

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST THOMAS MORE ROMAN CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY
AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Belmont, Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114275

Headteacher: Mr D Groark

Lead inspector: Mrs M Fitzpatrick

Dates of inspection: 2 – 4 February 2004

Inspection number: 257982

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

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:	110
School address:	Thorndale Road Belmont Durham
Postcode:	DH1 2AQ
Telephone number:	0191 386 4761
Fax number:	0191 384 7025
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Joanne Pallister
Date of previous inspection:	1 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas More Primary School is a Voluntary Aided, Roman Catholic school situated on the edge of Durham City. It is smaller than most primary schools, with 110 pupils between the ages of four and 11. Children join the school in the Reception class and their attainment when they join is above what is expected for their age. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below the average and there are no pupils with statements of special educational need. The school community is almost entirely from a white British heritage, with less than 10 per cent from other heritage groups. There are no pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language. The school works closely with the community who make use of its facilities and with other learning institutions to extend provision for its pupils. In 2003 the school received a Schools Achievement Award and the Healthy Schools Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
24326	Mrs M Fitzpatrick	Lead inspector	English History English as an additional language
19361	Mr K Ross	Lay inspector	
4926	Mrs T Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design technology Geography Music Physical education Foundation Stage Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
 Anglia House
 Carrs Road
 Cheadle
 Stockport
 SK8 2LA

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Thomas More Primary is a very effective school. Standards achieved by pupils are well above average and all pupils achieve very well because they are consistently very well taught. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, ensuring a clear focus for the development of the school. The school's strategies for inclusion produce an ethos in which tolerance, respect and care are paramount and they ensure that all pupils have their needs very well served. The school has considerable strengths, some of them outstanding, and no significant weaknesses. Areas of relative weakness are already being tackled through the school's development plan. The school serves its pupils and its community very well and provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very high standards it achieves.
- The vision and excellent leadership of the headteacher; the very good leadership and management in the school overall.
- The very good teaching and very good support for pupils' learning from classroom assistants.
- The excellent inclusion that it promotes.
- The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The very high quality, rich curriculum it provides.
- The very good contribution that governors make to the development of the school.
- The excellent links with parents, which support pupils' learning.
- The very good links with other schools and learning institutions.

The school is much more effective than it was at the last inspection. Standards have risen, the quality of teaching is higher and there is much more effective curricular provision in the Foundation Stage and throughout the school. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is now very good, and standards have risen significantly to well above average by Year 6. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate in identifying the correct priorities for further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Pupils' achievement is very good. Results in the national tests have shown better than average improvement over the last five years. The school's performance in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 is very high compared with that of similar schools, placing the school in the top five per cent of school's nationally. Pupils who sat these tests made very good progress from the results they achieved in national tests when they were in Year 2. Pupils now in Year 6 reach standards similar to those in the table above. In the subjects inspected – design and technology, ICT and history - pupils reach standards well above those expected. Pupils in Year 2 achieve standards that are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics, science and design and technology. In information and communication technology and history they reach standards above the expected level for their

age. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well and all are on course to reach the expected level in all six areas of learning for Reception children and many will exceed it by the start of Year 1.

Achievement is high because pupils are very well taught and they bring **very good attitudes** and enthusiasm to their learning. Their behaviour in and out of class is always **very good** and this enhances their learning. Their personal development is **very good** because of the school's **excellent** provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good.

Teaching is very good throughout the school, with some excellent teaching seen in Years 5 and 6. Strengths of the teaching include: a very high commitment to developing independence in all pupils regardless of ability, very good planning for different groups of pupils, and imaginative links between subjects which enthuse and motivate pupils. Assessment is very good and is well used to plan appropriately for the learning needs of all pupils. The curriculum is very well planned. It is enriched with very good links in the community to extend learning beyond the classroom and takes good account of pupils' interests and strengths. Provision in the Reception class has improved rapidly and is now very good. Planning takes good account of the needs of all children. Provision for out of school activities and clubs is outstanding.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the development of the school, while the acting deputy headteacher sets a very good example in the high quality of her work in the classroom. The governors make a significant contribution to the leadership of the school and to its development. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents rightly hold the school in very high esteem. They recognise how dedicated teachers are and are delighted with how well they know and care for their children. Pupils are proud of their school and feel safe and happy there. A few pupils felt the behaviour of some was not good, but inspectors did not agree with their point of view and found behaviour to be very good in and out of the classroom.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Pursue the improvements detailed in the current school development plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **well above** the national average in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 and Year 2. Pupils' achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress in their learning and most are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the time they start Year 1.
- Pupils in Year 2 exceed the expected standard in ICT, history and design and technology.
- By Year 6 pupils exceed the expected standard in information and communication technology, design and technology, history and geography.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, including gifted and talented pupils, achieve very well.

Commentary

1. Children in the Foundation Stage join the school with attainment that is above the expectation for their age. They make rapid progress in all areas of their learning because they are very well taught and cared for. Teachers and support assistants have a good knowledge of children's needs and are flexible in the arrangements that they make for children's learning so that all are able to achieve their best. Good assessment ensures that children's learning is well tracked. Teachers use this knowledge to plan tasks that provide the correct level of challenge to keep the children moving forward at a good rate. By the end of Reception all children will achieve the early learning goals and many will have exceeded them. By the start of Year 1 children are extremely well-prepared for the next stage of learning.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (16.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.8 (15.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.1 (16.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 for pupils in Year 2 were well above the national average in reading and writing. When compared with schools in the same free school meals bracket, these results are about average in reading and well above average in writing. Results in mathematics were at about the national average, but were very low compared with the results of similar schools. However, the small size of the group taking these tests makes comparison of test results unreliable. In the teacher assessments in science in 2003, results were above the national average. Since the time of the last inspection, results for pupils in Year 2 have risen faster than the national trend of improvement. There is no significant difference in performance between boys and girls in the tests.
3. Pupils who are now in Year 2 are reaching well above the expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is because they are very well taught and their enthusiasm for learning is very well used by the teacher in getting them to work at a rapid rate. The school's arrangements for teaching Year 1 and Year 2 pupils separately for English and mathematics also makes a very good contribution to the standards pupils achieve. Because

class sizes are small, so they receive plenty of adult attention. Pupils who have special educational needs – either because they need additional support or are gifted and need more challenge - are very well supported by these arrangements. For instance, a Year 1 pupil has his need for high challenge in mathematics met by working in the Year 2 class on more advanced topics.

