

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Great Wyrley, Walsall

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124376

Headteacher: Mr D McCauley

Lead inspector: Mr Geof Timms

Dates of inspection: 17-19 May 2004

Inspection number: 257980

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 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	146
School address:	Hut Hill Lane Great Wyrley Walsall Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E A Bullivant
Date of previous inspection:	15 June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School has 146 pupils, including 4 children of pre-Reception age who attend on a part-time basis. This represents a doubling in the size of the school since the last inspection and this mobility has an impact on standards achieved. Although there is a range of ability, and this differs from year to year, overall the attainment of most children when they enter the school is broadly in line with that expected for their ages. There are 21 pupils on the register of special educational need, one with a statement of special need entitling them to extra support. This is below average overall when compared with schools nationally but it does vary from cohort to cohort. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The great majority of the pupils are from a white British background. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The school provides for a small number of Traveller children, nine of whom were on roll during the inspection. Extra support for these pupils is provided through the West Midlands Education Service for Travelling Children. The proportion of parents who claim their entitlement to free school meals is broadly average and has risen as the school has grown. The school received an achievement award in 2003 for the improvements made to standards in English, mathematics and science.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21038	Mr G Timms	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Physical education Personal, social and health education English as an additional language
9958	Mr T Page	Lay inspector	
11418	Mrs J Underwood	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics History Music
23647	Mr G Cooper	Team inspector	English Design and technology Geography Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's effectiveness is good and it provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well, given their attainment on entry to the school and, by the age of eleven, the standards attained by the substantial majority are at least in line with those expected. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and governors and there is a clear focus on raising standards. Pupils have very good attitudes towards school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are rising and pupils achieve well; standards are above average in science, information and communication technology and physical education by Year 2, and above average in information and communication technology and history by Year 6.
- The headteacher provides very effective leadership and management.
- The governance of the school is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good with a significant proportion that is very good.
- The outdoor facilities for the children under five are inadequate.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their investigative skills in mathematics.
- The presentation of pupils' work and their skills in spelling and punctuation are not used in their day-to-day work.

Overall, the school's improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and achievement have improved due to the very good leadership and management. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, partly owing to the policy introduced after the last inspection, although this now needs updating. The provision in information and communication technology has improved greatly and this is now good, resulting in above average standards. Handwriting has been addressed but these skills now need to be transferred to pupils' every day work.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Although there is a range of ability and pre-school experiences evident, most children's attainment on entry to the Reception class school is broadly in line with that expected. The majority of Reception children are on course to achieve the expected levels in all areas of learning except communication, language and literacy, where many are on course to exceed the levels expected.

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

Caution is needed in interpreting the data because the number of pupils in each year group is small.

**Achievement** is **good** overall, throughout the school. Although standards in 2003 were well below average when compared to schools nationally in mathematics and science, the achievement of the pupils who had been in the school since Year 1 was satisfactory in mathematics and good in science, as it was in English. The low standards were due to the high mobility and an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards have risen, and are continuing to rise, in Year 2 at a faster rate than that found nationally and they are now mostly above average. In Year 6, standards have been more inconsistent, due to the small sizes of the cohorts, but overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been at a rate above that found nationally.

Current standards in Year 2 are average in reading, writing and mathematics. They are above average in science, information and communication technology. Standards in physical education are above those expected in Year 2. Standards throughout the school in information and communication technology, and history are above those expected and have improved greatly since the last inspection, especially in Years 1 and 2, owing to improved resources and better teaching, due to training and good subject leadership. Current standards in Year 6 are broadly average. **Pupils' personal qualities are very good** overall. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** are **good**. Attendance is very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning** are **good** overall. There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers. The curriculum is good. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They receive very good support from learning support assistants and this enables their good inclusion into the school. The care and welfare offered to pupils is good. The links with the community and other school are very good, especially with the secondary school and sports co-ordinator project, and these links support good curriculum provision. Links with parents are good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher provides very good leadership and this is having a direct impact on standards. The subject leadership is good. The governing body offer the school a very good level of support and challenge. They are very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including those relating to standards and achievement.

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

Parents are very satisfied with the work of the school in all areas. They particularly like how approachable the school is and how well the school is led and managed. They feel the teaching is good and that teachers have high expectations of the children. Pupils like most things about school and are very positive about their teachers and the care they receive. A minority think that other children are not always well behaved, but the evidence of the inspection did not support this.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- put into place as soon as practicable the planned improvements to the outdoor facilities for the children in the Foundation Stage;
- use the available assessment data to set targets for individual pupils;
- improve the opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills in mathematics;

- ensure that the good skills established in presentation, spelling and the use of grammar are transferred to pupils' day-to-day work.



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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Achievement is good in all years, regardless of gender, level of attainment or special educational needs. Standards are improving and are average in English, mathematics, science, music and physical education by Year 6. Standards in information and communication technology are above those expected. In Years 1 and 2, standards are above average in science and information and communication technology. In the Foundation Stage, the majority of Reception children are on course to achieve the expected levels in all areas of learning except communication, language and literacy, where many are on course to exceed expectations.

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

- Improvements in teaching, learning, leadership and management since the last inspection are resulting in raised standards.
- The achievement of pupils who have been at the school for the longest time is the strongest and is above average in English and science.
- Standards in history are above average throughout the school and in physical education are above average in Years 1 and 2.

#### **Commentary**

1. Attainment on entry for the present cohort in the Reception class is broadly average. However, attainment tends to vary considerably given the small size of each cohort. The good teaching and learning, and well-planned and appropriate curriculum, is resulting in the majority of Reception children being on course to achieve the expected levels in all areas of learning. However, in the area of communication, language and literacy, many are on course to do better than that and to exceed the levels expected. This is the result of good and often very good achievement in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.9 (14.6)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.2 (14.5)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.0 (15.1)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. In the Year 2 national tests for 2003, standards were average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics when compared with all schools nationally. This represents a good improvement over previous years and reflects the overall improvements in provision since the last inspection. When compared with schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were below average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. However, this also reflects improvements in recent years, when standards were often well below average.

