

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Worthing

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126042

Headteacher: Mr G Schofield

Lead inspector: Mr J G F Parsons

Dates of inspection: 24 – 26 November 2003

Inspection number: 257829

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: 4 to 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 260

School address: Cobden Road
Worthing
Postcode: BN11 4BD

Telephone number: 01903 234115
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr M Hodson

Date of previous inspection: 1 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

An average size Voluntary Aided school on the edge of Worthing town centre inspected 24th to 26th November 2003 by an inspection team led by John Parsons. Children's standards on entry are well below average particularly in speaking and listening skills. There are a significant number of pupils from minority ethnic groups mostly of Asian heritage. Some pupils have English as an additional language and are at the early stages of language development, most are from a European background. An above average number of pupils have special educational needs, most are at the early stages of support and none have statements. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, mobility is low but there are high levels of deprivation in the area.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22546	Mr J G F Parsons	Lead inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Physical education Foundation stage English as an additional language
9736	Mr J Brasier	Lay inspector	
11901	Dr P Lowe	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Geography History Music
20877	Mr D Pink	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school that has reversed a serious decline in standards in recent years. All pupils achieve very well overall due to the development of consistently very good teaching and learning. The headteacher and key staff provide excellent leadership and management. They have a strong vision for the future of the school and its changing intake and have successfully raised expectations of staff and pupils. The school offers **very good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards have improved significantly by the end of Year 6 and at least match those expected for pupils' age and are sometimes above. By the end of Year 2 they are below average in reading, writing and mathematics but improving.
- The levels of attainment on entry have declined and are well below average, in particular in speaking and listening skills. The school has not developed links with feeder nurseries sufficiently to help children's preparation before they start Reception.
- All pupils, regardless of background, achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in the Reception and Years 3 to 6. They are well cared for. Relationships are very strong. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good overall but there is a lack of awareness of the multicultural nature of society.
- All staff work as part of a very effective and committed team. The very good governance and inspiring leadership has enabled teaching and learning to improve, and is an important reason for the recent very rapid rise in standards.
- The consistent planning uses many original ideas; it is designed to challenge pupils of all abilities and is very effective. It makes a strong contribution to the high quality teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are effective but recording of pupils' progress is not always consistent.
- The quality of the curriculum is a strength of the school; there are many opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities. The very practical approach to subjects challenges pupils' learning and captures their interest.
- Parents have a high opinion of the school, most feel well informed and they play an important role in its life.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection after a dip in its effectiveness. Standards are rising. All the key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

All pupils regardless of background achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Reception and in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Reception, children's standards overall are below those expected for their age due to the very low levels of achievement on entry. The goals they are expected to reach by the end of Reception are achieved only in creative and physical development.

There is a particular weakness in the vital skills of speaking and listening. Standards by the end of Year 2 are rising but in reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematics they are below average. However, pupils achieve well and progress is good. These disappointing standards are because of the very low standards on entry and, until recently, the very high turnover of teachers. By the end of Year 6, in 2003 national tests, results compared to all schools were average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Compared to schools in a similar context, results were average in English but well below average in mathematics and science. Due to the very good achievement and progress in Years 3 to 6, and the high quality teaching and learning, standards have been rising. They at least match those expected for pupils' age and there are some examples of high attainment in all subjects. Standards are above average in all other subjects by the end of Year 6 except for physical education, which are average. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has been particularly good due to improved resources and teachers' subject knowledge.

Pupils' personal qualities are very well developed and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although their awareness of the multicultural nature of society is lacking. Pupils have very good attitudes to school; behaviour is good and attendance satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall and sometimes excellent. It is most effective in Reception and Years 3 to 6. Teachers know their pupils well and plan challenging and practical activities to take their learning forward. Particularly effective is the imagination and originality of ideas that teachers plan into lessons to engage pupils and keep their interest. The very good range of activities in the curriculum is an important factor in standards rising. It is practical and carefully designed to suit the needs of all pupils. High quality relationships significantly contribute to rising standards, and parents fully support the endeavours of the school and make an effective contribution to their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are major factors in the school's success. They have enabled the school to reverse the recent decline in standards. Supported by a strong governing body, there is a clear vision of high expectations for the school, to which all subscribe. This ensures a high degree of consistency in teaching and learning and high expectations.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils think highly of the school, with very few concerns in the answers to the questionnaires.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to sustain the very good rate of improvement, the headteacher and staff should continue to raise standards overall, but especially in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Years 1 and 2 by:

- Intensively developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, by prioritising these;
 - in teachers' planning;
 - and in pupils' teaching and learning.

To further improve provision the school should:

- improve links with the feeder nursery schools to help better prepare children for Reception;
- and develop all pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of society.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement of all pupils overall is very good. It is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Reception and Years 3 to 6. Standards are rising across the school. However, the inspection found that they are below average overall at the end of Reception and in reading, writing, and mathematics by the end of Year 2. They are at least average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. In all other subjects, standards are average in Years 1 and 2 and above average in Years 3 to 6 except for physical education which is average across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning and arrangements for children in Reception mean they achieve very well.
- The well below average standards on entry affects standards by the end of Year 2. These remain below average despite good levels of achievement and progress in lessons.
- There is excellent leadership, and a strong vision for the school. High expectations by all staff and more consistent teaching and learning means there has been a rapid improvement in standards in recently.
- Modified versions of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been adopted very effectively. A creative, imaginative and highly practical approach to planning engages and stimulates pupils. This is an important factor in standards rising.
- Because of the recent improvement pupils are on track to at least match average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 and in some instances exceed them.
- Assessment procedures are good and teachers know their pupils well, although they do not always record their progress consistently across the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.6 (14.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.4 (13.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.5 (15.2)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 36 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	27.2 (27.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.7 (25.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.9 (28.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Commentary

1. In the national tests of 2003 results were well below average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics compared to all schools. Compared to schools in a similar context they were well below average in reading and mathematics and very low in writing. By the end of Year 6 results in these tests were average in English and below average in mathematics

and science. Compared to schools in similar contexts, standards were average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, educational value added in 2002 from Year 2 to Year 6 was well above average in English average in mathematics and above average in science, it is likely to be similar in 2003.

