provision for information and communication technology from the outset and good achievement here has brought their attainment in line with the standard expected at their age. As with the oldest pupils, those in Year 2 reach the standards expected of them in religious education.

8. At the Foundation Stage, children start at the school with well below average attainment and, in a good many cases, special educational needs. Very good teaching and a well-planned curriculum help the children achieve well during both the nursery and the reception years. They progress well towards the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception but, overall, children end the reception year with attainment well below the learning goals set for this age group. A significant minority of the children fall well short of most of the goals because of their low attainment when starting out but also because a good many attend poorly.
9. Throughout the school the very good achievement within lessons evident during the inspection was true of all pupils, regardless of differences in ability, needs, gender or background. This reflects the school's very determined commitment to providing equal opportunity, the skilfulness of the teaching and the rigour of checks on pupils' progress. Signs of possible underachievement are quickly identified and necessary extra help organised. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress toward the targets set individually for them. This reflects the very good, well-planned teaching they receive through the effective collaboration of teachers and support staff. They are given very good help and the confidence to take part in all classroom activities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their work and towards others in the school are **excellent** and their behaviour is **very good**. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **excellent**. The attendance of pupils and their punctuality are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make excellent relationships with both adults and fellow pupils within the school.
- The school gives pupils especially good help to become confident learners with a keen and responsible attitude to their learning.
- Pupils develop a very clear sense of right and wrong which underpins their very good behaviour.
- The development of thoughtful, caring and co-operative attitudes towards the community is very good.
- Despite the school's best efforts a small minority of parents do not co-operate over attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

10. This is a happy, friendly school where adults and children develop excellent relationships with each other. With strong leadership from senior management, the school staff set the tone in their warm, encouraging and supportive approach to pupils. Pupils follow very well the staff's example of respect and care in their relations with others. A consistently very strong ethos helps pupils to make excellent progress in their personal and social development. Many start in the nursery with poor levels of independence and poor social skills, but excellent provision for their development that starts here, and continues throughout the school, helps them to mature rapidly. By the time they leave the school,

pupils are confident, self-reliant individuals able to make very respectful and co-operative relationships with others.

11. The school's very sensitive promotion of pupils' self-esteem and its thorough support for pupils' achievement are highly effective. For example, pupils who find real difficulty with reading and writing nevertheless show admirable enthusiasm and determination right through the school in their work on these skills. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their work, behave well and focus on their individual tasks; as a result, they are proud of their achievements. Teachers use many very good means for generating pupils' sense of responsibility for their own learning: setting clear and challenging personal targets for pupils, helping them fully, ensuring all have the opportunity to succeed at their own level and talking to them in an increasingly adult way about their work and progress.
12. Excellent provision for pupils' moral and social development gives pupils a very sure sense of right and wrong and the skills to co-operate most harmoniously with others. The consistently very clear and positive example set by staff is at the heart of these processes. Staff treat pupils and other adults with respect and consideration. They listen to and consult pupils with genuine interest and concern. These approaches are well complemented by the more formal teaching within the very good programme of personal, social and health education, the work of the School Council and the opportunities for pupils to take particular responsibilities for the life of the school, as when they act as 'playground friends'. Pupils take all that they learn from these provisions to heart and this is the basis of the very good behaviour found both in classrooms and around the school: pupils' good behaviour comes from within. As a result, school staff need to intervene relatively rarely to impose good behaviour and there appears to be no bullying or harassment of any significance. No pupils have needed to be excluded from school in recent times for unsatisfactory behaviour.
13. The warm and co-operative climate of excellent relationships provides the backdrop for the school's very effective encouragement of pupils' willingness and ability to reflect on themselves, their lives and their relationships. School assemblies, often benefiting from the lively inputs of visitors, give good support to these processes³. Very good provision for spiritual awareness is supported by very good provision for pupils' cultural development so that they learn to appreciate, respect and value both their own cultural heritage and that of others. A wealth of special events, educational visits and visitors from a variety of cultural backgrounds support this provision. As with other aspects of its work, the school's provisions for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been very thoughtfully planned, have been supported by relevant staff training and consultation and are subject to careful checks on their effectiveness.

Attendance

14. Pupils' attendance was well below the national average in the last academic year. The school has made a good effort to improve attendance and has met with some success in the present year but the rate continues to be below the national average. The school monitors poor attendance very closely since it is clear that pupils who do not attend school regularly do not achieve so well. With the support of the education welfare officer from the local authority, the procedures for promoting attendance are good, and the level of unauthorised absence has

³ As this is a Church of England school Collective Worship is denominational in nature and is the subject of a separate inspection and report.

been reduced. However a number of families do not fully understand the importance of regular attendance, and this is especially noticed in the nursery.

15. Even though most pupils live fairly close to the school, each day a significant number do not arrive in good time. The late arrival of pupils at school disrupts the start of the day and pupils' learning, not only for the pupils that are late but also for the rest of the class.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.4	School data:	0.7
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.5

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A good curriculum receives good enrichment from activities outside lessons. The school has satisfactory accommodation and resources.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**. Assessment of pupils' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school there is a consistency of good, and mostly very good, quality across the full range of teaching skills.
- The teachers show excellent skills and strategies for encouraging interest, effort and co-operation in pupils.
- Teaching is both very challenging and very supportive for pupils of all abilities and needs, ensuring full equality of opportunity.
- Teachers set targets and give pupils feedback on their work very effectively.
- Pupils' very good levels of interest, enthusiasm and application to their work are helping them to achieve very well in lessons.

Commentary

16. A striking feature of the teaching in this school is the high degree of consistency in approach and practice from the nursery class through to Year 6. Teaching reflects clearly shared understandings about how to promote learning which are sensitively applied to match the range of pupils' ages, abilities and needs. Teachers' personal expertise is supported by the headteacher's very strong and knowledgeable leadership of the teaching through careful monitoring and thorough support for teachers' professional development. Almost all lessons are of at least good quality, many are very good and some are excellent.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (10%)	16 (40%)	17 (43%)	3 (7%)	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.

