

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST THERESA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Blacon, Chester

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111388

Headteacher: Mr M. Forber

Lead inspector: Mr Paul Bamber

Dates of inspection: 22 - 24 March 2004

Inspection number: 257966

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	225
School address:	Kipling Road Blacon Chester Cheshire
Postcode:	CH1 5UU
Telephone number:	01244 390758
Fax number:	01244 370718
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Baxter
Date of previous inspection:	September 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Theresa's Catholic Primary School is of average size with 225 pupils on roll including 36 children who attend part-time in the nursery. The number of pupils on roll is well short of its capacity of 275. Pupils who attend the school are from predominantly white British backgrounds, with none speaking any other language other than English. Most pupils come from predominantly the local parish and a significant number come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a small number of children in public care. The number of pupils leaving or joining the school at times other than normal is marginally below average and attainment on entry is below average. Around 15 per cent of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs, with about one per cent with a Statement of special educational need. Both of these proportions are broadly average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15064	Paul Bamber	Lead inspector	Mathematics Geography History Physical education English as an additional language
19344	David Jones	Lay inspector	
31012	Anne Welch	Team inspector	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Science Information and communication technology (ICT) Personal, social, health and citizenship education Music
22999	George Loizou	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Art and design Design and technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Although the school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education, there are **serious weaknesses** in pupils' standards and achievement. The quality of teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. The school's ethos is positive. Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Governance is **unsatisfactory**. The school offers **unsatisfactory** value for money.

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

- Pupils do not achieve well enough in the core subjects, in which standards are too low.
- Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is good.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning because they are well managed and their spiritual, moral and social development is good.
- Standards in art and design are above expectations throughout the school.
- Assessment information is not used effectively enough to ensure that all pupils make sufficient progress.
- The care provided for pupils is very good.
- The amount of teaching time does not meet national recommendations.
- Governors are not sufficiently aware of the school's weaknesses.

Improvement since the last inspection is **unsatisfactory**. Although the school has put in place formal systems for tracking pupils' progress, these systems are not used rigorously enough. Standards have fallen. The quality of leadership and of management is not as high as it was at the time of the last inspection nor is the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

In the table below, comparisons with all schools nationally show that results were well below average. Compared with similar schools, standards were in the bottom five percent in English and mathematics and well below average in science.

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
E\* - very low.*

*Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Children enter the reception class with well below expected skills in their language and communication skills, mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve well, but many are still below expected standards, especially in language skills by the time they enter Year 1. They make greatest strides in their personal, social and emotional development. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are well below average in reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In the current Year 6, standards reflect those indicated by the 2003 national test results and are well below expectations in ICT. Standards in art and design are above expectations throughout the school. Pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are unsatisfactory. Achievement is least good for pupils who are more-able and those with special educational needs.

Pupils' personal development, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is **good**. Pupils have good attitudes to school and they behave well. Attendance is satisfactory but some pupils are often late arriving in the mornings.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is of good quality in the nursery and in the reception class. Art and design is taught well. Pupils are very well cared for, but the school's systems for ensuring that pupils progress as well as they should are unsatisfactory. There are satisfactory links with parents, although more parents could actively help with their child's reading and homework. Links with other schools and colleges are good. Although the curriculum is appropriate and pupils are given many enriching experiences, the amount of teaching time falls significantly short of national guidelines throughout the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The newly appointed headteacher has a good understanding of the school's weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve standards and achievement. Although management is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in self-evaluation and in the use of test data. Governance is **unsatisfactory**, because governors are insufficiently aware of the school's weaknesses.

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

Parents think well of the school, especially how much their children like the school, the approachability of staff and the quality of the arrangements for helping children settle in. Concerns expressed by some parents, about the pupils' behaviour and about bullying, proved unfounded during the inspection. Pupils say they like school, particularly how friendly and welcoming it is.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards and achievement in the core subjects.
- Use assessment information more effectively to enable pupils to make better progress.
- Ensure that the amount of teaching time meets national guidelines.
- Make sure that governors become more knowledgeable about the school's weaknesses, in order to be better placed to hold the school to account for its standards and the pupils' achievements.

In the above text, core subjects refers to English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

There are serious weaknesses in the standards pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 attain in the core subjects and in their achievements.

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

- Standards in the core subjects are well below expectations in both key stages.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough, especially those who are more-able and those who have special educational needs.
- Standards in art and design are above expectations throughout the school.
- Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve well.