2. In the Reception class, children, regardless of their capability, achieve very well. However, standards on entry are well below average and in particular speaking and listening skills are weak and children are very immature for their age. Despite, in many instances, having attended a number of private nurseries, children are not well prepared for Reception. They make very good progress due to the very good organisation and teaching and learning in this class. In the short time they are in the Reception they do not reach the standards expected in the six areas of learning. The exceptions are physical and creative development in which they achieve the goals for their age. Children are carefully tracked through effective assessment procedures during this period and this means that teachers know how much ground pupils have to make up in Years 1 and 2.
3. By the time pupils start Year 1 they are still quite immature and their speaking and listening skills are not well developed. However, they rapidly gain confidence and maturity, and most are well adjusted to school life by the end of Year 1. In Years 1 and 2 pupils achieve well and make good progress due to the good teaching. However, some find the transfer from Reception to the more formal Year 1 curriculum difficult. The school is aware of this and is in the process of continuing to modify the National Curriculum to smooth their path. Teacher assessment in science showed standards that were above expectations in 2003 national tests. The well below average results overall in reading, writing and mathematics were due not only to the very low standards on entry but also to the high turnover of teachers. The inspection found standards better than this but still below average in these subjects. However, they are rising rapidly. The combination of consistently good teaching and a very well planned, practical curriculum is having a very positive impact.
4. In Years 3 to 6 progress accelerates and pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. Lessons are very well planned, show imagination and are aimed at engaging and inspiring pupils. In the national tests of 2003, pupils achieved the national average in English, an improved result, but were below average in mathematics and science compared to all schools. The high teacher turnover is an important factor in these results and the inspection found standards that were at least average in all these subjects and sometimes above. The consistently very good teaching in recent months and very strong planned practical lessons have enabled this rapid improvement in standards. Pupils' educational value added from Year 2 to Year 6 in 2003 was good overall and very good in English and is likely to be similar in 2004. Pupils from minority ethnic groups or who have English as an additional language achieve similar standards to their peers.
5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 1 and 2 very well in the foundation stage and Years 3 to 6. There has been an increase in numbers in recent years but in some instances these pupils are lower attaining rather than having specific educational needs. Some classes have a high proportion of these pupils, which inevitably adversely affects overall standards and the results in the national tests. They benefit from the good assessment procedures, which effectively identifies their needs. The individual education plans used are thorough and well thought out. In particular they benefit from the very good and original lesson planning which is practical and admirably suited to the majority who are at the early stages of support. Similarly those pupils who do not speak English as their first language are very well supported and fully integrated into lessons. The school has a very strong commitment to ensuring that pupils, regardless of background, are given every opportunity to succeed. Pupils who are higher attainers or gifted and talented are recognised by the school and by the time they reach Year 6 they are achieving very well.

6. In all other subjects pupils mostly achieve average standards by the end of Year 2 and above average standards by the end of Year 6, except for physical education, which is average across the school. Standards in ICT were below average by the end of Year 6 during the previous inspection and they are now above average. This is due to significantly improved resources, including a comprehensive computer suite, interactive white boards in some classes and the improved subject knowledge of teachers. The school has a long standing tradition of high quality work in the arts and the inspection confirms that this continues with standards in art, music and drama being above average by the end of Year 6. The creative lesson planning and very good teaching of skills are the major factors in these good standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are a major strength of the school. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The desire to learn is very strong.
- Relationships are very good.
- The school's expectations of conduct are high.
- Racism and sexism are unknown and bullying rare.
- There is some rough behaviour among younger pupils in the playground.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils' to reflect on or rejoice in the spiritual or other wonders that they discover.
- Moral and social development are very good and cultural development is satisfactory. However, there is a lack of understanding about cultural diversity and knowledge of the world amongst younger children.

Commentary

7. The school has sustained this aspect as a strength in its provision as it was during the previous inspection. Pupils are very keen to answer questions and contribute their own ideas to lessons. They listen with respect to others' viewpoints and show pleasure in the achievements of others. Pupils say that everyone works hard and that they work together well. For instance, in a history lesson, Year 4 pupils conferred enthusiastically to predict what might have happened when the Romans left Britain.
8. Pupils exhibit mature behaviour in most situations. They appreciate what is expected of them and are keen to comply. There is a little challenging behaviour, but the teachers work well together to find solutions when there are difficulties. Pupils and parents say that there is no bullying, although a few parents expressed concern in the questionnaire. Most parents feel that behaviour is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and there have been very few exclusions in the past year.
9. A few younger pupils think that there is too much rough play on the playground. Some mild examples of this were seen during the inspection. The enterprising curriculum and the school's curriculum provide many opportunities for pupils to marvel at and appreciate the world we live in, through the exciting work in science, for example as Year 6 pupils work with bulbs and batteries to make a torch. The strong promotion of moral and social behaviour results in mature pupils who respect and enjoy each other's company. There are many musical and artistic opportunities for pupils, and performers from other cultures come into the school, but in practice the younger pupils lack multicultural understanding and display little awareness of what lies beyond our shores. In discussion with pupils they have little general knowledge or understanding of the world outside their immediate environment.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.4
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	0.5

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	142	2	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	55	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good overall. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is supported by an enriched curriculum, which is also very good. Very effective planning promotes high quality teaching, which inspires pupils to be enthusiastic learners. They are looked after well and the very high quality monitoring of pupils' personal development and good assessment procedures mean that teachers know their pupils well. Good links with parents mean that pupils are supported well at home and effective arrangements with the local secondary school prepare pupils for transfer. The links with the feeder nursery schools are less effective and children are not well prepared for entry to this school.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is very good in Reception and Years 3 to 6 and good in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Reception and Years 3 to 6 teaching and learning are very good.
 - The very consistent, imaginative and original planning underpins very effective teaching. Teachers have a very good understanding of the learning needs of all pupils.
 - Due to the very good management of pupils there are high standards of behaviour.
 - All staff work closely as a team.
 - Assessment procedures are effective but record keeping and setting of homework are not always consistent.
 - Teachers benefit from professional development in ICT, mathematics, dance and textiles from other primary and secondary schools that have specialist expertise.
10. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Reception and Years 3-6. Teaching is very good when planning is original and imaginative and the learning needs of the pupils are clearly identified and met by sensitive and inspirational teaching. The teaching of English in Years 5 and 6 is excellent because of an inspirational interpretation of the National Literacy Strategy. Very good teaching is found across the age range from Reception to Year 6. Music teaching is consistently very good.
 11. Where teaching is most effective, in literacy in Years 5 and 6 for example it is because there is a clear understanding of expectations in the school and an agreement as to styles and methods. Teachers are confident and knowledgeable about the subject and the needs of their pupils. Detailed, imaginative and original medium term planning is the key to this common understanding. Once the outline planning is established, then teachers use their considerable skills to plan the lesson to the needs of their pupils. This involves the effective development of literacy skills evident in most areas of the curriculum, an important factor in rising standards. However, speaking and listening skills are well below average on entry to the school and pupils have much ground to make up. This includes those for whom English is an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups. Like their peers, they lack the range of vocabulary and speaking and listening skills expected for their age. The support of teaching assistants for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Assistants run an effective session each morning before school for some of these pupils who need special help.
 12. Where teaching is very good or better, teachers engage pupils very effectively during lessons and have high expectations of their behaviour and achievement. This encourages pupils to feel secure and to be adventurous in their learning. Consequently, pupils work well together and as individuals. Lessons are well paced so that pupils remain interested and enthusiastic about their learning.
 13. Teaching assistants are used well, whether to support pupils with special educational needs or in classroom support. They know the pupils well and are skilled at identifying those who need help. Teamwork between teachers and assistants is very effective.
 14. The quality of teaching and learning is effectively enhanced by links with other schools in dance, drama and work with textiles. Homework is set regularly in English and mathematics and matches the work pupils do in lessons. However, there is not enough consistency in the use and standard of work expected.
 15. Teachers know their pupils well. Overall assessment is effective. Day-to-day assessments are made informally in the most effective lessons, so that teachers and pupils are aware of what has been achieved. Regular annual tests in English and mathematics provide good information and allow the school to set goals for the achievement of individual pupils. Termly records of pupils' progress are kept and these are passed on from one teacher to another as the class moves through the school, and when fully completed these are useful. However, recording is inconsistent, weakening to some extent their effectiveness. Details of pupils' progress are not shared enough with them, in order to help them understand how well they are progressing and what they can do to improve their own learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (7%)	23 (56%)	13 (32%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