17. The consistency within the teaching is highly effective in that it supports and strengthens the impact of each teacher's work. Throughout the school teachers show very high expectations of both pupils' learning and their behaviour, make excellent relationships with pupils and establish classroom rules and routines very effectively. Pupils therefore come to lessons with consistently very positive attitudes, expecting to enjoy learning, gain in self-esteem and behave well. As a result teachers need to spend very little time managing class procedures and pupils' behaviour. Lessons proceed smoothly, at a lively pace, in an orderly, calm and happy atmosphere. Pupils behave very well as a matter of habit, a sign of how effectively high expectations have been established and very good attitudes and relationships encouraged.
18. Teachers employ a wide range of skills and strategies that are highly successful in encouraging pupils to take an interest, try hard and concentrate on learning. They are very sensitive to pupils' needs for self-esteem and offer much encouragement, with personal warmth the mainstay of the rewards they offer pupils. The stimulating, and sometimes 'fun' tasks pupils are set are often very imaginatively devised to interest pupils. Tasks are also challenging and very well matched to the full range of pupils' abilities and needs. This keeps pupils alert and the full support they receive helps them to achieve very well and to take pride in so doing. Teachers set clear targets for individual pupils to aim at as they try to improve their work and give pupils clear feedback on how well they are doing. Allied to the encouraging and caring way teachers

relate to pupils these strategies are highly effective in promoting the responsible attitudes to their own learning that pupils show.

19. Matching of pupils' tasks to their abilities and needs is much helped in English and mathematics by the organization of the teaching from Year 2 to Year 6 in ability 'sets'. These arrangements work very smoothly with pupils moving quickly and co-operatively from class to class for these lessons, a further tribute to the consistency of teachers' practices and pupils' very positive attitudes. Support for pupils with lower levels of ability and for those with special educational needs is much enhanced by the skilful and sensitive work of teaching assistants who work with small groups or individuals often within the classroom but sometimes elsewhere. Teachers and assistants collaborate well to ensure that those who have difficulty in learning or behaviour are fully included in all opportunities for learning. Teachers use these pupils' individual education plans well to adapt the work effectively to their needs.
20. Processes for putting pupils into ability sets and teachers' other strategies for relating pupils' tasks to their previous learning are well supported by processes for assessing pupils' progress. These are good overall and very good at the Foundation Stage and in English and mathematics. In these two subjects pupils' progress is tracked precisely and systematically and as a result the school is quick to spot pupils who are achieving less well than they should and to arrange extra support. In other subjects there is also a systematic approach linked to identification of learning intentions in the curriculum planning. These arrangements are relatively new and have yet to yield all the potential benefits of analysis of the effectiveness of curriculum plans and of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning.
21. The very challenging and very supportive teaching, together with pupils' very good levels of interest, enthusiasm and application are promoting very good achievement in lessons. The teaching has been improving markedly in recent years and is raising the levels of pupil achievement. Improvement is very recent in Years 1 and 2 following a period of many staff changes. The full benefits of improvement, as seen in test results and long-term measures of pupils' progress, have yet to be fully seen. The teaching is much better than at the previous inspection when teaching was only just satisfactory and 22 per cent of lessons were judged unsatisfactory.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum with **good** opportunities for enrichment. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good strides have been made in improving the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection.
- The excellent personal development of pupils is paramount in promoting high achievement.
- The curriculum takes extremely good account of the different needs, aptitudes and abilities of pupils.
- The school provides very well for the large numbers of pupils with special educational needs.

- Big improvements have been made to the older pupils' accommodation but the nursery classroom is too small and tests the staff's ingenuity in promoting good learning and achievement
- Learning is made interesting and fun by the good range of activities outside lessons.

Commentary

22. At the time of the previous inspection, the curriculum was judged to be unsatisfactory because insufficient time was allocated in Years 3 to 6, pupils had variable experiences because of weak planning and what was taught was not always at the right level. The quality of the curriculum has improved significantly. Sufficient time is now allocated at each stage of education and for all subjects. Furthermore, the timing of lessons has been tightened up so that more time is available for foundation subjects⁴ during each school day. The school has made significant improvements in the ways that English and mathematics are taught. Not only has the staff implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies very effectively, but teachers have also drawn on them very flexibly to successfully meet the needs of mixed-age classes and the wide range of ability within the school. Setting for literacy and numeracy is complex and spans different year groups, but high levels of co-operation, collaborative planning of a very high standard and a willingness to be flexible and responsive mean that pupils of all ages and abilities are enabled to achieve well. The school has not been content to adopt the national guidance for the foundation subjects without challenging itself to refine it by identifying which key skills pupils will learn in each year group. This has enabled teachers to move forward in making valid and valuable cross-curricular links, which make learning more relevant for the pupils. Although good progress has been made in this respect, not all teachers are achieving a good balance in every subject between the teaching of knowledge, understanding and skills at levels relevant to the ages of the pupils. The school has identified what it needs to do next by providing more guidance to staff on which skills to link with which topics.
23. The school's curriculum is further enhanced by the very good provision made for pupils' personal, social and health education. This is planned in the same detail and with the same degree of high-quality monitoring and evaluation to check that all pupils are receiving similar experiences and that there is a good degree of consistency in teaching and learning. Parents have been actively involved in developing a policy for sex and relationships education as a precursor to developing a curriculum that spans all year groups. Pupils have taken an equally active role in devising ways to make their fellow pupils aware of healthy eating. Other aspects of health education are sensibly incorporated into the science curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school has a large percentage of pupils with a range of learning and behavioural needs and disabilities. The early and accurate identification of individual needs is reflected in clear individual education plans for these pupils. The wide range of flexible provision enables their needs to be met very successfully and for pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.
24. The school provides an interesting range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, which are open to pupils from Year 2 onwards and are well attended. Activities change according to teachers' and pupils' interests and what is available from outside providers. Sports

⁴ The foundation subjects are art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.

and the arts are well catered for. Football, netball and rounders teams are open to both boys and girls, but there is also provision for solo sports such as judo. Pupils have the opportunity to sing in the choir and play in the brass band as well as learning to play the recorder. Dance and drama are also on the menu. To cater for other interests and talents, activities such as the current affairs club, a Christian club, knitting, sewing and gardening are on offer. The school has also maintained the good range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, both of which serve to stimulate pupils' interest and to make learning more meaningful.

25. Both the accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. In the last year, the accommodation for classes in Years 3 to 6 has been comprehensively remodelled to provide classrooms which are much more conducive to teaching and learning. Most classrooms are of a satisfactory size with those used by the reception classes large enough for the wide range of activities on offer. In stark contrast, the mobile classroom used by the nursery children is too small for the numbers of children and for the Foundation Stage curriculum to be taught with full effectiveness. Inadequate storage space places further constraints on the staff team. It is to their great credit that this barrier to learning is minimised by very effective use of the outdoor classroom whenever possible and by excellent teamwork and a determination to find ways around the many constraints. Within the main building, staff also make very good use of every available space to meet the needs of small groups of pupils who are withdrawn for targeted work. The computer suite is too small for whole-class teaching, although teachers are adept at making use of those computers that are outside in the corridor to ensure that all pupils have easy access. The hall, too, is on the small side and places pressure on lunchtime arrangements and physical education lessons for the large classes at the upper end of the school.

