

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104375

Headteacher: Mr. J. A. Ryan

Lead inspector: Mr. C.D. Loizou

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 June 2004

Inspection number: 257828

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	334
School address:	Cannock Road Fallings Park Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV10 8PG
Telephone number:	01902 556355
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. G. F. Kelly
Date of previous inspection:	19 October 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Catholic (Voluntary Aided) Primary School is above average in size, with 334 pupils on roll. This includes 48 Nursery children aged three who are admitted part-time to the school's Early Years Unit. The Nursery can admit up to 52 children (26 full-time equivalent). The school is popular and admits up to 47 four-year-old children into its Reception year each September. The children's attainment on entry to the school varies but is usually well below average overall. Most of the pupils live near to the school.

In addition to the Nursery and Reception classes, there are nine classes, three of which are of mixed-age and there are six single-age classes. The number of pupils leaving or joining the school at times other than the usual time of admission or transfer is high compared with most schools. The area the school serves has many families that locate temporarily, including Traveller families who choose the school because it caters for their needs very well. The majority of pupils are of British white heritage but there is a significant range of backgrounds that includes approximately one in five pupils who are learning English as an additional language and of these, one in ten are in the early stages of English language acquisition. In addition to the five per cent of pupils from Traveller families, a significant number of families, particularly in the early years from Nursery through to Year 2, are from ethnic minorities. The largest group is of Indian descent, with smaller numbers of mixed race, Caribbean, African and Chinese origin. Thirty-two per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average and the school has a further five per cent of families who are entitled to claim but choose not to do so. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average (18 per cent) and two per cent of the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need, which is average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties. The school is located in an Education Action Zone.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18645	Charalambos Loizou	Lead inspector	English as an additional language; English; Information and communication technology; Music; Physical education
14178	Patricia Willman	Lay inspector	
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	Foundation Stage; Mathematics; Art and design; Design and technology
27100	Trevor Davies	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Science; Geography; History

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school provides a good education** and the pupils achieve well as a result. The teaching is good and is particularly strong in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception years). The headteacher and staff have developed a caring and supportive ethos and are a hard working and committed team who are devoted to the individual needs of all the pupils. Although standards are below average in English, they are average in mathematics and the pupils make good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The leadership and management of the school are good. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in reading, mathematics and science and standards are in line with those expected by the end of Year 6, but achievement and standards in writing could be higher
- The pupils enjoy learning and show good attitudes to school because the teaching is good and is well planned to meet their needs and abilities
- Although science standards are in line with those expected by Year 6 they are not as high as they should be by Year 2 where monitoring has not been rigorous enough to improve them
- The curriculum is good and is particularly strong in the Foundation Stage where Nursery and Reception children get a very good start to their education
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and provides a good steer to the work of the school and its educational direction
- The support and provision for pupils with special educational needs, for Traveller pupils and those learning English as an additional language is very good
- Attendance rates are improving well but remain below the national average

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in 1998. The library has improved very well. Handwriting standards have improved well but spelling and independent writing are still not consistent, so only satisfactory progress has been made. The school has made good progress in providing more opportunities for the pupils to structure their independent writing.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

The **pupils achieve well** even though standards in English were below average in last year's national tests. The school has been successful in improving teaching and the curriculum so that all groups of pupils make good progress. The decline in results in the national tests needs to be treated with caution as there are a number of important factors to bear in mind. The pupils start school in the Reception year with low attainment on entry and this is lower now compared with previous years. There is also an increasing proportion of pupils joining the school who are in the early stages of English language acquisition and large inward mobility at different times of the year. However, all the pupils achieve well, including those who started the school and remained throughout since the Nursery and Reception years. In the 2003 end of Year 2 national tests, the pupils attained well below average standards but compared with similar schools, standards were average in reading and science and below average in mathematics. Writing standards were too low and in the lowest five

per cent of schools nationally. Currently standards have improved on previous years and are below average by the end of Year 2. This signifies good progress in relation to their low attainment when they first started school but writing and science standards could be higher. The Year 6 national tests last year confirm that the pupils achieve well, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. By the end of Year 6, standards are in line with those expected in most subjects but are below average in art and design.

The pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are also well behaved, polite and courteous to each other and relationships are good throughout the school. Attendance rates are below the national average but punctuality is good. **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good.** There are good opportunities for the pupils to show respect and demonstrate care for each other.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good.** The quality of teaching across the school is good. The pupils use literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well in other subjects but extended forms of writing are not being checked rigorously enough for spelling mistakes. Reading and mathematics are consistently well taught. The pupils with special educational needs, Traveller pupils and those learning English as an additional language are very well supported by well-qualified staff who are well deployed to support those pupils in greatest need. Learning is good overall because teachers plan work that is based on systematic assessments but assessment and monitoring in science in Years 1 and 2 are not as rigorous as those in English and mathematics. Computers are used well to support teaching and learning.

The curriculum provides good opportunities for learning throughout the school. The use of ICT in other subjects is good and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The staff in the Nursery and Reception years have a very good understanding of the curriculum for children of this age. The school has very good accommodation and good resources.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership of the school is good overall.** The senior staff and subject co-ordinators provide good leadership as they monitor lessons and teachers' planning rigorously but this could be sharper in science in Years 1 and 2. Governance is good because the governors have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to sustain improvement. **The management of the school is good.** The headteacher, staff and governors work well as a team under the very good leadership of the headteacher.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Most parents are very pleased with the school. However, a few parents are not playing their full part in ensuring that their children attend school regularly. The headteacher now involves the pupils more in decision making and the pupils enjoy making decisions about their school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The school should:

- improve science standards and the monitoring of science in Years 1 and 2
- improve the pupils' spelling skills and independent writing
- continue to improve attendance rates to bring them in line with the national average

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Although standards are below average in English, the pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school but could do better in writing. Mathematics and science standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with those expected and the pupils achieve well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are in line with national expectations in most subjects but could be higher in writing across the school and higher in science by the end of Year 2
- The children in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) achieve well and this lays very good foundations for their learning
- The pupils with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language and Traveller pupils make good progress and are well supported by teaching assistants and specialist staff
- Standards in ICT have improved very well since the last inspection

#### Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is low and is well below that expected of children starting the Reception year. This partly explains why there has been a decline in standards by the end of Year 2 since the last inspection. There is very good provision for both Nursery and Reception children and this provides the children with a very good start to their education. However, given that the children start school from such a low level, they still do not reach the early learning goals in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. Another important characteristic that affects attainment is that an increasing proportion of pupils who join the school in the Nursery or Reception year are in the early stages of English language acquisition and there is an above average rate of inward mobility to the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.4 (13.8 )	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	11.4 (11.7)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	14.0 (14.2)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.9 (24.0)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	25.0 (25.3)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	26.0 (25.3)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 46 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. The school's results in the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2003 declined compared with the previous year in writing, mathematics and science but improved in reading. The results



achieved in the national tests were well below the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Writing standards were in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. Compared with similar schools standards in reading were average; in mathematics they were below average; but writing standards were well below average. The apparent decline in standards does not indicate underachievement because the pupils who took the tests last year started school with very low attainment on entry and a significant proportion is identified with special educational needs. However, writing standards, particularly in spelling and independent writing, could be higher. Science standards, although improving now, are not high enough because there has been insufficient monitoring of teachers planning and the science curriculum in Years 1 and 2. Monitoring has largely focused on improving English and mathematics standards and this has been more effective and consistent compared with science.