A very good innovative curriculum, to which all teachers subscribe, together with very good opportunities for enrichment, are having a significant impact on raising standards of attainment. The accommodation is good and resources adequate, the introduction of interactive whiteboards has been most effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovative nature of the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of planning and the insistence that teachers be creative.
- The enrichment of the curriculum.
- The recruitment of very high quality teachers.
- The low priority given to physical education.
- Lack of development of an awareness of the multicultural nature of life in Britain.

Commentary

16. There is a very good innovative curriculum, which whilst meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, goes far beyond it. The curriculum reflects the approach of this Catholic school and takes as its starting point the education of 'the whole child'. There is a strong emphasis on personal development. The arts - art, music and drama - are used to build confidence and to supplement the skills learned in basic subjects.
17. The holistic approach to the curriculum with an expectation of success for all ensures that pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Pupils with English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups also benefit from this inclusive approach. High attaining pupils and those with specific gifts or talents are recognised and very well provided for, through the enriched curriculum and imaginative planning of lessons.
18. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative in their teaching to ensure that that needs of individual pupils are met. In order to achieve this, the development of medium term planning is given a high priority to ensure consistency and coverage. Once established, teachers are then expected to spend relatively short amounts of time adapting those plans to the day-to-day needs of their pupils. In this way consistent values and standards are set so that the outcomes can be effectively monitored. In Year 3, for example pupils extend their skills in literacy and mathematics through their historical study of Ancient Egypt as well as developing an understanding of how society worked in this period. Provision for ICT is good; in particular the development of resources and teachers' subject knowledge and skills has had a significant impact on standards. The curriculum is enhanced through links with other schools, for example in dance, drama and work with textiles. However, although the curriculum is covered fully, physical education is given a low priority.
19. The enrichment of the basic curriculum is very good. Development of social and artistic skills underpins the curriculum and these are enhanced in basic curriculum planning. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good for the size of the school. Local professionals provide

sports activities – including football, basketball and karate. There is a school orchestra and a significant number of pupils have instrumental music tuition. There is an arts club and opportunities for pupils to study Italian and Latin.

20. The school has been successful in recruiting very high quality teachers. The support staff are effective and understand the needs of the pupils well. This is in part, due to the reputation established by the school. The newly arrived teachers and the more consistent staffing have made a very marked impression on standards in recent months. Teachers are attracted to the school by the vision of the headteacher and by the way in which he expects teachers to be inventive and imaginative in supporting the learning needs of all pupils. The accommodation is good. Space is used well so that there is a quiet uncluttered atmosphere about the school. The high standards of cleaning and maintenance support this effective learning atmosphere. The high quality of displays provide visual stimulus and establish a sense of high achievement. The arts curriculum, including music, is very well resourced.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are well cared for. They are well supported through very effective monitoring of their personal development and good assessment procedures. There is no school council but the school makes a good effort to involve pupils in its life and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care is very good, based on a trusting and caring relationships with teachers and teaching assistants.
- There are good arrangements for child protection, welfare and health and safety.
- Academic support and advice are based on factually determined progress.
- Although there is no school council, pupils feel that their views are taken seriously by staff.

Commentary

21. Pupils told inspectors how happy they were in the school, and parents confirmed this. This was clearly a very good foundation for their work in school. The headteacher and other teachers talked caringly about pupils and the difficulties they might be facing. It was clear that child protection concerns are well embedded in their thinking. Health and safety is prominent in the life of the school. The headteacher takes a keen interest in risk assessments for external visits and ensures that they are thorough. Midday supervisory staff double as teaching assistants, which is beneficial to the management of pupils' behaviour. They are well regarded by the children, who find them helpful and fair. Pupils' welfare is well provided for, with several staff trained in handling critical medical conditions. There is a breakfast club and an after-school club on site. There is a medical room. Pupils' views are sought through questionnaires, and all pupils spoken to felt that their ideas on school issues were taken seriously. Pupils have targets and the older pupils discuss their progress towards them. However, in some classes not enough opportunities are given for pupils to know how they are progressing and what they could do to improve. The school takes children from a very large number of nursery schools. Induction procedures for children in Reception are adequate. However, the school's links with feeder nurseries are not sufficiently established to ensure good preparation before children start Reception.
22. The support given to all pupils from all backgrounds is good including those with special educational needs. A senior manager and a very experienced teaching assistant ensure that pupils are identified early and monitored effectively throughout their school careers. Teaching assistants are consistent in their dealings with pupils and this helps pupils to develop in a confident atmosphere. Supportive individual education plans are devised for pupils with special educational needs. However, these are not always used enough to involve pupils in their learning and to allow them to see the achievements they make and what they need to do to improve.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links with parents and other primary and secondary schools and the local community. However, the school's links with feeder nursery schools are lacking and children are not well prepared for Reception. Parents' support the school well, think highly of it, and the school values their participation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are insufficiently developed prior to children starting Reception.
- Parents provide very good practical support to the school.
- There are good transfer arrangements to the senior school.
- Good quality information is provided to parents.
- The school handles parental concerns and complaints very well.