Care, guidance and support

The care that the school takes of pupils and the way that they are involved in the school are both **very good**. The support and guidance that pupils receive is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils, including child protection are very well established.
- All the staff know the pupils very well and the very extensive help that pupils receive focuses on improving their achievements both academically and in their personal development.
- The school council is a very good way for the school to take account of pupils' views.

Commentary

26. Child protection procedures are fully in place with the headteacher having the role of designated person, and all members of staff know their responsibilities in this regard. Routines for dealing with health and safety are well established and reviewed by the governing body every term. Annual safety checks on potentially dangerous equipment are carried out and practice evacuations of the premises take place each term.
27. There is, however, one serious health and safety issue for the children of the school but it is not strictly within the school's responsibility. This concerns cars bringing pupils to school, and collecting them at the end of the school day. In spite of numerous requests from the school cars continue to park on double yellow lines, vehicles manoeuvre in and out of the adjacent car park without due care, and parents walk pupils through the vehicle-only entrance to the school. All these thoughtless acts present a significant risk to the safety of pupils and the situation is "an accident waiting to happen".
28. The teachers and all the other staff in school know the pupils and their families very well. Academic progress is monitored and recorded very effectively, with a particularly strong emphasis on identifying and helping those pupils who are not doing as well as they might. But also the more able pupils are given more challenging work so that all the pupils in the school are motivated to work to the best of their ability. Identification of pupils' needs of all kinds and intervention with relevant support are both of high quality. Through the excellent programme of personal, social and health education and a very carefully planned and monitored system of pastoral support, teachers and other staff share in the pupils' personal development very effectively.
29. All pupils share with their teacher in setting and monitoring their personal targets and these are discussed with parents at parent evenings. Older pupils take on monitor duties to help in the smooth running of the school and for the care of the younger pupils through, for example, the 'playground friend' scheme. The School Council is very well established so that all pupils know and understand how it operates and can explain the improvements within the school that have been brought about by the council; some examples are the lunch-time salad bar, new rubbish bins, the quiet garden and 'friends bench' in the playground, and the house system in school. More recently council representatives have been involved in interviewing prospective members of the teaching staff. All these activities show a very high level of pupil involvement in running the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents, the wider community and other schools is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a very high regard for the school.
- Parents are given detailed information about the school and very good reports on their children's progress.
- Most parents help their own children at home and actively support the school's open events.
- Active involvement with the church and wider community makes a significant impact on the life of the school.
- There is very productive and close liaison with other schools in the area.

Commentary

30. Parents are very happy with the school. This is clear from the pre-inspection meeting with parents, from informal discussions with some, and from the parents' questionnaire. No major concerns are expressed. Virtually every parent expressing a view to inspectors is pleased with their child's progress. Parents also greatly appreciate the caring ethos of the school, the close support staff give to pupils, the very good behaviour and excellent quality of relationships between pupils and staff.
31. The school provides parents with regular newsletters, termly curriculum plans for each class and other frequent notices about school trips and other events. Annual reports on individual pupils are very good and liked by parents. They describe what the pupil has done, what effort they have made, the standards achieved in core subjects and the progress made. There is a perceptive commentary on the pupil's social and personal development. Reports include some comments on things that are not so good or need working on and they set clear targets for the year ahead. In addition progress toward pupils' targets are reviewed more frequently with parents at consultation evenings and updated as necessary. There are very good links with parents of pupils with special educational needs; they are kept fully informed of the progress of their children and invited to meet staff for frequent reviews of progress.
32. Parents help their children at home in their homework assignments, and this participation by parents is monitored carefully by the school and contributes to pupils' learning. There is always plenty of parental help with school trips and support for the fundraising activities of the Friends of St Marks, which regularly raises very substantial funds which are used to improve the school's facilities and provide additional resources.
33. The school has very close links with St Mark's Church. Pupils attend Christmas, Easter and Harvest Festival services, and the vicar regularly takes school assembly. Pupils enjoy a wide range of trips to places of interest from the local library to a residential trip in Year 6. Visitors coming into school from the community include the police, safer-cycling trainers, theatre groups, church groups, artists and volunteers who support extra-curricular clubs. Each term the pupils raise money in a variety of ways for a large number of local, national and international charities. All these activities enrich the educational experience for the pupils and allow them to gain an appreciation of the community beyond the school.

34. The school is one of seven primary schools linked to the secondary school, Werneth High, to which nearly all the pupils transfer. Liaison between all these schools and the local education authority is close with a well managed programme for pupils to transfer on to Year 7. Very good contact with children before they join the nursery is achieved through home visits by the nursery teacher. In July all pupils have a trial day in their next class, wherever that may be, which all goes to ease the pupils' transfer into the next academic year.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The leadership of other senior staff is **very good**. Management throughout the school is **very good**. The governing body makes a **good** contribution to leadership and management.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body, headteacher and staff work well together as a very effective team in their continual drive to help pupils do their best within a very caring and supportive environment.
- The headteacher is an inspiring leader and a highly proficient manager.
- The deputy headteacher gives particularly good support.
- The senior management team is enthusiastic, committed and well focused on school improvement.
- The well-targeted planning for the school's improvement is being implemented with energetic determination.
- The governing body give good support to school leadership and management.
- The finances of the school are prudently managed and well focused on school priorities.

Commentary

35. The headteacher provides excellent leadership which is inspirational and has created a climate within the school where all staff are dedicated and committed to providing high-quality education within a high-quality school community so that pupils can be helped to do their very best. She sets an excellent example of determination to improve the school and ensure it is entirely true to its aims. The headteacher and deputy headteacher together make a formidable team whose experience and expertise complement each other. Together, they have worked very successfully to ensure there is improvement in the school's performance, but within an atmosphere of caring, consultative and open teamwork to which all staff contribute fully.
36. Under skilled leadership and through full consultation with staff and the governing body, the school is moving forward at an accelerated pace. The headteacher has a very clear and accurate view of what needs to be done to continue to improve pupils' achievement. Her very clearly focused sense of purpose is shared by all staff at the school. Staff and governors are self critical and through strategic planning and clear thinking have provided a culture, which is strong, thoughtful and dynamic in its intent to succeed. Staff are ambitious and keen to learn. All with responsibilities for leading aspects of the school's work do so with commitment and industry. Subject co-ordinators are conscious of the school's high expectations and work hard to ensure good professional support is provided for teachers and support staff.
37. The deputy headteacher, as well as giving thorough support to whole-school leadership, is also the special educational needs co-ordinator. He is very aware of relevant and required procedures and co-ordinates very well with staff, parents, external agencies and governors representing special educational needs. His highly effective monitoring and evaluation, and thorough administration, result in the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
38. The management of the school is very good overall. Long-term strategies and annual plans for school improvement are very thoughtfully constructed. They are informed by the school's very thorough checks on its performance made through searching evaluations of teaching, learning, pupils' progress and the quality of provision across all aspects of school life. All staff contribute well to these processes. Checks and improvement planning are carefully linked to the performance management targets of staff and the arrangements made for their continuing professional development. Effectively and efficiently managed support and training for both teachers and support staff responds

well to both individual and school needs and is making a very productive impact on the school's rapid improvement. Two outstanding features of the school are tributes to the comprehensive vision in leadership and the very good quality of the management: the high degree of consistency within all aspects of the school staff's work, and the very effective way all aspects of the school's work integrate with each other, so that each enhances the effectiveness of the others.

