

INSPECTION REPORT

ST VERONICA'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lancashire

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119589

Headteacher: Mrs J M Lord

Lead inspector: Lynne Read

Dates of inspection: 12 - 14 January 2004

Inspection number: 257989

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: 150

School address: Raven Avenue
Helmshore
Rossendale
Lancashire
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Telephone number: 01706 226315
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Miss H A Lord

Date of previous inspection: 30/3/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Veronica's RC Primary School serves the families of the parish which covers a diverse area of Helmshore. Social and economic circumstances are above average overall. With 152 pupils on roll, it is smaller than most primary schools. Children entering the reception class have a range of learning experiences that are just above those typical of the age group. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (19 per cent) is above average. Some pupils have moderate learning or medical needs. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need and this is below the national average. All pupils are of a white, British background. The school works closely with a local language college to offer French and German lessons to the older pupils. Staff are in the final stages of working towards the Investors in People award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

St Veronica's is a **very good** school where pupils **achieve very well and have very good attitudes**. Teaching is **very good** and, as a result, pupils make **very good progress** in lessons. Leadership is **very good** and firmly focused on high standards. Management is **good**. Pupils with special educational needs are **well supported** and have access to all the activities that the school has to offer. The school provides **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and areas for development are:

- Attainment is well above average in English, mathematics and science. It is above expectations in geography and history.
- *Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory but not as good as in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and ICT skills are not sufficiently applied across other subject studies.
- Very good teaching is responsible for very good learning.
- Very good leadership drives the school forward successfully.
- *The management of the non-core subjects is undergoing a review and at present, there is no consistent approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the provision or of recording pupils' assessments.
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development, resulting in very good attitudes to learning, very good behaviour and excellent relationships.
- The curriculum is broad and enriched by the provision for teaching foreign languages.
- Pupils are very well cared for.

**These areas had been identified by the school as needing improvement prior to the inspection.*

Improvements

There have been very good improvements since the last inspection, especially in the standards achieved and the quality of teaching. Provision has improved well in ICT and the reception class. The role of the governors has been enhanced effectively; they are well informed and supportive.

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	A	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.

Standards/achievement

Standards at the school are very high. The A* grade indicates where the school's attainments are in the top 5 per cent in the country. Work seen during lessons and in a scrutiny of completed work confirms the continuation of very high standards in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is very good because pupils have a very high quality of teaching and they work very hard to reach the challenging targets set for them. Children achieve well in the reception class and a significant proportion are already working within the National Curriculum programmes for English and mathematics when they enter Year 1. Attainment in personal and social development is very good and it is good in the other areas of learning. In the present Year 2 group, the numbers of pupils working at the higher levels is well above average. Throughout school, those pupils who have special educational needs progress at a good rate because they have good support. Standards and achievement in ICT have improved well from the low point seen at the last inspection and both are satisfactory. Attainment remains below that seen in other key areas but there are elements of good achievement, for example in the use of the Internet at Years 4 to 6. Attainment in history and

geography is above expectations and, in the other subjects, it matches expectations. The high standards of reading and writing contribute well to the good quality of work seen in science, history and geography. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 learn Spanish, French and German and are attaining above-average levels in oral work, reading and writing.

Attitudes

The school promotes spiritual, social and moral development very well and the provision for cultural development is good. The resulting high standards of pupils' behaviour and their very positive attitudes underpin the very good learning seen. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching

The quality of teaching is very good and has a direct impact on the very high standards seen. Teachers present their pupils with interesting lessons, driven at a fast pace. In the single and mixed-age groups, teachers take great care to set work at different levels depending on each pupil's prior learning. This ensures that pupils of different ages and abilities have the challenge or support that they need to learn effectively. The information from assessments in the non-core subjects is used well in planning the next lessons. Teaching assistants are well informed and make a valuable contribution to learning.

Curriculum

There is a **very good, broad** curriculum. Higher attaining pupils have appropriate challenges in their work. Very good enrichment for learning comes through the modern foreign language provision. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall but the space for learning in the reception classroom is limited because it forms a thoroughfare between the two halves of the building.

