

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tilehurst, Reading

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110006

Headteacher: Ms J P Feeney

Lead inspector: Mr J G F Parsons

Dates of inspection: 22 – 24 September 2003

Inspection number: 257916

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:	251
School address:	City Road Tilehurst Reading Berkshire
Postcode:	RG31 4SZ
Telephone number:	0118 9422003
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Epps
Date of previous inspection:	22 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

An average size Voluntary Aided school on the outskirts of Reading inspected 22 to 24 September 2003 by an inspection team led by John Parsons. Children's standards on entry match those expected for their age. There are very few pupils who are from ethnic minority groups or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has increased in recent years and is similar to the national average. The mobility of pupils is low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22546	Mr J G F Parsons	Lead inspector	Science Art and design Physical education Foundation stage
9770	Mr J Baker	Lay inspector	
11901	Dr P Lowe	Team inspector	English Geography Music English as an additional language
22578	Mr G Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology History Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with a number of very good characteristics and a strong caring Catholic ethos, which permeates all aspects of school life and treats every pupil as a valued individual. Pupils achieve well and standards in the national tests in recent years have been at least above average by the end of Year 6. The dynamic leadership and management of the school ensure that it is constantly seeking to improve. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- by the end of Year 6 pupils' standards in science are above average;
- in information and communication technology standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection but remain below average in some aspects by the end of Year 6;
- all pupils achieve and progress well, and very well in science in Years 3 to 6, those with special educational needs also achieve very well;
- the governing body is very good, it takes an active part in the life of the school and holds it to account;
- the quality of teaching and learning is very good especially in literacy;
- newly introduced procedures to check pupils' progress in lessons are very effective but are not yet used by all teachers in all subjects;
- the establishment of a highly consultative approach to parents successfully involves them in their children's education;
- the lack of a dedicated outside area for reception, to complement the good indoor facilities, limits the children's range of activities, although the school has plans to address this in the near future.

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning and the arrangements for the increased number of pupils with special educational needs are very good. The school has successfully addressed all the key issues identified in the previous inspection.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	C	A	C
Mathematics	A	A	A	A
Science	C	A	B	C

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

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, the inspection found standards at least match those expected for pupils' ages in all subjects except for information and communication technology by the end of Year 6. In this subject standards are below average in some aspects but are rapidly improving. Standards are above average in science by the end of Year 6. Regardless of background, pupils achieve well in all subjects, they are confident, articulate, and listen well. The goals children are expected to reach by reception are achieved by the majority and they start Year 1 confident, mature, and with well developed personal, social

and emotional skills. Pupils make good progress in all subjects including reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2, and English and mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Literacy skills are particularly well developed and teaching in all classes is very good in this aspect of English, which has a good effect on standards in all subjects. Pupils progress very well in science in Years 3 to 6. The high quality teaching leads to very good practical work and recording in this subject. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, often reaching average standards, or above, due to the very good teaching and arrangements made for them. However, the high number of such pupils taking the national tests caused a decline in results in 2003 in Year 2 and Year 6. Higher attaining pupils including those who are gifted or talented achieve above average, sometimes well above average standards especially by the end of Year 6. **Personal relationships and the pupils' behaviour are very good and the school's strong Catholic ethos means that pupils have excellent spiritual awareness. Moral and social development is very good and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance and punctuality are good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning was very good in more than four out of ten lessons seen and very good overall. The quality of teaching literacy in all classes is particularly strong, which has a strong impact on the learning and achievement in English and other subjects. The individual tracking of pupils' progress means that teachers know their pupils well and good planning ensures challenging work is set. The curriculum meets pupils' needs effectively and is enhanced by a very good range of activities out of school. Excellent relationships and trust between pupils and staff and the very good support given to all pupils helps them to achieve well. Parents are very well informed and make a very strong contribution to their children's learning. The very good links with the local Catholic Church and community reinforces the Christian values held by the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are strengths of the school. The headteacher and key staff work very well as a team and inspire and motivate pupils and staff. They are receptive to innovation and take care to adopt strategies to improve the school. They are constantly evaluating their performance in pursuit of higher standards. The governing body is vigorous, has a commitment to developing the school and hold it strongly to account.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have a high regard for the school, all agree that the school is well led and managed, that teaching is good and that the school helps their children to mature. A few would like a greater range of activities out of school. The great majority of pupils have a positive view of the school, they feel teaching is effective and they are well cared for. A few would like lessons to be more interesting and their peers better behaved.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to ensure that by the end of Year 6, pupils reach the expected standards in all aspects of information and communication technology by:
 - using it more in all subjects but especially in mathematics to improve data handling;
 - by giving pupils more opportunities to use the Internet and make presentations;
- to use the newly introduced, and very effective, procedures to check pupils' progress in all subjects and in all classes;
- to implement the plan to provide an outdoor area to extend opportunities for pupils in the reception class to work and play.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.7 (16.1)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.8 (13.9)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	16.5 (16.2)	16.7 (16.1)

There were thirty four 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 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.6 (26.8)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	29.4 (28.8)	26.7 (26.6)
science	29.4 (28.8)	26.7 (26.6)

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

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The inspection found standards in all subjects at least match those expected for pupils' age in all subjects, except for information and communication technology. Despite good development since the previous inspection, standards are below average in some aspects by the end of Year 6. Standards in science are above average by the end of Year 6. All pupils achieve well and work to their full capability regardless of their prior attainment and they achieve very well in science in Years 3-6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching and effective arrangements for children in reception means that they achieve well in all the six aspects of learning and very well in personal social and emotional development.
- The adoption of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has improved pupils' standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Standards in science are above average by the end of Year 6 due to the very good teaching and good practical work and recording.
- Due to very good teaching pupils make very strong progress in developing literacy skills, which has a strong effect on standards in all subjects and enables pupils to achieve well.
- High attaining pupils or those who are gifted or talented achieve well and reach standards that are above or well above average in all classes.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in all classes but the numbers have increased significantly recently and the high numbers in Year 2 and Year 6 last year meant that results declined in the 2003 national tests. However, standards have been good, often very good over recent years and good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

- Improved facilities such as the computer suite and improved subject knowledge of the teachers have significantly improved standards in information and communication technology. However, they are below average in some aspects by the end of Year 6.

The individual tracking of pupils' progress and levels of achievement together with individual target setting means that the progress of all groups of pupils is well known and this has a strong impact on their achievement and standards.