3. In the national tests in 2003 for Year 6 pupils, the school's results were below the national average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, English results were above average and in mathematics they were average but science results were below average. Currently, standards show significant signs of improvement, particularly in English and mathematics. They are currently below average in English but this is largely related to writing standards where pupils' spelling and independent writing is inconsistent across the school. Nevertheless, reading, speaking and listening standards are in line with those expected and so the pupils have made good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Given the difficult challenges facing the pupils and the school, for example, limited speech and language skills, high mobility and an increasing number who are learning English as an additional language, the pupils achieve well. This includes the achievement of pupils who have been in the school throughout since the early years. Mathematics and science standards are currently in line with those expected by the end of Year 6. This also signifies good improvement on previous years, including science standards in Years 3 to 6 where teachers' planning has been more consistent when compared with that seen in Years 1 and 2.
4. The good leadership of the school has ensured that teachers use assessment information to guide their planning. Since the last inspection, teachers have adapted their planning and the curriculum to the needs of pupils and there are more challenging circumstances now compared with those facing the school the last time it was inspected. The school is highly committed to including all pupils and provides well qualified support and staff to deal with those who have particular learning needs, such as pupils from Traveller families and those learning English as an additional language.
5. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because they benefit from good quality classroom support, provided by learning support assistants. Individual education plans are put together carefully by teachers, learning support assistants and the special educational needs co-ordinator to enable pupils to progress in small, well-defined stages, set against their individual learning targets. These plans are discussed with pupils so that they understand the targets they are working towards and they receive regular feedback about how well they are doing. As a result they attain standards that represent good achievement in relation to their abilities.
6. Standards in ICT are improving well and are currently in line with those expected. This is a very good improvement from the position found in the last inspection because achievement in all aspects of the ICT curriculum is good. Good leadership and management of this subject are responsible for this improvement as well as substantial improvements to the curriculum, staff training and resources.
7. Standards in art and design are below average because there are gaps in the curriculum, which result in work that is not always challenging for all pupils. Design and technology standards are much better and are in line with those expected. Standards in geography, history, music and physical education are in line with national expectations. The pupils

achieve well in history and physical education and make satisfactory progress in design and technology. The variation in standards and achievement in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is the result of the determination and focus placed on improving the core skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics as well as ensuring that the staff are well trained in ICT. The school has identified other aspects of the curriculum as in need of special attention, for example, art and design.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils respond well to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural values promoted by the school and, as a result, their attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. Most pupils are punctual and although attendance has improved since the last inspection, it is unsatisfactory overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour are the foundation of the positive climate for learning in school
- Relationships throughout the school are good
- Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong and are consistently encouraged and praised for making the right choices
- Systems to improve attendance are very good
- The children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development

### **Commentary**

8. Most parents support the strong Christian values promoted by the school. This helps the pupils enjoy coming to school and show good levels of interest in, and enthusiasm for, all aspects of school life. They learn about the values and beliefs of others in their lessons and, through their active and successful fund raising, begin to appreciate the difficulties faced by some communities both in this country and overseas. In assemblies they are taught to value friendship and, through their prayers, to trust in God. Although spiritual development is not overtly planned for in lessons, there are times when something amazing happens and pupils are excited about what they see. An example of this was seen in a science lesson in Years 3 and 4 when a large picture of a white skeleton on a black background was revealed. The sensory area in the Foundation Stage also produces excitement and wonder as the children explore different textures and light. Pupils feel valued because teachers always listen to their responses and ideas in lessons and this encourages them to participate. Many pupils enjoy the creative aspects of their learning. They are proud of the poetry they have written and the choir sing harmoniously with great enthusiasm and confidence. Many pupils are pleased with the way the school deals with bullying or harassment and say they are confident that someone will care for them if they are concerned in any way.
9. Moral and social development is promoted well. All staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work consistently and effectively to achieve this. A small number of pupils have difficulty in controlling their behaviour. Because of the high level of very good support provided for these pupils, their behaviour has very little negative impact on the calm and happy day-to-day life of the school community. Pupils clearly understand the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and the majority willingly comply with the expectations of their teachers and become sensible and useful members of the community. Pupils value the awards for good work and behaviour and comment that they try hard to earn them. They are encouraged to listen quietly to each other's ideas in lessons and, although they may not always agree, to respect different viewpoints. Because of the good and often very good relationships between most pupils, there are few concerns about bullying and pupils trust the staff to deal with any unkind behaviour fairly and effectively. The trained peer supporters have a useful role in mediating minor disputes and helping other pupils with problems they may have, including suggesting strategies to deal with any form of bullying. Consequently, all the

pupils know there is always someone they can talk to if they have concerns. The residential visits undertaken by Years 2 and 6 pupils are very popular and help to promote pupils' self-confidence. The members of the new School Council have a clear understanding of their role and are proud to have been chosen to represent their classmates. There have been no exclusions.

10. The provision for cultural development is good overall and this has a significant impact on pupils' personal development. They learn about the cultural and religious traditions of others through many of their lessons. The wide range of visits out of school and many visitors to school provide pupils with interesting experiences that enhance their cultural development well. The differing backgrounds of many pupils are celebrated and this has a positive impact on pupils' understanding and tolerance of those who are different. The visit of the Zip Theatre gives pupils the opportunity to learn about some aspects of non-European cultures, but the school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities at present for first hand experience of life within multi-cultural Britain.
11. The children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and about half achieve the levels expected for their age. They are encouraged to work and play constructively and happily together and learn to make sensible choices. They listen carefully to instructions and try hard to please their teachers and other adults who work with them.
12. Although attendance is still not as good as in most primary schools, as a result of the high level of support from the education welfare officer, the Traveller Support team and other local authority agencies, together with the school's own rigorous procedures, there has been a significant improvement in attendance over the last year. Almost half of the pupils have very good attendance records and this has a positive impact on achievement. About half of the very high unauthorised absence relates to Traveller families who leave the area and to a small number of parents who do not keep the school informed about reasons for absence. Most pupils arrive at school on time and the parents of those who do not are reminded of the importance of punctuality. Most parents ensure that their children attend regularly and advise the school promptly when their children are absent.

### Attendance

#### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.3	School data	1.8
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

### Exclusions

There have been no exclusions in the last three years.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good and this signifies good improvement since the last inspection. Consequently, the pupils achieve well across the school in relation to their prior attainment on entry and to their abilities.