#### **Commentary**

1. Standards have declined significantly over the last two years in Year 6 and consistently in Year 2, since the last inspection. Pupils in the current and in last year's Year 6, suffered some disruption to their learning as a result of being taught by many different teachers in a short time, which resulted in them not achieving as well as they might. Many pupils' lack of language and literacy skills and insecure grasp of basic number facts contribute significantly to their unsatisfactory achievement and low standards. Too few pupils attain higher levels in national tests and pupils with special educational needs make too little progress.
2. Children in the nursery and reception classes make good progress. They enter the nursery with very low standards in language and communication and low standards in the other areas of their learning. Despite their good progress, they continue to struggle with their literacy skills and a significant minority enters Year 1 without reaching the expected levels in many areas of their learning. Because of good teaching and effective pastoral care, children make the best progress in the personal, social and emotional development, many reaching the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	12.4 (13.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	11.7 (12.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.5 (14.4)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Test results in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently well below average over the last four years. Too few pupils reach the expected standards in reading. In writing, standards have improved and more pupils now attain expected standards. In mathematics, many pupils attained expected standards in the tests in 2002 and 2003. However, in all three subjects the proportion of pupils reaching higher than expected levels fell well short of national averages. Compared with similar schools, the school's standards were very low in reading, well below average in writing, and average in mathematics. Pupils do not make enough progress in reading and writing, especially during their time in Years 1 and 2.
4. In the current Year 2, standards are well below average in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT and pupils do not achieve well enough in these subjects. In art and design,



standards are above average and pupils achieve well. In those other subjects in which it was possible to make a secure judgement, standards and achievement are in line with what would be expected.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.3 (27.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	23.4 (24.9)	26.8 (26.7)
science	26.8 (28.1)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 32 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

5. Grades in all three subjects were down on previous years. The disruption to these pupils' learning already referred to in this section of the report was a contributory factor, but their progress, compared to their test results, when they were in Year 2, was well below average. The school's trend for improvement in all three subjects is below that nationally. In 2003, the test results in English and mathematics fell well short of the school's targets. Standards in the current Year 6 are well below average in all the core subjects and the school is likely to again fall short of its formal targets in the 2004 national tests.
6. Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards in art and design because the subject is taught well and pupils show a keen interest in painting, drawing and design. Standards in ICT are well below average, mainly because pupils do not have enough access to computers. In those other subjects that were inspected standards and achievement are in line with expectations.
7. More-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should because shortcomings in teachers' assessments and in the school's procedures for tracking pupils' progress, mean that they are often set work which does not match their needs. The school's own data also reveals that pupils with special educational needs do not make the progress they should. Some initiatives designed to support these pupils have only recently been implemented by the school and have had insufficient time to make an impact. While teaching assistants assiduously and sensitively support pupils with special educational needs and lower ability, the work planned for them is often not focussed well enough upon their specific needs. Although there was no firm evidence why, it is noticeable from recent Year 6 test results, that boys under-achieve much more significantly than girls in national tests, especially in English and mathematics.

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

The overall quality of pupils' development is **good**, and is a strength of the school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is satisfactory, whilst punctuality is unsatisfactory.

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

- The school has high expectations of pupils' conduct.
- The school's ethos promotes good relationships.
- Pupils' punctuality is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

8. The pupils' development is encouraged and supported by the good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the school's commitment to a caring environment where all pupils are valued.

9. The pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour enhance their learning. In many lessons observed, pupils worked enthusiastically at the tasks set, showing a pride in their achievements. Some very well produced Year 6 history and geography projects provided clear evidence of pupils' positive attitudes to their work. Pupils worked well together when required to co-operate on tasks.
10. As they move about the school between lessons, during break and lunchtime, pupils' behaviour is good. They are courteous and respectful with adults and enjoy discussing their schoolwork and personal life. They recognise and enjoy the security of a disciplined environment and do not have significant concerns about bullying. Pupils feel that they could turn to the teachers if any bullying did occur. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility or to develop initiative are limited, apart from participation in the school council. Discussions with members of the school council reveal they are thoughtful, and able to take responsibility sensibly.
11. Attendance is satisfactory, but punctuality is unsatisfactory and lessons do not always start on time. The school does not have an attendance policy and no provision is made for first day contact in the event of absence. There have been no exclusions.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0.4
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

12. The school's ethos and promotion of Christian values through its Catholic foundation provide a strong basis for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils reflect on spiritual and moral values sensibly and thoughtfully. The school maintains close links with its local church, for instance for seasonal services and the weekly family mass. Moral values are constantly reinforced to which the children respond well. For their part, pupils have initiated through the school council the introduction of older pupils acting as mentors for younger ones during play. They are actively involved in their local community through business ventures, meeting with residents of local senior citizens homes and participation in inter-school sport. Their good social development is significantly enhanced through the broad range of visits to educational venues. Many of these visits help them develop an insight into their own cultural traditions, such as the Jodrell Bank observatory and the Catalyst Museum at Runcorn. In art and design, they have produced designs in the style of African and Indian artwork as well as Celtic art and design, which contributes well to their good cultural development.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory** overall. The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory** overall. The curriculum is satisfactory. The quality of care is very good but guidance and support are unsatisfactory. The school's accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The school's links with parents are satisfactory.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory** overall. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 2 and Year 4. Overall, teachers' assessment of pupils' work is **unsatisfactory**.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching in the nursery and reception classes ensures that children achieve well.
- Teachers do not consistently set tasks that match all pupils' needs.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well.
- The use of assessment is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is good in art and design.