39. Members of the governing body are well informed and are able to identify the strengths of the school as well as areas for development. It is a proactive governing body and its regular review and monitoring procedures keep it well informed. Governors have a clear understanding of the achievements of the school and decisions made are objective and based on first-hand knowledge.
40. Financial planning by the headteacher and the governing body is good. The previous financial year ended with a very high surplus, but this is not reflected in any present shortages of resources. It was accrued because of some unexpected income together with prudent long-term financial planning designed to improve staff efficiency and effectiveness. Once activated in the next school year, these plans provide for a reduction in the surplus to an acceptable level. The recommendations of the most recent audit report have been addressed. The day-to-day financial operations are effectively and efficiently managed by the school administrators.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	696,776
Total expenditure	681,548
Expenditure per pupil	2,268

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	75,787
Balance carried forward to the next	91,015

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

41. Since the last inspection, the school has opened a twenty-place nursery which children attend either in the morning or the afternoon. In the last two years, under the very good curriculum leadership of the Foundation Stage leader and the committed leadership of the nursery teacher, there has been good improvement in the provision because of the very good consistency in planning and assessment, both of which are of a very high standard. The staff have also done very well to cope with the inadequate accommodation and storage facilities in the nursery which demand continual ingenuity and place additional pressures on them to create the right environment for effective teaching and learning. It is to their credit, that these potential barriers to learning do not affect the children's achievement. The provision for children with special educational needs is very good. Early identification is the key, and staff ensure that the experiences that children have are tailored to their needs and pitched at just the right level.
42. When children join the nursery, their attainment is well below the level typical nationally for children of the same age. Most children have poor communication skills, and many are not used to playing with their parents and carers or with other children. They come to school with a limited range of experiences, which the staff in both the nursery and reception classes work very hard to extend. In spite of the very good teaching in the nursery, when the children move into the reception classes, most children are still way behind the expected standard for children of their age in most areas of learning. This is partly because attendance is very poor in the nursery and also because a great deal of effort is spent in this first year teaching the children how to learn through play. The nursery teacher has recently led a parenting course which has been very successful in forging a partnership with a group of parents that is enabling them to become more involved in their children's learning and to play their part in extending the initiative to other parents.
43. In the reception classes, teaching is also very good, and staff work very successfully to build on the children's achievement and constantly challenge them to do their best in every area of learning. A great deal of effort has gone into developing an outdoor classroom, and its use is planned for thoroughly on a daily basis to enable children to consolidate their knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of meaningful contexts. Although all support staff make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning, they are not equally adept at intervening in children's play to extend their vocabulary and use of language or to challenge them to make decisions and solve problems. Children of all abilities achieve well. Even so, when they move into Year 1, although a small minority is already working within the National Curriculum, a significant minority has not achieved the goals expected for children of their age in most areas of learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school rightly recognises the importance of this area of learning in unlocking the children's ability to learn.
- Staff are alert to individual needs and create a very safe environment where children develop independence and curiosity.
- Nursery staff play alongside children so that they learn how to play on their own and with others.

Commentary

44. Children come into the school with little awareness of others and lacking in confidence. The high emphasis that all staff place on this area of learning, along with very good teaching and learning, promotes very good achievement. Standards are below average when children move into Year 1 because a minority of children do not reach the expected goals. In the nursery, staff are very adept at helping children to make the most of each activity by illustrating what they are expected to do by modelling what they can do and how to behave, as well as providing key words and phrases to encourage interaction. Very good induction procedures and thorough assessment in both the nursery and reception classes mean that children's individual interests, aptitudes and circumstances are taken into full account when determining just what level of support and challenge is needed. Staff in the reception classes have high expectations of children, many of whom rise to the challenge and show growing powers of concentration and a willingness to try their hardest.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers take every opportunity to model correct language and extend children's vocabulary.
- Children are given many reasons to read and write in real situations.
- Staff achieve a very good balance between direct teaching and the opportunity for children to try things out for themselves.
- A love of books and language is encouraged from an early age.

Commentary

45. Many children come into the nursery with very limited vocabulary and a small number find it difficult to express even basic needs. Teaching is very good overall and at times excellent in reception when children are engaged by very imaginative approaches which make them part of the action in literacy lessons. All classrooms are alive with language and set up so that children can use language in a range of contexts, whether it is visiting the French café in the nursery or booking a holiday in the travel agents in reception. Children are encouraged to enjoy a wide range of books and teachers' thoughtful questioning enables them to make sense of the story through picture clues and key words. Most staff are skilled at building children's vocabulary step by step, and encouraging them to express themselves by using phrases and simple sentences, as they get older. The very good planning for every role-play area determines a number of different focuses, which extend children's imagination and the tasks they need to engage in, whether speaking and listening or reading and writing. Children achieve well overall, and higher and average attaining children make rapid progress in reception, but

standards are well below average at the end of reception, because a significant minority with special educational needs has not achieved the expected goals.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff give children the chance to have fun with numbers and to use them in many different contexts.
- Each classroom provides stimulating activities and role-play areas where children can spend money, weigh and measure, and use shapes.

Commentary

46. Children come into the nursery having had very little experience of number and, in spite of the good teaching, many still struggle with consistently recognising and naming numerals from 1 to 10 by the time they go into reception. Teaching is good in the nursery and most children achieve well. The 'clinic' gives them a chance to weigh and measure and to use numbers for a variety of reasons. Both the café and the shop provide a wealth of opportunity to count and match and to use money. Teaching is very good in reception and builds very effectively on the solid foundations laid in the nursery. A significant percentage of the children achieve very well, because of teachers' high expectations and very well structured provision which provides a range of contexts in which children are encouraged to apply their understanding to solve problems. By the time they go into Year 1, the higher-attaining and average pupils are working within the National Curriculum, but a significant minority of pupils with special educational needs fall short of the expected goals.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are provided with a very wide range of first-hand experiences.
- Very good links are made between the many and varied activities that help children to make connections and try out new ideas.