Care and guidance is very good. Pupils form trusting relationships with adults and say that they feel safe. Pupils who have special educational needs have good support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good and sharply focused on high attainment. Management and governance are good. Even though standards are high, there is no complacency. The quality of self-evaluation is very good and this is shown by the fact that the two key issues of the inspection had already been identified as improvement areas. The subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and ICT are very effective. The school is in the process of developing a team approach for monitoring provision in the other subjects to replace the current system. In the interim, management procedures and the recording of assessments are inconsistent. Governors have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play an effective role in shaping the school's direction and development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have a **high opinion** of the school. Pupils have **very good** views and they play an active role in school development through the school council.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise attainment in ICT so that it is more in-line with that for English, mathematics and science and extend its use across the curriculum.
- Complete the re-development of management in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and ICT in order to establish a consistent approach to the monitoring of provision and recording of assessments.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children in the reception class **achieve well**. Standards in English are well above average and they are very high in mathematics and science. Achievement is very **good** in these subjects throughout school. Attainment in history and geography is **higher than expected** by Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant number of children exceed expectations in personal development, language work and mathematical understanding by the end of the reception class.
- In the Year 2 class a high number of pupils are attaining at an above-average level in reading, writing, mathematics and science and a significant proportion are well above average.
- The very high standards seen in Year 6 are a consistent feature at the school.
- Attainment in ICT is satisfactory but not as high as in other key areas of English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well in relation to their starting points.
- The standard of pupils' writing when recording work in other subjects is very good.
- Boys and girls and those capable of higher attainment achieve equally well.

Commentary

1. When children enter school, their learning experiences are just above those typical for the age group, mostly in terms of early language and mathematical work. They achieve well in personal development, communication, language and literacy and in mathematical understanding and a significant number exceed the expected learning goals in these areas by the time they move into Year 1. Children attain as expected in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative and physical development. They gain a thorough grounding in their education that prepares them well for work in Years 1 to 6.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	18.2 (16.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	16.6 (15.5)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	18.1 (18.7)	16.3 (16.5)

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

2. When compared to schools nationally and to those in similar circumstances, the 2003 results were well above average and there were a high percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 3. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that, in Years 1 and 2, pupils are achieving very well in speaking and listening, reading and writing which is a very good improvement since the last inspection. There are good improvements in mathematics and science where pupils are also achieving very well. The reasons underpinning the improved achievements are: the very good teaching, pupils' willingness to learn and work hard and a much improved system of checking pupils' progress. There is a good number of pupils who are on track to achieve the higher levels by the end of the year in reading, writing and mathematics putting expected results at well above average.

- Pupils' spelling is largely accurate, handwriting is well formed and the higher attaining pupils are including detail in their well-punctuated sentences. In mathematics, pupils are confident in calculating mentally and have a secure understanding of shape, measures and in making graphs and charts. Skills of scientific enquiry and investigation have improved considerably and are good. For information and communication technology (ICT) achievement is much improved and is now satisfactory. There are some strengths in the presentation of data in Year 1.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (28.9)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	30.9 (29.4)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	31.7 (31.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Attainment is well above average and has remained so over the last three years. Results for mathematics and science put the school in the top 5 per cent nationally. Achievement is very good and, when compared to schools that had similar results for the Year 2 class in 1999, progress is very high in all three subjects, again putting the school in the top 5 per cent in the country. This is a very good improvement on the findings of the last inspection.
- The school has a very effective system of tracking progress and of setting learning targets year on year to guide teachers' planning. This ensures that pupils achieve their potential, including the higher attaining groups and those who are gifted or talented. Boys and girls achieve equally well in their lessons. Attainment seen in lessons and through the scrutiny of work is judged as well-above average for English, mathematics and science and a good proportion of pupils are working at the higher levels. Notable strengths were seen in the quality of pupils' writing in all subject areas, their skills in mathematical computation and problem solving and in scientific experimentation.
- Attainment in ICT is average and there have been very good improvements here since the inspection of 1998. Pupils now have the benefit of a bank of computers and improved software to enable better teaching of skills. Teachers' subject knowledge has improved and a good scheme of planning is now in place to ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding for all elements of the subject are taught in a progressive way. Gaps in pupils' prior learning have been filled but attainment is below the level of the other key subjects and this is an issue for the inspection. Attainment in history and geography is above expectations with major strengths in pupils' skills of historical enquiry and interpretation and in mapping work. Older pupils are achieving well in their weekly lessons for French or German and are gaining experiences that are above and beyond those normally available for primary-aged pupils.
- Last year's targets for the Year 6 pupils in English and mathematics were very challenging. Results in English matched those set at level 4 but fell marginally short at level 5. This was largely due to circumstances in the test situation rather than a true reflection of attainment. In mathematics, targets were exceeded. The school is on track to achieve the targets set for this year.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well throughout school. They have individual learning goals that are set at regular intervals. Their parents are kept informed of progress made and advised on how to help at home. The broad curriculum allows pupils to develop their creative, physical, practical or foreign language skills so that all have the opportunity to find their own talents.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school promotes personal development very effectively. As a result, pupils' attitudes, values and the development of their personal qualities are **very good**. This area continues to be a strength of the school. Attendance is well above the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The mission statement sets the standards for accepted values throughout the school and is well known to all.
- Spiritual, moral and social development is reinforced through all aspects of school life and is very good.
- Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are exceptionally good.
- Very positive attitudes and very good behaviour promote achievement very effectively.
- The school provides older pupils with good opportunities to exercise responsibility.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and punctuality is very good.