## Commentary

13. The good quality of the teaching and support in the nursery and reception classes enables children to achieve well and make a good start to their schooling. All adults who are involved with the children work very hard, with considerable success, to help many to overcome their considerable difficulties in communicating and in developing language skills. Adults provide a good example in the use of language for the children to help them develop their own speaking skills. The best teaching occurs for children's personal, social and emotional development, which lays the foundation for them to become more confident, to take responsibilities for choosing their own activities and for sharing resources and adults' time amicably. Although satisfactory, teaching is least effective for children's physical development because lessons sometimes lack sufficient pace and children spend too long being inactive.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1 (3%)	11 (33%)	19 (58%)	2 (6%)	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.*

14. In less successful lessons in Years 1 - 6, teachers do not set tasks that match pupils' needs sufficiently. As a result, the achievements of more-able pupils and of pupils with special educational needs are not as good as they should be. While there were good lessons in which work was well matched to needs, for example, in an effective Year 6 mathematics lesson, there were too many instances in which more-able pupils found tasks too easy and pupils with different special educational needs were set the same work. A weakness in the teachers' use of the assessment information available to them contributes to the mismatch of tasks and pupils' subsequent underachievement.
15. In most of the lessons observed, teachers' good management of pupils' behaviour contributed significantly to their sensible behaviour and positive attitudes. The good relationships between teachers and pupils also mean that lessons proceed in a warm atmosphere, which encourages pupils to 'have a go' without fear of failure. While relationships are good in the Year 4 class, the lack of rigour in insisting that pupils listen to instructions and to each other means that in lessons there is continual chatter and pupils' learning is not as effective as it should be.
16. Teachers assess pupils' work both against the objectives set out in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the objectives in teaching programmes in some other subjects. However, they do not use this information rigorously or consistently enough to help them set work that matches pupils' needs. When subject co-ordinators analyse test papers, weaknesses are identified in too general terms. This does not sufficiently help class teachers to address specific weaknesses in pupils' attainment, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
17. The quality of teaching in art and design is good. Teachers introduce pupils to a wide range of art and design forms and encourage them to experiment with different media. Pupils take a

pride in their good achievements and teachers encourage this by attractively displaying pupils' work around the school.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** and provides a good range of out-of-school activities that meet pupils' needs.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for enriching the curriculum.
- The school makes good provision for children in the reception and nursery classes.
- The school has good links with the community and partner institutions.
- There are some weaknesses in provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Some lessons are too long and pupils become restless, but the total amount of teaching time falls considerably short of national guidelines.

### Commentary

18. The curriculum provided the pupils with a wide range of experiences and all subjects are taught meeting statutory requirements. Currently, there is insufficient use of ICT to support learning in other curriculum areas such as English and history. Religious education is taught following the locally agreed syllabus. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex and relationships and drug education, is satisfactory overall. The national strategies for numeracy and literacy are used satisfactorily and provision for pupils' spiritual development is good.
19. The school provides good enrichment. There is a good range of after-school sporting activities and visits to places of interest enhance the curriculum well. Many pupils attend after-school clubs that include football, dance, netball, board games, gymnastics and science. Residential visits for pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 give them opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills in geography and physical education as well as enjoying outdoor activities. Visitors come into school to talk about a range of topics during the year. The school arranges for musicians and artists to spend time with the pupils to enhance their creative, social and physical skills.
20. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the nursery and reception classes are good. The curriculum is well planned and meets the personal, social and emotional needs of the children particularly effectively.
21. The school has good links with the local community and partner institutions. There is good involvement with the local church and pupils take part in regular masses held in school by the parish priest. Coaches from the local Football Club regularly instruct boys and girls in developing their football skills. Links with local high school are good. Good links with a national bank have enabled the school to receive grants to purchase sets of guided reading books as well as equipment for outside games.
22. There are some weaknesses in provision for pupils with special educational needs, which has resulted in them making unsatisfactory progress. Teaching assistants are used in classrooms but their role to support pupils with special educational needs is not clear. The newly appointed co-ordinator is aware of the need for all staff to focus on the amount and quality of support given to pupils with special educational needs and has put into place procedures that will raise pupils' achievement. Individual education plans are to be reviewed six times per year instead of twice per year, with targets being specific and challenging. Allocation of classroom assistant times to support special needs pupils is being reviewed to ensure that pupils receive the support they are entitled to.

23. The amount of time that is allocated to different subjects is inconsistent and some lessons are too long and pupils lose concentration. This was evident in a Year 2 literacy lesson that lasted for one and a half hours. At first, the pupils listened well but as the lesson progressed, they became inattentive and restless. The total amount of teaching time falls well short of national guidelines and this contributes to pupils' underachievement.

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

The school's provision to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils is **very good**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Procedures to ensure pupils work in a healthy, safe environment are good.
- Systems designed to ensure pupils' good academic progress are unsatisfactory.
- The school develops positive and trusting relationships well.
- The induction arrangements for pupils are good.