Commentary

47. Most children come into the nursery having had a limited range of experiences outside of the home and without the necessary vocabulary to make sense of these experiences. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve well, even though the majority will not achieve all of the expected goals by the time they go into Year 1. There is wide-ranging provision within the classrooms and through a large number of visitors and visits which are thoroughly planned for and built upon after the event. These enable children to develop their powers of observation and to begin to make connections on a much broader canvas. Staff make very good use of the local community and the locality to bring the outside world to the children, as well as taking them to places many of them have never been to before. Each first-hand experience is exploited to the full by first-class planning that identifies the potential for learning in every one of the six areas, where this is possible.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for nursery children is innovative.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to climb and balance.

Commentary

48. Teaching and learning is good in this area overall and very good in the nursery. Pupils achieve well and take great enjoyment from participating in a wide range of physical activities. Although the development of children's skills in manipulating pencils and tools with their hands is below average, many of them have reached the expected levels in other aspects of their physical development by the end of the reception year. This is because staff in all classes give this area of learning sufficient time each week and make good use of the hall and the outside areas to develop the children's ability to use their bodies for a range of purposes. The present lack of fixed-climbing apparatus outside places some limitations on what children do on a regular basis, although some use is made of the climbing apparatus in the hall. However, teachers in the nursery compensate for these limitations by providing a very wide range of activities, including Tai Chi to encourage balance, fluency of movement and calmness and the use of a parachute to encourage co-operation and co-ordination.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff make very effective use of role-play to fire children's imagination.
- Music lessons are not always pitched at the right level and do not always encourage exploration.

Commentary

49. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well, although standards are below average when children go into Year 1, because a significant minority do not have the language to express their ideas. Staff work very hard at encouraging children to think creatively, but many children lack the confidence in their own ideas and need constant encouragement. Role-play is used in a variety of ways to get children involved and to help them take control of a situation. This was most marked when children in reception had to consider whether Little Red Riding Hood or the Wolf was telling the truth and what to do about it. Children have frequent opportunities to sing, sometimes in too large a group, but the limitations of space in the nursery classroom makes it difficult to set out a range of instruments for children to explore on a regular basis.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities learn and achieve very well in many lessons.
- Thorough checking on teaching, learning and pupils' progress means that no time is wasted in taking remedial action.
- Lessons are lively, challenging and often great fun.
- Teachers make very good use of assessment information to set challenging and specific targets for individuals and groups.
- Very high expectations of behaviour and effort motivate pupils to try their hardest.

- The knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator provides high quality guidance and support.
- In many classes, teachers plan effectively for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects, but expectations are too low for many Year 6 pupils, particularly in writing.

Commentary

50. By the end of Year 2, pupils' standards were well below average in both reading and writing in the national tests in 2003. This year, the standards are similar, despite improving provisions, only because this year group started at the school with particularly low attainment and has a very high level of pupils with special educational needs. However, in 2004, the great majority of pupils have reached the expected levels, with an increased number attaining the higher level 3 in both reading and writing. The last two years have seen real improvement in provision because of the effective way in which weaknesses in teaching and learning have been identified and rectified. The present Year 1 and 2 pupils have achieved well and their progress has been particularly rapid in Year 2 because of very good teaching which has built on the good foundations laid down earlier. Nearly two-thirds of pupils made more than the expected progress in reading and over one-third in writing, with very few pupils failing to make the expected gains. Pupils with special educational needs fared very well. Not only did they make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans, but most of them made the expected progress when compared with national expectations and a few actually made more than the expected progress.
51. By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards were below average compared with all schools nationally in 2003 and indications from teachers' assessment, supported by inspection evidence, is that the present cohort will attain similar standards in 2004. This is partly because of the significant percentage of pupils with special educational needs, but also because the effect of much improved achievement in Years 1 and 2 has not yet fed through into later years. What is clear from extensive school data and inspection evidence is that the present cohort of pupils in Year 6 has made very good progress and has achieved well.
52. Standards in speaking and listening are below average at the age of seven and average at age eleven. Given the very low levels of communication that most pupils start school with, this represents good achievement for most pupils and very good achievement for higher-attaining pupils who are encouraged to find their voice and to use it with consummate effect. Although pupils have always been judged to be good listeners, speaking has always been a step behind. Because of a sustained effort on the part of all staff to identify every opportunity to promote talking, whether in pairs, groups or whole-class discussion, pupils are now confident to express their ideas. Teachers constantly bring new words and grammatical terms to pupils' attention and make sure that they understand their meaning. They not only use new vocabulary in their explanations and questions, but also expect pupils to use the words when answering questions, making suggestions and giving explanations. Drama now plays a part in many lessons. 'Hot seating' is used particularly effectively in many lessons when pupils assume the role of a character in literature in order to adopt a different voice and viewpoint while answering others' questions.
53. Standards in reading are well below average at the age of seven and below average at eleven. This said, the great majority of pupils throughout the school attain expected

standards and those pupils who are capable of attaining the higher levels are enabled to do so. Pupils throughout the school are keen readers, enjoy talking about their favourite authors and develop an increasing range of strategies to make sense of what they are reading. Teachers are particularly skilful in helping them use a wide variety of clues to cope with challenging texts at every age and pupils demonstrate a real sense of achievement in getting to grips with new texts and using higher-order skills of inference and deduction to get to the nub of the matter.

54. Standards in writing are well below average at the age of seven and below average at eleven. There has been striking improvement in the quality of pupils' handwriting in Years 1 and 2. Handwriting is taught well with good levels of consistency and focuses on individual needs. Pupils apply their developing skills to every piece of writing and a greater percentage of pupils than is often found join letters fluently. Not only does this make their writing more legible, but it frees them up to think about the content of their writing. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 do not place the same emphasis on developing a fluent hand and, in some classes, pupils' handwriting and presentation are often untidy. Pupils in all year groups now have good opportunities to write at length and for a wide range of purposes and audiences. The school not only ensures that pupils have a solid grounding in all aspects of writing, but regularly gives them time to hone a piece of writing for competitions. The quality of pupils' work on these occasions is impressive, whether writing poems using very imaginative, figurative language or putting forward a well-argued case for living in the past or the present. Improved writing reflects successful strategies the school has implemented in targeting pupils' writing, both in literacy lessons and in other subjects. If teachers' expectations of pupils' writing were as high in other subjects as they are in literacy lessons, standards in writing could be even higher.
55. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2, all lessons observed were very good. In Years 3 to 6, lessons ranged between excellent and good. Although teachers brought their individual styles to bear, there was a notable consistency of approach across all classes and sets. The two excellent lessons were taught to the higher-attaining and the lower-attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6. Almost all teachers have very good subject knowledge and all teachers plan and prepare very thoroughly. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and efforts and because of very good assessment procedures and target-setting, they pitch individual challenge at just the right level, constantly urging pupils to go that one extra step. Most lessons took place at a really lively pace, were full of variety and had stimulating content. Texts were very well chosen to exploit the teaching points and spelling and grammar were taught knowledgeably and imaginatively. Homework was always pertinent and chosen to take learning on. The main characteristic of most lessons was the sustained concentration of the pupils, their will to succeed and their enjoyment of language and literature.
56. Leadership and management are both very good. The co-ordinator has a wide range of evidence at her fingertips and has a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. High-quality monitoring and analysis have ensured that the school knows precisely which pupils need additional challenge or support and which aspects of the curriculum need greater emphasis. When the school was last inspected, standards were not high enough at the end of Year 6 and provision for the subject had weaknesses in teaching, assessment, the curriculum and the leadership and management. The school has been successful in tackling every one of these weaknesses. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the appointment of the present headteacher were spurs to action, along with purposeful setting arrangements and the determination of the