Commentary

1. In the reception class children, regardless of their capability achieve well. Standards on entry are broadly average with most children having attended local nursery schools. The majority of them achieve standards that at least match those expected for their age in the six areas of learning, except for the development of children's personal, social and emotional development, which is above average. This is due to the good teaching, the very caring environment, the well planned and organised lessons and the effective tracking of children's progress.
2. By the time they start Year 1 children are confident and articulate. In Years 1 and 2 all pupils continue to achieve well due to the very good teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge, check pupils' progress and set them challenging targets which raise standards and ensures good achievement. In the national tests of 2002 pupils achieved standards by the end of Year 2 that were above the national average in reading but matched it when compared to schools in a similar context. In writing standards were well above the national average and above when compared to similar schools. In mathematics, standards matched national expectations for pupils' age but were below when compared to similar schools. Teacher assessment in science showed standards that matched those expected for pupils' age nationally.
3. In Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to achieve well and very well in science with good practical work and recording taking place. In the national tests of 2002 pupils achieved standards that were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Compared to schools in similar contexts, standards were well above average in mathematics and matched the national average in English and science. Pupils' progress over time from Year 2 to Year 6 in the national tests of 2002 (sometimes called 'value added') confirms their good levels of achievement. Value added was very good in English and mathematics, good in science and very good overall.
4. Those pupils with special educational needs are strongly supported; arrangements are very good, they are very well taught and achieve very well, many reaching the standard expected for their age. For example, in the national tests of 2002, of the eight pupils the school was supporting for their special educational needs, five of them obtained the nationally expected level in the three core subjects. The introduction of assessment procedures in all classes, that track individual pupils, are particularly effective. These procedures ensure that teachers know their pupils well. Individual targets are set and all groups of pupils regardless of background achieve to the best of their ability. Procedures to check pupils' progress are in the process of being refined to make them even more effective by being even more focused on individual achievement. These new procedures are most effective where they are used and standards and achievement levels have improved accordingly. However, they are not yet used in all classes and all subjects.
5. In the more recent 2003 tests, for which national comparisons are not yet available, standards were lower than the previous year due to the higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in Years 2 and 6. Higher attainers and those who are gifted and talented

achieve well and their standards are above or well above average in all subjects. In all other subjects standards at least match those expected for pupils' age and frequently exceed them in those classes where there are fewer pupils with special educational needs. They achieve well, all pupils working to their full capability, except for information and communication technology. This is much improved since the previous inspection but standards are below average in the use of the Internet, presentations, the handling of mathematical data and the use of this subject in others. The school is in the process of introducing an initiative to develop the arts (art and design and music) and although this has not yet had an impact on standards it has improved the leadership and management of these subjects to make them more effective in terms of planning lessons and improving teachers' subject knowledge.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very effectively developed and are a strength of the school. Attendance is good and similar to the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attitudes to learning are very good which helps them to achieve well.
- Pupils behave very well in the classroom and around the school.
- Personal relationships are very good and are a result of the Catholic ethos of caring for others.
- Spiritual awareness is excellent and a strength of the school.
- Moral and social development is very good and cultural development good.
- Pupils are very confident and very keen to take responsibility. This is the result of their being given many opportunities to mature and become independent.

Commentary

6. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning in most lessons. Nearly all listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and undertake tasks enthusiastically. This is the result of very good teaching where teachers maintain a high level of interest and set appropriately challenging tasks which ensure that all abilities have the opportunity to achieve.
7. Standards of behaviour are very good in the classroom and around the school including the playground where all pupils play harmoniously together. All pupils discuss and agree class rules and are fully aware of the high standards expected and insisted upon by all staff some of whom use their own strategies for behaviour management within the classroom. The very caring ethos of the school results in pupils knowing right from wrong and showing consideration for others. No signs of aggressive behaviour were seen. However, a few pupils have behavioural problems and these are dealt with very effectively by the school. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
8. From the day they start school pupils are encouraged to become independent and they willingly take on a range of responsibilities appropriate to their age. These range from simple duties in reception, which include writing their name on the monitor board, to whole class duties in Year 3 and whole school duties in Year 6. Year 6 duties are very wide ranging and make a very significant contribution to pupils' personal development and maturity. For example, they act as mentors for reception pupils and act as 'Buddies' to any new pupils to the school. Also the school council encourages pupils of all ages to take responsibility and use their initiative.

9. Relationships between pupils are very good. They play harmoniously together and work very well together in groups. Relationships between pupils and staff are also very good and are the result of staff giving a very positive lead in engendering good relationships, for example, by giving praise and encouragement at every opportunity as well as acting as good role models.
10. The excellent development of spiritual awareness is the result of the strong Catholic ethos of the school which is central to pupils' lives. This was clearly demonstrated in the 'Welcome Assembly', a very moving and spiritually uplifting occasion which also gave a very clear message of caring for others.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent Promotion of good behaviour and personal development

Pupils who behave well are rewarded by being eligible to sit at the 'Golden Table' in a working area outside the classroom where they are trusted to work on their own in groups of two or three. The 'Golden Table' is very special since it is covered with gold foil and pupils privileged to work at it are awarded a golden pencil holder and special pens and pencils which they can use only when sitting at the 'Golden Table'. The 'Golden Table' also has a sign which says, 'We have earned the privilege of working on our own'. It will come as no surprise to learn that pupils are very keen to sit at the Golden Table and equally, no surprise to learn that this is a very effective strategy for promoting good behaviour, particularly since they can lose the privilege if they don't maintain their good behaviour.

Why it is outstanding? It builds the self-esteem as well as encouraging good behaviour by making pupils feel special and it helps to develop self-motivation and the ability to work independently. This is particularly valuable for the less able because it positively discourages dependence. At the Golden Table support is not so readily to hand so pupils try just that little bit harder before seeking help.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Black or Black British – any other Black background
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
186	0	0
17	0	0
15	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
7	0	0
2	0	0
7	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. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The combination of very good teaching, an effective curriculum, and very good leadership and management of the school means that pupils achieve well and thrive. This is set within the context of a caring Catholic ethos that treats all pupils as individuals, measures their performance, and sets them targets for improvement. Pupils make good progress over time especially in Years 3 to 6. The arrangements and very good teaching for those pupils who have special educational needs is very effective and they achieve very well.