### **Commentary**

24. The school is a safe and secure place in which to work and learn. The procedures for ensuring that the school community is risk free are good. Pupils feel that they can play safely and free from harassment and appreciate the measures taken by the school to enhance the facilities provided for them.
25. The school's systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory and their shortcomings contribute significantly to pupils' underachievement. Although some teachers do track pupils' progress, the information is not used rigorously enough to ensure that pupils falling behind receive the work and support which will enable them to make up lost ground. This is particularly true of pupils who are more-able and those with special educational needs.
26. The hard work the school does to promote trusting relationships contributes well to the positive ethos and the respect and co-operation which exists between pupils and staff. Pastoral care is very good with staff responding sensitively to the pupils' problems, whether physical, emotional or behavioural. The work of the learning mentor is a particularly positive feature, contributing significantly to raising the self-esteem of certain pupils.
27. The arrangements for helping pupils settle in to the school are good. They are especially good for the youngest children entering the nursery or reception class, enabling both children and parents to feel confident about the care they will receive and knowledgeable about the routines they will encounter. Such arrangements are part of the good provision in the foundation stage.

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

The school's links with the community and with other schools and colleges is **good**, whilst the links with parents are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of links with the community, other schools and colleges is good.
- Some pupils do not receive enough support for their learning at home, especially their reading.

## Commentary

28. The quality and range of links with the community support the children's learning and achievement well. These include educational business partnership with a banking group and the 'young enterprise scheme'. The school has strong links with the local community through the church. The school makes good provision to inform parents through newsletters, annual reports of pupils' progress and opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress. The school has well-developed links with its local secondary schools and provides strong support for the smooth transfer of pupils from St Theresa's.
29. Those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with the provision made by the school to inform and involve them. The headteacher has initiated termly meetings to provide a forum for the views of parents and to deal with concerns, and the school has provided family learning support. However, only a small number of parents assist with the children's learning in school or at home and this low level of support adversely affects pupils' learning and achievement, especially to help them read better.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory** overall. The governance of the school is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher has a clear grasp of the school's weaknesses and of what to do to improve standards and achievement.
- There are weaknesses in the school's self-evaluation procedures and in the systems for ensuring pupils' good progress.
- The effective leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that provision for children in the nursery and in the reception class is good.
- Governors are insufficiently aware of the school's weaknesses.

## Commentary

30. The new headteacher, who was appointed in January 2004, has identified the school's serious weaknesses and has already drafted an action plan designed to improve pupils' standards and achievements. His able deputy headteacher is effectively supporting him in improving provision and in liaising with staff in order to make the necessary changes, especially in assessment and tracking procedures. Key staff are beginning to implement new procedures, but there has been insufficient time to bring about the necessary improvements in standards and achievement, especially for more-able pupils and those with special educational needs.
31. Significant factors in pupils' underachievement are weaknesses in the school's self-evaluation and in the procedures for tracking pupils' progress. The self-evaluation schedule completed prior to the inspection revealed a considerable mismatch between the school's perception of its performance and that of the inspection judgements. The evaluations of the quality of teaching have not been rigorous enough. The action taken to address the weaknesses found has not been effective in improving the quality of teaching or in raising standards. Whilst the new headteacher has observed everyone teach and given each teacher areas in which they could improve, there has been insufficient time for these to be followed up to ensure that necessary improvements have occurred. Although there are pockets of good practice in tracking pupils' progress, there is no consistent system and in many cases the expected progress which pupils should make is not explicit enough nor sufficient action taken to follow up pupils who are falling behind.

32. The effective leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that children achieve well in the first two years of their schooling. The team of teachers and qualified nursery nurses work closely together to plan and implement appropriate experiences for the children in all areas of their learning. Children's progress is assessed accurately and the next steps of their learning planned with their previous achievements in mind. The good arrangements for settling the children into school when they first start ensure that they and their parents are familiar with routines and personnel and feel secure in the knowledge that any concerns will be dealt with sensitively and sensibly.
33. The governors are insufficiently knowledgeable about the school's weaknesses. For instance, the governors seem unaware that other schools in similar circumstances are attaining higher standards and that their pupils have better achievement. Although governors are very supportive of the school and ensure that financial control is rigorous, they have been less effective in ensuring that sufficient funds have been made available to buy sufficient computers so that pupils reach expected standards in ICT. Neither have they made sure that the funds allocated to support pupils with special educational needs have been used effectively and efficiently.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	596,545	Balance from previous year	50,575
Total expenditure	581,413	Balance carried forward to the next	65,707
Expenditure per pupil	2,169		

**Barriers to raising achievement**

34. Over the last three years, pupils' learning and the leadership and management of some key subjects have been disrupted as a result of staff leaving the school, for promotion or for personal reasons. In addition, the expectations of a significant minority of parents about the standards their children should achieve are quite low.



# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING and SUBJECTS**

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

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. Children's levels of attainment when they start in the nursery are well below those expected for their age and in speaking and listening skills, they are particularly low. Children progress at a good rate and respond well to the sensitive and effective teaching in the nursery. Teaching which is good overall is based on well-informed knowledge of young children's needs. Leadership and management are very good and a strong team of qualified and experienced staff work closely together to ensure efficient organisation. A wide range of stimulating and challenging activities are planned with great care to match the needs of all children in the six areas of learning.