co-ordinator and staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning through sustained professional development and excellent teamwork.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. The school makes good provision in enabling pupils to consolidate and apply their skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing well in subjects other than English. The same good range of teaching and learning styles are present in most lessons, with plenty of opportunities for pupils to explore their ideas by talking things through with a partner first. Pupils' books indicate that in many classes, teachers provide contexts for pupils to read and write for a range of purposes and sometimes at length, whether reporting science investigation or recounting what happened at a christening in church. However, there is less consistency in this aspect of pupils' work. The oldest pupils are sometimes set written tasks that are pitched at too low a level and their ability to write at length and in depth is sometimes constrained by unimaginative worksheets which demand too little of them. The greatest strength in almost all lessons is teachers' constant insistence on the use of correct vocabulary and the emphasis they place on extending pupils' ability to use a wider variety of words and structures to express their ideas.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is lively, creative, well focused and uses probing questioning very well to promote understanding in all lessons.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes to their work contribute to their very good achievement in lessons.
- Work carefully matched to their abilities and needs helps both pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils to do their best.
- The subject co-ordinator provides informative guidance, monitors and evaluates the work carefully and ensures that realistic targets are set.
- Mathematics is used well across the curriculum.

Commentary

58. In the 2003 national tests standards attained by Year 6 pupils were average while in Year 2 they were well below the national average. Present Year 6 pupils' work is again of average standard, but Year 2 pupils' work shows improvement over last year's test results, though it remains below average. When pupils' earlier attainments and the special educational needs of a substantial number are taken into account, these levels of attainment show that the great majority of pupils are achieving well in relation to their capabilities. Improving provision means that in most lessons pupils are now achieving very well, although this is not yet fully reflected in their ultimate attainment when taking the national tests. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in understanding numbers, shape and space, data-handling and pattern relationships.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There are many examples of very effective teaching where pupils clearly enjoy their mathematics and achieve very well. Management of pupils' behaviour is very good, achieved through lively, creative, interesting, well-prepared and well-focused delivery. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are attentive, keen to learn and as they work through the school they are

becoming self-assured. They work independently and collaboratively displaying respect, consideration and co-operation in relations with their peers, their teachers and the support staff.

60. Teaching is delivered at a brisk pace with high expectations. Teachers use a good variety of methods to explain new work and use the interactive whiteboard⁵ and computers very effectively to support mathematical learning, making the best use of visual approaches. Teachers use 'quick-fire' probing questions very effectively to stretch and gauge pupils' understanding. The good use of problem solving helps pupils apply ideas successfully to practical situations. This systematic approach has a positive impact on helping to raise the levels of pupils' mathematical understanding. The opportunities provided to apply mathematical learning to everyday situations are a strength of the school's approach in mathematics. Pupils show confidence when using mathematical vocabulary, which is reinforced in their paired work.
61. Assessment of pupils' progress is very good. Day-to-day assessment is used well to guide planning for future teaching and match tasks very well to pupils' abilities with the result that all pupils are able to do the best they are capable of. The good-quality help of teachers and, in many lessons, the able contribution of teaching assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Pupils are always aware of what they are expected to learn through the teacher's identification of learning objectives and the setting of individual targets. This encourages and promotes very good pupil-teacher interaction and sustains pupils' concentration and engagement with their work.
62. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and ensure that teaching is planned to promote good progress by all pupils. Assessment data is analysed and pupils' work examined carefully to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress. This information is used effectively to plan improvement. The co-ordinator sets targets and monitors progress on a regular basis. Improved leadership and management of the provision have led to significantly better teaching and pupil achievement since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Pupils' skills in mathematics are used well in other subjects and this helps reinforce their understanding of mathematical concepts by using them in practical and relevant ways. Good links with information and communication technology, science, design and technology and history are effectively planned. Very good opportunities are given in investigative science for pupils to apply and practise their data-handling skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show a lively interest, try hard and achieve well.

⁵ Large touch-sensitive screen on which images are displayed by a projector linked to a computer, as an alternative to a conventional monitor. By touching the screen, teacher or pupils can control events instead of using a keyboard or mouse.

- Good teaching places an effective emphasis on investigative work which promotes good scientific understanding.
- Teachers give pupils very good support to help them meet the very challenging tasks they set.
- The extensive improvement of the subject provision has been well managed but the use of information and communication technology in science is underdeveloped.
- Analysis of data from new assessment systems has yet to be used as a basis for planning further improvements.

Commentary

64. Year 6 pupils' results in the 2003 national tests in science were average and a similar picture of standards is seen in the work of the present Year 6 pupils. The great majority of them reach the level of attainment expected at their age and a considerable minority exceed it. Younger pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 are below average because pupils have started with low attainment and a significant number have special educational needs. In view of their prior attainment and levels of need pupils throughout the school achieve well.
65. Pupils learn and achieve well because they respond very positively to good teaching which encourages a lively interest in the work and a will to succeed. Consequently pupils work to the best of their ability. Good teaching is seen in well-planned work accompanied by high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. The teaching caters very well for the range of pupils' abilities and needs, including special educational needs. Very challenging, but also encouraging and supportive, teaching leads to pupils' positive attitudes to the subject which are reflected in the substantial amount of work which they complete. Pupils' enthusiasm is also successfully promoted by the many interesting practical investigations which are woven into the teaching of the whole curriculum. These also are effective in developing and consolidating pupils' understanding of scientific ideas and investigative methods and in giving them some good opportunities to apply their mathematical skills of data handling as they construct and interpret graphs of measurements they have taken. As yet, though, the use of information and communication technology to support this work is underdeveloped.
66. The subject co-ordinator shows good leadership of planning and development in the subject. This leads to a consistency of approach and quality in the provision for the subject. There are good checks on teachers' planning, on lessons, on the work pupils do across the school and on their performance in tests. Checks led the co-ordinator to identify the need to give pupils more experience of interpreting data from investigations, and he has successfully implemented this improvement. Pupils' progress is assessed systematically by class teachers at the end of each unit of work, but the system is new and data has yet to be collated and analysed as a means of showing precisely where the school could target plans for improving achievement.
67. The quality of the teaching and of the curriculum, the rate of pupils' progress and the effectiveness of subject leadership and management have all improved significantly since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good improvement in teaching and resources is raising the level of pupils' achievement
- Teachers' knowledge is good and they use assessments of pupils well to plan work.
- Pupils are keen and confident in using computers.
- Resources for the subject are good.
- The co-ordinator gives strong support to the teaching and checks performance in the subject well.
- The school exploits well pupils' knowledge and developing skills in information and communication technology to enhance their learning across the curriculum.