Teaching and learning

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	16 (41 %)	22 (56%)	1 (3%)	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.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching encourages and engages pupils.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good.
- The effective teaching of literacy and good use of a well defined, three-part structure in lessons in most subjects.
- Ability sets in literacy and numeracy in Years 5 and 6 are effective.
- Teachers use good questioning skills.
- The use of time, support staff and resources is good.
- The thorough use of procedures to check pupils' progress is good.
- There is an insistence on pupils' high standards of behaviour.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is good; all pupils are treated as individuals.
- There is a strong emphasis on achievement in the teaching and learning.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very well developed.
- Pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is good.
- Pupils' application and productivity are strong.
- Sometimes the use of commercial work sheets in lessons in Years 1 and 2, in science and history, limits the development of some pupils especially higher attainers.

Commentary

11. During the inspection, teaching was good or better in 97 per cent of lessons. It was very good in 41 per cent of these lessons. Three per cent of teaching was satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when the quality of teaching was good overall and very good in just over 20 per cent of lessons.
12. The quality of teaching and learning is good in reception. Carefully structured activities help pupils to make good progress in the development of skills and in their attitudes to learning. Staff work together as an effective team, and time and resources are used well to support learning. Good assessment procedures enable work to be matched to children's differing abilities and rates of learning. Relationships between staff and children are very good and promote good learning. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and children

achieve well, because they are motivated to learn. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

13. The teaching of English and literacy across the school is very good. The elements of the National Literacy Strategy are addressed very effectively and literacy skills are used, and developed, well in most areas of the curriculum. The introduction of an innovative approach to monitoring pupils' progress is very new, but is already having a positive impact on teachers' planning, where it is used, and is particularly effective at developing pupils' knowledge of their own learning. Homework contributes well to pupils' learning.
14. In mathematics and numeracy, teaching is frequently very good. The elements of the National Numeracy Strategy are addressed well. Mental agility is well developed in Years 5 and 6 and the use of mathematical skills across the curriculum is good. The organisation of pupils into ability sets in Years 5 and 6 in numeracy, as in literacy, is instrumental in raising standards.
15. Teaching is very good in science, overall. Pupils carry out experiments competently and record their findings efficiently. Planning is good, but work is not always pitched at different levels to suit different abilities in Years 1 and 2 in science and history, where teachers use commercial worksheets that are not sufficiently open-ended to challenge higher attaining pupils and do not extend their literacy skills.
16. In information and communication technology, teaching is good. There is a very good computer suite. Teachers and teaching assistants have all received training. Software has been purchased to support most aspects of the curriculum. Standards have improved and all pupils achieve well, particularly those with special educational needs. However, the full impact of these improvements has yet to be felt and, by the end of Year 6, pupils do not reach the expected standards in all aspects of the subject.
17. Teaching is very good in geography, with a strong emphasis on geographical enquiry skills. It is not possible to make a judgement in history, and personal, social and health education and citizenship, because no lessons were seen.
18. Teaching is good in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Governors and staff are eagerly awaiting the remodelling of the accommodation for the creative arts, which will enable them to develop these areas of learning to the full and enrich pupils' learning. The good teaching encourages and engages pupils.
19. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. This has a strong and positive effect on their learning. Work is well-planned in relation to their needs and there is good liaison between all professionals. A good range of strategies is used. Sometimes pupils receive extra support within the class, or in a small group by a teaching assistant. On other occasions, individual pupils receive their own individual support, according to the detail of their particular education programmes.

The curriculum

The school provides its pupils with a good curriculum, which is very well supported by opportunities for enrichment. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been very effectively introduced since the previous inspection.
- There are very good opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum.

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they often make very good progress.
- The school is very open-minded to curriculum development and keen to take on new initiatives that will improve performance.
- Although the curriculum for information and communication technology has improved since the previous inspection, standards are still not yet high enough by the end of Year 6.

Commentary

20. The use of the detailed curriculum and structure in the National Literacy Strategy is used very effectively by teachers. Much of the very good teaching was seen in literacy lessons.
21. The school's well-planned curriculum is very well supported by after-school club activities, visitors and visits, which enliven the work of the school and provide enrichment for the vast majority of pupils. The list of after-school clubs is extensive and includes sporting, creative, musical and other activities, all of which are well attended. One of the most successful visits made by Year 6 pupils is the residential visit to the Isle of Wight, where they carry out many geographical and information and communication technology activities, together with important opportunities for the development of their social skills.
22. The school has a very positive and open-minded approach to curriculum development. Recently, a new form of day-to-day monitoring of pupils' progress has been adopted. This is developing the already comprehensive assessment procedures. It entails sharing details of the objectives for learning in literacy lessons, in language which pupils can understand. Further, it involves the marking of work only in relation to these objectives. This strategy is already having a positive effect on pupils' understanding their own progress due to the clarity and transparency of the approach. It gives them a clear indication of what they need to do to raise standards themselves. It also means that all pupils regardless of background will have full access to the curriculum.
23. Good improvements have been made, since the last inspection, in information and communication technology. However, whilst improvements in hardware and in teachers' confidence and subject knowledge are very good, there are still elements of the work, which are not yet fully planned. For example, opportunities to use of the Internet, to handle data and to make presentations are limited. Information and communication technology is not used extensively to support other subjects and so pupils do not reach the expected levels by the end of Year 6.
24. The provision, made by the school, for its pupils with special educational needs is very good. As a result of well resourced curriculum provision, these pupils often make very good progress over time. Results of national tests show that pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and often obtain the nationally expected standards. The curriculum needs of pupils with special educational needs are well-known by all staff, who plan for them carefully. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that these needs are met and full access is given to the whole curriculum. Accommodation for pupils who have special educational needs is good. A visiting support teacher has the use of a specialist room where she can withdraw pupils for extra support.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides pupils with very good support and guidance and makes good provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good health and safety procedures are in place.
- Good child protection practice occurs but the policy does not give guidance to new staff in line with best practice.
- Pupils' progress is monitored, which means that teachers know their pupils very well and as individuals; ensuring that all groups of pupils are effectively included in all activities.
- Staff are committed to pupils' welfare through the caring Catholic ethos of the school.
- The innovation of individual monitoring of pupils' performance, although at the early stages, is having a positive impact on pupils' knowledge of their own work and taking responsibility for it.
- Very good involvement of pupils in the school's work and development through the school council contribute to pupils' independence.