Commentary

23. The activities in feeder nursery schools are not sufficiently in harmony with the requirements of Reception and children's standards on entry to the school are well below average, particularly in speaking and listening skills.
24. Parents have high opinions of the school, with a very few concerns in the responses to the questionnaire. The school is very good at seeking parents' views and acting upon them, it has an 'open door' policy, which is appreciated by parents. The school provides good information to parents in the prospectus, governors' annual report, newsletters and reports on pupils. School reports are succinct, evaluative and personal and contain targets and information about progress relative to the National Curriculum. Parents are supportive in many ways, raising funds through the parent teacher association, helping in class, and with homework and reading. The school is thoughtful in that it provides separate information to parents who are no longer together. Joint plans are made to tackle attendance or behaviour problems. There are three consultation evenings during the year that are appreciated by parents. Parents are welcome at assemblies and over 40 parents attended the class assembly held during the inspection. Parents are welcome in the school and it was good to see pupils leading their parents back into the classroom to view work they were proud of.
25. The effective induction procedures for secondary education take place on two days in the summer term. This includes an escorted train ride, as that is the predominant means of transport for many of the pupils when they attend secondary school. Subject coordinators meet with staff from other Catholic primary schools and the secondary school as part of their in-service programme. A beacon middle school has been financially supportive in some areas of the curriculum (textiles and dance). A secondary school gives help in ICT through the weekly visits of their 'Technobus'. Advanced skills teachers from this secondary school have been very helpful in supporting St Mary's teachers in ICT and mathematics. These links contribute to the school's adventurous curriculum.
26. The school works closely with all parents of pupils including those with English as an additional language or minority ethnic groups to help pupils achieve their potential. Parents of those pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in the planning of provision through attendance at annual reviews. The school maintains effective links with local support agencies and these have resulted in improved diagnostic programmes to better monitor these pupils' progress. Records are transferred effectively to the local secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership, management and vision is excellent overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and vision for the school. The management systems are excellent and play a major part in the school's success. The governors provide very good support and hold the school to account.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision of the needs of the school and its development.
- All staff share his vision for the future, leading to very good consistency in planning and in teaching and learning.
- The rapid improvement in standards is due to the very effective recruitment of high quality staff and implementation of very good initiatives.
- The reflective and flexible management through detailed planning has modified the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils and the changing intake.

Commentary

27. The leadership and vision of the headteacher are excellent and these have been the major factors in raising standards in the school in a very short space of time. The key senior managers in the school share the headteacher's vision and through very effective teamwork ensure very high quality teaching and learning. The excellent management overall inspires a sense of commitment, and purposefulness, to provide the best and most appropriate education for all pupils. The detailed monitoring of pupils ensures that those from different backgrounds, including those from minority ethnic groups are well provided for and the school has an effective race equality policy which is reported to parents annually.
28. The governing body is effective in ensuring that statutory duties are fulfilled and in supporting the headteacher in a critical but supportive manner. It has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Many governors have immediate experience of the school through being parents of pupils and former pupils.
29. The headteacher has a clear holistic vision of pupils' education. As a means to this end, high priority is placed on learning through the visual and performing arts. This is matched with a commitment to expect high standards from all pupils in all subjects. The arts provision is expected to help support learning in basic subjects. Through this practical provision there is a very high commitment to providing equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. The headteacher leads by example and inspires this confidence in all the staff in the school. He is committed to detailed, medium term curriculum planning, and insists that teachers are creative in their shorter-term lesson plans. This means that whilst the statutory curriculum requirements are met, teachers feel they have the freedom and encouragement to innovate. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, form effective teams, which involve and enthuse pupils in their learning.
30. There is a common approach to the coordination of subjects. This helps in the consistent development of the very strong practical but flexible curriculum organisation. This also ensures the very effective management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs, and indeed all pupils, regardless of background.
31. All staff have a very reflective approach to their work. They constantly review and change their practices to benefit the needs of all pupils. This very effective continuous review ensures that teaching and learning is kept practical, interesting, relevant and engages all the pupils. Through excellent performance management procedures, professional development and the excellent induction of staff new to the school the headteacher ensures that standards and a common approach to teaching and learning is maintained. Effective guidelines are set to enable teachers to manage their workload.

32. It is the very high quality and holistic philosophy of leadership which has attracted very high quality staff to this school. Staff have joined the school because of its reputation and because they share the vision of the headteacher. A period of staff turbulence in the recent past adversely affected school development and standards. The school is now much more settled and standards are rising rapidly.
33. The financial management of the school is very good. The governors regularly monitor spending patterns after first establishing the budget. The bursar is well trained and supported in the use of data systems. Good care is taken when ordering to ensure best value.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	582,304
Total expenditure	570,253
Expenditure per pupil	2,254

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	12,785
Balance carried forward to the next	24,836

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

34. The arrangements for children in Reception are very good. The Reception class and combined Reception and Year 1 class are very well led and managed. The coordinator and teacher liaise closely with other teachers in Years 1 and 2 to ensure children's continuous development. The procedures adopted to check pupils' progress are effective. In many activities the teachers and assistants can be seen closely monitoring children's individual achievement and progress. Children with special educational needs are well provided for and fully integrated into all activities; they achieve well and make good progress. Indeed all children regardless of background including those with English as an additional language and from minority ethnic groups are given good opportunities to succeed.
35. All six aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum are fully implemented and there has been good development since the previous inspection. The intake has changed and standards on entry are well below average. Many children have weak speaking and listening skills and are quite immature when they start Reception. Despite having attended various private nursery schools, in many instances, children are not well prepared for Reception and have much ground left to cover. However, the quality of teaching and learning is very good overall in all aspects of the foundation stage curriculum. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, are well organised, plan very efficiently, and use time, resources and assistants effectively.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation of the classroom and outside area enables children to play together in a constructive way using a good range of toys and construction materials.
- Many children are very immature when they start school and need much support to develop, which they receive. They are given very good opportunities to collaborate with each other and develop maturity when working and playing together.
- The very good range of activities helps children to develop their independence and good attitudes to their work. However, many have a short attention span and find more academic work difficult.
- Most children quickly become confident and are happy at school and will speak out in discussion time, but they often do not speak clearly, and rarely in full sentences.