### Teaching and learning

The teaching and learning are good. The assessment of pupils' work is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and the use of assessment in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) are very good
- There is good teamwork that results in a consistent and systematic approach across the school
- Assessment is used well to inform teachers' planning in most subjects but it could be sharper in science in Years 1 and 2 to ensure that the pupils achieve higher standards
- The pupils work hard because the lessons are made practical and interesting. Teaching assistants are well qualified and very effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs, Traveller pupils and those learning English as an additional language
- Teachers are increasingly gaining in confidence when using ICT as a teaching aid
- Planning includes helping pupils to understand their learning targets but this is not as evident in teachers' marking of pupils' writing where the pupils display inconsistencies in spelling and independent writing

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	11 (23%)	21 (44%)	15 (31%)			

*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.*

13. The teaching in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is very good and is having a positive impact on children's learning. There is a good understanding by the staff about how young children learn and they set high expectations. The Foundation Stage staff work closely with those in Years 1 and 2 and so the transition from the Reception year to Year 1 is very smooth. There is a good degree of consistency in teaching styles and staff in the Foundation Stage work very effectively as a team to ensure that all of the children make enough progress. They teach basic communication skills well and are successful in improving the children's personal and social development. Teachers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants are clear about what they want the children to learn. For example, from the very start, the children soon learn to settle into school each morning. Activities are prepared for the children to choose that reinforce their communication and language skills as when they share traditional and familiar stories and nursery rhymes. There are also good links to numeracy as some groups count out places when sorting and matching coloured toys. Teachers and support staff sit with a group of children as they draw pictures and write about stories.
14. The headteacher and staff have established an effective team approach across the school. This provides opportunities for teachers and support staff to plan lessons that provide tasks that are well matched to the abilities of the pupils. The teaching is well organised and this results in many opportunities for the pupils to benefit from a broad range of tasks and activities that are well matched to their abilities and needs. A key strength is the contribution to the teaching made by teaching assistants who are well deployed to support pupils who have learning difficulties or are in the early stages of English language acquisition.
15. The teaching in both the Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6 is good overall. Good teaching was observed across the school. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively and the pupils are able to read a range of texts with increasing accuracy and fluency. Extended forms of writing are given high priority in most classes but this is not consistently evident in all subjects with some variations across classes in the structure and forms of independent

writing. This has been identified as a weakness in the pupils' literacy development and the school has already adopted measures to improve the quality and range of extended forms of writing as well as spelling which is also a particular weakness in the pupils' writing. The measures adopted by the school are already having a positive impact on pupils' writing, especially by the end of Year 6 where the pupils are increasingly using different forms of writing, including diaries, poetry and note taking. The headteacher and subject co-ordinators have effectively monitored the teaching across the school and this leads to fruitful discussions among the staff who regularly plan topics together and assess the pupils' performance. The monitoring of science teaching and standards in Years 1 and 2 has lacked rigour and this has led to some lapses in the progress the pupils make in science by the end of Year 2.

16. Assessment is used well to inform teachers' planning. Teachers' marking reflects high expectations and learning targets are used to inform the pupils of their progress. However, spelling is not marked as rigorously as other aspects of writing which leads to inconsistencies across the school. Assessment is well used in mathematics and reading with good records kept that help teachers to track the pupils' progress. Optional national tests in each year group from Year 3 onwards are used to keep records and track progress but this is greatly affected by the inward mobility of pupils who join the school at different times of the year and in different year groups. This presents a challenge for teachers which they accommodate very well and remain highly committed to including all the pupils, for example, by monitoring and assessing the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language or making early assessment of those pupils who have moderate or complex learning difficulties.
17. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well by class teachers because activities are closely matched to their needs. This ensures these pupils succeed in lessons, and, as a result, they achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Learning support assistants, deployed to work with groups of pupils, make a good contribution to the quality of teaching and learning by following the teacher's planning closely, and by boosting pupils' skills and confidence. For example, in a good mathematics lesson with Year 1, the learning support assistant helped pupils to develop a greater understanding of time and using a clock face. As the activity progressed, and pupils enjoyed success, the learning support assistant and teacher challenged pupils with well focused questions about durations of time and intervals denoted on the clock face. Learning support assistants are a valuable and effective resource. This also applies to specialist staff who are brought into the school to support Traveller pupils across the school. This is very effective and enables the pupils to participate fully in school activities and lessons. When some of the younger Traveller pupils first join the school they are made to feel very welcome and soon settle into routines. This is especially significant in those cases where this is the very first experience of school for some of these pupils, most of whom have not had any Foundation Stage or pre-school experience.
18. The teachers have a good understanding of the stages of learning and attainment targets set out in the National Curriculum. They plan an interesting range of topics with good links between subjects. This is evident in design and technology, history, ICT and music where, for example, Year 5 and 6 pupils have designed and made musical instruments in design and technology and used these in their music lessons. The school provides good opportunities to enhance the pupils' learning using ICT. The pupils enjoy using computers and have regular access to the computer room. Consequently, basic skills are well taught and are being sufficiently reinforced in other subjects. There are good examples across the school of pupils using word processing skills in literacy, spreadsheets in mathematics and science, and Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were observed making good progress using a data handling program to sort and classify characteristics. The use of information and communication technology is increasingly becoming consistent across the school and the pupils are using computers, digital cameras, tape recorders and camcorders in many subjects and for a variety of purposes. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and there has been very good progress.

## The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum that is particularly strong in the Foundation Stage where the Nursery and Reception children get a very good start to their education. Opportunities for enrichment and the quality of accommodation and resources are good.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Foundation Stage curriculum for children in Nursery and Reception is very good
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good
- The school's accommodation and resources are good and enhance opportunities for learning
- The school offers many opportunities for enrichment through its programme of visits and school activities

## Commentary

19. The school's values and principles are apparent throughout the school. It places considerable emphasis on developing the whole child including their personal and social as well as their academic skills. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and their eagerness to learn. The school is highly inclusive and provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all groups of pupils.
20. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has declined since the last inspection and pupils enter the school with limited speaking and listening skills. The school has identified speaking and listening as a priority and the staff have received guidance and training through the National Primary Strategy Leadership Programme. As a result, there are now specific strategies used in lesson planning and in the classroom to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, such as 'talking partners', thus enabling pupils to gain greater access to all subjects.
21. The school is part of an Education Action Zone and has been well supported in its efforts to improve standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the linked intervention programmes are used to support pupils' learning. The effectiveness of the strategies is most evident in Years 3 to 6, where well-planned lessons and focused teaching have had the greatest impact on pupils' achievement. A greater emphasis on investigational skills has also helped to raise standards in science.
22. The school timetable is organised to ensure that pupils of all ages experience a broad curriculum. Provision in ICT, history and physical education is good. Pupils are using computers well to support research in increasing areas of the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of visits, activities and events in school. Year 2 pupils visit the Kingswood Centre for a residential stay and Year 6 have an activity week in Wales. Visiting authors such as Jacqueline Wilson, history days and regular visits of a live theatre help to motivate pupils to achieve well. A good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs encourage pupils of all aptitudes and abilities. These include football, rounders, computers, line dancing and cookery. The provision for personal, social and health education in the school is good, and contributes towards the very positive attitudes that the pupils have to learning and to their relationships with each other.
23. The breadth of curricular opportunities in the Foundation Stage is very good and this helps Nursery and Reception children to get a very good start to their education. Throughout the school, there is a clear commitment to inclusion and the school ensures that all pupils receive the help they need to access the curriculum. The provision for those pupils with special educational needs is very good. Support staff are employed very effectively in the classroom to ensure that those pupils whose need is greatest receive the most support. Each child with learning difficulties has an Individual Education Plan. These are regularly

reviewed and assessed and this informs future targets for these pupils. There are close and effective links with personnel from local agencies and staffing support for Traveller children. A learning mentor provides further support for other pupils with specific learning needs.