Assessment procedures are thorough and begin before children join the nursery. Strong links are forged with parents during the induction visits made to each new starter's home. This means that not only do the children know their new teacher but also that their individual needs are assessed and prepared for before they enter school. This is the start of an accurate and informative profile of each child's achievements during the time spent in the nursery and reception classes. The accommodation and resources are organised to good effect to provide an exciting environment for young children. The outdoor area is used productively to support all areas of learning.

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

Provision for personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because of good teaching and high expectations set by all staff.
- Very strong relationships between staff and children promote children's confidence and encourage them to work hard.
- The curriculum is designed to allow children to initiate their own activities and to make choices and decisions.

### **Commentary**

35. Children's personal development blossoms during their time in the Foundation Stage because the staff are skilled at promoting it in everything children do. Many nursery children are reticent and need much encouragement to participate in activities. Staff are warm and caring in their approach and make each child feel special. This ensures that they settle comfortably into the routines of the nursery. For example, they register their own name on arrival and share in tidying the room at the end of activities. Relationships are very good and this means that children trust their teachers and other staff. Adults act as good role models, particularly in the calm, quiet manner they use when talking to children. In turn children learn to be polite, to care for others and to take turns and share fairly. The positive attitudes and high expectations of all staff boost children's self esteem and spur them on to try even harder to do their best. Good teaching promotes children's independence well and because they are given a manageable choice of tasks and the opportunity to make simple decisions, their sense of responsibility grows. This is increased in the reception class as the organisation becomes more formal and children take on the responsibility to complete a task in a given time. Although few are on course to reach the expected levels in this area of learning, the gap between national expectations and what they are able to achieve will have closed considerably by the time they leave the reception class.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skilful teaching gets children off to a good start with reading and writing skills.
- There are good links with other areas of learning that help the development of language skills.

### Commentary

36. Good teaching means that even the youngest children learn to explain their immediate needs and begin to offer simple contributions to discussions. Almost every activity involves asking questions and emphasising words and names. In both nursery and reception, best use is made of adult-led groups to encourage children to speak to an audience. Teachers employ their own good use of language to help children to broaden their vocabulary and to improve their diction.
37. To encourage an interest in books, teachers fill boxes full of story-books and colourful reference books. Sitting on the carpet with rapt attention, children turn pages, lift up flaps, look at pictures and experiment with words. There is a strong emphasis on learning to recognise the sounds of letters, beginning in the nursery with the initial letters of their names. In reception there is 'the letter of the week' supported by attractive displays of objects beginning with the chosen letter. Writing skills are taught systematically so that children learn to form letters correctly and make a smooth transition from copying what the teacher has written to having a go for themselves. There are many informal opportunities provided for children to practise their writing skills. Nursery children 'write' prescriptions in the 'doctor's surgery' while reception children 'order' supplies for the 'medical centre'. Children achieve well during their time in nursery and reception classes. More able children are beginning to read and write some words independently although less able children still struggle to write their names. Despite this good achievement, because of their low starting point, many are on course to attain levels well below those typical for their age.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have a good knowledge of how to teach basic numeracy skills through talk and the use of resources.
- Teaching provides children with good opportunities for practical work.

### Commentary

38. Good, clear explanations enable children to achieve the objectives of lessons in mathematical development. Children practise what they are learning in different ways, for example, counting is used whenever it is appropriate so that they become familiar and confident with numbers. Children count and recall the sequence of numbers as they sing a range of counting songs. The strong emphasis on practical activities ensures that most nursery children confidently used *longer* and *shorter* at the end of a sorting activity. Reception children begin to understand the properties of common two-dimensional shapes through playing a matching game with their teacher. Learning to take turns enhances their personal and social skills. Although this good provision for mathematical development enables most pupils to achieve well, few will reach the levels of attainment typical for their age.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for the development of knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A range of interesting activities is planned to promote learning in this area.
- Tasks are used well to support the development of language skills.

### Commentary

39. Teachers' expertise ensures good provision. They plan stimulating activities that not only help children to acquire an early understanding of the world, but also link to other areas of learning in a natural way. As nursery children made biscuits, the good quality of the questions made them think carefully about health and safety issues, and how the ingredients change when they are mixed together and during the cooking. Number and measuring skills were reinforced well as they noted the weight of each ingredient used. Others effectively used their number skills as they programmed a *Roamer* to move to a given spot. Reception children used the outdoor area well to heighten their awareness of their senses as they listened and looked around them. Work in this area of learning is also enhanced by visits, for example, to local woodlands and boat trips on the River Dee. Visitors include theatre groups and a local farmer and some of his livestock. Children in both classes develop their ICT skills well by using computers and listening to audio-tapes on a regular basis. They develop a relevant understanding of their own culture as they act out baptisms and weddings and visit the parish church. Due to effective teaching children achieve well but most will not reach the levels of knowledge and understanding expected for their age by the end of the reception year.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are confident when participating in physical activities in the school hall and the outside play area.
- The structure of some physical education lessons is too formal for young children and slows their rate of achievement.
- Children have ample opportunities to use small tools and implements for writing, drawing and painting.