Commentary

36. Children achieve very well and mature quickly in Reception. The teachers and their assistants have established a harmonious working environment and through very good teaching ensure that all children are valued and comfortable in class. Some achieve the expectations for their age, especially the older ones in the mixed Reception / Year 1 class. Many do not as they are quite immature and do not have enough time in Reception to develop in this aspect fully, and standards are below average. The school is aware of this and makes efforts to smooth their path in Years 1 and 2 by modifying the curriculum. However, children settle into Reception quickly and thrive in the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms.
37. Teachers manage children very well and the classrooms are bright, colourful and welcoming to them. The very good teaching and learning that takes place quickly develops children's understanding of the correct way to behave. This encourages them to talk about their

feelings and discuss their behaviour. However, the lack of well developed speaking skills hampers this development. Because of the very good teaching, children mostly respond well in class during question and answer sessions, but often the teachers have to frequently repeat what they say to ensure that all understand. Sometimes children's attention will wander and teachers have to work very hard to keep them on task.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication and literacy is very well taught and lessons are very well planned with simple, clear and practical objectives that children understand.
- Children are very well managed, and time and resources are used very well.
- Many children do not speak or listen well, few speak in whole sentences and some children are difficult to understand.
- Much attention is paid to developing literacy skills, and there is constant interaction between the teachers, assistants and children.

Commentary

38. All children make very good progress because of the very good teaching but due to their immaturity and very low standard on entry many do not achieve the standard expected for their age by the end of Reception. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and the quality of teaching is very good. They make a very concentrated effort to raise standards in this aspect of learning. They manage children very well and there was never a raised voice during the inspection. Lesson planning shows great imagination and many lessons follow a theme. During the inspection it was based on the story 'we're all going on a bear hunt', which children are familiar with and enjoy. Very good questioning by teachers and their assistants helps to develop children's understanding. However, when children respond they show that they have difficulty in expressing themselves. Inevitably this slows development. There are good opportunities in this lesson for children to reflect on what it must be like to be alone, like the bear. Some children write letters clearly and understand that text goes from left to right, a few write unaided but most need considerable help with their work.
39. During one writing lesson the higher attaining pupils concentrated for a considerable length of time but the majority found this difficult. Children use a 'phonic sheet' or prompt to help them to sound out words and this is used well. However, most need adult help to spell 'swishy' 'swashy,' which they have seen written down shortly before, showing poor recall. Children with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers and achieve very well. Those with English as an additional language are very well supported. They are often given one-to-one attention by a teacher or assistant to prepare them to participate fully in the lesson. Children, regardless of background, achieve very well.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some children count numbers to ten and some to 20 and beyond. Others do not recognise individual numbers unless they are in sequence and do not recognise them when written in words. Many do not understand what zero is.

- During structured play children are beginning to weigh and measure informally using sand and water and building apparatus.
- Children are familiar with using ICT and use the computer well to help develop their number skills and make simple charts and graphs.
- Only higher attainers use words like 'larger' 'smaller' 'taller' 'longer', mathematical vocabulary is quite limited in many instances. However, standards are rising rapidly.

Commentary

40. Children have the opportunity through very well organised resources and very good teaching to learn basic number skills and through practical work they learn to weigh and measure. They achieve very well, due to the very good teaching, but they are hampered somewhat by their poorly developed speaking skills and lack of mathematical vocabulary. However, they are given every opportunity to develop. For example, going to the dining hall they count how many steps there are. When playing outside in the designated area the assistant or nursery nurse will ask children to name specific plastic numbers hanging on a line. Teachers and assistants record children's answers as part of the effective ongoing assessment procedures. During one very good lesson the teacher was effectively developing children's knowledge of numbers up to ten. Although they were very enthusiastic, only about a third of the class were secure with recognition of all the numbers. Higher attainers are on track achieve the standards expected in this aspect of learning, but not the majority.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children show a good understanding of the computer and what it can do.
- During lessons they develop an understanding that sound travels, using simple experiments. However, many have difficulty understanding and expressing concepts such as 'the further away the fainter the sound'.
- They build and construct models effectively using a variety of materials.
- Work is extended into a well equipped outside area.

Commentary

41. Very good teaching and learning in this aspect means that children achieve very well and are beginning to develop an understanding their immediate environment. The teacher uses the local area effectively to develop children's understanding of place and they map out simply where they have been using blocks. Lessons encourage children to be inquisitive and look carefully at their surroundings. When working on the concept that sound travels the teacher uses good question and answer sessions to develop pupils' understanding. However, the lack of well developed speaking and listening skills means that children sometimes have difficulty in expressing themselves and making it clear that they understand, and whilst a few higher attainers are likely to achieve this early learning goal the majority will not.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is at least **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of mobile playground equipment, including tricycles and trolleys. There is a climbing tower and slide and a well planned outside area that encourages physical development.

- Children show good spatial awareness and are given time to use the available small and large apparatus with suitable supervision.
- Children enjoy more formal physical education lessons in the hall.
- In the playground, children move with confidence, imagination and in safety; they show control and coordination in their movements.

Commentary

42. No directly taught physical education lesson was seen so no judgement can be made overall about teaching and learning. However, during play in the outside area children enjoyed physical activity and showed confidence when using the wheeled and static apparatus. The teachers and their assistants intervened effectively to assist children using small apparatus such as tricycles and trolleys and ensuring that they are kept active. Pupils use smaller equipment well, showing fine movements when using modelling sticks to make clay models. Children are dextrous and well coordinated when using scissors, they take due care, listening well to simple practical instructions. They achieve very well and majority are set to reach the expected level in this goal by Year 1.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's art work is of high quality.
- Organisation of the classroom encourages creativity through a very good range of resources.
- There are well planned activities that are imaginative and enjoyable and children use a wide range of media including paint, clay and charcoal.

Commentary

43. The bright and stimulating classroom and outside area encourages children to be creative. There is a wide range of activities organised to enable children to express themselves and they enjoy these 'hands on activities' and concentrate very well. Teaching is very good and all pupils regardless of background achieve very well. A majority of children are set to reach the standards expected in this aspect of learning. In a very good lesson seen children were using a wide variety of materials to illustrate the story of 'we're all going on a bear hunt'. Some were using clay and were able to approximate the shape of the bear with help, and all their models had a head, legs and arms. Children used the modelling tools safely and effectively.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective planning promotes high quality teaching and learning.
- Literacy skills are taught well across the curriculum.
- Pupils are interested and motivated to learn.
- Assessment is good and is used well to respond to individual needs.
- Standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are below expectations in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