Commentary

9. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs, are enthusiastic about school. They are very keen to learn and show a high level of commitment, both to their work and to all the out of school activities and clubs. In lessons they work together very sensibly and listen respectfully to what others have to say; this promotes their learning very well. Children in the reception class are on track to exceed the learning goals in personal and social development and this provides a very good start to their education. As they move up through the year groups, pupils respond very well to the school's high expectations of behaviour. They are friendly and polite to visitors and very considerate of each others' feelings. There have been no exclusions and no racist incidents over the last year and both parents and pupils agree that bullying is not a problem. The excellent relationships that exist throughout the school strongly reflect the school's mission statement and underpin what is a very harmonious and caring community.
10. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their very good attendance and punctuality. One pupil said that she wished the school was open on Saturday and Sunday! Another reason for pupils' regular attendance is the cooperation and support of parents. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring and promotion of attendance and punctuality.
11. The school provides many good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility; for example each class takes it in turn to organise fund raising activities for charity. All Year 6 pupils have prefect responsibilities and help effectively in the smooth running of school routines through their link with individual classes and teachers. The good responsibilities they are given help them to learn to care for younger children; for example on a wet playtime Year 6 pupils played action songs with reception children which all enjoyed.
12. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in pupils' spiritual development, good improvement in social and cultural development and the previous high standards in moral development have been maintained.
13. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good and enhanced well by close links with the church. It pervades all of school life by creating an ethos in which individuals feel valued. Assemblies and prayers are used well to give children time to reflect on their faith and to make sense of their experiences. The class worship is of an exceptional standard. Teachers create a highly spiritual atmosphere and encourage pupils to discuss some complex issues at their own level of understanding. For example, Year 2 pupils discussed baptism and understood how the water can 'make you clean on the inside'.

14. Social and moral development is very well promoted. There is recognition for good work and personal achievements that help children to develop their sense of pride, as well as to share in the celebration of the successes of others. Teachers have very high expectations in regard to the behaviour of pupils and they, in turn, rise well to the challenge. Moral issues are raised and discussed in specific lessons. Pupils are supported in expressing their thoughts and emotions and in learning how to make sensible decisions and to be responsible members of a school community. This is especially evident through the work of the school council.
15. Cultural development is promoted well. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is broadened through their geography, history, art and music lessons where they learn about cultural traditions from around the world. Older pupils benefit from their French, German and Spanish lessons that include a strong emphasis on European cultures. Religious education lessons include the study of world faiths which goes some way to preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society. They have contact with other ethnic groups through the German 'pen-friends' scheme and some classes have had visits and talks from an Asian lady. However, there are no regular opportunities for pupils to meet with non-European counterparts or representatives of non-Christian religions.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.5
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.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
119	0	0

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

The absence of exclusions is further evidence of pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is predominantly **very good** throughout school and pupils achieve very well. There are **improved and very good** processes in place for checking pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science and for setting challenging targets for future learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good range of subject knowledge, including a thorough understanding of the needs of children in the reception class.
- The teachers' planning is very good and uses assessment information very well to target the next steps in learning for pupils, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching assistants are knowledgeable, well briefed and effectively deployed.
- Teachers use a range of strategies and resources to challenge, motivate and encourage pupils. They have very high expectations.