- Current standards in Years 1 and 2 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they are better than that in science, information and communication technology, history and physical education. Too little evidence was seen in other subjects to make a secure judgement. Pupils achieve well and this is partly due to the good teaching. Teachers ensure learning is often active, as for example in science with its focus on investigative work and first hand experiences. They are doing well in information and communication technology due to the improved resources, teacher expertise and good opportunities to use computer skills in other subjects such as mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.6 (26.4)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	23.8 (26.4)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	27.4 (28.7)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- In the Year 6 national tests in 2003, standards were average in English but well below average in mathematics and science. They were also well below average when compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Even so, the trend of improvement over time was above that found nationally and standards have clearly improved since the last inspection. Achievement is good. When the results of the pupils who have been in the school since Year 2 are analysed it shows that they made good progress in English and science, and satisfactory progress in mathematics.
- Current standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average in Year 6. They are better than that in information and communication technology and history. Standards in physical education and music are broadly in line with those expected. The evidence of the inspection is that the improved provision since the last inspection, the better teaching and learning and the very good leadership and management are having a positive impact on standards and they are rising steadily. This improvement has also been supported by the ability of the school to create single age classes in most year groups, thus making it easier for teachers to plan and deliver work appropriately matched to the pupils' ages and prior attainment.
- The targets set for pupils in this year's national tests are appropriate and reflect the improvements seen in provision. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress and achieve well because they receive intensive support. While standards for these pupils remain generally below what is expected for their age, and sometimes well below that level, they progress well against the targets set for them in the light of their prior attainment. Pupils who are recognised as more able also achieve well. There are no significant gender differences evident in the standards attained, although evidence from past tests points to boys underachieving over time compared to the girls in Year 6. Children from Traveller backgrounds achieve well, especially when they receive extra support from the support service, and when they spend sufficient time in the school.

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

The school provides well for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attitudes and behaviour are very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour is consistently very good, with only an occasional interruption when the teacher is speaking.
- Pupils are very positive about their lessons and their play.
- Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are excellent.
- The school has a strong moral code that is embedded in its Christian and caring ethos.
- There is limited provision for developing pupils' awareness that they live in a multi-cultural society.

### Commentary

7. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around school. The positive nature of their behaviour has a strong effect on the quality of their learning. Most lessons are calm and orderly. It is usual that there is a strong focus on what the teacher is saying and pupils gain a great deal from this. Very rarely, a small number of pupils interrupt the flow of the lesson because they find it difficult to wait for their turn to speak. The questionnaire for pupils reveals that they like their school and discussions with them indicate that they enjoy their lessons. Lunchtime and playtime are orderly events. Pupils enjoy the extensive playing fields in fine weather. They play many cooperative games on the playground at break times. A particular strength of the school is the fine relationships that exist among pupils themselves and between pupils and adults. No cross words were overheard during the inspection. There were no minor niggles among pupils. There is no evidence of bullying, harassment or racial incidents.
8. Pupils identified as having special educational needs get great encouragement from adults working in the school. These pupils are frequently to be seen working enthusiastically and confidently at their tasks. Their attitudes are a measure of the good support they receive and are a positive benefit in their achievement.
9. There was one temporary exclusion in the last school year. This was a health and safety matter for adults and other pupils. The school believes that the strategy was necessary and that it has proved to be successful.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	144	1	0

10. The pupils' spiritual development is good and this contributes well towards the school's commitment to its Christian ethos. Very good moral development leads to a caring and inclusive community and very good social development ensures all the pupils' contributions are valued. Older pupils can be seen looking after younger pupils during assembly and in the playground. Pupils work very well together, effectively collaborating either with a partner or in small groups. The school provides opportunities for pupils to

understand their own culture through history and visits to the museum and art galleries. However, although other cultures are explored in geography, literacy and religious education through festivals such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year, there are few opportunities when pupils are made aware of the diverse cultures that surround them. The school tries to highlight this aspect but this is a potential area for further development.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.5	School data	0.9
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.*

11. Attendance and punctuality are very good. The school's good relationships with parents, including those in the Traveller community, and the support of external agencies, are effective in maintaining parents' commitment to ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. The teaching and learning is good and is supported by a broad, balanced and effectively enriched curriculum.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. A significant amount of the teaching is very good or better.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers and support staff have developed very good relationships with the pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.
- The good teaching and teamwork in the Reception class have a positive effect on children's learning.
- Teachers use information and communication technology very effectively in their teaching.

## Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	6	19	3	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

12. The quality of teaching in the Reception class is good overall with some very good teaching particularly in literacy. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children means they are provided with a wide variety of experiences in all areas of learning. This ensures they make good progress towards achieving the expected standards for children at the end of the Reception year. Planning, by the class teacher, is closely linked to the nationally agreed early learning goals. Plans are shared with the support staff and Foundation Stage co-ordinator, who offer ideas and suggestions. Questioning is used very effectively to extend children's understanding and to develop their speaking skills and vocabulary. Very good relationships give children confidence to respond to adults' questions and to share their thoughts and opinions. The very good support provided by teaching assistants and other adults within the classroom means all children benefit, including those with special educational needs. Work is closely matched to individual needs and has a positive effect on their learning. Day-to-day assessment is good enabling the teacher to amend planning as needed. There is a quick and easy method of recording observations and these are then added to children's files.
13. The good teaching is characterised by the excellent relationships evident throughout the school. This encourages pupils' learning, ensuring that they have the confidence to join in class discussion, answer questions and make appropriate suggestions. This is highlighted in the investigative work in science, where the teaching, along with that in history, is often very good. Good teaching was observed in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, music and physical education. Teachers prepare lessons well, planning the use of good resources and using a range of methods appropriate for the purpose. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a teaching and learning policy. This is now in need of review and up dating. It does not contain information about monitoring systems or sufficient guidance about pupils' learning and how this can be affected by different teaching styles.
14. Teachers make very effective use of modern technology in a range of ways. The recently introduced interactive whiteboards are used effectively to demonstrate and illustrate lessons. In one science lesson, a demonstration of the effect of boiling water was videoed and projected onto the board so all pupils could watch safely. Teachers use computers to plan lessons; this planning is then e mailed to the headteacher for evaluation. The Internet and CD ROMs are well used to provide interesting and appropriate resources for pupils to use in lessons. All teachers have access to a school laptop for planning and for data analysis.
15. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and this enables them to learn well and achieve well. Teachers prepare suitable individual plans for their learning that take prior learning into account. These plans have targets carefully thought out to enable pupils to make progress and achieve well. Work is prepared that is well calculated to maintain the pace of these pupils' learning. Teachers keep a close and careful eye on progress through regular tests and assessments that are used to prepare future tasks. Learning support assistants provide very skilled support when pupils are withdrawn in small groups from the class. Traveller children are taught well and receive extra support from the local education authority when appropriate.
16. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. There are good systems now in place but these are yet to be fully used in planning work that is appropriate for all pupils, or to develop individual targets that sufficiently challenge pupils and support new learning.