24. The school's staffing, accommodation and resources contribute well to the quality of education. The school has a good ratio of staff and support staff and these are deployed effectively. The ICT room provides a well-equipped central facility to support the development of pupils' ICT skills. The school library provides a very good resource, and includes a further bank of computers. All of these facilities enhance curricular opportunities for the pupils. The pupils say they enjoy using the new library and computer suite and believe that they have learned a great deal about researching information now they have access to the Internet.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes very good provision for the care and welfare of all pupils. They receive consistently good quality personal and educational support and guidance. Pupils have good opportunities to be involved in school life and their views are taken into account.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The kindness and commitment of all staff ensures that parents and pupils feel confident that any problems will be handled fairly and effectively
- The holistic approach to care which is firmly centred on the welfare of the child
- The personal support and guidance for each individual are very good

### **Commentary**

25. There is an appropriate awareness of health and safety issues. Fire drills are carried out regularly and records are kept. There is good provision for first aid. Regular checks of the premises are carried out which ensure that the school provides a safe environment. The headteacher is responsible for child protection issues and keeps up-to-date with developments. All staff are aware of their duty of care in this aspect of pupils' welfare. Pupils learn about the benefits of a healthy diet through their science lessons and older pupils are given appropriate information about sex and drugs. Teachers emphasise the safe use of resources in lessons and playtimes are well supervised.
26. There are often good relationships between pupils and the adults who work with them, consequently, pupils are confident that someone will help them if they are unhappy or worried about something. Staff are very knowledgeable and sensitive to individual pupils' needs and there are very good systems to support those with difficulties of both a personal and educational nature, for example the Nurture Group and the work of the learning mentor. Excellent records are kept of incidents that take place and these are closely monitored in order to identify any emerging problems at an early stage. Based on good procedures for assessing pupils' achievement, individual strengths and weaknesses are identified and appropriate challenge provided to improve achievement. Although targets are set, pupils are not always clear about what to do to get better. There are very good induction arrangements for children joining the Foundation Stage and those who join the school at other times are helped to integrate into school effectively. This ensures that parents are confident that their children will be cared for.
27. There is good communication between pupils and staff and this provides an informal channel for pupils' views to be taken into account. The new School Council allows pupils to be more involved in making decisions on matters that directly affect them. The pupils say they enjoy taking more responsibility for decision making about how to improve their school.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a good partnership with parents and the community. Links with other schools are good. The quality of these partnerships has been maintained well since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most parents have very positive views about the work of the school and are very supportive of the Christian values promoted by the school
- There are strong links with the adjacent church and parish community
- A small number of parents do not ensure their children's regular attendance

### **Commentary**

28. The parents who took part in the consultation before and during the inspection express positive views about the work of the school. They are pleased that their children are expected to work hard and that they make good progress. Parents are provided with good information through the prospectus, the annual governors' report and the regular newsletters. The annual reports on the progress of pupils are good. They clearly indicate how well the pupils are achieving and the text is a good balance between strengths and weaknesses. The consultation evenings are well attended and parents comment that these give them additional useful information about how well their children are doing. Teachers are also easily available at the end of the school day and are very willing to arrange to see parents should they need more information or have a concern. The school organises opportunities for parents to learn about the curriculum, but very few parents take advantage of this. A course for Family Learning takes place in the school every week and several parents of children in the Foundation Stage attend regularly, learning how to help their children in support of the work of the school. Most parents encourage their children to complete their homework, although some parents expressed the view that the provision of homework was inconsistent. Parents willingly volunteer to help with visits and large numbers attend the performances and celebrations held in school. The events organised through the parents' organisation are well attended and the funds raised help to supplement resources. Each year parents are asked to complete a questionnaire either on a specific school issue or to canvass wider views on what the school does well and what could be improved. These views are taken seriously and help the governors and management of the school to plan for the future.
29. The school has good links with the local community generally. Pupils are regular visitors to the neighbouring church and the parish priest, who is also the Chair of Governors, is a familiar figure in the school. Joint parish events are very well supported and perpetuate the very good reputation the school has in the local community. A small number of older members of the community come into school to read with the children and the local football club provides coaching for the school team. Pupils also visit local amenities in support of their learning. The Education Action Zone has facilitated a beneficial link with a major international company which has resulted in two employees reading with pupils every week. There are satisfactory mechanisms for pupils transferring to the next stage of education and educational links with other schools are good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and that of subject co-ordinators and the senior management team is good. The governance of the school is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher, staff and governors provide a very caring, supportive ethos, which is committed to providing for the needs of all pupils
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and provides a good steer to the work of the school and its educational direction



- Support for pupils with special educational needs is managed very effectively

## Commentary

30. The headteacher, staff and governors have created a very caring school community in which the needs of all pupils are valued and understood. The headteacher provides very good leadership and sets a clear direction for the school, both in terms of its values and educational priorities. He is well supported by other senior staff. The governing body provides good management and promotes the aims and values of the school well. The governors make regular visits to the school to see for themselves how it operates. They ensure that the school's statutory requirements are being met but also understand the school's priorities and areas for improvement. The governors work closely with the headteacher in monitoring progress towards these objectives. They receive regular reports on the curriculum from subject co-ordinators and this helps to inform them of developments.
31. The school has good systems to monitor and evaluate its own performance. The current school improvement plan provides a clear outline of the school's priorities and areas requiring attention. For example, the school has identified through its staff performance management programme, the immediate need for all staff to raise pupil achievement in specific areas such as writing. The professional development needs of staff are linked to those areas of greatest priority. For example, the school is involved in the National Primary Strategy Leadership Programme. This has improved teaching and learning as staff are now aware of and are implementing strategies such as 'talking partners' that help to raise standards in the classroom. The school receives support from the Education Action Zone in raising standards. The headteacher and governors have managed this provision effectively and ensured that external support is targeted at identified priorities for school improvement.
32. The financial management of the school is good. The headteacher and governors have been very effective in directing financial resources towards educational priorities and this has helped to enhance accommodation and school resources. For example, the school has acquired a new library and ICT suite and this is having a significant impact on pupils' learning opportunities and is helping to raise standards. The governors are prudent but competitive in ensuring that the school meets the principles of 'best value' in its financial management.
33. Staff share common values and show a strong commitment to equal opportunities. This is a highly inclusive school and leaders provide good role models to other staff and pupils. There are very good support systems and all feel valued. This is reflected in discussions with parents, staff and pupils who speak highly of the school and its leadership and management. The school is a welcoming place and teachers new to the profession are mentored and supported very well.
34. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are very good and this has resulted in very good provision for the youngest children in the school. The Foundation stage operates an integrated approach so that both the Nursery and Reception children are taught together and at times in distinct age groups. This is highly effective and very well organised because the staff understand the learning needs of the children and are highly competent and very well qualified to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
35. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory. Subject leaders are at different stages of development with policies and schemes of work. All subjects follow national guidelines and the assessment co-ordinator has developed effective assessment procedures for the different curriculum areas. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning in some areas is not rigorous enough. In science for example, lack of monitoring is not helping teachers to raise standards in that subject.
36. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages this very important area of learning very effectively and is well supported by a designated governor who meets regularly with the co-

ordinator. Individual Education Plans for pupils who have special educational needs are of high quality, are regularly reviewed, and accurately address the needs of individual pupils. One of the main roles of teaching assistants in the classroom is often to provide special educational needs support. They are all highly committed and contribute towards planning, assessment and the review of individual education plans for these pupils.