4. Pupils in Year 2 reach above the expected level in information and communication technology because they are well taught and have good opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects. In history, their good literacy skills are well used to help them reach above expected standards, and in design and technology they reach standards that are well above the expected level for their age. Planning in this subject is very thorough, and pupils are encouraged to apply the skills they learn in mathematics and art to produce well-made articles. A strong feature of their learning in design and technology is the rigorous evaluation that the pupils make of their own and other's work.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.0 (30.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.5 (29.6)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.5 (30.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 12 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Pupils who are now in Year 6 achieve well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This because of consistently very high quality teaching and a high level of challenge in all the work that pupils do, combined with their own enthusiasm for learning and capacity for working independently. The very high standards they achieve in these subjects spills over into other learning, as they are constantly set tasks which require them to draw on skills and knowledge from these core subjects. Their formidable language skills allow them to write very well for all purposes, while their reading skills allow them to gather information rapidly from both fiction and non-fiction texts. In mathematics, they are adept at problem-solving and make very good use of ICT to analyse data. In science, they work rapidly on investigations, confidently predicting and hypothesising. The quality of their presentations to the rest of the class is very high indeed.
6. Pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are well above the expectation for their age in information and communication technology, because the skills are very well taught and they have many challenging and imaginative opportunities to further develop them. In history and geography they achieve similarly very high standards, because the work they do is linked closely to the literacy and numeracy skills they have acquired, and they are given plenty of opportunity to work both independently and collaboratively. This allows pupils to pursue individual or group interests to broaden their knowledge. In design and technology, creative planning by the teacher sets complex challenges in the subject. Pupils make very good use of skills from other subjects to produce work of a very high standard. Their design sketches, improvements and evaluations all show work that is well above the expected level for their age.
7. Pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress because their learning difficulties are very well assessed and very good provision is made for their learning. Pupils with special educational needs who sat the Year 6 national tests in 2003 made better than expected progress from Year 2 to Year 6 because of the school's very good provision. They did particularly well in their English tests because their individual education plans target their learning needs very precisely and the learning support assistant is very good at teaching literacy skills.
8. The school sets challenging targets for pupils in the national tests, that are based on very good knowledge of their current learning. The targets for this year are not as high as last year's,

reflecting a lower proportion of higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless, results are likely to be well above the national average, demonstrating the very good achievement of pupils in Year 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **very good**. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is **excellent overall**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Catholic ethos of the school, supported by teachers' dedication, encourages very high standards in behaviour, attitudes and relationships.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good as a result of very effective teaching.
- Excellent relationships with each other and all the adults in the school show how much pupils value being part of the school community.
- Very good attendance and punctuality support pupils' achievements.

Commentary

9. The whole Catholic ethos of the school encourages excellent relationships and very good attitudes, behaviour and attendance. The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development creates an environment in which pupils feel they belong to a caring community that gives them opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility.
10. Children in the Foundation Stage mirror the very good attitudes and behaviour seen throughout the rest of the school. They go about their tasks happily and are building good work habits. They are responsive to their teacher and willing to try hard in all that is asked of them. All the children will at least meet the target set for them in their personal, social and emotional development and many will exceed them.
11. Pupils are very proud of their school and very enthusiastic about all aspects of school life. They enjoy working hard in lessons and as they said in their questionnaires they like 'finding out new things'. Pupils are keen to take up opportunities to become involved in extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by teachers and parents. Adults in school always treat pupils fairly and are seen as very good role models in the respect they have for each other and for each pupil.
12. Pupils' behaviour is very good, both in class and around the school. They show self control and are calm when they move around the school and in the playground. Pupils behave very well even when an adult does not supervise them directly. There were no exclusions of pupils in the previous school year. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good. Lessons begin when they should and there is no waste of time. These features positively support pupils' achievements.
13. The school provides a very strong moral framework for pupils. Rules and routines are regularly discussed so that pupils are fully able to understand the need for them. By taking time to explain the impact of pupils' actions on others, teachers demonstrate how highly the school values relationships and how classroom and school rules relate to these. The result is that pupils demonstrate an open, genuine understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They have a very well developed spiritual awareness because of the frequent opportunities in the school day for reflection and giving thanks. They are very caring in their dealings with others. For example, in pastoral care group sessions, made up of pupils of different ages and abilities, teachers help pupils consider the outcomes and consequences of their activities. These sessions also make a very good contribution to pupils' moral, social and spiritual development.

14. The school has developed an excellent climate where pupils can grow, flourish, give and receive respect and feel a sense of their own worth. The values of caring, striving hard and celebrating each other's achievements are very well embedded in the day-to-day life of the school. The headteacher and all staff provide very good role models for pupils in the way that they uphold these values and their impact is seen on all pupils, who work very hard to meet the high expectations that the school has of them. The school's excellent promotion of inclusion ensures that pupils know they are equally valued. They fully understand that the same opportunities are open to all and because of this develop very good sharing attitudes.
15. Pupils in all classes are taught about their own and other cultures through religious education topics which cover the major world faiths, as well as their own Catholic faith. In geography, they learn about the way of life in other lands and links with a school in India gives pupils a good understanding of the differences in culture as well as environment and climate. Links with a school in Cumbria similarly broaden pupils' knowledge of life in the wider world. Teachers seize the opportunities offered in art and music to present pupils with images and sounds from different cultures so that they have a good knowledge of the diversity of the society in which they live.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002 –2003 (96.8%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll
102
4
1
1
1
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. Assessment is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge to make imaginative links between subjects and to ask thought provoking questions.
- Pupils' natural curiosity and thirst for learning are well directed through teachers' skilful planning.
- Pupils have high levels of independence and are very supportive of each other's learning.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and offer demanding but attainable challenges to all.
- Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and pupils relish lessons because learning is fun.
- Time in lessons is very well used, and learning support assistants are very effectively used to support learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	21	4	0	0	0	0

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

16. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. In Years 5 and 6 there is excellent teaching. The improvements in the quality of teaching are partly due to the very effective recruitment of new staff who are fully committed to the school's aims, as well as to the excellent development of curriculum provision, which has encouraged teachers to develop creative approaches to their teaching. The impact of this very high quality teaching is seen in all aspects of pupils' learning. Their attitudes to learning are very positive; their confidence and self-esteem are very high, and they very quickly develop independence in their learning, all of which contribute to the very high standards they reach.
17. In the Foundation Stage children settle quickly to the demands of learning because of the clear routines that are established at an early stage. Teachers and support assistants have very high expectations of children's behaviour and concentration, which they balance well with encouraging independence and initiative. Teachers make very good links between areas of learning so that children can see connections and apply their skills across all their learning experiences. Because teachers have very good knowledge of children's needs, they are able to plan activities to challenge and interest them. This results in very good use of time and builds well on their enthusiasm for learning.
18. Teachers' subject knowledge is very strong across the curriculum. They make very good use of this. For example, during whole-class teaching they carefully direct and phrase questions to individual pupils to assess their learning and develop their thinking. They make very good use of correct subject terminology, so that pupils learn this naturally and apply it well in their own speech and writing. Teachers are adept at developing discussion at different levels so that pupils of all abilities have a chance to contribute and feel valued. In a very good lesson with Year 2 pupils, the teacher helped pupils make great strides in their reading skills by asking pointed questions about the story they read. Pupils were eager to volunteer their ideas about whether characters were nice or not and how they knew this. Their confidence in giving answers was due to the skilful questioning of the teacher, who ensured there were clues to the answer in the question.
19. In many lessons teachers make imaginative links between subjects. This enhances pupils' learning by allowing them to make connections and sometimes to explore how one thing may impact on another. In a Years 3 and 4 lesson about Ancient Greek mythology, pupils were challenged to research independently before deciding how they would present their information to the class. Pupils made very good use of their high level ICT skills to prepare presentations, as well as linking what they knew was myth with what they knew was fact from their study of

Ancient Greek civilisation. For example, a group of boys discussing the Trojan wars were able to explain how the geography of Greece helped one army in battle while hindering another. During this extended lesson, pupils were fully engaged in research, discussion and assembling information to share with the class. They were completely absorbed and used literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effortlessly as they assembled their combined efforts.