A wide range of data is now available to the school, and the headteacher is aware of the need to consolidate this information and to make it meaningful and useful.

## **The curriculum**

The school's curriculum is good and provides the pupils with a good range of learning opportunities.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and is closely linked to the nationally agreed areas of learning.
- Many visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities provide good enrichment to the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and effective support gives them access to the curriculum.
- The accommodation is good but the lack of a secure outdoor play area for Reception children inhibits opportunities for planned outside activities.

### **Commentary**

17. The curriculum allows pupils to achieve well across the school. Lessons are made more interesting for the pupils because there is an emphasis in many subjects on learning through practical experiences. This motivates the pupils, making them more willing and eager to learn. All relevant statutory requirements are met, including the provision for a daily act of collective worship and religious education. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been effectively implemented. Sex education is discussed as and when any questions are asked, and drug education is not tackled until Year 7, as agreed by local primary schools and the feeder secondary school. The school is fully inclusive in its approach to offering pupils equal access to activities and equal opportunities.
18. Pupils with special educational needs are kept well in touch with the statutory curriculum. The school ensures that pupils who find learning difficult are not disadvantaged but enjoy the full range of curriculum opportunities available to all pupils. Good emphasis is placed on the development of skills. Pupils do particularly well when receiving intensive support from learning support assistants. It is more difficult to provide the same high level and quality of support in all lessons.
19. In all subjects, planning is based on a yearly cycle, as an increase in pupil numbers has provided the school with the opportunity to create single age classes. The exception is Years 5 and 6 where there is a mixed age class, so planning for this class still follows a two-year cycle. The schemes of work are devised from national guidelines and are reviewed regularly. Meetings are held between teachers to discuss the curriculum and make amendments to ensure it meets the needs of the pupils. Through their planning, teachers endeavour to make meaningful links with other areas of the curriculum; for example the use of information and communication technology to extend pupils' mathematical experiences. Some subjects are taught in blocks to provide better opportunities for the development of skills. For example, history is taught for one half of a term and geography the next.

20. Teachers provide a rich and varied programme of learning opportunities for all pupils including a range of extra-curricular activities. However, the range is limited because the majority of clubs are sport related and there are presently no music or art clubs on offer. The school is aware of this and has plans to introduce new clubs next term. During term time enrichment opportunities include visits to museums, art galleries, the theatre, a residential experience, a visiting theatre group, musicians, the local policeman, firemen, the Archbishop and the priest. Along with the exploring the local environment, these activities help to enhance and enrich the pupils' curriculum and increase their knowledge of the world around them.
21. The accommodation for the Foundation Stage is good. The classroom is spacious and offers plenty of room for a range of activities that stimulate children's interest in all areas of learning. However, the lack of a secure outdoor area dedicated to the use of Reception children limits opportunities for planned outdoor activities and physical development. Teachers' expertise is shared in Years 3 to 6 for music and physical education and this benefits the pupils' learning. The effective use of support staff ensures that pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum.

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

The school provides well for pupils' health and safety. Support, advice and guidance are good. The involvement of pupils through the school seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has effective procedures to support the welfare of its pupils.
- Relationships are excellent; they are based on trust and mutual respect.
- Assessment is good, but the majority of pupils are not systematically informed of levels or targets.
- Pupils' opinions are taken seriously, and their concerns and suggestions are taken up by staff.

### **Commentary**

22. The school has good health and safety procedures secured by a well-written and comprehensive policy. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken to maintain pupils' health and safety both on the site, and whilst on educational visits. There is an Internet safety policy that requires the signed agreement of parents and pupils. Child protection arrangements follow locally agreed procedures and all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities and receive in-service training.
23. Pupils are provided with good support and guidance; it is effective because of the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and teachers. Pastoral support is well informed because pupils' successes are celebrated and formally recorded, and pupils know what they have "conquered and overcome". Academic monitoring is equally well recorded but guidance is not so well focused because of inconsistent marking and a lack of individual target setting, except for pupils with special educational needs who have very effective individual education plans. Pupils identified as being more able are provided with suitably differentiated work and their sporting talents are well developed, although there are fewer opportunities in music and other areas. The Traveller pupils are

well supported so that they are fully included in the life of the school, and make similar progress to other pupils.

24. The school has effective strategies for the identification of learning difficulties. There are systematic procedures for reviewing and evaluating the progress pupils have made. Consultations with parents and staff, sometimes involving pupils, establish what targets need to be set next. Efficient procedures ensure that available support is well targeted on pupils' needs. Good links are maintained with outside bodies. The school has good consultative channels with the educational psychologist and departments who provide guidance and advice on therapies required. The national Code of Conduct for identifying and providing for special educational needs is fully observed.
25. Pupils' involvement through the school acting on their views is good. Members of staff are very accessible and pupils have the confidence to discuss any emerging problems. Whilst there is no school council, there is a pupils' 'Eco' committee that is democratically elected and focuses attention on improving the school environment. Recently, for example, pupils drew governors' attention to worries about greasy lunch trays, which were subsequently inspected and found to be satisfactory.
26. Very good arrangements are in place for inducting new pupils into the school. Reasons for choosing the school are explored with parents; new pupils are introduced by their class teachers, and supported by their peers through an informal buddy system. Settling in is monitored carefully, and the headteacher provides feedback to parents.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils are very happy with what the school provides.
- Good quality information is provided about pupils' progress but there are no formal arrangements for canvassing parents' opinions.
- There are extensive community links.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges enhance academic, pastoral, and sporting provision.