### ***Financial information***

#### ***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	756,879
Total expenditure	746,469
Expenditure per pupil	2,018

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	54,500
Balance carried forward to the next	64,910

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

37. The high standard of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and there has been good progress made since then in all areas of learning. There are 48 children attending part-time in the Nursery and 40 full-time in the Reception class. Many of the Nursery children transfer to schools nearer home but where no Nursery provision was available. By the time the children leave the Nursery, they have made very good progress in acquiring important skills such as the ability to socialise, to sit and listen to instructions and to respond to adults and each other. However, overall their attainment on entering the Reception class is still well below average because their language skills are very limited and many need very considerable support to develop the range of personal skills and emotional maturity to respond fully to all the school has to offer. In spite of the fact that many of the children in Reception achieve standards below those expected in most areas of learning, they make very good progress by the time they are ready to join Year 1. This is because the teaching is of high quality, the children are very skilfully supported and their progress tracked very carefully.
38. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are significant factors in the quality of provision. The ethos is very coherent and positive. All activities are very well organised so that the children become sufficiently secure to meet new situations.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children are making very good progress
- Adults are very sensitive to the children's needs
- Support for children with specific difficulties is very good

#### **Commentary**

39. The children settle well into the Nursery because the induction procedures are very good, the routines are clear and the adults are sensitive and supportive. In the Nursery and Reception groups, all the children are developing good relationships and are well supported to play and work together co-operatively. When upsets occur, the children are made to feel very secure, but are encouraged to gradually widen their social group. They become more self-confident in engaging in an ever broader range of activities. Children who have experienced difficulty, for example, in sharing equipment with others are learning to take turns and ask politely for what they need. As they move from the Nursery to join Reception activities, the youngest children benefit from working with the older children, for example, during self-chosen activities. This also helps the older children to become aware of the younger ones and take some responsibility, for example, for ensuring that the younger ones can contribute to completing puzzles or can be included in the sand and water tray activities. The development of the outdoor area makes a very major contribution to the growth of the children's personal and social skills. A significant proportion of the children do not achieve the early learning goals by the time they begin Year 1 but their progress towards them is very good.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children's speech improves as the result of very good teaching
- The teachers are skilful at developing the children's vocabulary
- The children engage in a wide variety of activities that encourage them to talk and to listen to others

## Commentary

40. The children's speaking skills are very poor when they start school in the Nursery. However, they experience an exciting, stimulating range of opportunities that encourage them to talk. As they engage in activities such as creating a dinosaur landscape, enjoying the sensory area or simply sharing their thoughts in a group, all the children are encouraged to speak clearly and audibly. The adults are very skilful at rephrasing questions or adding responses to what the children say in order to enlarge their vocabulary. This provides a model for the children to structure their thinking logically. One higher attaining child gave a very vivid account of the Spanish dancing she had witnessed, describing her own "flamenco" style dress and clicking her fingers to imaginary castanets. Many children are still at a stage where their utterances are very brief but their expressions reflect interest and enjoyment in what their peers say. The very good range of role play activities in and out of doors provides a very effective stimulus for talk. Some of the children of Reception age are developing their writing skills. Early reading skills are well developed with many visual prompts and books shared among the children who learn traditional and modern stories and nursery rhymes. The fact that the adults initiate writing with them encourages the children to think about what might follow and enables them to generate and record their own ideas. The children are beginning to space their words appropriately and recognise some key letters as they spell the words they are using. Many children are still at the stage of emergent writing. The teaching of language skills is very well pitched to match the needs of a few who are ready to begin the National Curriculum. There is a wealth of display and labelling in the teaching areas to help children to see the purpose of writing.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's counting skills are developing because a wide range of everyday activities are used to reinforce number concepts

## Commentary

41. The teaching is very good and this enables the children to make very good progress in their learning of core mathematical skills such as counting, sorting and ordering numbers. Many of the children can count objects to ten, recognise and write their related numerals. Some children have yet to learn to orientate written numbers correctly. Overall, about half the children will meet the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception class. The more confident children can count up to 20 bears and sort them into simple sets. A few are confident at counting in tens to 100. On looking at two dinosaurs of different lengths a few children understood that one end of each had to be aligned in order to decide the shortest or the longest. Some children have used the computer to support their number work. Number songs and rhymes are also enjoyed as are cooking activities where spoonfuls of ingredients are counted. They are beginning to observe shapes and to develop a vocabulary to describe them. The adults ensure that all the children are very well supported to engage in mathematical activities whenever the opportunity arises.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The development of the children's awareness of their physical environment
- The acquisition of basic computer skills
- Opportunities to use a wide range of materials and to develop a range of physical skills to undertake practical activities

### Commentary

42. Most of the children progress very well even though their attainment is overall well below that expected at this stage. This is in part due to the low level of communication skills to describe what they observe in the world around them. The adults organise a very stimulating range of experiences to arouse the children's curiosity about, for example, how different materials behave when they are heated or frozen. Through stimulating activities they learn that the climate of Antarctica is cold and that this influences how people dress. They use the computer to select and "pack" a suitcase of clothing for Barnaby Bear to go on holiday in the sun. They are learning to recognise the characteristics of different animals and also that some are now extinct. The adults are very alert to initiating opportunities for both Nursery and Reception children that encourage observation and investigation. They also respond promptly when the children indicate that they wish to pursue some experience. An opportunity to work in groups to create a dinosaur collage had the children excitedly comparing the use of pasta, fabric or lentils to represent the dinosaur's scaly skin. The children's curiosity about the world around them is developing well but they are heavily reliant upon the very skilled adult help and very effective planning which is now allowing them to move towards achieving the early learning goals.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good planning especially to develop fine motor skills
- The improved development of the outdoor area

### Commentary

43. Teaching is very good and children achieve well. For many, the acquisition of the fine motor skills needed to draw around templates, to hold pencils and brushes comfortably and to handle a range of containers requires patient support and a wide range of regular experiences. The adults are very skilful at providing these experiences and patiently allowing the children sufficient time to explore them. The outdoor area now provides a very valuable addition to the activities in the hall where children can develop their gross motor skills through body movement and more vigorous exercise. The progress from when the children join the Nursery to the time they leave the Reception class is very good. The children will achieve the early learning goals because they can control their movements well, twisting, turning, running, balancing and climbing on the interesting range of outdoor equipment.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good range of resources
- The planning to provide a wide range of opportunities