20. Planning for learning takes good account of pupils' interests and prior learning. It also builds very well on their highly developed social skills by designing activities which require pupils to work together closely on projects. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 worked at impressive speed on presentations to show how they decided which shoe sole to recommend for its low-slip properties. The teacher expected high levels of co-operation and high quality presentations at the end of the allotted time. Pupils made excellent use of their very good ICT knowledge to prepare presentations and in each group all pupils were involved in deciding which methods they would use. A skilful link was made with literacy as some pupils raised the question of the audience for the presentation and would the style be appropriate. The pressure on pupils to complete in a given time, together with the very good preparation they had in the previous science lesson, meant that pupils were excited by the task and confident of success. In sharing knowledge, skills and decision-making, pupils were learning at a rapid rate and regarded the whole process as pure fun.
21. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils is detailed because of the very good assessments that are made of learning. They make good use of this knowledge to plan work at the correct level, to pair pupils for different activities and to give the correct level of freedom to help pupils develop their independence further. In a Year 1 English lesson, the teacher was careful to design activities which allowed higher attaining pupils to work quickly at some tasks, while others required more thought and reflection. Other activities required pupils to move about the classroom to find information or check their answers. All of these styles of learning suited the needs of the pupils very well and they worked hard and with great enthusiasm as a result. The sharp planning and imaginative activities also ensured that each pupil was able to work at his or her best rate, so their achievement was very high.
22. Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. They are very effectively used by teachers to target pupils who may have a problem with some aspect of their learning or who need higher levels of challenge in what they do. The meticulous planning of the classroom assistant who teaches additional strategies in literacy and numeracy enables her to have highly effective, intense sessions with pupils throughout the school day. Pupils learn at a rapid rate because of her very skilful teaching. All teachers make very good use of any additional support they receive through their careful planning, recognition of their colleagues' strengths and their excellent relationships with them.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is **very good**. It is exciting, and supported by a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors. The quality of resources is **good** and they are used to support learning well. Accommodation is **satisfactory**, and although some classrooms are small and cramped, the space is managed extremely well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of literacy, numeracy and information technology skills in other subjects is very good, with areas of excellence.
- The curriculum is exciting and enriched through many experiences.
- The curriculum is innovative and continually being improved.
- Equality of opportunity is central to the work of the school.

Commentary

23. In the Foundation Stage there is a very good balance between activities directed by teachers, those selected by teachers that give opportunities for exploration, and those chosen by children themselves. All the required areas of learning are linked together very well to make good use of time. There is a very good emphasis on communication, language, literacy and mathematics at levels appropriate to the children's needs, so that they are completely ready for their next stage of learning.
24. Curriculum planning has improved considerably since the previous inspection. There is a clear structure to planning to take into account the mixed age classes, and this is carefully monitored to ensure continuity and progression in skills and understanding.
25. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are fully included. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to initiate further improvement. Practical experiences and the use of visits and visitors are embedded in planning to ensure that learning experiences are memorable and enrich the curriculum. Teachers set clear learning objectives for lessons and frequently specific objectives for groups or individual pupils.
26. Teachers in each class plan their own sequences of lessons carefully to link subjects together and make effective use of time. This is an area of excellence. Literacy and numeracy skills are not only used to support learning in other subjects but are consistently developed wherever possible, and this contributes much to standards attained. For example, imaginative and creative writing is frequently used in an innovative way to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding in science, and numeracy skills are linked extremely well with information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support topics such as river studies in geography. The older pupils' standards in ICT are so good that they rapidly produce high quality and effective presentations for different audiences, again reinforcing and using literacy and numeracy skills.
27. It is very clear that both the academic and personal needs of individual pupils are central to the work of the school. Different strategies are used to support those with short or longer-term learning difficulties or a specific talent in a particular subject. For example, a high attaining pupil in mathematics or English may work in another year group for either subject. Pastoral lessons, where pupils from all age groups work together, develop links between year groups so that no pupil feels out of place in another class. Teachers show by example and by their response to pupils' answers that all contributions are important. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good and suitable arrangements are in place for good quality support for sex education and drugs awareness. Lessons are carefully organised so that pupils do not consistently miss any one subject when they work outside the class for whatever reason.
28. Teachers' planning for pupils who have special educational needs is firmly rooted in their individual education plans, and classroom assistants are very well briefed on targets for pupils in each lesson. Because of the thoroughness of this preparation, pupils who have special educational needs are very well supported in all subjects and have full access to all learning opportunities as a result. The detail of planning for the needs of different groups of pupils is a strength of the curriculum and underpins the school's excellent inclusion practices.
29. For a small school, there is an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular sports, musical and other activities available on the premises. These are well supported by parents and pupils make good use of the experiences on offer. During the inspection, for example, pupils were observed completing an extended activity in Spanish and then cheerfully moving to another long session of Irish dancing.
30. Resources for learning are good. They are very well organised to make good use of the limited space available, and are easily accessible and well used. Space is also well used and extremely well managed. Different groups of pupils use different areas at different times, and yet there is no fuss and everything runs very smoothly. Some classrooms are small and

cramped. For example the reception classroom has limited space, so the range of activities available at any one time has to be limited. Teachers are ingenious at making best use of space and not letting this reduce the very good quality of the curriculum, even though it means extra work to manage the situation.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. The support, advice and guidance the school gives to its pupils are also **very good**. Procedures for seeking pupils' views are effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Catholic ethos promotes a very supportive, positive atmosphere of love and respect.
- Very good arrangements for child protection are in place.
- All pupils are very well cared for and the procedures for monitoring and supporting each pupil's achievements and personal development are very good.
- Effective arrangements are in place to take account of pupils' views and concerns.
- Induction procedures for the Foundation Stage and preparation for transfer to secondary school are very good.