### **Commentary**

27. Parents hold very positive views. All parents replying to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that induction arrangements are very good. None disagree that teaching is good, that staff have high expectations, that the school is well managed, that staff encourage children to become mature and independent, and that there is a good range of interesting and enjoyable activities. Very few negative opinions were expressed. Pupils' views are also positive. Inspectors broadly agree with parents' positive opinions but do not think that teachers' high expectations always extend to the quality of pupils' written work.
28. Parents are provided with a very good flow of information about the progress of their children, and news of what is happening in school. Pupils' annual reports provide clear



advice and improvement targets. Teacher consultation evenings, and curriculum meetings, help parents to provide effective support for their children's education at home. The school prospectus and governors' annual report do not carry all the information that they should, notably national test and assessment comparisons, parents' rights in connection with religious education and collective worship, and a summary of school finances. There are no formal arrangements in place to canvass parents' views but teachers and governors are accessible and receptive to parents' opinions.

29. Community links are very good; they provide the bedrock on which the school's ethos and commitment are built, as well as providing an educational resource. The school premises, including the parish hall, are shared with the community to provide clubs and facilities, as well as a place of worship. The local environment is used effectively to enhance the curriculum and productive links have been forged with local businesses to celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils' sing at the shopping centre, their artwork is exhibited in a local supermarket, and their poetry is displayed in the library. The whole community of Great Wyrley is involved in the annual fun day, which raises in excess of £2,000 for the school.
30. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. The strongest link is with Cardinal Griffin School, the main receiving secondary school, which provides extra educational resources and sports coaching, and works closely with St. Thomas More on curriculum continuity and pastoral support at the time of secondary transfer. The secondary school will soon be installing a broadband video conferencing facility that, initially, will be used to enhance the science curriculum. There are also close links with local primary schools, colleges and universities. Work experience places are provided for childcare students and trainee teachers.
31. The school has very good processes for involving parents in consultation about pupils who find learning difficult. They are fully informed and consulted from the earliest stages of concern about the pace of learning. Subsequently, parents are full participants in the review and setting of targets.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**, providing a secure foundation for pupils' achievement. The governance of the school is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher leads the school very well, suitably supported by all adults working there.
- The learning environment of the school has been managed effectively during a period of significant growth.
- There is a clear vision for the school committing it to improving provision and standards.
- Performance management and the continuous professional development of staff have a high profile that is supported well by school improvement planning.
- Because staff are well settled and work consistently towards the school's aims and mission statement, parents and pupils are confident in the provision it makes.
- The governing body have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

## Commentary

32. The school is very well led. It is a confident and orderly establishment that works to the high principles of its mission statement and its foundation as a church school. The headteacher is clear about his expectations, for the school, of staff and of pupils. The school sets great store by its ethos, which is very positive. Its pupils achieve high personal standards. Academic achievement has been more difficult to come by but school results in National Curriculum tests are currently improving more rapidly than are results nationally. The school has been managed very effectively through a period of potential disruption as it has almost doubled in size since it was previously inspected. Staff and pupils have been able to benefit from a good working environment throughout this development.
33. School improvement planning is efficient. The senior management team identifies the most important priorities in the light of subject leaders' action plans. The plan is relatively slim but well constructed. It makes it very clear where responsibility for developments lies, what funding is likely to be available and the timescale in which developments need to take place. Success criteria by which developments are evaluated are carefully identified. Other important school management documents, including the school prospectus, annual report of governors to parents and policies and procedures are readily available to assure the school's sense of direction and purpose.
34. One factor in the high level of commitment of staff is the value placed upon their continuing development as teachers and support staff. Although the school finds the finance for teachers' courses difficult to manage, it remains committed to their development and professional well being. Their performance is managed efficiently and in a positive atmosphere that maintains morale. As a result of this and the positive ethos of the school, there is no difficulty in retaining staff. When staff vacancies occur, the school has no difficulty in attracting good quality candidates for posts. Good arrangements exist for observing lessons in English, mathematics and science to improve the school's provision and quality of learning. This strategy has been successful in securing good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Parents and pupils like the school and the work it does. They are right to be confident in its provision.
35. The governing body offers the school a very good level of support and challenge. They have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and are very aware of areas for improvement. They have a strong strategic vision for the school and are closely involved in the school improvement planning process. The governing body is well led by the experienced chair and there is an appropriate structure of committees and working parties. The governors have a clear desire to provide the best they can for the pupils and so they can achieve the highest standards possible. A number of governors are linked to subjects or to aspects of the school's work such as special educational needs and they visit the school, meet with staff and show a very good understanding of aspects of the curriculum and the standards achieved in test results.
36. The needs of pupils who find learning difficult are well managed. The experience of the coordinator ensures that the school complies fully with the code of practice for special educational needs. The school spends more than its delegated budget to support pupils' needs. The needs of the children from Traveller backgrounds are also well met through the well-managed support offered by the local authority.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	343,946
Total expenditure	328,292
Expenditure per pupil	2,585

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-31,007
Balance carried forward to the next	-15,353

37. From the figures above it can be seen that the school is operating a deficit budget. This has been fully agreed with the local education authority. The school has been expanding rapidly. Governors have had to make additional provision of accommodation, staff and resources before delegated funding was available. The deficit shown above has again been considerably reduced and the school is well on the way towards a fully balanced budget. The process of expanding the school has been managed very well. Given the amount available to spend per pupil, the social and economic context and the provision it makes, the school provides good value for money.

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

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

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

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

- The organisation of the Reception class provides a welcoming, stimulating environment for the children.
- Children are offered a wide range of activities and experiences in all areas of learning to help them achieve the expected learning goals.
- The lack of a secure outdoor area limits the range of planned outdoor activities.