### Commentary

44. Teaching is very good. The children are on course to achieve the early learning goals. They respond very positively to opportunities to paint, create collages and make a variety of models. The teachers are very encouraging so that the children develop their imagination, for example, through the provision of exciting materials in the role play areas. Photographic records of the children simulating the roles of a fire officer and a police officer revealed a set of shining faces and the certainty that the children had fully entered into their roles. The sensory area arouses the children's imagination as they enter the darkened room with its exciting, fibre-optic lights and reflective artefacts. The children enjoy singing and playing instruments and this is often done in conjunction with other work such as counting. The teaching in this area is stimulating and benefits from the presence of a skilled accompanist.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although standards are below average, the pupils achieve well and make good progress because there is good teaching throughout the school
- Assessments of the pupils' progress are used well by teachers to set precise learning targets for all pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs
- Good support by learning support assistants helps raise standards well, particularly for the lower attaining pupils
- Although the pupils make good progress in their basic writing skills, the range and quality of pupils' extended writing are not consistent across the school and spelling is unsatisfactory

### Commentary

45. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has adapted its curriculum and teaching to deal with many challenges that affect overall standards. Although standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, the school faces more challenges now compared with those seen at the time of the last inspection. The inward mobility of pupils affects overall standards in every year group, particularly when pupils join the school with low speech and language skills or speak English as an additional language. Another important factor is the increasing proportion of pupils who join the school and are in the early stages of English language acquisition. Additionally, Traveller families are very well supported by the school and some of the younger children who join the school for temporary periods of time have had no previous education.

46. Good teaching overall enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. The work of the many support assistants is most valuable because they help to bring lower attaining pupils closer to the standards of their peers. Teachers and learning assistants support pupils who have special educational needs particularly well. As a result these pupils try really hard and have a very positive self-image. Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good, as is the specialised support provided for Traveller pupils. Teaching assistants and specialist support staff are deployed very well and where they are needed most. For instance pupils in the lower ability groups in English lessons very often have a teaching assistant working alongside them, either individually or with their group.
47. Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average in speaking and writing and standards are in line with those expected in reading and listening. The school has recovered from the dip in the 2003 results and has begun to reverse the decline in English standards. The pupils make good progress in lessons and also achieve well in relation to their starting points. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 focuses rightly on embedding key basic skills that the pupils can capitalise on later in their learning. Pupils who have special educational needs in Year 1 and 2 are also supported very sensitively, with tasks set that are usually very closely matched to their needs. Standards in writing are below average because spelling is a particular weakness and the pupils write simple sentences correctly but find it difficult to write independently without support. By Year 6, the pupils have improved their reading, speaking and listening skills very well and although writing has improved with much evidence of extended and independent forms of writing, spelling rules have not been learned sufficiently well and higher attaining pupils do not write more complex sentences accurately. In some classes the quality and range of extended forms of writing are not consistent with other classes where expectations are higher and this is an area that the school has not explored fully through its monitoring.
48. Teaching is good through the school. Teachers engage pupils well because they establish very good relationships and value pupils' ideas. A strength is that teachers give pupils more opportunities to speak, and are careful to include all abilities during the question and answer sessions. Therefore standards are improving well in speaking and listening. Teachers plan work on several levels to match the ability range. Teachers set targets for group tasks and allow sufficiently for individual progress. Staff identify teaching very closely with learning, and usually promote learning skills effectively. For instance, pupils use reading well for research, for example, when older pupils looked up information about John Lennon as part of their history topic. There are also opportunities for the pupils to share ideas with a partner as part of the school's strategy of using 'Talking Partners' in lessons, as when Year 5 pupils discussed which words they could add to their writing when describing characters or settings. Teachers set high expectations but this is not always evident when marking pupils' writing with many spelling errors uncorrected and no clear indication as to how the pupils should improve their spelling.
49. The pupils respond to the teachers' high expectations in a very positive way. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are very good. They listen well in lessons, and are prepared to think carefully and wrestle with ideas. A good strategy used by teachers and support staff is to ensure that pupils know what they need to be able to attain to reach the required levels to help them build their own learning still further. This is most effective when teaching the pupils basic reading skills and letter sounds but when pupils engage in independent writing they lack confidence for example, when note-taking or engaging in fast planning techniques to unlock their ideas.
50. The subject is well led and managed. The English co-ordinator has a substantial awareness of what is needed in the subject, coupled with a firm grip on standards and trends. The school's analysis indicated that writing was an area that needed attention, and the co-ordinator has introduced a programme of measures that significantly strengthen the provision. These measures have been observed in action, from as early as the Reception

year, and are contributing well to an even more secure pattern of progress with this year's standards improving on those seen in previous years.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

51. Teachers' planning includes specific reference to a good range of opportunities to enable pupils to practise and use their language skills to enhance standards in other subjects. In Years 3 to 6, the pupils are expected to produce comprehensive topic books of research into their history topic on Vikings or modern times such as researching the life and times of John Lennon. Role-play is used well in lessons, for example, when 'hot seating' a debate about environmental issues in geography. Good writing occurs in design and technology, where pupils record their design briefs, and evaluate their work well at the end of a project. The subject co-ordinator monitors systematically the literacy links with the result that there is a good element of consistency in the teaching across the school.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the subject is very good
- The teaching is good overall
- Standards are improving, particularly by the end of Year 6

#### **Commentary**

52. The pupils' attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 2 is still below average but they are making at least satisfactory and often good progress particularly in number work. The emphasis on problem solving by the end of Year 6 is having a very positive effect on the pupils' understanding of mathematical operations such as multiplication and division. This is the result of a very positive development opportunity that the co-ordinator has led and to which the staff have responded very promptly. Most pupils are now likely to attain average levels and a good proportion will achieve above average levels. The results of national tests have fluctuated year on year. This is because there is a very considerable variation in the nature of the cohort of pupils entering the school each year. Also, a significant number of pupils join and leave the school at different points during their primary years.
53. All the pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) are making good progress. The skilful assessment of their needs that results in clear targets being set for them is a key factor in building the pupils' confidence to undertake work across all the areas of mathematics. These pupils receive very considerable support to participate actively in the mental practice that generally precedes the main activity of each lesson. Great care is taken to track the pupils' progress and to organise the teaching to respond to their needs.
54. The teaching of the younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 is at least satisfactory and there are also strengths such as the close attention paid to developing the pupils' work in number. The older pupils in Years 3 to 6 are well taught and at times, the very good balance of direct teaching and practice results in very considerable progress during a single lesson. This was the case in one excellent lesson where pupils were learning methods of multiplying and dividing numbers. The pace of work was very brisk but supported by very sharp assessment of when additional teaching was required in order to consolidate a point or move the learning on.
55. The lessons are generally well planned. The younger pupils enjoy a variety of activities. Pupils greatly enjoyed a circus of activities that introduced them to the concept of ordinal numbers. The concentration skills of some younger pupils are limited but they respond well



when some of the activities are organised in the form of puzzles or they are able to use concrete equipment. The warm-up mental activities are lively but at times, they are not sufficiently challenging for the higher attaining younger pupils. The teaching assistants are generally very well deployed but there is room at times for them to be used to provide more stretching mental practice for some pupils.