Commentary

68. Pupils are achieving well throughout the school. Standards are currently average because the effectiveness of staff training and new resources have not as yet had sufficient time to fully impact on the oldest pupils' attainment. Younger pupils have benefited from improved provision since starting school and Year 2 pupils' standards meet national expectations for their age. The school has over the past few years pursued energetically a policy of using its computer suite to maximum effect. Through using the extra computers outside the suite, the school is almost able to provide a computer for each individual pupil in class lessons. This helps to maximize pupils' development of skills and teachers' opportunities to measure pupils' progress accurately.
69. Pupils already display much confidence in their use of computers and are keen to try out new programs and to improve their knowledge of previously acquired ones. Their very positive attitudes provide the basis for their successful learning. They work very co-operatively in pairs, discussing and resolving problems with the use of proper technical vocabulary. They take advantage of opportunities which have been created for pupils to have extra sessions in the computer suite to develop their information and communication technology skills.
70. The teaching of information and communication technology is good throughout the school, reflecting the fact that, since the previous inspection, there has been considerable training for teachers to increase their own computer knowledge and the effectiveness of their teaching. As pupils move through the school, their development of skills is systematic and carefully programmed in the planning. Teaching assistants play a prominent and positive role in helping pupils learn and consolidate new skills. The school has fully recognised this potential and assistants are undergoing extensive training in this area, a promising development. The staff are well equipped with laptop computers and there is considerable software to support pupils' learning. Assessment of pupils' progress is good and day-to-day assessment is used well to plan future teaching.
71. Leadership and management in this subject are highly effective and show great determination. The subject leader has worked extremely hard to support teaching and learning throughout the school. She systematically monitors planning, teaching and learning and standards, and knows the strengths of the work and where improvement can be made, as in the case of control technology. Resources and strategies to bring about this improvement have already been identified. The teaching, planning, resources

and leadership and management for this subject have improved greatly since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is good. Teachers use computers in classrooms as a matter of course to further promote pupils' information and communication technology skills while extending their knowledge and understanding in such subjects as mathematics, science and history or undertaking writing in English. This usage is built carefully into teachers' planning. This provides pupils with many extra opportunities to consolidate their learning and extend their skills.

HUMANITIES

73. Neither **geography** nor **history** was inspected in depth and it is therefore not possible to make overall judgements about provision, standards or achievement in these subjects. In history, one lesson was observed but none were seen in geography. However, samples of pupils' work and teachers' planning were examined and the co-ordinator for both subjects was interviewed about monitoring and assessment in the subjects. Since the last inspection, the school has done much to address previous weaknesses. Sufficient time is now allocated to these subjects and planning has improved significantly, although it is of variable quality in Years 3 to 6. A great deal of thought has recently been put into identifying subject-specific skills relevant to each year group in the school and this has gone a long way to achieving the right balance in developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers now identify key skills in planning units of work and have started to undertake termly assessments. These assessments do not yet inform planning enough, particularly in ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently in their written work. The subjects make a good contribution to literacy, particularly in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6, there is a marked level of inconsistency and variable progress and achievement because not all teachers are giving sufficient emphasis to the development of skills and the oldest pupils are not working at a high enough level in their research or in their written work. Lesson observation and examination of pupils' work does indicate, however, that there is good practice to be shared. In a good history lesson with Year 2 pupils, the teacher's carefully structured planning and successful exploitation of Victorian seaside photographs enabled pupils to observe closely, make comparisons with their own experiences and ask pertinent questions to develop their knowledge and understanding. Written work from a mixed Year 5/6 class showed that activities had been carefully chosen to develop pupils' skills of enquiry at the right level and to enable pupils to write for a range of purposes.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all ages are really made to think.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Teachers skilfully enable pupils to link their understanding of religion with current issues.
- Lessons are used very effectively to promote discussion and debate.
- Written work is pitched at a low level for many of the oldest pupils.