- Staff ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are fully involved in all lessons and receive the support that they need.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	16 (43%)	15 (41%)	4 (11%)	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 teaching in the reception class is very good in sessions for communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding and personal and social education. As a result of the very good provision, children achieve very well in these three areas. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is effectively promoted and there is a good emphasis on practical experience. The teaching of physical development is good with a strong emphasis on developing manipulative skills. There is lack of space in the classroom and this means that creative activities are not part of the continuous provision from which children may choose. The teacher works hard to compensate for this by organising 'creative' sessions where teaching is sound. During the inspection, some children were happily experimenting with the effects of potato printing and others engaged in role-play in the classroom 'clinic'. Taking all factors into consideration, teaching in the reception class is good overall.
17. In Years 1 and 2 teachers focus on developing a very solid foundation in literacy and numeracy. During guided reading sessions, pupils learn to use a good range of strategies to help them tackle new texts and in mathematics lessons; they try out different approaches to problem solving. This prepares pupils very effectively for the more demanding curriculum in the junior classes. Throughout school, teachers prepare and plan their lessons with great care and with constant reference to prior learning, thus ensuring that pupils have the challenge or support that they need to do their best. This is especially important in the mixed-age classes where work is very carefully targeted. Teachers share the learning goal with the pupils at the beginning of each lesson and then review the success achieved at the end. Pupils, and their parents, are aware of their individual learning targets. Consequently, pupils know what they need to do to improve and parents are able to support their children well at home. Teachers make satisfactory use of ICT to prepare lessons and to find extra sources of information. The overhead projectors are used well in classes to demonstrate new learning in ICT or to project text and diagrams for class discussions.
18. The checking of pupil's learning is very good in English, mathematics and science and tracking records show each pupils' progress year on year. These records provide the essential information for the setting of future targets and for teachers' planning. Assessments of learning in the other subjects are completed weekly and the information is used well to plan the next steps. There are no overall tracking records in these subjects, however, to show pupils' learning over time. This has an impact on the quality of management information but not on the quality of teaching and learning.
19. The quality of teaching has improved further since the last inspection, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT. Assessments, tracking and target setting have improved very well in the core subjects and expectations of learning are very high. Teachers have a very good knowledge of how pupils learn. This helps them to bring lessons to life and to successfully motivate their pupils. Excellent relationships exist in classes and pupils rise to the high expectations because they trust their teachers and know that help is readily available if they need it. Teaching assistants play an important role here. They are skilled at explaining difficult concepts and often enable pupils to keep up with the fast pace of learning

where there might otherwise have been difficulties. The headteacher evaluates the success of planning and teaching and there is a good programme of training in place to enhance skills. Teachers pool their ideas and successes through staff meetings and this is a good way of sharing good practice.

20. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils who require additional help are identified as soon as possible when they begin school. The special educational needs co-ordinator, together with the class teacher, discuss and develop pupils' individual education plans. Teaching assistants are conversant with the specific learning programmes and keep a useful record of each pupil's progress to pass on to the teacher. Teachers use skilful questioning to ensure that all pupils are fully included in lessons, thereby enabling them to make consistent gains in their learning.

Some examples of good teaching and learning

Reception Class

Staff take every opportunity to extend and enhance pupils' vocabulary - this has a direct and positive impact on the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

The reception class work as a single-age group in the mornings and this enables the teacher to concentrate solely on the recommended Foundation Stage curriculum and to include more practical and investigative work.

Years 1 and 2

There are regular, short, oral sessions where children learn to discriminate, segment and blend sounds within words. This work is laying a solid foundation for reading and spelling.

Teachers include 'little tests' or quick revision sessions during their lessons to check on pupils' learning before moving to the next stage.

Short, focused sessions in reading and writing led by the teaching assistant are effectively supporting those pupils who are experiencing difficulties.

Years 3 to 6

The work is very well matched to pupils' prior learning, thus maintaining a very good rate of progress.

There is a very strong emphasis on problem solving and investigational work, especially for the older pupils.

This promotes very good standards in mathematics and science.

Classroom displays are a good aid to learning. Examples of writing styles, spelling patterns, mathematical terms and calculations all serve as good reminders for pupils who refer to them when working.

A good selection of classroom resources and reference material are freely available for pupils during lessons and are used well.

The curriculum

The school provides its pupils with a **good** range of learning opportunities, successfully meeting their interests, aptitudes and learning needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities for learning are provided for children in the reception class.
- The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are very effective.
- Provision for the support of pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The planning of topics for the non-core subjects is successful in ensuring that skills, knowledge and understanding are taught progressively and that there is no repetition of work in the mixed-age classes.
- Very good opportunities are provided for the development of the skills of literacy and numeracy through the work in other subjects such as science, geography and history.
- There is room to extend the application of pupils' skills in ICT when studying other subjects.

Commentary

21. The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements to teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Well-structured schemes of work are in place for all subjects, based on the latest national guidelines. Children in the reception class benefit from a good curriculum. Throughout

Years 1 to 6, good curricular planning ensures that teachers use a range of interesting topics on which to base lesson plans.