#### **Commentary**

38. The Foundation Stage provides the children with a good start to their education. They are admitted to the Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. However, the majority attend school on a part time basis for either a term or two terms before they join the Reception class. Most of these children have had either nursery or some form of pre-school experience. Attainment on entry for the present cohort is broadly average. However, attainment tends to vary considerably with each cohort. The majority of Reception children are on course to achieve the expected levels in all areas of learning except communication, language and literacy, where many are on course to exceed the levels expected.

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

Provision in this area is **very good**.

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

- Every opportunity is taken to enhance children's development through planned activities.
- Very good relationships ensure children feel happy and secure.

#### **Commentary**

39. Because of good teaching and the many opportunities provided for children to develop their personal and social skills, the majority are on course to achieve the expected level and a few will exceed this. Most children find it easy to conform to the high expectations of good behaviour set by the staff. Children know the routines well and settle quickly to tasks with minimum fuss. The majority are well focused and interested and, even when not directly supervised, sustain their concentration. For the most part a calm working atmosphere pervades each session. The very good teamwork of all the adults provides the children with good role models of co-operation, which they try to emulate in their role-play and shared activities. Children were observed playing very well together. Some very good conversations were overheard as the children played in the "Fire Station" pretending to be firefighters, phoning into the incident room to talk to colleagues. Children listen carefully and respect the opinions of others. The majority patiently wait their turn but

occasionally one calls out in their excitement. Because of the very good relationships children are confident to ask questions, are settled, happy and secure

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in this area is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good and provides children with a wide range of experiences to develop reading and writing skills, helping them to achieve well.
- Every opportunity is used to extend vocabulary and develop speaking and listening skills.

### **Commentary**

40. Owing to the very good teaching in this area, many children are on course to exceed the expected levels. They are making very good progress in developing their language skills because of all the opportunities provided for speaking and listening. Many children are articulate, confident speakers often replying to questions in complex sentences. All adults use every opportunity during activities, particularly directed ones, to develop vocabulary through probing questions. Because of this, children enjoy listening to stories and sharing books. During a literacy session, they demonstrated how they can predict what might happen in a story and joined in the repeated words with great enthusiasm. Reading has a high priority within the classroom and this motivates and encourages the children to enjoy and appreciate the written word. Higher attaining children read accurately at an appropriate level and are beginning to develop skills for working out unfamiliar words. Lower attaining children also recognise many of the words in their books. They receive good support from adults in the class to help them make good progress. All children can sound out words but the higher attaining children are more successful in running the sounds together to make the word. Children enjoy answering questions about their books, retelling favourite stories and reciting rhymes. Children make very good progress as they develop their early writing skills. Many opportunities are provided by the teacher for writing in different areas of learning.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in this area of learning is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Every opportunity is used to develop children's counting skills, including number rhymes and songs.
- A wide range of activities is offered to support learning so children become confident understanding numbers.
- The quality of teaching is good so children achieve well.

### **Commentary**

41. Owing to the good teaching, the majority of children are on course to achieve the expected levels in this area. The lesson began with the singing of a number rhyme and children joined in enthusiastically. They demonstrated their knowledge of number by responding quickly to questions about "one less than" or "one more than" and in counting to 20 with few problems. The number rhyme was used very effectively to develop

children's understanding of number. Practical activities were provided to support learning as a group of children worked outside with the teacher estimating how many circles they could draw in a minute or how many jumps they could do. The circles proved to be easier than the jumps because they could not count accurately above 20 and the number of jumps in a minute exceeded this. Other children made number books or made different length railings out of play dough to develop their vocabulary for comparing lengths.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in this area of learning is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Many relevant visits and practical activities help to enhance the children's understanding of the world around them.
- The quality of teaching is good so children are enthusiastic, make good progress and achieve well.

### **Commentary**

42. During the inspection, firefighters brought a fire engine from the local fire station to support work in a topic about people who help us and was the stimulus for role-play; the role-play area being a fire station. Photographic evidence shows a very varied curriculum including cooking: making Christmas cakes and bread, a number of visits, using the school grounds for rubbings, celebrating Diwali and Chinese New Year and many more. Computers are regularly in use having a range of programs for different areas of learning. Children often work together supporting each other. Some have very good knowledge of how to use a computer with very good mouse control and the ability to print out their work.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

43. This area is in need of further development because of the lack of a secure outdoor area for the children. The school has already highlighted this but present plans mean that it will be quite some time before it comes to fruition. Children are on course to achieve the expected levels in this area despite this lack of facility. Spatial awareness is developing, as is body control but in the lesson observed there was limited opportunity for children to explore ways of moving and stopping. In this session, the children were not well focused on the tasks and a few did not concentrate as well as they could. Children are provided with a range of activities to help them develop pencil control through specifically designed work sheets and colouring. Other activities encourage hand-eye co-ordination as children thread string through small holes.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

44. There was no opportunity to observe any sessions in this area of learning so no judgement can be made about provision or teaching. From the pictures displayed on the walls standards are as expected at this age. Different media are used for art including painting, collage and printing. Children enjoy singing rhymes and action songs.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Pupils' achievement benefits from a wide-ranging number of tasks and activities.
- Literacy skills are well used to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Pupils are articulate and generally read well but their knowledge of library layout is sketchy.
- While pupils write freely for many purposes, they do not systematically transfer the formal skills they learn into their everyday tasks.
- The subject is well led.