Commentary

31. The school, with its strong Catholic ethos, is a very caring community that reflects well its stated aims. The friendliness and courtesy of all the staff and pupils are strong characteristics of the school. Procedures for child protection are very good and all staff are aware of their responsibilities and duties if they feel a child is at risk. The children's questionnaire, and discussions with children during inspection week, clearly indicate that all pupils have trusting and supportive relationships with adults whom they can confide in if they are worried or hurt. The recently established school council and the pastoral care sessions are used very effectively to take account of pupils' views and concerns. Planning for each session of the pastoral care group is derived from citizenship and personal, health and social education (PHSE) guidelines and is linked to gospel themes. These sessions play an important part in developing pupils' confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities. Procedures for helping children to settle in the Reception class are very effective and ensure that they soon get used to school routines and enjoy coming to school. The pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education throughout the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **excellent** links with parents, who think very highly of the school. Links with other schools and the community are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has formed excellent links with parents and involves and works with them at every opportunity.
- Parents are provided with very good quality information.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges benefit pupils' learning.
- The Parent Teacher Association supports the school very well with fund raising and resources, as well as social events.

Commentary

32. The school has an open door policy and provides a very friendly, welcoming environment. Parents are extremely happy with the school. They hold very positive views about the all-round education provided and the Catholic values that are promoted. They are particularly pleased with the family atmosphere that the school provides.
33. A well-established system of communication with parents includes informative newsletters that report on past and future events. Parents also receive information about the work their children will be doing in all subjects and ways they can support this.
34. The school holds regular workshops to keep parents informed about how their children are being taught. Recent courses include information and communication technology, keeping up with the children in numeracy, and a positive parenting course. These sessions help parents to understand the curriculum and to give practical support to their children's learning at home. There is also an opportunity for parents to discuss their children's progress each term.
35. A dedicated and very active Parent Teacher Association organises a range of social and fund-raising events. These are well supported by parents and make a highly valued contribution to school resources which are of benefit to the pupils.
36. Links with other schools and colleges, educational visits and visitors to the school from the community add another important dimension to pupils' learning as well as enhancing their social and personal development. The leadership of the school has worked hard to establish and develop these links.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school are **very good** overall. The governance of the school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the development of the school.
- Strong teamwork and shared vision enable the school to respond quickly and effectively to change.
- Very good leadership and management of the curriculum.
- Very good self-evaluation and response to good practice.
- The governors' knowledge of the school and the support and challenge they offer to improve it are very good.

Commentary

37. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. Since taking up post two years ago, he has led the school through a process of successful change. He has done this through his accurate analysis of the school's priorities for improvement. This has provided the basis for rapid developments in curricular provision and planning, resources for learning, the assessment of learning and the quality of teaching. He has provided excellent guidance to help staff support his vision for an exciting and rich curriculum for each child in every class. His very high expectations are very well shared with colleagues, who wholeheartedly support his ambitions for the pupils. Standards have risen significantly since he joined the school and are now well above average. Under his leadership, the quality of educational provision has been improved so that it is now very good, with some outstanding aspects in curriculum planning and extra-curricular provision. The headteacher has succeeded in improving links with parents so that these are now excellent. He has developed very good links with other learning institutions in order to draw in support for pupils' learning, as well as to allow staff to share good practice with others. The result of all this work has been to produce a vibrant school where learning is always seen as fun by pupils and success seems a natural result of being in school.

38. All of the developments in the school have been very well managed, through a measured pace of change and thorough consultation. Teachers and support staff have been fully involved in deciding how changes would be implemented, and the high dedication and professionalism of all staff have been a major factor in the success of recent developments in the school. Subject leaders have played a significant role in identifying and leading improvements, particularly in assessment and the analysis of learning. They are expert and committed; give very good support to colleagues, and are willing to seek out good practice in neighbouring schools. A good example is the link formed with a neighbouring Beacon Nursery, to assist in developing the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. The changes following this link have transformed the provision for young children and demonstrate the willingness of staff to seize upon new ideas and practices which will benefit the children's learning. The leadership and management of key staff are very good overall and, because they have developed such a strong team spirit, ideas and suggestions are quickly translated into practice and results shared.
39. The leadership and management of special educational needs provision are very good. There is very good assessment of pupils' learning needs and individual education plans are well written and effectively used by class teachers and support assistants. The organisation of support, which extends to pupils who are gifted or talented, as well as to those who occasionally falter in their learning, is excellent, ensuring that staff time is maximised for the benefit of pupils' learning. The school has very good links with parents and external agencies to support pupils' learning.
40. The governors have a very good involvement in the work of the school. They share the headteacher's ambitions for high quality provision and high standards in the pupils' work. They have established a very effective committee structure which makes very good use of the different expertise and experience of governors. They are eager to keep pace with national developments in education and participate regularly in governor training and conferences. While they give very good support to the headteacher in developing the school, they are prepared to question and challenge priorities or the direction of developments. They have established a very thorough programme of monitoring activities. These involve all governors visiting the school with a specific area for evaluation, and allow them to hold the school to account. These visits are linked to the school's priorities or recent spending decisions and help governors gain a better insight into the impact of their decisions. The budget is very well managed, and members of the finance committee apply their expertise well in order to make very good use of the principles of best value. Taking into account the very high standards achieved, the very good provision and the modest spending for each pupil, the school is judged to give very good value for money.
41. The school benefits from a significant aid to learning in the very good parental support that it receives. The school values this highly, and in order to get the best from it, the school regularly runs workshops for parents to keep them informed of methods and styles of teaching and learning, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT. The headteacher is also very quick to develop links with external agencies that can bring expertise or advice into the school to aid learning. This has led to a rapid expansion in the range of out-of-school activities and in the involvement of volunteers and students in the work of the school.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	270,623	Balance from previous year	26,661
Total expenditure	272,333	Balance carried forward to the next	26,661
Expenditure per pupil	2,569		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING,

SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. Children are admitted to the Reception class in the September prior to their fifth birthday. They usually work in a class containing the youngest Year 1 children. Almost all children enter Reception from other pre-school settings.
43. There is a wide range of ability, but on the basis of assessments carried out soon after they enter the Reception class, the children's attainment is above average. Standards among boys and girls are similar. All are likely to at least attain the Early Learning Goals in all areas before they enter Year 1 and most will exceed them. These children are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of learning. Very good teaching that constantly links areas of learning together, well managed links between the teachers who share the class, and very good organisation of a cramped classroom are the reasons for the children's very good achievements.
44. Due to timetable arrangements only one teacher was seen in charge of the class during the inspection, but all planning was checked and the second teacher was seen when acting in a voluntary capacity. Teachers are knowledgeable about each child's stage of development and their individual needs. They are very well supported by a number of skilled voluntary workers who, due to their commitment, compensate for the current lack of a nursery nurse in the classroom. All adults involved are well briefed about roles and responsibilities and there are good assessment procedures to monitor children's progress. In literacy these are very good. There is a balance of activities, that are matched to the age and maturity of the children; directed by adults; set by adults, and explored by children or selected by the children themselves. It is very clear that the teachers have very good vision for further improvement. They have made very good use of links with a Beacon Nursery and this has led to very good improvement in provision since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well because teaching is very good.
- Staff model ways to behave well and encourage children to be independent.
- The variety of activities, where the children work alongside older pupils and learn from them, makes an excellent contribution to their learning.