Commentary

25. The very good health and safety procedures include termly inspection of the premises and a full risk assessment of all aspects of the school. Pupils' healthy and safe living is well promoted through the personal, social and health education programme which is enhanced by talks from the police and fire service. Staff are very diligent in monitoring pupils' welfare and as a consequence child protection practice is good.
26. Teachers and support staff know the pupils and their families very well, are sensitive to their needs and are thus able to provide very good support and guidance. The very good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. Good monitoring procedures of pupils' progress and very good use of these procedures to respond to pupils' needs ensures that they are very well supported and advised on their academic achievement.
27. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively screened and tested in order to establish the best strategy to address their difficulties. Individual education plans are written for all pupils whose specific needs are noted. These plans are well written and contain detailed targets and notes of what strategies, time and personnel will be used to put the plans into effect. The use of the newly introduced monitoring of pupils' progress, will give a clearer picture of the short term gains pupils make in their learning.
28. Seeking pupils' views and involving them in the work of the school is achieved very effectively through the school council and has resulted in a number of improvements in the past year including fitting blinds in classrooms. Pupils are also involved in the assessment of their own work through the recently introduced procedures for checking pupils' progress on an ongoing basis.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents and good links with the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very well informed about the school, the curriculum and their children's standards and progress.
- The very good contribution parents make to their children's learning at school and at home makes a positive contribution to their achievement.
- Parents raise large sums of money each year.

- The school regularly seeks parents' views and acts on them.
- The good links with the community help to enrich the curriculum and make pupils aware of their own culture.
- The good links with other schools ensure that pupils transfer happily to their next stage of education and also help to enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

29. Parents are very well informed about the school through the prospectus, weekly newsletters and frequent other correspondence. They are also very well informed about the curriculum through termly, class newsletters and through information evenings. Information about their children's progress is very good and includes half-termly reports on overall effort, attainment, behaviour and homework. In addition, more detailed information is provided through consultation evenings and very informative annual reports. Parents are also welcome to discuss concerns at any time. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are fully consulted and play a full role in helping set plans and monitoring their children's progress. There has been very good progress in developing links with parents since the previous inspection, when a few were disaffected with the school.
30. Parents have very high regard for the school. They all consider teaching to be good and all feel that the school encourages their children to become mature. The inspection team fully supports the parents' very positive views about all aspects of the school.
31. Parents make a very significant contribution to their children's learning by providing very good help in the classroom and on trips and visits. Parents also contribute to the school in many other ways, for example, they run the 'Walking Bus' and raise large sums of money for the school through the St Paul's School Association.
32. The school seeks parents' views through a very extensive annual questionnaire covering all aspects of school life. Information received is acted upon, for example, the introduction of half-termly reports and refurbishment of the toilets.
33. The good links with the community include very strong links with the local Church which has a very significant impact on the school's Catholic ethos. Other links with the community include performing at the Hexagon Theatre, visits to a local synagogue, talks from visitors to the school and good use of the local areas as an educational resource.
34. There are good links with other local primary schools, for example subject co-ordinators liaise with each other and exchange ideas. There are strong links with the Catholic secondary school which ensures that pupils transfer happily to their next step of education. Also the secondary school helps to enhance the science curriculum by providing specialist equipment. There are also very good links with Reading University which helps the recruitment of teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good and a strength of the school, good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good.
- The governors are active in the school and hold it to account.
- Staff work closely as a highly motivated and effective team.
- The management of the arrangements for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

35. The governance of the school is very good. The governors are very committed and take advantage of training opportunities. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and take an active role in shaping its vision and direction. Parents consider that the governing body is very hardworking. The inspection team confirms this. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils its statutory duties. It monitors the nature of the school's policies in relation to special educational needs, English as an additional language, racial equality, disability and sex education to ensure full integration of all pupils. It influences the school's development, with a clear focus on improving the quality of provision and raising standards, within a strong Catholic ethos. The school development plan is long term and includes many new initiatives that are carefully considered and costed. The governing body challenges and supports the headteacher and the senior management team. It is prepared to take difficult decisions when necessary.
36. The leadership of the headteacher, the senior management team and other staff with responsibilities is very good. They show a very clear vision for the future development of the school, provide strong leadership and inspire, motivate and influence staff, pupils and parents. The school has high expectations of pupils and staff. This was confirmed by parents at their meeting. There is a positive climate for learning which focuses on improvement and the achievement of all pupils. Strategic planning reflects and promotes the school's aims and values. The dynamic leadership of the headteacher facilitates the development of leaders. Her commitment to full integration of all pupils, promotion of equality and concern for the needs of individuals is excellent.
37. In-service training in literacy and the organisation of Year 5 and 6 pupils into ability sets for literacy and numeracy have raised standards in teaching and learning. There is a strong and shared commitment to extend this good practice to all subjects. The introduction of new, on-going assessment procedures is beginning to have an impact on standards. However, the increasing proportion of pupils with special educational needs joining the school because of its good reputation has an adverse effect on overall standards and the results in recent national tests.
38. The co-ordination of special educational needs has very recently changed hands. The new coordinator is currently working very closely with the former coordinator before complete handover takes place. The day-to-day management of special educational needs is very good.
39. The management of the school is very good. Self-evaluation is embedded in the life of the school and pupils are increasingly encouraged to evaluate their own performance. There are very effective systems in place for carrying out rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. This provides clear evidence of pupils' progress within and across stages in English, mathematics and science. It highlights the achievement of different groups of pupils, enabling prompt and effective action to be taken where necessary. There are plans further to involve all staff in the monitoring of teaching and learning and the tracking of pupils' progress.
40. Performance management of staff, including support staff, is well established and is effective in raising standards. Induction procedures, professional development strategies and the school's contribution to teacher training are very good. The school manages the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff very well. Financial procedures are very effective in helping the school to attain its educational priorities. The headteacher and governors follow recommended procedures in order to obtain good value for money. Their understanding and application of the principles of best value are very good. The balance carried forward is to enable the school to fund the resourcing of its increasing roll.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	554,307
Total expenditure	474,737
Expenditure per pupil	1,876

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	53,380
Balance carried forward to the next	79,570

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. The arrangements for children in reception are good. The reception class is well led and managed and the teacher liaises closely with the Year 1 teacher to ensure children's continuous development. The procedures, which are eventually to be adopted school wide, for checking children's progress are very effective. In all activities the teacher and her assistants can be seen monitoring children's individual achievement and progress. Children with special educational needs are well provided for and fully integrated into all activities, as indeed are all children regardless of background. All six aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum are fully implemented and there has been good development since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is consistently good in all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The teacher has good subject knowledge, is well organised, plans effectively, and uses time resources and her 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 enables children to play together in a constructive way using a good range of toys and construction materials.
- Children collaborate well with each other and show maturity when working and playing together.
- They are independent, have good attitudes to their work and remain on task for extensive periods, concentrating well during lessons.
- They are happy in their work, confident to speak out during discussion time and they relate well to adults and other children.