44. Pupils' results in English by the end of Year 2 in the 2003 national tests were well below average in reading and writing and when compared to schools in a similar context they were well below average in reading and very low in writing. By the end of Year 6 in 2003 national tests results in English were average, both compared to nationally and to schools in a similar context.
45. The inspection found that standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are on track to be below average by the end of Year 2. This can be attributed to the fact that this group of pupils entered Reception with standards that were well below average, and were adversely affected by high staff turnover in previous years. However, pupils of all abilities are now making good progress and achieving well. Progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 and standards in English are likely to be at least average by the end of Year 6 for all pupils. Those with special educational needs, from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language achieve similar standards to their peers. This is due to teaching which is very good and, sometimes excellent. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds including those with English as an additional language are now making very good progress against their prior attainment and achieving very well. Inspection findings suggest that pupils' standards in English in Years 1 and 2 are continuing to improve and that pupils in Year 6 will meet the challenging targets set for them.
46. Standards in speaking and listening are below average by the end of Year 2, and average by the end of Year 6. A significant number of pupils in Years 1 and 2 have difficulty in listening for sustained periods of time, and their communication skills are underdeveloped. Pupils in Year 6 listen carefully to each other and to adults and contribute well to discussions, demonstrating the very good progress achieved in Years 3 to 6. There is no difference in standards between boys and girls although some year groups have many more boys than girls. There are planned opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills in every area of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 3 spoke confidently and enthusiastically about their visit to the British Museum and the research that they had carried out on the Internet about Ancient Egyptian gods.
47. Pupils' attainment in reading is tracked and analysed to improve standards. Regular reading practice, and improved phonics teaching (sounding out letters and words) from an early age are causing standards to rise. A more consistent approach to the teaching of spelling and writing has also been instrumental in the recent improvement in standards. Pupils are encouraged to practice their reading and spelling at home and most parents support their children well.
48. Standards in writing are below average in Year 2, but are rising. They are average in Year 6. There are planned opportunities for writing in most subjects. Recent monitoring shows that the school's continuing emphasis on writing is having a positive influence on standards. The writing of many pupils in Years 5 and 6, in particular, is varied, thoughtful and interesting. One girl, writing a poem about the Second World War asks, 'Why did it have to be that way?' She refers to, 'Blood-covered weapons lying in deserted fields', and concludes that despite blood-red poppies reminding us of the effects of war:

'People still kill and people still die,
People still suffer and people still cry.'
49. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 and 2, and very good in Years 3 to 6. Very consistent team planning is carefully designed to engage pupils' interest and provide practical and very effective experiences. Pupils develop their ICT skills when designing the front covers of newspapers and editing text on the screen. Year 5 and 6 teachers make excellent use of their interactive whiteboards to promote learning across the curriculum.

Teachers have a very good understanding of the learning needs of individual pupils and use a wide range of successful strategies to challenge their thinking. The promotion of equality of opportunity is very good and teachers' insist on high standards of behaviour, for example during discussions care is taken to ensure all pupils participate. Strengths of learning are in pupils' application to their work, their productivity and their capacity to work collaboratively. Homework is set regularly and usefully extends pupils' learning in some but not all classes.

50. The subject leader provides very good leadership and manages the subject very well. He has a very clear vision for the future development of the subject. He analyses school test results in detail and suggests changes of emphasis in teaching, for example in spelling, in the light of what the test results reveal. Assessment is good and the results of assessment are used well to respond to pupils' individual needs. The curriculum is enriched by cross-curricular links. The quality of provision, based on effectiveness, has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Leadership and management, the curriculum, the use of assessment and teaching, all show good improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented well. It provides a structure for the progressive development of pupils' speaking, listening, reading, writing and spelling skills in all areas of the curriculum. Additional literacy support is provided for pupils who experience difficulties. Resources for the literacy hour are good and help teachers to develop the elements of the literacy strategy effectively.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is very good.
- Teaching is very high quality overall.
- Very good relationships lead to very good management of pupils' behaviour.
- Informal assessment is used effectively to check pupils' achievements.
- The limited development of language skills depresses standards in Years 1 and 2.
- Assessment procedures are good but recording is not always used consistently in all classes.

Commentary

52. Standards in mathematics are below average by the end of Year 2 and at least average by the end of Year 6. In the 2003 national tests standards were well below average in both year groups. Standards had declined over the past two years due to a high turnover of teachers and lower expectations. The significant improvement in standards observed during the inspection is due to more consistent high quality teaching and learning. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and classroom assistants and achieve similarly to their peers. All pupils achieve well including those who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language and in Years 3 to 6 they achieve very well. More able pupils are effectively challenged throughout the school and achieve their potential. Those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers. There is little difference observed in the standards achieved by boys and girls, although there are significantly more boys in some year groups.
53. Pupils enter the school with mathematical and language skills which are very much below those expected. The achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good; it is very good in Years 3 to 6. There is a high concentration on the development of number skills and pupils are slowly

gaining confidence in mental calculations. Pupils find problem solving which involves the use of language difficult because of their low level of English language skills. Specific support is given to those for whom English is an additional language, which is effective.

54. Overall the teaching is very good. It is consistently good, sometimes very good in Years 1 and 2, and consistently very good in Years 3 to 6. Strengths include:
- the lively and brisk pace of lessons, which involve and enthuse the pupils in their learning;
 - the help given to pupils to find alternative ways of recalling concepts and ideas;
 - the effective and informal day to day assessments made during lessons, which allow pupils to evaluate their own learning;
 - the high expectations of teachers, which challenge pupils in their learning.

Pupils often make good use of computers. In Year 6 they record data on spreadsheets on the computer. Planning is effective and allows teachers to innovate to meet the needs of pupils of a wide range of abilities. However, the recording of pupils' attainment over time is inconsistent and this does not always allow effective records to be passed from teacher to teacher. This is particularly noticeable in the records from the previous period of multiple changes in teaching staff. Homework is regularly set and usefully extends pupils' learning in some but not all classes.

55. The adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy as the basis for planning has made a significant contribution to the rise in standards. Detailed and imaginative planning ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The leadership and management of the subject is very good. Leadership by example, sets the expectations for others to follow. Effective monitoring of planning, teaching and pupils' learning ensures that standards continue to improve.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. The opportunities for developing mathematics across the curriculum are good. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example pupils study paintings by Picasso to identify numbers of regular and irregular four sided shapes. In Year 3, in history, pupils model the three-dimensional shapes of the pyramids. In science, pupils measure and record numbers effectively.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At its best, the quality of teaching is inspiring and pupils learn very well through a 'hands on' approach. ICT is used most effectively in Years 3 and 6.
- There is very good development of literacy skills in science in Years 3 to 6 and pupils articulate their thoughts and ideas well.
- Scientific language is used in all classes, but in Years 1 and 2, pupils' vocabulary and speaking skills are quite restricted and this slows development.
- Recording of practical experiments is particularly good in Years 3 to 6; in Years 1 and 2 pupils are less productive and their work less well presented because of their weaker literacy skills.
- All pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 to 6, including those who have special educational needs.