Commentary

45. Teaching is very good and children achieve very well in all aspects of this area. All children are likely to exceed the early learning goals before they enter Year 1. Before they start school there is a thoughtfully planned programme to prepare children and parents. Children are happy at school, trust their teachers and understand the class routines because these are clearly established. Teachers strike a good balance between demanding high standards of behaviour and attention, and encouraging children's independence and giving them opportunities to use their initiative. All adults demonstrate that they care about each child as an individual. The children learn to work together in shared tasks. They are regularly included in mixed-age group activities where older pupils care for them. This helps to prepare them for more formal teaching at a later stage and extends their range of friends. Older pupils often visit the Reception children to share their work, for example to read books, or get them to test items they have made in design and technology, such as biscuits. Again this helps them gain in confidence and in their ability to form relationships with others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because teaching is very good.
- The staff encourage and develop the children's spoken language, listening, reading and writing skills very well.
- Sharing and using books are linked well to the different activities.

Commentary

46. This area of learning is very well managed with carefully planned and supervised activities as well as opportunities for developing independence. Children take part in short and well-structured whole-class activities to develop listening skills and a love of books, to read together and retell stories. They are encouraged to express their feelings about characters. They retell stories in sequence and are able to use expression to demonstrate the attitudes of different characters. No opportunity is lost to develop children's understanding and use of challenging vocabulary in these activities. In group activities children further develop literacy skills carefully targeted at their level. Children are keen to learn to read and all are able to identify some familiar words in their books, relating the words to the pictures and to initial letter sounds. Those with the highest attainment are already reading simple familiar text with confidence and write well-structured sentences using capital letters and full stops. Sharing and using books play an important role in introductions to many activities, such as creating models, helping children appreciate the value of books. All children are likely to at least attain, and almost all will exceed the Early Learning Goals.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because the teaching is very good.
- Many opportunities are provided for children to learn to calculate and explore shape and pattern and measure.

Commentary

47. There is a very good range of carefully planned opportunities for developing the full range of mathematical skills, and not just those of number. No opportunity is missed for children to use their skills, for example making repeated patterns for the 'rainbow fish's coat' or counting the arms on the octopus. Standards are already beyond those expected with many children able to state different ways of making seven. The class teacher is very adept at making children think. For example, when comparing lengths of fish they had created, she arranged two fish to give a false impression. Children quickly challenged the teacher, and one said, "If you turn one round or upside down it will still be the same size".

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide variety of experiences are provided to extend children's knowledge of the world around them.
- The quality of teaching is very good so children achieve very well.

Commentary

46. Children take part in a wide range of carefully planned activities that help them learn about why things happen, how things are made and why changes occur. The current theme of under the sea forms a basis for many activities such as whether using giant syringes full of water or blowing through tubes makes a model fish move faster. Children regularly look at changes caused through heating in cooking activities and explore textures of the materials they are using. They test materials to see if they will serve a specific purpose, for example what type of medium could be used to create a pattern on a coat for the 'rainbow fish'. They learn about past and present by looking at photos, and through practical experience at a nearby Victorian interactive museum. They learn about other cultures and beliefs as well as developing an understanding of and respect for their own religious background. They learn how things grow in their own garden. Children come to school with a wealth of experiences, but these are continually extended and they will all attain the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1. Many will exceed them. One child for example clearly understood the difference between reversible and irreversible processes caused by heating.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

No overall judgement on provision or teaching can be made due to the special arrangements during the week of inspection. No direct teaching was observed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many opportunities are provided for children to manipulate small and large construction equipment and a variety of tools.
- Some aspects of physical activity outdoors are temporarily restricted.

Commentary

47. There is a good range of practical equipment for children to use to make models and improve hand-eye co-ordination, including mouldable materials and large and small construction equipment. These are easily accessible and carefully organised. Children confidently use the computer mouse to create recognisable pictures. Other activities, for example working in sand and water, also develop these skills. A designated outdoor area has been constructed, parts of which have been used well. Access to this area and provision in it are currently being improved. All children are likely to at least attain the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well because of very good experiences provided.
- There are good opportunities for role play to stimulate the children's imagination.
- A good range of materials is available for children to explore colour, texture and shape.
- Parents make a very good contribution by creating materials to support learning.

Commentary

48. Children are given many opportunities to develop their observational skills through what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste. For example in music they explore sounds using parts of the body. Children learn to express their feelings in drawing, painting, modelling, and role-play, and also through the teacher's careful development of their appreciation of characters in books during literacy time. In art they explore colour and design, freely creating large collaborative designs and their own personal pictures, sometimes linked to the work of particular artists. Role-play areas that they help to create themselves extend children's imagination. These are made even more interesting through contributions, such as exciting dressing up clothes, from parents. Story bags are also taken home each week to stimulate children's imagination. Although no specific and direct observation of teaching was observed, creative activity permeates all areas of learning and therefore teaching is judged as very good. All children are likely to attain and most will exceed the Early Learning Goals before they enter Year 1.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high standards achieved by pupils in all aspects of the subject.
- The very good achievement of all pupils.
- The consistently high quality of teaching.
- The very good assessment, tracking and target-setting procedures.
- The very good leadership and management.
- Very good support for literacy by the learning support assistant.

Commentary

49. Standards have risen since the last inspection, when they were judged to be average by the end of Year 2, and above average by the end of Year 6. They are now well above average for both age groups as a result of improved leadership and management of the subject, improved assessment procedures, much improved teaching and a broader curriculum.
50. Pupils in Year 2 read fluently and with very good expression because the teacher loses no opportunity to develop their skills and, through very skilful questioning, encourages them to think deeply about what they read. Pupils have a very good understanding and retention of what they read and many are independent readers who, 'prefer to read in (my) head because it's faster'. They have very good opportunities for reading and are expected to read non-fiction as well as fiction books, so that they learn the skills of reading for information from an early age. Their speaking and listening are of a similar high quality and they learn much from discussion about characters when they share books. Their thinking is sharpened when they talk about the language the writer uses to show whether a character is 'nice' or 'nasty'. Their writing reflects an extensive vocabulary and spelling is only occasionally weak because they attempt such difficult words in their writing.