Commentary

42. Children achieve well and mature quickly in reception. The teacher and her assistants have established a harmonious working environment and through good teaching ensure that all children are valued and comfortable in class. Many exceed the expectations for their age in this aspect when they reach Year 1, and show great maturity which enables them to progress and achieve well in later years. They settle into reception quickly and thrive in the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere of the classroom. The teacher manages children very well and the classroom is bright, colourful and welcoming to them. The good teaching and learning that takes place quickly develops children's understanding of the correct way to behave and encourages them to talk about their feelings and discuss their behaviour. Because of the good teaching children respond well in class during question and answer sessions, such as when talking about animals that live under ground during a science lesson. They mix well together for example, when playing with a tricycle with a trailer they take it in turns to peddle and to be passengers in the trailer.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Literacy is well taught; children sound out words to enable them to learn to read.
- Lessons are well planned with clear and simple objectives that children understand.
- The management of children is very good and the teacher uses time and resources well.
- Children speak clearly often in full sentences.
- There is good use of teaching assistants during lessons supporting all pupils including those with special educational needs.
- Most children write their names and form legible letters; a few higher attainers write unaided.
- All children know that writing goes from left to right and they show a great interest in books; they are keen to learn to read.
- There are many opportunities for children to talk to the teacher, the assistants and to each other in an encouraging environment.
- Children are confident enough to talk in large groups and give their views and answer questions.

Commentary

43. The majority of children achieve the standards expected for their age by Year 1; they are articulate and listen carefully during lessons. Teaching and learning are good, the teacher's subject knowledge is comprehensive and the tracking of children's progress during lessons to ensure that the work set is challenging, and is particularly effective in this aspect. Children achieve well in this aspect and make good progress during lessons. The use of a commercial scheme enables children to develop their pre-reading skills by sounding out letters to tackle new words. For example, all pupils who had the letter 'e' in their names were able to identify it and identify whether it was at the beginning, middle or end of their name. Children recalled nursery rhymes well and remembered the words when they chanted the 'Grand Old Duke of York'. They recalled in detail the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and during the lesson sounded the letter 'h' identifying it accurately in their name and other words, showing good preparation for learning to read. They learn to write letters in the air before putting pencil to paper and show good pencil control as they copy letters. Pupils are keen to speak and this is a strength in their work. They frequently talk to each other, the teacher and assistants encourage good conversation and use probing questioning to develop pupils' understanding of their work, insisting that they respond orally.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All children know and count numbers to ten and some to twenty and beyond.
- Children are beginning to weigh and measure informally using sand and water and building apparatus.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to develop children's work on number supporting their skills in counting numbers up to ten and playing counting games.
- They use the word zero when counting and understand what it means.
- Children understand and use vocabulary such as 'more' or 'less' and other words that quantify in discussion.

Commentary

44. Children have the opportunity through well organised resources and good teaching to learn basic number skills and through practical work they learn to weigh and measure. Children achieve well and make good progress during lessons and the majority achieve the expected standards in this aspect by Year 1. In one lesson children located missing numbers from one to ten in a number line and counted reliably to ten. They counted out loud confidently some using their fingers to assist. Many saw the patterns in numbers and put a missing number into a sequence. The teacher shows good subject knowledge in using computers in the suite effectively to reinforce children's number work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a good understanding of information technology and what it can do.
- During lessons they find out about living things and accurately identify features.
- They investigate objects and materials by using their senses effectively.
- They build and construct models effectively using a variety of materials.
- The lack of an enclosed outside area restricts the range of opportunities that extending the classroom outside for activities can give.

Commentary

45. Good teaching and learning in this aspect means that children have an effective understanding of the immediate environment. The teacher uses the facilities well such as a local wooded area to give children a sense of place and develop their skills of observation. Lessons encourage children to be inquisitive and look carefully at their surroundings. The majority at least achieve the expected standards in this aspect by the end of the year. Children show a good understanding of where animals live. During one good lesson they linked pictures of rabbits and badgers, with photographs of their homes. Children explore this further as they experience making holes of various sizes and depths in the sand tray. Pupils' skills of observation are further developed with local walks and they talk enthusiastically about what they have seen.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of mobile playground equipment including tricycles and balancing apparatus.
- Children show good spatial awareness and are given sufficient time to use the available small equipment.
- There is no suitable large equipment for children to travel under, over and through and to balance on readily available. These disadvantages are overcome to some extent by physical education lessons in the hall when apparatus is used.
- In the playground children move with confidence, imagination and in safety; they show control and co-ordination in their movements.

Commentary

46. Current arrangements to some extent overcome the restriction of not having a dedicated area in which pupils can develop their physical skills. The main playground is used for this purpose, children are offered a range of physical challenges and there is a suitable range of smaller resources available. Most children achieve expected standards for their age by the time they reach Year 1. No physical education lessons were seen. However, during play children enjoyed physical activity and showed confidence when using the wheeled apparatus. The teacher and her assistants intervened effectively to assist children when they were attempting to use a piece of apparatus they were unfamiliar with, such as a wheeled balancing board. Children were active and showed enjoyment of physical activity often sharing an activity with a friend or peer, such as when towing each other around on a trailer behind a tricycle. The lack of a dedicated area, however, restricts children in the more informal use of an 'outside classroom' for physical activities.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's art work is good quality.
- Organisation of the classroom encourages creative development through a good range of resources.
- There are planned activities that are imaginative and enjoyable.
- There is no evidence of the art forms from other cultures.

Commentary

47. The bright and stimulating environment encourages creativity and there is a wide range of activities organised to enable children to express themselves. A majority of children achieve the standards expected for their age by the end of the year. No lessons were seen but children's self-portraits show good detail such as hair, eyes and noses. Paintings show that children mix colours well and have an understanding of the appropriate colours for skin and hair. When using pencils or crayons children show dexterity and are able to colour neatly and keep inside a shape.

SUBJECTS IN YEARS 1 TO 6

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong focus on improving pupils' achievement to raise standards.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The teaching of literacy across the school is very good and the use and development of literacy skills across the curriculum are effective.

- The organisation of pupils in Years 5 and 6 in ability sets for literacy is effective. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is good.