Commentary

57. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection after a dip in standards. Teachers plan a very effective range of practical activities and scientific experimentation. The inspection found that standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and at least average by the end of Year 6. Sometimes standards in Year 6 are above average. There is no difference between the standards of boys and girls although there are many more boys than girls in some classes. The school has new effective procedures based on national guidance, for checking on pupils' progress. This enables teachers to plan work which challenges all abilities, including those with English as an additional language. These pupils are fully integrated into lessons and achieve and progress as well as their peers. The leadership and management of the subject by the enthusiastic coordinator are very effective and standards are rising. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, with the adoption of a more practical 'hands on' curriculum.
58. Planning for lessons is imaginative and interesting to pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6. In one very good Year 4 lesson pupils had to devise a test to find out 'will a snowman melt faster if he wears an overcoat', much interesting discussion ensued and pupils were fascinated by the concept. Younger pupils select and log items that are man-made and those that occur naturally. In a good Year 2 lesson they produce a chart to illustrate their findings, although mostly accurate, were not well presented. ICT is used well in this subject and pupils produce graphs and charts to illustrate their findings especially in Years 3 to 6. Some good discussion occurred and most pupils were able to select man made items from natural ones. Weaknesses in vocabulary were exposed when no pupils in a group of average ability were able to identify that the outside covering of a tree was bark, instead they called it 'wood'.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision for ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- ICT skills are used well across the curriculum.

Commentary

59. Attainment is average by the end of Year 2 and is above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and they achieve very well in Years 3 to 6. Low standards in ICT were an issue at the last inspection. There has been good improvement since then. Standards have improved significantly. There has been a marked improvement in resources. Through a very well-planned curriculum, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding progressively, each year.
60. By the end of Year 2, pupils confidently use computers for a range of purposes. They organise and classify information to present their findings and save, retrieve and print their work. They communicate information using text, pictures and sound. When finding information, they frame questions and interpret their findings, for example, during a project on 'Teddy Bears'. They use a sequence of instructions to control the route taken by a programmable robotic device, and use simulations and models for investigation.
61. By the end of Year 6, pupils competently use the Internet to search large databases and to interpret information. They analyse information during a data investigation, and combine different forms of information from a variety of sources. Pupils gain an understanding of

spreadsheets, for example when carrying out a pocket money investigation linked with mathematics. Their experience of control technology and monitoring develops well through a burglar alarm project linked with science. They are familiar with plotting, and monitor environmental conditions and changes on the computer. They become proficient in giving multimedia presentations. Literacy skills are well developed through research, writing newspaper articles and editing text.

62. The quality of teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and this leads to good learning on the part of all pupils. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is very good. Most teachers combine explanation, demonstration and practical activity very well; as a result, pupils make very good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning support assistants and the ICT technician provide very good support in the computer suite. Ongoing assessment in lessons enables adults to recognise mistakes and misconceptions and use them constructively to aid learning. Time and resources are used very well.
63. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader has a very clear sense of educational direction and gives very good support to staff and pupils. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good and there is equality of access and opportunity for all pupils including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, all of whom achieve as well as their peers. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum (ICT)

ICT is used effectively in many subjects across the curriculum. There are examples of its good use in science, history and geography by pupils who are using the Internet for research purposes. The interactive whiteboards in Years 5 and 6 are most effective and enhance pupils' learning. Word processing is effective.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

64. Year 1 pupils effectively develop their early mathematical, scientific and geographical skills as they study the school grounds, particularly the environmental area, and draw plans and maps. Their mathematical and ICT skills develop well as they produce pictograms, charts and block graphs. Their learning is enriched through visits to the Pulborough Nature Reserve and The Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre, in Arundel. Pupils in Year 3 extend their knowledge of Worthing effectively through local visits, and compare and contrast the physical and human features with a town of similar size in Europe. Year 4 pupils gain some understanding of less economically developed countries, through a study of Africa. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 very effectively study rivers, coastal erosion and deposition, the water cycle, and the use of water. They develop their ICT skills well as they carry out research.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are strong cross-curricular links.
- Independent enquiry skills are taught well.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits.

Commentary

65. Standards are average by the end of Year 2. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and achieve well. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and all pupils make very good progress and achieve very well.
66. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a sound knowledge of life in their grandparents' time. Their learning is enriched by a visit to a toy museum and supporting displays of old toys, including a rocking horse. They study the contribution of a number of famous people, including Louis Braille and Henry Ford. Their sense of chronology develops as they learn about famous events, such as the Gunpowder Plot.
67. Pupils in Year 3 made very good links with literacy in one very good lesson. They discussed effectively what they had learnt on their visit to the British Museum, and enacted Ancient Egyptian beliefs about the creation, linking this to their study of myths in literacy. They developed their mathematical skills well when they measured and constructed a pyramid using their computer skills. They researched material about Ancient Egyptians gods using the Internet. Year 4 pupils developed their literacy skills well, as they recalled their visit to Fishbourne Palace. They showed very good understanding of the relevance of historical sources and a good knowledge of the Roman legacy to Britain. Year 5 pupils made very good links with literacy whilst studying the Second World War. They wrote creative poems about war, and good cross-curricular links were made with mathematics and design and technology through the construction of air-raid shelters.
68. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 and 2 and is very good in Years 3 to 6. Lessons are very well-planned and strong links are made with other subjects. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching strategies that gain pupils' commitment. Pupils are encouraged to pose historical questions and seek answers. There has been good improvement in teaching, standards, and the curriculum since the previous inspection.
69. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. She has enriched the curriculum through cross-curricular links and the encouragement of visits to support learning, for example, a visit by Year 5 pupils to the Imperial War Museum. Good resources support learning. A very good portfolio of assessed work demonstrates pupils' good achievement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a longstanding tradition for encouraging the arts and this has been maintained from the previous inspection.
- There is good development of skills particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- All pupils enjoy art and design and there is extensive use of sketch books in which pupils effectively record their ideas and trial their work.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in 3 to 6 and often reach standards that are similar to their peers.
- Very good cross-curricular use of art and design, particularly in history and geography, illustrating cultures such as the Aztecs, ancient Egyptians and paintings showing African influences.