#### **Commentary**

45. Standards in English are broadly average in Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in the work seen are similar to the results of National Curriculum tests in 2003. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is well promoted by the broad range of interesting experiences pupils learn from across the curriculum. However, achievement is hampered by the fact that pupils do not transfer the good disciplines they learn in handwriting, spelling and punctuation into their everyday tasks. While aspects of English have improved since the previous inspection, especially in the range of tasks and resources available, handwriting and spelling continue to have a negative effect on the quality of work seen. The writing in handwriting practice books is often of high quality. Pupils do not write to the same high standard in their day-to-day tasks. Pupils practise spelling and have success in spelling the words they learn. Spelling in day-to-day tasks is frequently inaccurate. Literacy lessons focus on the good use of style, grammar and the conventions of good punctuation. Pupils perform effectively in these exercises. However, the conventions are not used to the same degree of accuracy in their creative writing tasks, or in tasks reflecting learning in other subjects of the curriculum.
46. Pupils listen well and this is a good support to the quality of their learning. They are highly motivated in lessons. Teachers are skilled at engaging them and interesting them. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to use their speaking skills. In literacy lessons; this is done mainly through questioning, although some skilled teachers use a 'dramatic pause' technique to encourage pupils to make their own well-disciplined, spontaneous contribution to the lessons. Of particular note are the very good opportunities for speaking and listening in lessons such as history, where pupils are expected to think about historical characters, and to understand their problems and motives. There are good opportunities for discussing issues in pairs and this purposeful use of speaking and listening is a strong factor in achievement in this area.
47. Reading skills are well developed. Most pupils read at the level expected for their age or better. They have good skill in working out difficult words and have a good sight vocabulary of instant recall words. They read regularly at school and at home. The home and school reading logs are a good link for parents and teachers to keep each other informed about progress. Pupils throughout the school have an increasingly mature



understanding of book features. In Year 2, they quickly discriminate between 'books someone has made up' (fiction) and books about information and knowledge (non-fiction). However, they do not know how fiction books in a conventional library are stored and so could not easily find another book by a favourite author. Pupils know how to use book features such as contents, index and glossary page and have a good understanding of the purpose of these features. They have some understanding of how to find a book on a particular subject in their own school library. Pupils have little understanding of how books in a conventional library are arranged and this hinders their development as independent learners.

48. The subject is well led by an experienced member of staff. The most significant recent improvements are in the breadth of experiences offered to pupils and the way these are supported through resources and the quality of teaching. The teaching is consistently good. Teachers have a good understanding of the nationally recommended strategies for teaching literacy skills. They make good links with other areas of the curriculum. While the school analyses the results of National Curriculum tests and develops whole school targets and priorities from the analysis, there is no consistent whole school strategy for identifying and sharing targets for individual pupils. This is done for pupils who find acquisition of basic skills in English difficult. Good individual plans for these pupils' learning support the good progress they make. Much of the adult support these pupils get is through short and intensive individual or small group lessons away from the main class. This works extremely well, especially as learning support assistants are very skilled. However, it is difficult to maintain this level of support in mainstream classes.

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

49. There is good use of language and literacy skills across the curriculum despite limitations to pupils' library skills and despite a lack of disciplined applications of the conventions of written English. Teachers are adept at designing tasks that use pupils' speaking and listening skills, require them to read and reflect and to complete written tasks that show their understanding, making best use of their vocabulary and authorial styles. This is the case in those subjects where a written response is the usual way of reflecting knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, tasks in religious education are many and varied, and pupils' literacy skills are put to good purpose writing about what they know about religion and what they are learning from religion. Although the spelling of technical vocabulary is frequently inaccurate, pupils get good opportunities to record and interpret the findings of the scientific investigations. Teachers create similar opportunities in geography and history. It is surprising then, that most of the work displayed attractively in classrooms is teacher generated, rather than celebrations of pupils' achievements.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Years 3 to 6 are rising slowly.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall.
- Relationships are very good and give pupils the confidence to explain the methods used to find the answer.
- Assessment data is not used effectively to provide pupils with individual targets.

- More systematic planning of opportunities for investigations is needed as these skills are underdeveloped.
- The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and keen co-ordinator.

## Commentary

50. From evidence seen during the inspection standards in mathematics are slowly rising in Year 6 but are dipping in Year 2. The results of the 2003 national assessments tests in Year 2 were above average when comparing them to schools nationally and average when comparing them to similar schools. The results for higher attaining pupils were in line with the national average. Inspection evidence suggests that in 2004, the results in Year 2 will be average but the percentage of pupils achieving higher levels will be considerably less. The results of the national assessment tests in Year 6 in 2003 were well below average when comparing them both to schools nationally and to similar schools. Inspection evidence suggests that in 2004 the results in Year 6 are on course to be closer to the average and with a greater percentage of pupils achieving higher levels than in the previous year.
51. The standards have fluctuated quite dramatically over the past few years, particularly in Year 2. This can be explained by the very high mobility throughout Years 3 to 6, 65 per cent last year, which is well above the national average. However, all the pupils who were in school for the tests in Year 2 made the expected progress based on their results achieved. Across the school, achievement is good in both key stages. All pupils, including those identified with special educational needs, make good progress.
52. Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis on the learning of number. There is evidence of a lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils whereas the lower attaining pupils' work is more closely matched to their needs. The presentation of many pupils' work is often untidy, poorly laid out, with no date or title, despite having instructions for this in their books.
53. Pupils across the school enjoy mathematics and are especially well motivated when their teachers are enthusiastic and lessons are brisk. The younger pupils explore positional language. In one lesson, one child using six coloured cubes made a shape and another constructed the same shape following instructions. This developed the vocabulary very effectively and pupils soon began to use words such as between, next to, underneath and more. Pupils in Year 2 found effective ways of solving word problems. They were confident and successful when the problems involved addition and subtraction but less so when multiplication and division were required. A Year 3 lesson demonstrated the good use of the interactive whiteboard for the mental starter. Pupils rose to the challenge of finding the numbers hidden under the snake on an empty hundred square. A small group of pupils skilfully used the computer to input data, producing block graphs of favourite crisps. Older pupils were fascinated by an investigation into angles and shape. They were very interested in finding out the shapes that responded to the teacher's questions. Computers were used very effectively to help lower attaining pupils understand what an angle was and the different types found.
54. The quality of teaching is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are generally well motivated to succeed especially where teachers are enthusiastic and lessons begin with quick fire mental problems. Questioning is used effectively to extend or reinforce pupils' knowledge. Owing to the very good relationships

between staff and pupils, they are confident when responding to questions and when explaining how they arrived at their answers. Planning suggests tasks are closely matched to pupils' needs and although this was evident in the lessons it was less so in pupils' work books. However, tasks for pupils identified with special educational needs are appropriate and well matched to their needs and understanding. These pupils also benefit from effective support and guidance from teaching assistants ensuring they have equality of access to the curriculum. Most teachers share the lesson objectives with their pupils and return to them at the end of lesson to check how well pupils feel they have understood. This gives the teachers instant assessment and informs planning for the next lesson.