Commentary

48. Standards in reading and writing match those expected nationally for pupils by the end of Year 2. Standards in the national tests, in 2002, by the end of Year 2 were above the national average in reading and well above in writing. Compared to similar schools, standards matched those found nationally in reading and were above in writing. Provisional results in the national tests in 2003 show that, due to a weaker cohort, standards were lower than in 2002, but the overall long-term trend is still above average. Inspection findings show that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress against their prior attainment (value added) and achieve well. They suggest that pupils' standards in reading and writing will match national expectations by the end of their time in Year 2, as they did at the last inspection.
49. Standards in English match those expected nationally for pupils by the end of Year 6. In 2002, standards in English were well above the national average and matched the average for similar schools. Progress from prior attainment was very good in English, showing very good achievement from Year 2 to Year 6. Provisional results in the 2003 national tests show that standards were lower than in 2002, due to a weaker group of pupils taking the tests, but the overall long-term trend is still above average. Inspection findings reveal that all pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and value added is good. They suggest that pupils will meet the challenging targets set for them and that standards will match national expectations by the end of their time in Year 6, as they did at the last inspection. Some pupils should attain standards that are above or well above national expectations. However, the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs adversely affects overall results in the national tests.
50. Standards in speaking and listening are above those expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils listen carefully to each other and to adults, and respond very well to questions and discussions. This was evident in a drama lesson in Year 6, when pupils listened intently to 'The Witches' Speech' in 'Macbeth' and performed the whole speech very effectively. The good use of focused questioning encourages pupils to participate fully. There are planned opportunities for the development of speaking and listening skills in most subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 referred confidently to different continents, as they discussed world climates.
51. Standards in reading match those expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' attainment in reading is tracked and analysed to improve standards. A strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics and regular focused reading sessions outside the literacy hour help pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly at home and most parents are very supportive in hearing them read.
52. Standards in writing in Year 2 and Year 6 match those expected nationally. The school's focus on writing is having positive results. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 5/6 literacy lesson produced some very good opening paragraphs for a biography of Anne Frank, for example, 'It is about a young girl's short life which contains joy and sadness, so brace yourself for a roller coaster of emotions and excitement.' There are opportunities for writing in all subjects, such as the recording of results in science.

53. The school places strong emphasis on spelling. Pupils are taught to sound out letters and words systematically in the Reception class and this; together with the practice of learning weekly spellings in all classes has a positive effect on standards. As pupils progress through the school, they use an increasing range of spelling patterns, and their vocabulary choices become more adventurous. Appropriate emphasis is placed on neat writing and presentation.
-
54. The National Literacy Strategy is implemented very well and provides a structure for the progressive development of pupils' reading, writing and spelling skills. Resources for the literacy hour are very good and help teachers to deliver the elements of this strategy very effectively. Additional literacy support, provided by trained teaching assistants, for pupils who experience difficulties, leads to improved standards.
55. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The strengths of teaching are teachers' very good subject knowledge, very effective teaching methods, insistence on high standards of behaviour and concern for equality of opportunity for all pupils. The use of time, support staff and resources is very effective. An innovative approach to ongoing assessment, which encourages self-assessment on the part of pupils, is beginning to have an impact on standards. The organisation of Years 5 and 6 pupils into ability sets for literacy is also helping to raise standards. Homework is used well to support and extend learning. Strengths in teaching inspire pupils to apply intellectual and creative effort to their work, enabling them to make good progress and achieve well. Their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is very good. They have a good knowledge of their own learning.
56. Strong leadership and an enriched curriculum including book weeks, visiting authors, poets and storytellers, and school productions, are instrumental in raising achievement. New assessment procedures are impacting positively on every area of the curriculum, enabling teachers to assess pupils' understanding and to plan accordingly. Literacy resources are very good and the library is used well to develop pupils' research skills. The very good information and technology suite enables teachers to develop pupils' computer skills in literacy, particularly to support writing.
57. Leadership and management of English display very clear educational direction. The experienced subject leader has been instrumental in helping to raise standards, through the introduction of new ongoing assessment procedures, which are a continuing focus for development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Well developed literacy skills play an important part in the development of other subjects. Pupils are articulate and express their thoughts clearly and accurately responding well to questions in all lessons. Development of writing skills for different purposes has been effective and for example in Years 3-6 pupils' record their experiments most effectively using a mixture of text, diagrams and charts. Some opportunities are missed to use information and communication technology for presentations, for example showing a project to the whole class using a projected image showing a mixture of text and illustration on the computer.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' results in the national tests in recent years were well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Results in the national tests over recent years have been consistently higher by the end of Year 6 than by the end of Year 2.
- The achievement of most pupils is good, while for a significant number of pupils with special educational needs, it is very good.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching.
- The setting of pupils Years 5 and 6 has a positive effect on the progress those pupils make.
- The use pupils make of their knowledge and understanding of mathematics needs to be developed further through more access to open-ended investigations and problem solving.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology within the subject, especially in connection with data handling and graphical representation.

Commentary

59. Most pupils achieve well in mathematics. By the end of Year 2 pupils' standards matched those expected for their age in the national test of 2002. Their progress between Year 2 and Year 6 (value added) was very good in these tests. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well with some achieving very well. In 2002, a high proportion of these pupils reached the expected standard in the national tests. The trend has been consistently well above average in the national tests in recent years by the end of Year 6. In the most recent national tests 2003 results continue to be at least above average. However, the inspection found that due to a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 standards now match rather than exceed those expected for the pupils' age.
60. Teaching overall is good, with some examples of very good teaching in the later years. Teachers make good use of the National Numeracy Strategy and plan their work well. They check their plans each day and alter them as a result of evaluating the previous day's work. They teach basic skills very well and make good use of their teaching assistants. Where teaching is very good, it is more dynamic keeping the pace brisk throughout the lesson; this keeps pupils well motivated. The newly appointed coordinator has only been in post for a short period and so has not yet had significant impact on the management of this subject.
61. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are grouped by ability into sets for mathematics. This is having a positive effect on the progress they make, both in lessons and over time. Teachers are faced with a narrower range of ability in their sets and match work more accurately to the individual needs of the pupils. As a result, pupils are better challenged, more enthusiastic and make better progress. It is a significant reason for the standards in the national tests being higher by the end of Year 6 than by the end of Year 2.
62. While pupils' standards in number work, shape, space and measure are satisfactory, the standards they reach in data handling are below average. There is not enough use of information and communication technology. There are few examples, either in the work from the previous year or in the current books, of data handling work being supported by the use of computer generated graphs, diagrams or charts. At the same time, pupils do not have enough open-ended opportunities to tackle investigations or problem solving, in order to make use of their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. They work well at word problems, finding what they need to do to translate the words into calculations, but these are very teacher directed and do not allow pupils to think for themselves or experiment with their knowledge.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Mathematics is used well in subjects such as science and geography where graphs and charts are used to illustrate findings. It is, however, not always planned into lessons and sometimes the opportunities to link mathematics into a subject are missed.