Commentary

74. Pupils reach the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus both at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, even though they come into school with lower levels of attainment than they did previously. Pupils throughout the school achieve well overall, but many of the oldest pupils do not achieve as well as they should in their written work because there is too much reliance on uninspiring worksheets and pupils of different abilities are expected to tackle the same task.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are long enough to enable pupils to reflect on what they have learned. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and prepare thoroughly. Good planning for each unit of work, and for each lesson, ensures that pupils learn about the beliefs and practices of different religions and use their knowledge and understanding well to make connections with personal experiences and wider issues. In a very good lesson in Year 2, which built on pupils' first-hand experience of a christening in church, the pupils were encouraged to understand why it was important to keep a promise. In preparation for their involvement in a church wedding, they showed good insight in considering what promises a man and woman might make to each other. In the final lesson on Hinduism in the Year 6 class, the teacher was very adept at enabling pupils to draw on all they had learned in this unit of work to consider how their views of marriage differed from that of Hindus and what were the advantages and disadvantages of an arranged marriage. The pupils responded maturely, showing respect for others' beliefs and taking a very balanced view in suggesting how they would respond to an arranged marriage. Because teachers know their pupils very well and have established very good relationships, pupils are willing to explore complex issues from quite a young age and to express individual views. The subject is a very good vehicle for promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills and teachers use a range of devices to enable pupils to discuss their thoughts in small and large groups. Pupils do not have a wide vocabulary, but teachers do all they can to ensure that key words are identified in each lesson, fully understood by pupils and then used correctly by them as they give voice to their ideas in discussion.
76. The temporary teacher who willingly accepted interim responsibility for the subject at Christmas has provided satisfactory leadership and good management. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work have enabled her to ensure that there is good coverage of the syllabus and that the strong links with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are maintained. The school has been very effective in making strong and explicit links between the teaching of religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Effective assessment procedures have been introduced, although these are not used as well as they might be to plan work to stretch the higher-attaining pupils. In spite of the fact that there has not been continuity in the co-ordination of the subject since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement. The school has maintained the good rates of progress that pupils make in Years 3 to 6 and has improved the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 to match. The many strengths identified six years ago have all been maintained and monitoring and assessment have both improved.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. Art and design, design and technology and music were not a focus for this inspection. The limited amount of evidence collected means that it is not possible to make a judgement about provision or standards in these subjects, although all the evidence points to good improvement because the school has tackled well the weaknesses in the curriculum planning for these subjects which were identified as a key issue at the previous inspection.
78. In **art and design** and **design and technology** no lessons were observed, but work on display around the school was examined along with a sample of pupils' sketch and design books. Teachers' planning was also examined and discussions were held with the teacher who co-ordinates both subjects. Planning is now thorough and of a good standard. It identifies the development of key skills in each subject for each age group. Both the planning and the samples of pupils' work seen indicate that a satisfactorily planned curriculum is now in place. Thought has been given to making meaningful links with other subjects: those between art and design and design and technology and between art and both music and geography are particularly successful. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities. She has carried out a good level of monitoring for a subject that is currently a low priority for the school and has developed a good assessment system that has the potential to improve standards further.
79. In **music**, one lesson, one singing practice for Years 4, 5 and 6 and a before-school rehearsal for the school band were seen. Planning was also checked and there were brief discussions with staff concerned. The singing observed was of sound standard and well led by a visiting specialist teacher. The lesson for some of the youngest pupils was of good quality. The band rehearsal showed that some pupils achieve highly in their ability to read music and play instruments. Planning documents show that the work is now firmly based on a very precise analysis of the skills pupils should develop as they move through the school and this is also the basis of a promising new system for assessing pupils' progress. Extra-curricular support for music through the choir, recorder groups and the band is good. Although quite new to teaching and to the school, the co-ordinator is already making a good impact through support for colleagues and their planning.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan well and manage pupils very skilfully.
- Pupils are keen and determined.
- School teams do well in inter-school competition.
- Extra-curricular activities, including the residential experience, make a significant contribution to extending and complementing school-based activities.
- Provision and pupils' achievement have improved substantially since the previous inspection

Commentary

80. Standards in physical education are above those expected nationally by the end of Year 6. In a gymnastics lesson, pupils explored their body shape and changed direction using

different parts of the body well. To develop their skills further, they used apparatus to raise the challenge and moved along and over apparatus, mounting and dismounting using a variety of good techniques displaying an emphasis on style, shape and landing. In a games lesson, pupils displayed good skills of ball control using racquets well to develop direction, speed and positioning. Pupils are well aware of the need to warm up and cool down, and even the very youngest pupils understand the effect activity has on the body. In both the gymnastics and games lessons pupils displayed good awareness of space and were conscious of their position in relation to others. Pupils attend swimming from Year 3 to Year 6, and in excess of 95 per cent achieve the expectation for their age that they swim 25 metres unaided. Many pupils also achieve awards for personal survival and life saving.

81. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons, dress suitably and display good attitudes. They work well collaboratively, taking turns and sharing apparatus well and thus putting into practice their very good social development. They acquire the competitive edge in matches and tournaments, an area where the school has enjoyed considerable success. Through this, they learn and display principles of fair play. All aspects of physical education are included in the curriculum, including athletics, dance and swimming.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' good subject expertise, thorough planning, good use of time and resources and very skilful management of pupils' behaviour all contribute to the good standards achieved. Teachers consider the individual needs of pupils very well and ensure that all pupils participate fully. They provide good opportunities for pupils to work in pairs, evaluate each other's performance and develop strong partnerships. The curriculum for physical education is good. The extensive opportunities provided through the extra-curricular programme enrich and enhance the acquisition of skills very well. The residential experience for Year 6 pupils contributes strongly to the physical education programme, extending and complementing school activities as well as promoting independence and inter-dependence.
83. The co-ordinator for the subject had been on maternity leave for some time before and during the inspection and sound temporary arrangements have been in place. However, in the longer term, leadership and management of the subject have proved very successful in promoting substantial improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress and the quality of teaching were judged to be unsatisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This very important area of the school's work is ably led by a co-ordinator, who is constantly striving to improve provision through asking whether it is good enough.
- Exemplary planning provides increasing levels of challenge as pupils move up the school and dovetails well with the school's planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' literacy skills are promoted very effectively.
- The school council provides an excellent introduction to the democratic process.

84. The school is rightly proud of its highly effective provision in an area that it considers one of the bedrocks on which the school ethos is founded. Pupils' very good achievement enables them to learn more effectively in other subjects. An energetic and knowledgeable practitioner whose enthusiasm for continuous improvement is infectious leads this area of the curriculum very well. She has worked together with all staff to develop a very comprehensive curriculum that takes very good account of pupils' ages and stages of development and ensures that there is a very good degree of consistency in the time allocated and the approach taken. Planning is amongst the best seen with high levels of challenge at every stage of learning. Lesson plans make very good links with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that there is a seamless quality to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the two strands of pupils' personal development. The potential to develop pupils' literacy skills is also exploited at every turn, whether in lessons, school council activities or the training for that and other responsibilities. Monitoring and evaluation are both of a high order. As well as constantly questioning whether what it does is good enough, the school has opened itself up to external scrutiny from an expert member of the governing body and has used her constructive feedback to both broaden and fine-tune its provision. For example, the school has recently conducted a review of pupils' independent study skills, personal organisational skills and classroom responsibilities in every class as the first step in ensuring that expectations for each age group are consistent and that they become more demanding as pupils move up the school.
85. The very good provision is manifest in the pupils' keenness to become involved in school life and to take very seriously whatever responsibilities they volunteer for. This was nowhere more apparent than in a lunchtime meeting of the school council where pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 conducted themselves impeccably and each one made thoughtful contributions to the debate. This is no mere talking shop. Each agenda item is thoroughly discussed and leads to an action that is likely to make a positive difference to the quality of work and play. Pupils are getting a really good grounding in democracy, whether as delegates or those who vote for them. School council members have been involved in obtaining quotes for work for a playground bench, in interviewing for a new member of staff, in improving the healthy options for school dinners and in taking full responsibility for putting on a concert to raise funds for new developments. They also monitor improvements, not only giving honest feedback in meetings, but also looking at ways to resolve any problems that arise. Council members feedback to their class after each meeting and proper time is allocated for there to be two-way communication so that all class members can play their part. The school also looks to other ways in which pupils can show initiative. Older pupils are responsible for planning and leading assemblies. Playground buddies and road safety officers are trained before they decide whether to apply for the positions. From the youngest pupil to the oldest, whatever task they undertake, they do so willingly, responsibly and, where necessary, with sensitivity.

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	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	5
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
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	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
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).