### Commentary

40. Staff use the outside area well to support all areas of learning but particularly children's physical development. Children experience a wide range of challenging physical experiences such as climbing, crawling and imaginative play. They negotiate wheeled toys in a controlled way and with an awareness of space. In the school hall, nursery children are good at finding a space to work in and can move in a variety of ways. However, when large apparatus is used, the pace of the lessons slows as children wait for their turn and some of the spontaneity of movement associated with young children is lost. Reception children develop increasing control over their body movements because staff not only give clear instructions about each movement but also demonstrate the correct techniques. However, too many activities are planned, with the result that some children become weary and lose interest. Children's skills in manipulating small tools, such as scissors, brushes and pencils, develop well because they are taught to use them correctly and have plenty of opportunities to

practise using them. By the end of the reception year, most children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals for physical development.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards in this area of learning. Teachers' plans indicate a good range of interesting activities. Work on display indicates a wide range of media being used.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision for English is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- Standards are well below average throughout the school.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Specific targets for pupils with special educational needs are not consistently highlighted in teachers' lesson plans and provision is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

41. Standards in English are well below average and have declined since the last inspection. This is reflected in pupils' well below average results in the most recent national tests in reading and writing in Year 2 and English as a whole in Year 6. Few pupils reach the higher levels in national tests, reflecting underachievement by the more-able. In Year 2, reading and writing are very weak and standards have remained low for a number of years. The school has not taken effective action to raise them. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well below expected levels with the school providing few opportunities for them to practise and improve these skills. The reasons for the decline in standards include:
  - A sharp turnover of staff with some classes being taught by a significant number of supply teachers.
  - The less than rigorous use of target setting for individual pupils.
  - The general lack of parental help at home, especially with reading.
  - The allocation of time and the organisation of the English timetable. Lessons are sometimes too long for both younger and older pupils and they become restless and lose concentration.
42. Standards in pupils' speaking and listening skills are well below average. Many pupils are passive listeners and are reluctant to answer questions put to them by the teacher or even take part in discussions. Generally, teachers do not encourage pupils to speak at length, to answer in sentences or to give reasons for their answers. Some pupils, especially those who are members of the School Council, are able to express their ideas clearly. Average and lower attaining pupils are reluctant to speak in class and when prompted by the teacher, usually reply with single word answers or short phrases.
43. In Year 2, standards in reading are well below expectations. The few more-able pupils read well, but average and less-able pupils show little understanding of the books they read and find it difficult to comment on the story. By Year 6, standards overall are well below expectations. Many of the more able pupils read accurately and fluently but higher order skills, such as skimming and scanning, are limited. Pupils' research and reference skills are

weak and they find it difficult to find books and information in the school library. The daily group reading sessions are not focused on improving pupils' reading skills and contribute little to raising achievement.

44. Standards in writing are well below the national average in Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 2, the range of pupils' writing is limited and there is little evidence to show pupils varying their writing to suit different purposes. Pupils in Year 6 are still showing many of the weaknesses that are found in the writing of younger pupils. The emphasis on writing tends to be on information or factual texts. Much of the writing is basic and limited. However, there are examples of good writing. In Year 6, some pupils have done some good extended writing. While some pupils have a satisfactory joined handwriting style, most do not and continue to print.
45. All groups of pupils make unsatisfactory progress because teachers do not consistently plan different tasks for pupils with different learning needs. The more-able pupils are not provided with consistently challenging work. An example of this is during daily group reading sessions when teachers focus on one group and allow the rest of the class to read books of their choice. Opportunities to set more-able pupils challenging tasks, such as scanning text for information or researching topics, are not followed through during these sessions. The use of target setting for individual pupils is not rigorous. Targets that are set are too general to be of use and usually not shared with pupils who are unaware of what is expected of them. The setting of clear targets for improvement, which are closely linked to pupils' levels of attainment, would enable teachers to plan work at much more precisely at the correct level for pupils in their classes. Assessment strategies are not effective enough to ensure all pupils make sufficient progress. Teachers do not systematically track the achievement of all pupils in English and this contributes to their unsatisfactory progress in this subject.
46. Teachers do not plan carefully enough for the specific learning needs of pupils with special educational needs. Targets from their individual education plans are often not referred to and the activities provided in class do not sufficiently match pupils' needs, resulting in underachievement.
47. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The rapid turnover of staff has contributed to this. The newly appointed headteacher has taken on, temporarily, the responsibility for English and is aware of the need to put in place strategies for the systematic and rigorous evaluation of standards, achievement and provision in the subject.

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

48. The development of literacy in other subjects is insufficiently planned and there are too few examples of extended writing, for example, in science. There are very few opportunities for speaking and listening in class discussions. Some good examples of writing in different styles were noted in Year 6, particularly to support pupils' work in history.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- Pupils' standards are too low and they do not achieve well enough in national tests.
- There are significant weaknesses in pupils' recall of basic number facts and in their ability to solve problems.