55. Although assessment procedures are in place, insufficient use is made of the data to inform pupils of their individual targets. Where marking is good, it is constructive and helpful. However, this is not consistent across the school and is an area for development.
56. The co-ordinator has had many opportunities to develop her understanding and knowledge of the subject. Consequently, she has been able to identify areas for development within the subject. A successful workshop was delivered to parents to explain methods of calculation and it is hoped to hold others. Through analysis of national test results, problem solving and investigations have been highlighted as priority areas. Support for developing these skills was evident during the inspection as teachers were observed tackling these weaknesses.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

57. The use of mathematics in other areas of the curriculum is good. Measurement is used in science and design and technology. Co-ordinates are used in geography and data handling is regularly used to record information in graph form in science and geography.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching of investigative and experimental science is a strength of the provision.
- The teaching and learning is good, with a significant amount that is very good.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support the teaching.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

### **Commentary**

58. In 2003, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels by the end of Year 2 was very high. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was well below average, pointing towards a lack of challenge and provision for the more able pupils. The national tests at the end of Year 6 showed that standards were much higher than they had been four years earlier but they fell from 2002. This fall was due to changes in the cohort and fewer of the more able pupils reached the higher levels than was the case nationally. However, when compared with their results when they were in Year 2, most of the pupils had made the expected progress. When the results are analysed they show that those pupils who had spent most time in the school made good progress.

59. The school recognised the need to improve standards further, and has ensured that the teaching and learning is much more strongly based on investigative and experimental work. This has been successful and the early indications are that standards have risen throughout the school, and that the test results in 2004 are likely to improve. The current standards in Year 2 are above average, while those in Year 6 are average.
60. The teaching and learning is good, and in a significant number of lessons it is very good. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards the subject and in all lessons they were interested and enthusiastic about their work. The planning ensures that the curriculum is fully covered. In the mixed age Year 5 and 6 class, the work set is appropriate for the ages of the pupils. Good links to pupils' numeracy skills are made through tally charts and bar graphs of the results of experiments, such as the times taken to dissolve different sugars. Teachers ensure that pupils are clear about safety issues and the front of the books contains teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work in books. This is good practice but is not always sufficiently followed up when marking, and too often the work is spoilt by poor presentation and the incorrect spelling of the important technical vocabulary. In Year 1, the teacher made very good use of the plenary session at the end of the lesson to share the results of a range of activities and to develop pupils' scientific vocabulary.
61. In one Year 2 lesson, very effective use was made of a video camera linked to the projector and interactive whiteboard to demonstrate safely what happens to a range of materials in hot water, carried out by a teaching assistant to one side of the room. This enabled all pupils to have a clear and safe view and to take part in predicting the outcomes of the experiments. A further information and communication technology link is planned with the introduction of a broadband Internet connection enabling the school to link via a camera to the secondary school for some interactive teaching.
62. Year 3 pupils have a good understanding of the needs of a fair test. They were setting up an experiment on seed growth and knew that only the heat was to be changed with other factors remaining constant. Good use is made of information and communication technology to record findings through charts and bar graphs. Very effective teaching in Year 4 used pupil discussion to explore the setting up of an investigation with very good interaction between pupils, and pupils and teacher.
63. The subject leadership is good. The school is good at analysing the data from tests to assess the areas needing reinforcement or revision. There is a clear focus on raising standards. The curriculum has been enriched through the provision of science and 'ECO' clubs for those pupils with a particular talent or interest in the subject. The work in these clubs has been well planned and has had a positive impact on standards. The co-ordinator has monitored and evaluated the teaching in the subject. This, together with the self-review by staff, has thrown up some curriculum areas where further training is needed to improve teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. The co-ordinator has developed strong links with the feeder secondary school. She has a good action plan for the future improvements needed to raise standards further.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above those normally expected.
- The use of computers, cameras and video in other subjects effectively enhances the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology in their work.

## Commentary

64. Standards throughout the school are above those normally expected. Achievement is good. The provision has improved a great deal since the last inspection. Pupils' skills in using word processing software are good. They confidently merge text and pictures and can alter the colour, font, size and shape of text. Higher attaining pupils are able to use the full range of word processing features to create and publish a birthday card.
65. Throughout the school, pupils have opportunities to use a range of software and learn about the variety of tasks computers can perform. Pupils are able to input and retrieve data and create bar graphs to present information. Younger pupils are able to program robots, learning how to control their movements through a range of imaginative activities. Older pupils can program screen turtles to draw shapes, and can alter the colour of lines. Music software is used to compose tunes. Spreadsheets are used to calculate the costs of foods. Good use is made of a data logger to measure external data such as temperature. The higher attaining older pupils can confidently create a slide presentation using a good range of effects.
66. The quality of the teaching and learning is good. Teachers have recently introduced the use of e-mail into the curriculum, particularly in Year 3. Pupils have a good understanding of the icons on the screen. The use of the Internet for research purposes begins in the infant classes. The teaching is based on developing pupils' skills in specific information and communication technology lessons, which are followed up by opportunities to use the skills in a range of subjects. In a lesson on creating a database, the teacher had made very useful laminated card sheets to act as a resource for reminding pupils of the steps involved.
67. The teachers complete most of their planning on computers and this is e-mailed to the headteacher for monitoring. Very good use is made of the video camera. In one Year 2 science lesson the teacher used the camera to film an experiment using boiling water, which she then projected onto the interactive whiteboard so that the pupils could observe the results safely. The use of the interactive whiteboards is good and is providing teachers with an effective resource, which they are using imaginatively across the curriculum. For example, the text on one literacy lesson was projected from the computer onto the board and this ensured it was clear and colourful, and easily visible to all pupils.
68. The subject is well led and managed. The previous subject co-ordinator had overseen the improvements in resources and teaching evident since the last inspection. This work is now being built on by the current co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is developing a useful portfolio of examples of pupils' work illustrating what they are capable of achieving at different ages. A system for assessing and recording achievement is also being trialled at present.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. Computers and other information and communication technology hardware are used widely in other subjects to support the teaching and enhance the quality of learning effectively. Art software is used to create some imaginative patterns and pictures. Word processing skills are used in making covers for pupils' project work. Year 5 and 6 pupils followed up a visit to an outdoor leisure centre by using their information and communication technology skills to produce a good newsletter or brochure for the centre.