51. By Year 6, pupils' skills have been developed to a very high level through their consistent application in other subjects. They discuss their work as a class and in groups for extended periods, learning much from each other, as talk is very well sustained by timely interventions from the class teacher. They have frequent, well planned and imaginative writing tasks which develop their ability to write for a wide range of purpose, such as preparing terse and informative power-point presentations or describing a route they might take on a tour of the Lake District. Their reading skills are sometimes formidable and the majority read at great speed to glean information in geography and history lessons. Nearly all pupils have developed a love of reading for pleasure and they can cite authors and styles of writing that they prefer, giving cogent reasons for their choices.
52. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities, achieve very well because they are presented with such an exciting variety of learning opportunities. These motivate them highly, while building very effectively on their existing knowledge and skills. In Year 3, pupils made very good gains in their understanding of Ancient Greek gods in their reading for a history lesson, and were thrilled to have the opportunity to decide how they would present this information to the class. Because of the teacher's very good planning, they had access to plenty of useful information and were encouraged to work independently to present their knowledge as a drama, a narrative or a newspaper item. Teachers go to great lengths to prepare in detail for pupils' writing activities. In an exciting lesson on science fiction writing, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, were treated to excerpts from 'The War of the Worlds'. They appreciated the terror that the first broadcast of this story produced when the teacher showed the front page of The New York Times. Pupils were then delighted to hear a tape recording of other pupils' interpretation of the story and began to consider how they would present it when their turn came. This high quality teaching and learning are evident in the many pieces of writing Year 6 pupils have completed this year, either as part of an English lesson or for their writing in science, history or geography.
53. Teachers have very good knowledge of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and plan carefully to set tasks or ask questions that ensure success for pupils. During whole-class teaching, teachers are seen again and again directing questions to specific pupils, then selecting others to develop an idea. This practice ensures that pupils of all abilities are involved and recognise that they have a valuable contribution to make. Teachers' very high expectations are rewarded when pupils all begin their writing tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. All teachers use information and communication technology in their lessons to very good effect. Pupils are allowed often to select their presentational devices and are ambitious in what they will undertake. Teachers exploit the mixed-age classes to very good effect by allowing pupils to work together and learn from each other so that younger pupils become ambitious to match the skill of their older classmates.
54. The subject is very well led and managed by an enthusiastic and skilled co-ordinator. Under her leadership all aspects of provision have improved. The very thorough and effective assessment procedures are embedding well, providing teachers with fine detail of what pupils know and don't know. Because of these procedures the school has been able to make very good use of the mixed age class organisation to place pupils with others of similar needs. For example, six Year 4 pupils join the Year 6 class for lessons and are very well challenged as a result. Other groupings are formed on the basis of sharp assessment, such as a Reception group which has short sessions on grammar and phonics with the highly skilled learning support assistant to bring them up to the expected level before the start of Year 1. Reading provision, including resources, has improved and the impact on standards is evident in the levels achieved by pupils throughout the school. Because of the very good provision for reading and the regular phonics and grammar teaching, pupils are well equipped for writing, where individual targets are set and regularly reviewed for every pupil.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

All teachers make very good use of literacy skills in all subjects. They place very good emphasis on talk as a medium for learning, and manage discussion between pupils very well so that they learn very effectively from each other. Teachers ensure that pupils develop confidence when speaking in a formal context by expecting them to make presentations to the class during and at the end of lessons. Again, this is a very effective way of sharing pupils' knowledge. The confidence they develop was well used in the school's production of *Baboushka*, last year. Pupils are expected to read for information from an early age and they quickly develop confidence and independence in their research skills as a result. The use that teachers make of writing is a strength of the curriculum planning. No opportunity is missed to use pupils' writing skills creatively. Because of this there are many memorable examples of investigations in science and inquiries in geography and history. One of the reasons that standards in English are so high is because of the care with which teachers plan for its use in all aspects of pupils' learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teaching and therefore learning are very good.
- The recent achievements of all pupils are very good.
- Numeracy skills are developed through, and used very well to support, other subjects.

Commentary

55. In 2003 standards in the national tests in Year 2 were in line with the national average and well below similar schools. Pupils who are now in Year 2 and those in Year 3, who took the tests in 2003, are currently making very good progress in their learning due to very good teaching. Recent achievement is very good. Standards attained by Year 6 pupils in the national tests in 2003 were well above average and above those in similar schools, despite the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in a small cohort. All pupils in this group made much better than expected progress from Year 2. Despite small classes, with very different characteristics each year, standards in Year 6 have been maintained at well above average, and pupils mostly reach the individual target set for them based on results in Year 2. Inspection judgements are that standards in Year 6 are well above average and that pupils with all levels of prior attainment gain a very secure breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding that prepares them very well for the next stage of learning.
56. A scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of lessons show that standards are well above those expected nationally in Years 2 and 6. Pupils in Year 2 have made very good progress this year due to very good teaching, which challenges their thinking and stimulates their enthusiasm for the subject. Mental arithmetic skills and pupils' written strategies for calculation are very well developed. Data-handling and problem-solving skills are well above average. In Years 3 to 6 this is mainly because of the frequent use of information and communication technology to record and analyse results of experiments and surveys and the use of mathematics in other subjects. Although standards in shape and space are above average, pupils do not have the breadth of experience seen in other areas of mathematics.
57. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy and employ different techniques, styles and resources very well to make sure pupils both enjoy mathematics and achieve the key objectives for the lessons. Work is carefully planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, although the assessment of individual needs is not quite so refined as that in English. To make efficient use

of resources, some pupils with specific needs are taught mathematics among older or younger classes. This is effective because of the careful development of a school family where pupils are helped to make friends across all year groups. The majority of lessons are well balanced to give pupils with different levels of attainment sufficient time to reinforce skills. Pupils are given, and demonstrate, a high degree of independence in lessons and willingly support each other. This helps those with higher attainment reinforce their skills.

58. Despite the above average standards reached in Year 6 mathematics has rightly been identified as priority area for development due to results in Year 2. This has led to careful deployment of teachers that meet the needs of each year group. Management of the subject has led to major improvements in Years 2 and 3. Thus management is judged very good. The subject leader sets a very good example of how to use and teach mathematics in other subjects and leads by example.

Mathematics across the curriculum

The use of numeracy to support other subjects and the development of numeracy through other subjects are very good, and in many cases excellent. Some excellent practice was seen that linked numeracy to pupils' work in geography, science, design and technology and information and communication technology. In a science lesson in Years 3 and 4 for example, the skills of measuring were carefully developed. Much work was done on a geography field trip exploring ways of measuring the depth and breadth of a river. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 automatically present their research data on spreadsheets and produce associated graphs, and these skills are rapidly developing in Years 3 and 4.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average throughout the school.
- Pupils' achievements are very good.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good.
- The use and development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in science are areas of excellence.