56. The scrutiny of previous work shows that the pupils are acquiring skills in all the required areas. The younger pupils, for example, have experienced measuring activities and simple data handling. The oldest pupils are beginning to acquire early concepts of algebra. The teachers use the plenary sessions of lessons well to review and assess what the pupils have learned. Given that the current cohort of pupils in Years 2 and 6 are making good progress in the basics of mathematics, there is a growing awareness that the plenary sessions can be used for introducing the next step in the learning. This is currently not always being used to set homework challenges, for example, for the oldest pupils but there are examples of this being used effectively in some classes. The school has made good progress since the last inspection because the pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

57. There is a good level of awareness of how the pupils' technical vocabulary can be developed through work in mathematics. The pupils enjoy opportunities to use computers to collect and classify data. For example, the younger pupils classified and counted Barnaby Bear's items of clothing to be packed in a holiday suitcase. Older pupils have collected information during a local traffic survey linked to an environmental issue that they have been pursuing in geography. Now that their computer skills are improving rapidly it would be appropriate to provide increasing challenges, for example, in the use of control technology when they undertake work on angles.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Although standards are in line with those expected by the end of Year 6, they could be higher by Year 2
- The monitoring of the science curriculum is not sufficiently rigorous, particularly for the younger age groups
- Pupils with special educational needs are effectively integrated in lessons and achieve well

#### **Commentary**

58. Standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with those expected. However, standards at the end of Year 2 are below national expectations. This may be partly due to the declining level of attainment by pupils on entry to the school but largely because of insufficient monitoring of the science curriculum in Years 1 and 2. The science curriculum for these classes lacks appropriate challenge and as a result the pupils' skills and knowledge do not progress sufficiently from year to year. Standards are lower when compared with those found at the time of the last inspection but the attainment of the large majority of pupils on entry to the school is also lower.
59. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in those lessons seen and in two lessons was very good. Teachers plan their lessons based on a scheme of work that follows national guidelines and use assessments at the end of each topic to ensure that pupils have acquired the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding. Overall, teachers interpret the scheme effectively, although Year 1 and 2 teachers require greater guidance to ensure that the

curriculum offered fully challenges all pupils. Teachers' planning identifies learning outcomes and appropriate levels of challenge for pupils who learn at different rates. Lessons are well managed and include a variety of stimulating and challenging investigations and experiments leading to good levels of attainment in scientific enquiry. Support staff are used widely, for example, to provide additional help for pupils who learn at a slower rate and therefore, provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

60. In the best lessons observed pupils approached tasks with enthusiasm and enjoyment and had a good understanding of how to conduct an investigation. In one lesson, a Year 4 class investigated the human skeleton. They were able to name the important bones and understood the skeleton's function in protecting important organs of the body. They were able to plan an investigation to show that the skeleton grows as we get older. In a Year 6 class, pupils designed and created a compression burglar alarm using electrical circuits. Observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and an analysis of pupils work confirms that in the older age groups, pupils are appropriately challenged and enjoy science.
61. An analysis of the pupils' work and classroom displays shows that they cover a good range of science topics and overall pupils are offered a wide range of scientific experiences. By Year 2 for example, pupils have explored everyday electrical appliances and are beginning to understand the difference between battery and mains electricity. In Year 6 pupils investigate reversible and irreversible change and understand scientific vocabulary such as condensing and evaporating. Teachers' planning and assessment in science are satisfactory. The quality of marking is generally good and helps to inform pupils on how to improve their work. The presentation of work is satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies throughout the school in terms of writing and the recording of investigations.
62. The monitoring of the science curriculum by the subject leader is not sufficiently rigorous, particularly for the younger age groups. As a result pupils are not making the progress they should by the end of Year 2. The subject leader, who is aware of standards and the quality of provision and of areas for improvement, receives good support from the assessment co-ordinator in establishing science assessment materials. Science resources throughout the school are generally good and effectively support teaching and learning. There is some good use of ICT to support science teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has made very good progress since its last inspection and so the pupils now achieve well throughout the school
- ICT is playing an important role in the teaching and learning across the school
- The subject is well managed and resources well used to ensure that the pupils make good progress

### **Commentary**

63. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in developing and improving the curriculum. From the work that the pupils do in the computer room it is clear that standards are improving well and are currently in line with those expected throughout the school. There is also evidence that as standards continue to rise, there are increasing opportunities for more able pupils to achieve high standards by the end of Year 6. The pupils achieve well in most lessons and printed work displayed around the school indicates that the pupils are making good use of ICT in other subjects. The work includes for example, Year 3 to 6 pupils designing book covers for their stories using desk top publishing and modelling

skills. Year 1 and 2 pupils demonstrate how well they acquire skills such as word processing and graphics and are learning to edit and improve the presentations of stories. Older pupils enjoy editing their writing with a wide range of written accounts and presentations of particular topics or projects. In literacy, older pupils in Years 3 to 6 can produce headlines and stories in the form of newspaper articles.

64. The teaching is good with particularly skilful support and teaching provided by the headteacher who is also the ICT co-ordinator. His skilful intervention and support for the staff has led to a very good rate of improvement since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the subject are good with efficient use of the school's resources to enable teachers and support staff to fully utilise computers, projectors, programmable devices and interactive whiteboards across the full range of the curriculum. The teaching is clearly having an impact on pupils' learning so that, for example, the pupils can observe demonstrations of advanced word processing skills or the Internet on the projector and can use hyperlinks when using the Internet to research information. In this way, more able pupils learn ICT skills and knowledge beyond their years.
65. The pupils achieve well because there is a cross-curricular approach to the subject and the teaching successfully combines the skills the pupils acquire with those in other subjects. This was demonstrated when Year 1 and 2 pupils used a text programme to arrange and edit the presentation of a story picture and book cover. Older pupils in Years 3 to 6 are becoming increasingly adept at data handling. In one lesson observed, the tasks included some challenging problem solving, which required the pupils to discuss and predict different outcomes. This work extended their understanding of how to use the computer to sort and arrange figures or measurements by grouping them into categories and investigating fields or characteristics. By the end of Year 6 the pupils are adept at organising and modelling information using a powerful presentation program using advance word processing. Other work covered includes a good range of turtle graphics and sequencing work and the teaching observed was particularly skilful in helping the pupils to use control technology to program and sequence information.
66. The pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language also make good progress and achieve well. They are usually well supported by teaching assistants, especially when working in the computer room. The school is also good at grouping pupils so that more able pupils are on hand to help those who need additional support. This improves the knowledge and understanding and skills of both the more able pupils and those who find it difficult to grasp key skills the first time of trying.
67. The good leadership and management of the subject combined with the effective support provided by teaching assistants have helped the school to improve the subject further. The subject co-ordinator is good at organising training for staff and deploying resources to help the staff develop their skills and this has improved the professional competence of teachers and other support staff.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

68. In English, a lot of the computer generated work involves editing and refining extended writing using word-processing skills. In other subjects, such as geography, history and religious education, word-processed work is also evident. Teachers' planning across the curriculum is good and some of it incorporates the use of ICT but this is an area that lacks consistency because teachers are still becoming used to using the school's new resources and computer programs. The library is a very good resource and is well used for research on the Internet and for e-mailing. In mathematics, there is some good evidence of spreadsheets being used or data handling to complement and enhance what the pupils do when problem solving or interpreting data but this is not consistent. In science, there is less evidence that the pupils have used computers or new technology such as sensors to improve their

investigative work but digital cameras are well used to provide recorded evidence of visits or activities both in school and off site.