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.
- There is good use of literacy skills in science; pupils articulate their thought and ideas well.
- Scientific language is used effectively in all classes.
- Recording of the practical experiments is particularly good in Years 3 to 6; in Years 1 and 2 the extensive use of commercial worksheets occasionally limits high attaining pupils' achievement, as the range of the tasks is too narrow.
- The new and effective procedures for checking pupils' progress are not in use in all classes.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and with support reach the national expectation.
- The organisation of practical experiments is good and there is a good range of resources available.
- Pupils remain on task for long periods and enjoy the subject.
- The school has implemented a science curriculum which closely follows national guidance; there has been good development in this subject since the previous inspection.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively in this subject.
- Pupils' recording includes good use of charts, graphs and diagrams to exemplify their findings using a good range of mathematical skills.

Commentary

64. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but there was some very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teachers plan a range of practical activities and scientific experimentation which are effective. The inspection found pupils achieve standards that match those expected nationally for their age by the end of Year 2 and are above this by the end of Year 6. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The newly introduced procedures for checking on each individual pupil's progress is particularly effective where they are used and ensures that the work set challenges them. All pupils achieve well regardless of background in this subject and their progress over time from Year 2 to Year 6 is good. The leadership and management of the subject is in the hands of a new co-ordinator who is enthusiastic but has not been in post long enough to have had any significant impact.
65. Pupils understand concepts like 'variables' and 'fair testing'. For example, in one very good Year 5 lesson about the transmission of sound the pupils identified various types of materials to muffle sound and vibration and deduced after experimentation, and discussion, that the denser the material the more effective it was in stopping sound from passing through it. They understood that to ensure a fair test the noise should be consistent in each experiment, using similar alarm clocks. In a very good Year 6 lesson pupils knew that to ensure that a fair test takes place the amount of water and sugar being used must be precisely the same in each beaker if they are using the temperature of the water as the variable in the experiment. They recalled scientific words such as 'saturated solution' when setting up the experiment. In a good Year 2 lesson pupils used computers effectively to record their findings about a survey

of favourite foods taken as part of 'foods to keep us healthy' topic. They used a graph generating program that enables pupils to show their findings in different ways such as a block graph, pie chart and bar charts. Pupils showed a good facility with the computer and were able to switch between the different types of graph after initial help from the teacher.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good by the end of Year 2 and satisfactory by the end of Year 6.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made good progress in its development of information and communication technology since the previous inspection but standards in some aspects of the subject are not yet high enough.
- The school has a very good and well-equipped suite of computers including a digital projector.
- There are good links with a local secondary school that helps raise both pupils' and teachers' expertise.
- Teaching is good and teachers' subject knowledge is much improved since the previous inspection.
- There is little representation of information and communication technology in displays in other subjects around the school.

Commentary

66. Since the previous inspection, when provision in the subject was unsatisfactory, the school has made significant improvements over the last two years. These improvements have involved the creation of a very well resourced information and communication technology suite, together with the training of teachers and teaching assistants to improve subject knowledge. As a result, pupils' access to information and communication technology has improved significantly and so have their skills, knowledge and understanding.
67. Teaching was never less than good and in one lesson was very good. This illustrated the usefulness of recent training and this is beginning to have a very positive effect on standards. Pupils achieve well in their use of the computer for data handling and also for modelling and simulations. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, pupils recorded their favourite healthy foods on a graph, and in Year 5, they searched the Internet to find data about mountain ranges they have chosen to study. They have used modeling programs to help them understand the way of life of the Romans.
68. The teaching of communication skills and the use of new technology across the curriculum in Year 3-6 are less successful. Pupils' standards are below expectations by the end of Year 6. The school does not have all the software in place and as a result, teachers have not been able to improve their own skills prior to teaching pupils. It is expected that with further planned in-service support these two areas of study will be taught to the recommended level by the end of the current academic year.
69. The new procedures for checking pupils' progress have not yet been introduced into this subject; this development would be a significant improvement on the already well established procedures and make them even more effective. The status of information and communication technology across the school is low. The coordinator is working well to make links between other subjects and information technology but this is not yet fully developed. Displays in classrooms and corridors do not yet reflect these links and do not reflect the importance of this subject in the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily across the curriculum and there is evidence of its good use in art and design, literacy, mathematics and for recording in some other subjects. However there are some opportunities that are missed in teachers' planning to use this important tool more extensively and in different ways across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching especially in Years 3 to 6
- The breadth of coverage of all aspects of the curriculum is good.
- The emphasis on developing pupils' skills is effective.
- The annual residential visit to the Isle of Wight extends pupils' learning and encourages interest in the subject.

Commentary

71. Standards match expectations for pupils' ages by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, as they did at the previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 2, they have a good knowledge of the local area and the emphasis is on geographical enquiry skills. They have a good understanding of the physical and human features of Tilehurst and use their literacy skills to give instructions on travel from home to school and computer skills to plot graphs of means of travel.
72. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of the water cycle, rivers and weather. They use their literacy skills for writing, mathematical skills for plotting co-ordinates and computer skills for research. Pupils develop a very good knowledge of rock formations, erosion and coastal protection through first-hand exploration of Whitecliff Bay, on the Isle of Wight, an area of special scientific interest.
73. Teaching is good overall, in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6. Strengths of teaching are teachers' subject knowledge, breadth of coverage and emphasis on geographical enquiry skills. Their high expectations and very good use of time, support staff and resources encourage pupils to respond with a high level of effort.
74. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good and the curriculum is enriched by local fieldwork and a residential trip. The new subject leader is well-informed and enthusiastic and her priorities for development are appropriate. Good resources support pupils' learning.

History

Provision for history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Visits, visitors and the growing use of information technology all give very good support to pupils' learning.
- The use of too many worksheets in some classes limits pupils' opportunities to use their literacy skills.

Commentary

75. No teaching was seen in this subject. However, analysis of work shows standards of work, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, that at least match those expected for the ages of the pupils. They are very well supported by the school's use of visits and visitors, giving much first hand experience of the topics they are studying. A visiting group presents historical periods to the pupils, showing them costumes or armaments of the period. A visit to an Egyptology exhibition gives pupils an opportunity to see artefacts of the period. The use of a CD ROM in a history lesson about Romans in Year 4, gives pupils good opportunities to move around a virtual tour of a Roman town. These experiences help pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve well.
76. Where pupils are given opportunities to write freely about their history topics, as in their work on evacuees as part of a World War 2 topic, their use of their literacy skills gives good support to their language development. However, in other topics, a reliance on commercially produced work sheets takes little notice of the needs of individual pupils; neither does it provide opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills. Too often pupils simply fill in blanks or write brief phrases or sentences.