## HUMANITIES

70. There is insufficient inspection evidence to make overall judgements about provision in **geography**. The subject was not a focus of inspection. The limited amount of work seen in pupils' books shows that they follow a curriculum that meets the expectations of the National Curriculum. Some valuable use is made of the locality to complete fieldwork. Opportunities are taken to compare the locality with different places in the British Isles and with countries overseas with markedly different culture and climate. There is good use of pupils' literacy skills to complete tasks in geography.
71. During the inspection, **history** was observed being taught in most classes, despite that fact it was not a focus for the inspection. Standards in history were above those expected for the age of pupils. All pupils were able to empathise with the characters in their particular history topic, showing how much they understood about life in those times. They also demonstrated their skills as young historians, beginning to discriminate between fact and opinion. For example, Year 3 pupils researched and discussed evidence about the Romans and the Celts using "hot seating" as a strategy for sharing their knowledge. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 used role play to argue about the advantages and disadvantages of the coming of the local railway. The quality of teaching seen in these lessons was very good, providing pupils with the opportunities to empathise with the characters they were portraying and building on previously learnt skills of historical research. The lessons were exciting and challenging and pupils had real enjoyment participating in them. There were very effective links with literacy as pupils used their speaking and listening skills in group discussion and during the final presentations.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

72. No lessons were observed in **art and design**. However, sufficient evidence was available from displays and other examples of pupils' work to say that standards have at least been maintained at the satisfactory levels found at the last inspection. However, there have been some significant improvements to the provision and these are beginning to have an impact on standards. Pupils have opportunities to use a range of materials and media, including paint, collage, weaving and printing. There is less evidence of three-dimensional work or of work based on a growing knowledge and understanding of the work of well-known artists. Year 2 pupils produce some good observational drawing. The use of computer software has improved since the last inspection and is supporting the creation of some imaginative work.
73. **Design and technology** was not a focus of the inspection. No lessons were observed and only limited evidence of pupils' work was seen. It is not possible to make judgements on overall provision, standards and the quality of teaching. There is evidence that pupils work to a design brief, use a range of tools and appropriate materials, and evaluate the

artefacts they make. Photographic evidence and the evidence of some completed work shows that pupils finish their products well.

74. It was only possible to observe the teaching of **music** in the junior classes. Standards by the age of eleven are in line with expectations. Pupils in Year 6 listened carefully to a poem and then chose percussion instruments to create a sound picture of the same poem. Pupils offered interesting thoughts about their choice of instrument and demonstrated their knowledge about the elements of music. Younger pupils listened carefully to a song, recognising some of the instruments used. The task set was to compose a sound picture using percussion instruments and words. Pupils worked hard at producing interesting and well thought out compositions. They were confident to share their work with their peers. Some singing was heard during an assembly and was tuneful and pleasant but lacking in enthusiasm.
75. The quality of teaching was good. Teacher expertise in this subject is shared so all pupils in Years 3 to 6 benefit from the skills of a musician. Similarly, another teacher with musical expertise teaches pupils in Years 1 and 2, although no lessons were observed in these classes. This also ensures that appropriate skills are developed throughout the school. Because of the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm, pupils are well motivated to succeed and enjoy their music sessions. The subject is well led by a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has rewritten the policy and introduced a new scheme of work. Keyboard lessons are offered, but presently there is little other extra-curricular music available. However there are plans to introduce choir, recorders and percussion next term. Pupils' music curriculum is enhanced by visiting musicians, and opportunities to perform in school productions or to sing in the community and in the church for family mass.

## **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are in line with those expected in Year 6 but better than that and improving in the infant and lower junior classes.
- The teaching and learning is good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

## **Commentary**

76. Standards in the infant and lower junior classes are above those expected and improving rapidly due to the improved provision, better teaching and effective leadership. Most of the older pupils, who have not benefited from the recent changes to the subject, still attain the levels expected for their ages. Achievement is good. In swimming, all pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills and almost all achieve the expected level by the time they leave the school. The school is part of a local sport co-ordinator programme based on a local secondary school. This has led to further training for staff and the support of specialist coaches and teachers to help raise standards in a range of sports. More training is planned in dance and gymnastics, which teachers have decided are their weaker aspects of the subject. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is

good, with support from learning support assistants helping all pupils to take part, and the provision of an individual programme of work for one pupil with physical difficulties.

77. The teaching observed during the inspection was all of good quality. The lessons were well planned and ensured that all pupils were sufficiently active, and had extended opportunities to practise and develop their skills. Pupils listen carefully to instructions and stay focused and on task throughout. Teachers make good use of small groups and small side games so that all pupils have good opportunities to take part. There are very good relationships between the teachers and the pupils, resulting in some good quality learning taking place. The school makes good use of teachers' expertise by enabling the co-ordinator to teach throughout the junior classes. Good warm up sessions help teach pupils about the benefits and effects of exercise on their bodies.
78. The subject is very well led and managed by the subject co-ordinator. Since taking on the role, she has recognised where there were gaps in provision throughout the school. For example, these were evident in the lack of opportunities through clubs and team sports for pupils to extend their skills and interests outside the basic curriculum. There is now good provision of clubs and growing opportunities for pupils to play with and against those from other schools in a range of sports including cricket, football, netball and golf.

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

79. Insufficient work was observed to make a secure judgement about provision. Teachers' planning incorporates pupils' personal and social education but there is no specific scheme or clearly defined sessions for this aspect of the curriculum timetabled. Circle time, where pupils sit in a circle and are encouraged to talk individually about issues, is used occasionally when issues arise within school. Healthy eating is encouraged through the science curriculum, while in physical education they are made appropriately aware of the effects of exercise on their bodies and how this benefits them.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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