Commentary

70. The quality of teaching is very good overall. All pupils regardless of background and ability achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 to 6. Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Teachers plan their lessons most effectively and with imagination. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 3, pupils and the teacher and assistant were dressed in costumes as Ancient Egyptians and pupils drew and painted portraits using the conventions of the period. Some very good discussion took place about the difference between the how people look in Ancient Egyptian pictures and how they really look. Work in this lesson made a strong cross-curricular contribution to pupils' work on this topic. Very good observational work occurs in Year 6 and in one very good lesson pupils were encouraged to look closely at their own finger and draw it. Good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to illustrate how to shade a drawing to give it depth.
71. There is good use of different media, and in one good Year 2 lesson pupils effectively use charcoal to draw pictures of soft toys, looking particularly at the texture of the subject and skilfully using techniques to give the impression of fur. Good progress occurs in Years 1 and 2 and this accelerates in Years 3 to 6 and is very good. Art and design makes a good contribution to literacy and in particular to speaking and listening skills. Good discussion took place during many lessons. The subject is well managed by an enthusiastic coordinator and a very useful portfolio of graded work helps teachers to assess standards and keep a good record of pupils' progress. Pupils with special educational needs progress well in this subject and enjoy the opportunity to express themselves in different media and their skills develop very well.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **at least good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some well planned and taught topics.
- Good cross-curricular planning fits in well with the school's philosophy of learning by doing.

Commentary

72. Only one lesson was seen in design and technology, so no judgement can be made about the quality of teaching and learning overall. Analysis of pupils' work indicates that standards are average in Years 1 and 2, and above average in Years 3 to 6. Pupils regardless of background, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 to 6. There is a full and effective curriculum in use in all classes and the new, dynamic coordinator is raising the profile of the subject across the school and developing the curriculum. Practical work includes making working models which show great ingenuity, for example, robotic controllable models using old CDs as wheels are particularly well made. Good cross-curricular work includes construction of air raid shelters with lighting as part of Year 5's study of World War Two. The school keeps a portfolio of graded work, which is a useful tool in assessing pupils' progress. The subject makes a good contribution to literacy, including written design instructions and recording evaluation of the completed designs. Accurate measurement and estimation make a good contribution to numeracy skills. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.
73. In the one lesson seen in Year 6, which was well taught, pupils make good progress and use a reasonable range of resources. They effectively recalled the work they had done on electric circuits in science, remembering words like 'series' and 'parallel'. The objective was to design a working torch using various existing designs as a basis by making up their own

circuits. The teacher carefully explained the use of tools such as a wire stripper and used the interactive white board effectively to illustrate points. Some good discussion followed, developing pupils' speaking skills. Good intervention during the course of the lesson helps take pupils' learning forward.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All classes are taught by a specialist music teacher.
- Pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn.
- The curriculum is enriched by opportunities to perform.

Commentary

74. Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. All pupils regardless of background make good progress and achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and make very good progress and achieve very well in Years 3 to 6.
75. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 developed their understanding of long and short notes effectively, through chanting and rhythm patterns. They used their voices expressively, explored musical sounds and performed with others on untuned instruments, as they accompanied the story of, 'We're all going on a bear hunt.' Pupils in Year 2 created rhythm patterns of long and short notes and recognised those patterns within familiar chants. Year 5 pupils effectively learned and practiced a selection of rounds and part songs. They are encouraged to listen to each other's part while singing, learning to sing in tune and to keep in time. They made very good progress in working towards a performance of a three-part Christmas round.
76. Teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. The teacher's very good subject knowledge, very effective planning, full inclusion of all pupils, and emphasis on effort and quality of performance are all strengths of teaching. Strengths of learning are pupils' enjoyment of music, their very good attitudes and their creative effort.
77. Pupils develop their literacy skills effectively, as they listen, discuss, compose, evaluate their performance, and sing songs. They develop their mathematical skills well as they learn to read and write music. There are opportunities to compose on the computer. The breadth of curriculum opportunities is very good. Pupils are encouraged to learn individual instruments, namely, the recorder, violin, cello, guitar and brass instruments. Year group assemblies are attended by parents and include drama, songs and poems. There is a school choir and orchestra. Opportunities to perform are very good. Recent performances have included 'Fame', 'Bad Guys' and 'Bugsy Malone', a 'Feeling Blue' Summer Concert and an African rhythm/chanting display.
78. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator is a gifted musician and a very good teacher. As a result of teaching every class, she has first-hand knowledge of the attainment of all pupils. She has introduced a very good scheme of work. Her planning is very thorough and she provides a very good role model for class teachers, who also teach music each week. There has been a good improvement in standards, planning and teaching, since the last inspection. Resources are very good, and are used well.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils participate in a full range of activities including swimming, gymnastics athletics and dance.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including football, athletics and netball.

Commentary

79. Standards of teaching in Years 1 and 2 are good overall, no teaching was seen in later years so no judgement can be made for Years 3 to 6. All pupils, regardless of background, achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2, although this subject has had a low priority in the school in recent years. The coordinator is keen to raise this subject's profile. He is effective and has made some useful changes. Despite limitations of outside space for this urban school, he has some good ideas to develop provision, including improving the equipment levels which are adequate at present. Pupils enjoy the good range of sporting activities provided after school and this contributes to their fitness and enjoyment of sport.
80. In a good Year 1 lesson, pupils enjoyed moving vigorously, warming up by jumping and skipping. The teacher managed pupils well although there were some who became excitable during the lesson and did not pay attention. However, this was quickly addressed and the pupils moved about the hall quickly, safely and with good spatial awareness. They put the apparatus out carefully and showed good balance and coordination when on benches and jumping and skipping. In a very good Year 2/3 lesson the teacher was experimenting with new warm-up routines, with a group of pupils; such as running on the spot and punching the air rhythmically. This led eventually to pupils working on set and freestyle dance routines to music. The set routines were polished and recalled in detail by the pupils from past work. The freestyle routines were new and pupils took some time develop them into a finished coordinated movement and in some instances did not manage this. Physical education plays an important part in developing pupils' listening skills, particularly in listening to instructions during lessons and speaking out during discussions about activities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81. No lessons were seen on these specific aspects of the curriculum, so no overall judgments can be made. However, the school is very aware of their importance and both the headteacher and his deputy place great emphasis on developing them. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings and reflect on their own circumstances during lessons and assemblies. The school has a strong personal development programme which includes opportunities to educate pupils about the dangers of drugs and a sensitive approach to sex and relationships education that is compatible with the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The strong Catholic ethos and caring community that makes up the school contributes effectively to citizenship. It recognises the importance of the individual and his or her place in the school. Pupils' qualities are celebrated in assemblies. The very strong relationships between all adults and pupils, helps pupils to develop a strong sense of self-esteem. They are given good opportunities to take responsibility. There is no school council; the school is considering introducing one to extend pupils' independence further and give them even greater opportunities for self-reliance.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	1
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

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