Religious education

This is inspected separately under Section 23 provision for aided schools.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are ambitious plans to develop the arts, including music, with the provision of a creative arts centre.
- 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 very well and reach standards that are similar to their peers.
- There is good development of pupils' skills of observation from the earliest years.
- Pupils use a good range of media with which to draw and paint and make three dimensional sculptures.
- Sometimes work is on small sheets of paper because of lack of space, which inhibits pupils' expression and the ability to give scale to the picture.

Commentary

77. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and pupils achieve well. Teachers plan their lessons well and use resources effectively. Standards at least match those expected of their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Development of the subjects has been good since the previous inspection. There is some particularly good work taking place in Year 6, where

pupils self-evaluate their work and the work of artists. The school follows national guidance in this subject. The leadership and management of the subject is in the hands of a new co-ordinator who has ambitious plans to develop the subject, but is so new in post that she has not yet had an impact on it.

78. The good teaching encourages pupils to use their skills of observation well in lessons. For example, in a good Year 2 lesson they looked at different types of fruit, a cooking apple and a lemon and discussed in detail the shape and how the colour changes according to the light and shade. The drawings that ensued showed a good knowledge of colour and shape but not perspective. In a good Year 1 lesson pupils examined the texture of different fruit that had been cut in half and tried successfully to reproduce it. Good progress occurs over time and in a very good Year 6 lesson pupils drew figures in different poses to represent movement. They used various effective techniques. In this very good lesson, pupils discussed in detail what they had done and were original in their approach. The teacher in this lesson showed very good subject knowledge and inspired pupils to be original in their work.

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of design boards.
- There are some well-planned and taught topics.

Commentary

79. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach the standards expected for their age. There are a number of well-planned and taught topics, mainly at Key Stage 2. Topics, such as the design and making of a pencil case or of a pair of slippers, effectively meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and enable pupils to put to good effect the knowledge, understanding and skills they have learnt over time. Designs are often clearly labelled, show the types of materials to be used and sometimes contain measurements. This creates good links with mathematics, while the writing of the plans on a design board, and the evaluations which follow, allow pupils to make good use of their literacy skills. The finishes, which pupils put on their completed products, are varied and thoughtful. Pupils make good use of sewing, gluing and other joining skills in order to add excitement and interest to their finished items. Only one lesson was seen and this was effective, the teacher had good subject knowledge and the lesson was well planned. The subject is managed by an effective coordinator.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiasm of staff and pupils encourages pupils.
- A comprehensive scheme of work is effective.
- An enriched curriculum helps pupils to achieve well.

Commentary

80. Standards match expectations for pupils' age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, as they did at the last inspection. All pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards are rising since the recent introduction of a commercial music scheme, which has led to increased confidence on the part of teachers. Pupils' singing is of a high standard. Their spiritual development is enhanced as they listen to music and reflect on it.
81. The active participation of pupils is encouraged, as in a lesson in a mixed Year1 and 2 class, when pupils developed their ability to clap the rhythm of a poem and to control instruments. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils listened with attention to detail and improved their control of pulse and rhythm. They explored chords on tuned percussion and developed their understanding of how to combine pitch. They thought how the music, 'Central Park in the Dark' made them feel and how they pictured the scene in their minds.
82. Teaching in music is good and leads to good learning for all pupils. The strengths of teaching are teachers' good subject knowledge, effective planning and high expectations, leading to the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to assess their work. They have a good knowledge of their own learning. Time and resources are used very well.
83. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum is enriched through extra-curricular activities. Group tuition is available for recorders, tin whistles and guitars. Individual tuition is available in violin, flute or clarinet. There are opportunities for pupils to sing in the school choir. Pupils perform at church services and school productions. Good resources support pupils' learning. The new subject leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and keen to implement the planned development of the creative arts.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well, lessons are active and all pupils have the opportunity to warm up and cool down properly.
- All pupils and staff change for physical education and wear suitable clothing.
- Due attention is paid to safety and all pupils, even the youngest, move apparatus quickly and with care.
- Pupils enjoy physical education and are enthusiastic; sometimes this means that noise levels are too high.
- All pupils have the opportunity to swim and reach good standards with specialist tuition.
- Extra-curricular activities support physical education, particularly team games such as football.

Commentary

84. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and pupils achieve well. Teachers' subject knowledge, good pace of well-planned lessons help pupils to achieve to their capability. The majority at least attain standards that match those expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school effectively follows national guidance in this subject and includes all the aspects. The subject is well led and managed and is prioritised for further development in the school's planning. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
85. In a very good Year 1 lesson the teacher challenged pupils physically with a vigorous warm-up routine jogging and jumping concentrating on landing quietly. Pupils worked well collaboratively and made star, circular and straight shapes in the floor work. Some good

discussion took place as they talked about and evaluated what they have done. Pupils showed good spatial awareness and they moved round the hall quickly but with control and an awareness of safety. In a good Year 2 lesson pupils learned to use a bat and ball with dexterity including balancing a ball on the bat. They showed increasing control as they developed their skills during the lesson and pupils were used effectively to demonstrate the skills being taught. Progress over time was good. There is some interesting experimentation in the subject, for example in a good Year 4 lesson pupils were shown Yoga techniques, the teacher has very good subject knowledge and the exercises pupils did enabled them to build up control, awareness of their bodies and breathing as well as increasing suppleness.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. No specific lessons were seen, so no overall judgment can be made. However, there are good opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to discuss their feelings and reflect on their own circumstances. The school has adopted a policy to educate pupils about the dangers of drugs and the school has a sex education policy in place. The strong Catholic ethos and caring atmosphere contribute to citizenship in terms of recognising the individual and their place in the school community. There is an active school council which advises the school; some decisions have been acted upon since its implementation last year. During an assembly, to welcome new pupils to the school, each new pupil is paired up with a pupil from Year 6. These Year 6 pupils have the responsibility to induct new pupils who are mostly in reception, but a few other classes as well. This ensures that newcomers are well integrated into the school helping them to settle quickly into school life and gives the older pupils real responsibility, positively contributing to the relationships in the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
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
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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