Commentary

59. In 2003 standards attained in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average and above those of similar schools, despite a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in a small cohort. Observations of lessons and pupils' work show that all pupils in the current Years 5 and 6 attain at least the expected standards for their age and almost all have above average attainment. In 2003 teachers' assessed standards as high in Year 2. The inspection judgement is that attainment is well above average in Year 2 and that pupils in this class are currently achieving very well.
60. Pupils in all classes gain knowledge of the necessary facts in all the required areas of study. The strong emphasis teachers place on investigation and enquiry, hypothesis testing and justification through analysis and presentation of results ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand scientific processes and remember them. In performing experiments and presenting results, pupils consistently use a very wide range of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. For example, following a sequence of lessons on friction, Year 5 and 6 pupils followed a design brief to respond to an imaginary letter from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. They had already recorded their experimental data on a spreadsheet and graphically. They analysed

their data, and presented their findings for imaginatively using a range of high level computer skills and programs, and demonstrating their understanding of the use of English in capturing an audience. Pupils have a very good understanding of general scientific terms and their application, such as control, variable and factors.

61. There is an excellent approach to the development of creative writing in science. For example, a pupil in Year 6 wrote a dialogue between two friends, who then fell out. Later in their life they met again by accident. As they talked they heated up and fused together. The conclusion to the short story was that they were now friends forever as they had clearly gone through a chemical reaction and were now inseparable. A similar fable was created in the form of a play which demonstrated how some changes are irreversible. Examples such as these abound in pupils' writing for science. In Years 1 and 2, pupils write vivid descriptions of the journey that food makes through the body. A significant feature of pupils' creative writing is the skilful use of correct terminology.
62. Teaching and therefore learning are consistently very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and present lessons in an imaginative and creative way to keep pupils interested. This was particularly evident in a lesson where Years 1 and 2 pupils were exploring circuits. Pupils were disappointed when the lesson ended and the teacher had to promise to give them more time to solve all the challenging problems she had set. Question and answer techniques are used very well to make pupils think and use technical vocabulary in their responses. Lessons are very well planned and resources prepared and plentiful. There are high expectations of behaviour and response to questions. These factors mean that no time is wasted. Classroom assistants and volunteers make a very good contribution to learning. This was particularly noticeable in a class where two Year 3 pupils missed the start of a lesson for extra literacy support, but quickly caught up due to the very good teaching by the well-prepared and knowledgeable classroom assistant.
63. Although the role of the recently appointed subject leader is not fully developed, the leadership of the head teacher and the very evident teamwork of the teachers and assistants have ensured that the subject is very well managed. This has led to a very good improvement in standards since the previous inspection and standards that are rising at a more rapid rate than national standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards achieved by pupils.
- Very good teaching of skills.
- Teachers' planning to integrate ICT skills into the whole curriculum.
- Pupils enthusiasm, confidence and independence.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject.

Commentary

64. Very much improved resources, high quality teaching and well planned application of skills have resulted in higher standards in the subject than were found at the last inspection. Teaching and learning are very good because skills are taught very effectively, with clear demonstration followed by short intensive practice to consolidate learning. These skills are then used in other subjects to allow pupils to extend their application of them.
65. By Year 2 pupils reach standards above the expectation for their age. By Year 6, standards are well above the expectation, with most pupils working at higher than expected levels. Committed and determined leadership of the subject has ensured that resources have

improved, with the installation of a suite of computers so that skills can be taught to large groups of pupils together. This has improved access to computers for pupils and teachers now plan for their use in most other subjects. The co-ordinator has improved the quality and quantity of software available to pupils, so that they are able to work on the same programs at home as they do in school. This allows teachers to set tasks that can frequently be completed or extended as homework and this is a feature of learning which is particularly appealing to boys.

66. By Year 2, pupils use computers for a range of activities. They are competent with both the keyboard and the mouse and have a good understanding of the commands to use when using different programs. They word process their writing and change font size and colour before saving it. In geography, they collect information about seaside holidays from the class and present this first as a pie-chart, then as a block graph. They download information and pictures of toys from the past for their history, while in science they produce pictograms of themselves showing differences in height and eye colour. As well as having good computer skills, pupils in Year 2 know that machines are controlled by different devices such as switches, buttons or remote control. They have learned how an electronic scale works when the local nurse visits and weighs the 'baby' doll.
67. In Year 6, pupils use ICT applications as a matter of course in all aspects of their work. Because they have so many opportunities to use computers, they have developed a very good knowledge of programs and most are skilled users of commercial word-processing programs. They are able to select from a wide range of presentational devices for their work in different subjects. They design a set of commands to operate traffic lights or a model lighthouse. They import pictures and adapt them for insertion in presentations of work in history and geography. Spreadsheets are frequently used to solve mathematical calculations such as converting seconds into hours, days, weeks and so on up to years, or to analyse weather data. Pupils use the digital camera to record their investigations in science and then scan these into their power point presentations for the class. Pupils work at speed, with very good concentration and achieve very well because teachers have very high expectations of them. In one science lesson, within 40 minutes, pupils worked from their raw data to produce polished presentations of which shoe sole had the correct friction for a floor surface. A strength of the work in ICT is the range of choice pupils have when deciding which program to use, as well as their ability to choose appropriately and explain their choices.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

ICT is embedded in the curriculum with pupils in all classes using it for some application on most days. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils regularly use computers to build a database of information about eye colour or their different ways of travelling to school. They use art applications to draw self-portraits to compare with those they have painted, and for design and technology to help them decide the colours of Joseph's coat. Older pupils use word processing to present information in nearly all subjects. They construct graphs and charts for their work in history and geography and use spreadsheets to record their investigations in science. The range of applications for pupils' learning is excellent and makes a very significant contribution to the high standards they achieve.

HUMANITIES

Only one lesson was seen in **geography** and not enough evidence was gathered to make a firm judgement about provision in the subject. In the lesson seen in Years 5 and 6, the teaching was excellent and pupils learned at a very rapid rate. In their research into mountain environments, they covered the major mountain ranges in Europe and Asia and had a very good base of information from which to compare and contrast environment, settlements, activities and climate in future lessons. Key factors in the speed with which pupils learned were the teacher's skilful planning to ensure that pupils made the best use of their literacy and ICT skills, and her very high expectations of pupils' ability to organise and direct themselves when working in groups. The quality of feedback from each was very high. Pupils were clearly accustomed to working at this pace and enjoyed

describing recent work on river development, where they were similarly well informed. Scrutiny of pupils' work in this and other classes indicates that standards are well above the expectation by Year 6.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high standards achieved by pupils.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The extended curriculum and use of drama enrich learning for pupils.
- ICT is very well used for research and recording learning.
- Pupils' enthusiasm ensures they work hard and make rapid progress.