## Commentary

49. In the national tests, in Year 2 and in Year 6, standards have rarely reached a satisfactory level over the last four years. In 2003, standards were better in Year 2, matching those attained by similar schools. However, in Year 6, standards were well below average when compared nationally and against similar schools. Data shows that last year's Year 6 did poorly compared with their performance when they were in Year 2. Current standards in both Year 2 and Year 6 are well below average and pupils do not make the progress they should.
50. Too many pupils have an insecure grasp and limited recall of basic number facts. They make basic mistakes when adding and subtracting and often use the wrong operation when calculating. Although staff satisfactorily teach a range of strategies for simplifying calculations, only the more-able pupils use these accurately. Many pupils find difficulties in applying the mathematical knowledge they have to solve problems. The school has recognised this and has recently introduced dedicated lessons designed to improve pupils' investigative and problem solving skills. However, there is little evidence as yet to indicate that standards have improved. Pupils' relatively poor literacy skills place restrictions on their ability to interpret or understand written mathematical problems effectively, which limits their achievements. Standards have fallen since the time of the last inspection.
51. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, for example in a Year 6 lesson about calculating angles, the pace and challenge set by the teacher, clear explanations and good use of resources, ensured good quality learning and satisfactory achievement. However, in some lessons, tasks were ill-matched to pupils' needs, especially for the more-able pupils. On too few occasions did lessons start with a rapid mental arithmetic session designed to consolidate pupils' knowledge and recall of basic number facts and multiplication tables.
52. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Training has been organised which has relevantly focused upon perceived weaknesses in pupils' standards. Improved resources have been made available to support mental mathematics sessions and problem solving. Recent close liaison with the local education authority has resulted in more focused support being provided for pupils in Year 5 who struggle with their work. There are, however, weaknesses in self-evaluation and tracking procedures. Although lessons have been observed, little or no improvement has occurred in those aspects of teaching which remain relatively weak. In the same way, although pupils who are not making the progress they should are identified, the action taken to improve their achievement has been largely ineffective.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

53. The promotion of mathematics to support learning in other subjects is satisfactory. Pupils use their measuring skills in science and design and technology, construct time lines in history and draw graphs accurately and interpret data satisfactorily in geography.

## SCIENCE

The provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are too low, especially for the more-able pupils.
- Weaknesses in teaching limit the amount of investigational work pupils carry out.
- There is good emphasis on the use of specific technical language.

## Commentary

54. Standards are lower than at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Year 6, standards have fallen over the last two years to be well below those expected nationally and pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in the present Year 6 are well below expectations with few pupils likely to reach the higher levels in national tests. Standards in the current Year 2 are below those expected nationally, and, although most pupils are within reach of the expected level, very few will exceed it.
55. Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses that prevent it from being better. Teachers do not use the information from their records of pupils' progress to identify what different groups need to learn next. Too often the starting point for investigations is the same for all pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, with no added challenge within the investigation for more-able pupils. Support for less-able pupils and those with special educational needs is inconsistent. Work is set for them at the same level as that set for more-able pupils and is too difficult for them to complete. On these occasions the rate of achievement for these three groups of pupils slows and is unsatisfactory. Pupils are taught to carry out an investigation, make and test predictions and decide if tests are valid but, too often, too much help is given and the work is taken over by the teacher. Some teachers play safe, so that pupils watch rather than carry out experiments and this goes against the very essence of an experimental and investigational approach to science. When investigations are carried out in such a way, pupils lose interest and some misbehave and the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory.
56. There are, however, some strengths in the teaching. Work is explained in clear scientific language and pupils quickly add the new words to their own vocabulary. Pupils in Year 2 include 'translucent' and 'transparent' in their work about materials, while pupils in Year 6 talk about making an 'hypothesis' and include 'upthrust' and 'gravity' in their writing about forces. Relationships with pupils are good and this engenders good attitudes to the subject on the part of the pupils. The presentation of their work is often good, particularly in Year 6. Effective use is made of the school's resources, including the butterfly garden and wild area. During the annual 'Science Week' the school draws upon the expertise of the local community including the local council's recycling unit, opticians, members of the fire brigade and members of the police force and personnel from a local aircraft industry.
57. Leadership and management have lost momentum during the absence of the co-ordinator. The monitoring of provision has been haphazard and weaknesses have not been identified. Plans are now in place to restart the evaluation of teaching and learning and to improve systems for tracking pupils' progress through school. The co-ordinator is also aware that the use of ICT in science is underdeveloped.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory due to shortcomings in the level of resources.
- Teachers do the best they can with the resources available.
- The new co-ordinator has a comprehensive action plan to address weaknesses in provision.

## Commentary

58. At the time of the last inspection standards were in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Since then standards have declined because the school does not have enough computers to teach lessons to a whole class. This means that it takes a long time

for every pupil in a class to practise a skill and subsequently pupils' progress is too slow. Teachers make good use of the ten laptop computers when it is their turn to use them and this ensures that all aspects of the ICT curriculum are covered. However, most pupils do not reach the expected standards for their age in any of these aspects. There are not enough opportunities for them to learn many of the skills they need to reach the expected levels. As a result, some average attaining pupils in Year 6 struggle to change font or the size of letters.

59. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching in the Years 1 and 2 class. Teachers are gaining confidence as they get to grips with new software and its capabilities. Their enthusiasm motivates pupils who enjoy using computers. However, most staff have not had the training to give them the skills to teach pupils how to use spreadsheets, simulators, sensory equipment and multi-media programs. Teaching is also hindered by the lack of large interactive screens to demonstrate new skills to the whole class.
60. The new co-ordinator recognises that provision for ICT is a key issue for development and an area that needs tackling urgently. A new teaching programme has been introduced and the software necessary for its implementation has been purchased. Staff training in the use of this software is high on the list of priorities. Procedures for assessing pupils' skills in ICT have been introduced although they have not been in place long enough to have made an impact on pupils' learning. Despite all these improvements, the co-ordinator is well aware that more resources, such as a computer suite, are imperative if standards are to rise to meet national expectations.

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

61. The use of computers in other subjects is very patchy. During the inspection, pupils were observed linking their skills from other areas of the curriculum such as literacy, mathematics and religious education with their ICT skills. However, opportunities to use ICT for research purposes are limited because pupils do not have access to the Internet. Also, pupils use computers to 'copy up' work such as science experiments rather than using the computer as a drafting and editing tool. A small number of more-able pupils, following a recent residential visit, prepared a *PowerPoint* presentation of their experiences, which was of a high standard.

### **HUMANITIES**

During the inspection it was not possible to make a secure judgement about provision in history or geography. Due to the school's denominational status, religious education was not within the remit of this inspection and will be reported separately by the Diocese.

In **geography**, pupils cover recommended teaching programmes in both key stages. Year 2 pupils understand that their own immediate locality is different to that in rural areas of other countries. By drawing simple maps they begin to see how routes can be planned and how to find their way from one point to another. Through simple fieldwork they gain knowledge about different land use, local businesses and problems associated with traffic. In Year 6, pupils have a secure understanding of different types of mountains and of the names and locations of the world's mountain ranges. In both Year 2 and in Year 6 indications are that standards are in line with expectations.

In **history**, Year 2 pupils study the passing of time by looking at toys of different ages and have some understanding of significant historical events such as the Fire of London. In Year 6, many pupils have a good knowledge of Ancient Egypt as a result of carrying out well-researched projects and some good teaching. In a good lesson observed in Year 6, pupils achieved well, demonstrating detailed recall of the customs and beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians. In the same lesson, the teacher made good use of ICT to stimulate further interest in the topic. Many Year 6 pupils have demonstrated their enthusiasm for history by producing very detailed and beautifully presented project files.

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



## **Art and design**

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

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

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Standards are above expectations across the school.
- The school values pupils' artwork and gives it high profile.
- Art and design is effectively used to support pupils' cultural development.
- Insufficient use is made of different media to enhance pupils' skills.

### **Commentary**

62. Achievement is good. Standards are above expectation throughout the school. Pupils employ a good range of media and use artists such as Picasso for inspiration. Pupils in Year 4 created attractive paintings of fish in the style of Seurat, trying out different techniques such as dotting and dabbing.
63. There are good displays of pupils' work throughout the school. Staff take great care in displaying pupils' work; for example, masks made from paper-mache by pupils from Year 2, sketches in charcoal of a slug by pupils in the mixed Year 1 / 2 class, while pupils in Year 6 displayed their sketches of cylinders and spheres. Art and design is used well to support pupils' cultural development with good examples of tapestries, prints and pictures based on Indian and African themes.
64. The quality of teaching is good, lessons are well prepared and pupils are encouraged to be creative. Most of the work seen was in traditional media and there were very few examples of work created using ICT.

## **Design and technology**

It was not possible to make a judgement on the quality of provision due to insufficient evidence. Only one lesson was observed and there was limited work evidence to analyse. From the few samples seen, there is evidence that the pupils' skills in making products are as expected.

## **Music**

No lessons were observed in music although the whole school was heard singing tunefully during assembly. Teachers' plans follow national guidelines and cover all strands of the music curriculum. The headteacher is acting in a caretaker role during the co-ordinator's absence. He is aware that music has a fairly low profile at the moment due to the lack of instrumental teaching, choir or after school music clubs. However, two annual productions, which are very popular with both pupils and parents, give pupils the opportunity to use their musical talents as they perform for others.

## **Physical education**

In physical education only one dance lesson, of a satisfactory quality, was observed in Year 2. Evidence from talking to staff and pupils and through photographic and written records, indicates that pupils have a satisfactory curriculum. There is a wide range of sporting clubs which promote pupils' physical development well and the school's football teams have had considerable success in local competitions and in fixtures against other schools. Residential visits also provide pupils with good opportunities to experience outdoor pursuits such as climbing, orienteering and abseiling.

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

No lessons were observed in this area of the school's work. This is a developing subject and has strong links with pupils' learning in religious education and science. There is a strong focus on aspects of personal development such as making choices, responsibility, self-discipline and being healthy. Topics such as smoking, drugs awareness and alcohol abuse are also addressed. Pupils are enthusiastic about the school council, which is helping them to gain a better understanding of citizenship and to take part in democracy at first hand.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>6</b>
Pupils' achievement	5
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	5
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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