## HUMANITIES

69. Only one **geography** lesson was seen during the inspection. It is not therefore possible to make a firm judgement about provision. Discussions were held with pupils and teachers and previously completed work and displays scrutinised. The evidence indicated that Years 1 and 2 had an understanding of the different types of homes and features in their own locality. In Year 4 pupils visit Rhyl in North Wales to contrast Wolverhampton with a seaside town, and Year 6 have studied the local area to consider the impact of a new tram system. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were able to discuss work they had completed on deserts and weather around the world earlier in the year. They know that climate, including rainfall, influences the way we live. Older age groups in Years 5 and 6 use ICT to research world weather patterns. In the one lesson observed Year 1 pupils were able to compare and contrast features of towns and the seaside and follow-up tasks were well matched to the pupils' varying abilities.

### History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is effectively planned and provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their historical skills, knowledge and understanding
- The quality of teaching and learning in history is good. Pupils enjoy the subject and demonstrate good levels of achievement

### Commentary

70. History is taught as part of topic work. The scheme of work follows national guidelines and every year group ensures through their planning that each history theme develops the knowledge and skills appropriate to that age group. The quality of teaching was good or better in all lessons observed. It was obvious that the teachers had a passion for the subject and communicated that to the pupils. The pupils were enthusiastic in the lessons and enjoy history. Lessons were well planned and allowed pupils to study artefacts and other forms of historical evidence. Teachers were aware of the needs of different groups of pupils and, because they set tasks at different levels of difficulty, achievement in many lessons seen was good.
71. The provision for history offers a broad range of opportunities for pupils to study history from different view points. A Year 5 class were able to gain a greater understanding of recent history by studying the life of John Lennon. They used photographs, computer programs by using web sites and used other biographical information to research his life and the times in which he lived. History is brought to life through educational visits and through events such as the Viking day for Year 3 and 4 pupils when they used role-play to enter the world of the Vikings. In one very good Year 4 lesson, pupils designed and created 'Thor's Hammer' and had to make choices over the appropriate Viking runes and decoration to place on the hammer. Year 5 visit the Black Country Museum to gain an understanding of social conditions in Victorian times. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are also able to gain a greater understanding of history through studying the life of famous people such as Florence Nightingale, or major events such as the Great Fire of London.
72. Pupils develop good historical skills. A group of Year 6 pupils were able to reflect on the history they had been taught and place different periods in history in the correct time sequence. The pupils made good contributions to history lessons. They were able to use investigational skills and respond well to historical questions such as how and why were things different in the past and how did events affect people's lives. Their work in books is quite neatly presented but there is an overuse of worksheets and few examples of independent writing or recording. History resources are good. The library provides

opportunities for research and ICT is used well to support teaching. There are a variety of posters and artefacts available for each history theme. Management of the subject is satisfactory although there is insufficient evidence of assessment or formal monitoring to measure or raise standards further.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

73. Work was sampled in **art and design** and design and technology but no lessons were observed. The artwork on display is somewhat narrow in range and reflects the fact that the school is at an early stage of fully utilising national guidance to provide greater depth and breadth of experience. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 have had experience of painting self-portraits and also larger figures of characters from their core reading books. They have used their observation skills to reproduce patterns in the walls of local buildings but the range of materials they use is rather too narrow. There is some evidence that art and design is used to serve the purposes of topic work and therefore does not provide the pupils with sufficient experience of any one skill or medium over time. There was evidence of large-scale collage work but neither the sketchbooks nor the photographic records revealed any large three dimensional work. However, older pupils had observed a rich array of hats and designed and constructed some examples of their own. This showed an awareness of fitness for purpose together with the creative imagination needed to select fabrics and to add decoration.
74. Scrutiny of the sketchbooks of the older pupils shows that they are making preparatory drawings before producing finished work. However, the use of these sketches is limited because only rarely does a succession of sketches appear providing evidence of how pupils arrived at a composition. There is limited evidence of the pupils' awareness of the work of artists or craftspeople. Sketch books contain no reference to this aspect of art and design and do not contain any working reference to what might have influenced the pupils' own drawings.
75. In **design and technology**, examples of work on display and discussion with the older pupils suggest that they enjoy the process of making things and are satisfactorily acquiring the necessary skills to plan a design project, to execute it and comment upon modifications they might consider appropriate. The younger pupils used their knowledge of mathematical shapes to create small models of houses. In both the Year 1 and 2 and the Year 3 to 6 classes, the pupils are acquiring satisfactory skills to select and join materials. In one project, for example, the older pupils used a variety of stitching to decorate money containers. They selected suitable fabrics and then had to decide upon appropriate ways of securing the edges. The younger pupils have carried out careful observations of cars, tricycles, and scooters and noted the way different parts contribute to the mobility of the vehicles.
76. Only three **music** lessons were observed and the teaching observed was satisfactory in two lessons and good in the other. The pupils enjoy singing sessions. The school has satisfactory resources for music. Good use is made of a peripatetic music teacher who helps to accompany singing and music playing in lessons led by class teachers as well as leading lessons himself. In this way, class teachers are becoming increasingly confident in teaching music to their class and this compensates to some extent for the lack of musical expertise amongst the staff. Standards are broadly in line with those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 based on the limited observations and evidence during the inspection. This is similar to the standards found at the time of the last inspection so there has been satisfactory progress since then.

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils make good progress because the teaching is good and well organised
- The school has improved the curriculum well since the last inspection with more opportunities now for the pupils to understand the effects of exercise on their bodies

### **Commentary**

77. In the lessons seen the pupils participated with enthusiasm because the teaching made tasks interesting and fun. Standards are in line with those expected and this signifies good progress for all pupils. In a very good lesson for Year 5 pupils, the teacher provided very good opportunities for the pupils to learn how to dance the Haka, a Maori tribal war dance. Pupils interpreted the music with appropriate movements and wonderful facial expressions in a very good dance lesson. Good outdoor games lessons were observed, one in Year 1 and one in Year 4. Both were well organised and the pupils demonstrated how well they could control their bodies while passing or receiving a ball. All the pupils enjoy physical activities and the majority give of their best. They are well focused on the tasks set and respond positively to the high expectations of their teachers.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is good consequently pupils achieve well and make good progress as they develop their movement sequences in dance, gymnastics and games. Because relationships are good pupils are happy to share their work with their peers. A good range of extra-curricular activities encourages pupils to develop their skills further as part of a team. The school also provides older pupils with an annual residential visit where they experience outdoor adventurous activities. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and in particular the school has addressed one key weakness in the subject that was to provide better opportunities for the pupils to realise and measure the effects of exercise on their bodies. This was evident in all the lessons seen during this inspection.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

79. No personal, social and health education lessons were seen during the inspection. However, the school provides regular discussion sessions and more formal circle times to share ideas and discuss important topics that help to improve the pupils' personal and social development. Topics studied in geography and history lessons are often linked to whole school themes, assemblies as well as in religious education. Circle times and discussions in other lessons help to raise self-esteem and confidence especially when pupils speak to a group or the whole class. Good use is made of drama and role-play to help the pupils relate to the views of others and to prompt questions.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*