Commentary

68. Standards are above the expectation by Year 2. By Year 6 they are well above the expectation.
69. Year 2 pupils learn about famous people such as Florence Nightingale and they discuss what difficulties she might have had to overcome when working at the hospital in Scutari. Because they have such good concentration and listening skills, pupils gain much from a video of Florence's life and are eager to share their information, as well as inquire further into her life. Teachers make good use of parental contributions and outside visits to make learning about other topics memorable, as when pupils learn about change over time by comparing toys from long ago with toys from the present day. Very good literacy skills mean that pupils quickly learn the correct terminology for the subject, which they are able to use confidently when talking about events in the past.
70. By Year 6 pupils have covered a number of different eras in their studies and are able to compare these by looking for example at the technology, transport, lives of rich and poor in each one. Their knowledge of the Tudor and Victorian eras is extensive, because of the way their learning is organised. Much work is undertaken independently, by groups or individuals, and then shared with the class through displays and presentations. By using these methods teachers ensure that pupils develop very good research skills and think imaginatively about how they will present their learning or provoke further thinking from classmates. They are challenged to use a wide range of sources for their work, to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and to compile their data in different ways. Very good use is made of copies of primary sources for data on birth and death rates or inventories of household goods and chattels, and pupils are adept at researching secondary sources on the Internet. Teachers expect pupils to use their considerable ICT skills to present information in the most appropriate way using graphs, tallies, charts and diagrams, as well as writing in a variety of styles. All of these very high expectations lead pupils to work very hard at topics, to strive to excel in their presentations and to achieve very well. Teachers use of drama as a vehicle for learning is a strong feature of the subject and an aspect that presents pupils with yet more opportunities for collaboration. In Year 6 the culmination of the topic studied is a day devoted to recreating the era and pupils clearly delight in dressing as Tudors or Victorians and preparing food, gifts and a theatrical performance for the whole school and parents.
71. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has developed resources and the curriculum well since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are in place and there is careful monitoring of teachers' planning to ensure that work is not repeated by pupils in mixed age classes.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

ART AND DESIGN

Commentary

72. Due to timetable arrangements only one lesson was seen in **art and design**. Teaching in this lesson was very good. Evidence of standards was taken from pupils' sketch books and work seen in displays. Pupils reach standards that are above those expected by Year 2 and Year 6. No judgement can be made on provision in art, although it is clear through planning and the work seen that pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to experiment with design, colour and medium and study the work and varied styles of past and present artists. For example, in Years 1 and 2 pupils learned about the style of painting of Nerys at a local museum and then used ink, charcoal and pastels to create designs based on her work. There is a clear structure to planning, and resources, including visits to museums to stimulate creativity, are well managed and organised.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained are well above those expected nationally in Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils achieve very well.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the design process.
- Teaching is very good.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

72. Only two design and technology lessons were seen during the inspection, both of which were very good. Elements of design and technology also appeared in other lessons. The quality of pupils' work on display, in photographs and in written work based on their experience gives a clear indication of the quality of provision. Planning shows that a wide range of experience is provided, including the use of computers to control flashing lights.

73. Younger pupils have a very clear understanding of the design process. They think carefully about the task; experiment to achieve a desired effect, and make collaborative decisions about final designs, giving reasons for their choices. In Year 6 pupils follow a design brief carefully, looking at all the possible factors and doing the necessary research. All work is very neatly finished and demonstrates a good level of skill in using different materials and equipment. Pupils carefully evaluate outcomes and consider how they could improve. They often make items for the youngest pupils in the school to evaluate, and these evaluations are proudly included in their files even when they are unfavourable. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' self-awareness and their consideration for others.

74. Teaching is very good. Voluntary assistants are used very well and make a very good contribution to learning. Where necessary, health and safety issues are carefully managed. Teachers have very good subject expertise and high expectations of behaviour and attitudes. Resources are carefully organised and accessible, and plenty of opportunity is given to pupils to make choices and improve their work. Thus, the most effective use is made of time available.

75. The subject leader sets a very good example to other teachers through the range of work covered, high expectations of standards, the quality of work completed and the clear links made with other subjects in the work seen in the classroom. Very good links are maintained with the secondary school that support pupils' learning. Photographs are kept of work in each year group as a check on standards. The subject is very well managed and is rightly low on the priority list for further development.

MUSIC

Commentary

76. Only one **music** lesson was seen during the inspection due to timetable arrangements, so no overall judgement can be made on provision although it is clear that music plays an important part in the life of the school. Years 5 and 6 pupils gave an impromptu performance of two songs. They sang sensitively and accurately. This was sufficient to place standards in singing above those expected and demonstrated pupils' confidence in performing for an audience, as a number of visiting parents and young children were present at the time. Boys and girls performed equally well and were keen to demonstrate how well they had learnt a new and complex song in a previous lesson.
77. A variety of instrumental lessons is provided, taught by visiting specialists. Instruments include cello, violin, guitar, keyboard and recorder. Opportunities are taken to extend pupils' experiences of music through a variety of dance activities, listening to performances of visiting instrumentalists and voice teachers. Pupils also perform both in school and out, and regularly sing at parish masses. A new scheme of work forms the basis of planning that is checked weekly to ensure all elements of the National Curriculum are included. A new subject manager is beginning to develop the role.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Commentary

78. One dance lesson was seen during inspection, where teaching was good and Year 4 pupils achieved standards that were above the expectation for their age. They worked very well in groups to create a dance based on the Greek myth of Persephone. Their response to the music was sensitive and they built well on the advice given by the teacher to improve the quality of their work. Provision in the subject has improved since the last inspection. The school now employs a qualified gymnastics coach who teaches all classes, alongside the teacher. This is providing very useful training for teachers as well as raising standards for the pupils. Provision for sport outside of the school day is very extensive and pupils in Year 6 spoke with great enthusiasm of the many opportunities they have for sport, and for taking part in junior leagues, gymnastics competitions and dance festivals.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning for the subject is very good.
- Organisation of teaching groups to include all age groups has a positive impact on the learning of all pupils.
- The teaching is very good.

Commentary

79. Teaching in the subject takes place on many informal occasions in the course of the week, when teachers seize opportunities to explore issues with pupils as they arise. Registration periods and after break sessions are sometimes used to allow pupils to raise a concern or query and teachers are adept at managing brief but meaningful discussions at these times.
80. The organisation for formal lessons reflects the school's very strong commitment to creating and strengthening its community. Classes are drawn from pupils in all age groups so that older and younger pupils have the opportunity to hear each other's point of view. Themes are linked directly to the gospels and to topical events so that pupils develop connections between the two. Teachers skilfully manage discussion to allow all pupils to contribute. In a very good session where pupils talked about the impact of watching too much television on their ability to hold conversations, pupils of all ages made thoughtful and well expressed comments. The teacher also made time for pupils from the School Council to take any concerns or issues that pupils wanted to have raised at the next meeting. Throughout the session pupils were fully engaged and thinking hard about matters that affect their lives.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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