22. The school is successful in identifying pupils with special educational needs as early as possible and moves quickly to take effective action where required. Pupils have detailed programmes of work that are regularly reviewed. The success of the procedures means that most achieve the expected level by the end of Year 6.
23. The school has implemented the strategies for literacy and numeracy very well. As a direct result, pupils of all levels of attainment are provided with a very good range of learning opportunities to develop their skills in these subjects. The development of skills in ICT is just beginning to enhance work in other subjects but there is scope to extend this further. The new plans for ICT clearly show where specific skills could be applied in other subjects which is a very useful guide for teachers. German and French lessons enrich the curriculum and are enjoyed by the pupils. This is good innovation that extends pupils' learning very effectively.
24. A central feature of the school's work lies in its commitment to include all groups of pupils in all aspects of its work. Girls and boys have the same access to all parts of the curriculum including games, with no noticeable differences overall in the standards achieved during the inspection. Those who have particular talents are recognised and given the challenge to extend them to the full.
25. The provision of personal, social, health education and citizenship is very well developed. It includes aspects such as growing up, reproduction, relationships and drugs awareness education. The ten week "moving up programme" provided for Year 6 pupils towards the end of the summer term is very effective in preparing pupils for their transfer to secondary education and is valued by parents.

Activities outside of lessons

26. The range of extra curricular activities available is very good. Parents and professional sportspeople provide training in football and netball. The school takes part in competitive sport and joins local music festivals when the choir performs to a high standard. Years 5 and 6 pupils visit an outdoor pursuits centre to engage in adventure activities which extend their experiences well. During the inspection a good number of pupils were observed attending clubs for art, music and science where they all enjoyed exciting opportunities to work together. Pupils said they enjoy the clubs for ICT and French which are very popular.

Staffing accommodation and learning opportunities

27. There is a dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff who work together well. All of these adults are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning needs. The governors employ additional teachers so that pupils in Years 1 to 3 have their English, mathematics and science lessons in small, single-age groups. This strategy is effective, mainly because there is a favourable ratio of adults to pupils. Records and observations show that the older, mixed-age grouping is equally as effective and the evidence from the very high test results confirms this. Lunchtime supervisors provide a good standard of care and know the pupils well. The caretaker ensures a very high standard of cleanliness at all times. The quality and adequacy of the building, with its latest additions and alterations, has been effectively improved and is now satisfactory overall. There is one outstanding problem relating to the reception classroom and that is out of the governors' control since it requires substantial funding. The classroom is small, considering the need for practical activity at this age, and it has to be used as a thoroughfare at all times. Because of the limitations, the teacher cannot offer the full range of learning activities at all times. However, she works hard to ensure that children have the experiences they need across each week. The resources in all subjects are satisfactory and are effectively used in lessons. The non-fiction library and the computer bank both represent good improvements to resources since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **very good** care for pupils and effective support and guidance based on the monitoring of pupils' achievement and personal development. This represents a **very good** improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff work very effectively as a team to ensure pupils' happiness and well-being.
- Health and safety procedures are very good.
- Arrangements for helping new pupils settle into school are very good.
- There is good involvement of pupils in the work of the school through the school council.

Commentary

28. Everyone in the school community is united in ensuring that pupils are secure and well cared for. Staff know pupils very well and pupils are confident in turning to their teachers when they are upset or need help. Replies from the pupil questionnaires show that pupils have great regard and affection for their teachers. The ethos of the school ensures that each individual is valued. The celebration of success at the weekly praise assembly helps to make pupils feel special. Orderly routines and good supervision at lunchtime help them to feel secure. The governors provide good support in ensuring that the school is a safe environment and staff are vigilant at all times. There are effective procedures for child protection and all adults know what to do if they have any concerns. The school extends its provision of care through its very popular and well supported after-school club. Parents speak very highly of this facility and of the quality of care at the school.
29. Pupils have the advantage of very good guidance and support as they move through the school. Teacher's marking is helpful and points out ways to improve as well as congratulating pupils on good pieces of work. The checking of pupils' progress in English and mathematics is rigorous and pupils have carefully worded targets that clearly indicate where improvement is needed. Targets are shared with parents and regularly reviewed. In the other subjects, progress is checked regularly and the teachers use the information well in lesson planning. Long-term records of progress are not kept so it is not easy to track attainment over time or to check the effectiveness of planning for the individual topics. This issue affects the quality of management information, not the quality of teaching and learning.
30. Good advice and guidance is also provided through assemblies and personal, social and health education as well as through individual counselling. Before children join the reception class a series of visits to school, as well as home visits, help them to become familiar with their new surroundings. Arrangements are very successful in promoting children's confidence. In returned questionnaires, 95 per cent of parents agreed that 'the arrangements for their children to settle into the reception class were good'. There are also very good arrangements for smoothing the transition to secondary school. These include good communication between teachers and visits to the secondary school which Year 5 and 6 pupils make.
31. Pupils agree that the school listens to them and takes their views into consideration. Year 6 pupils play a responsible role in the running of the school and, together with class representatives, they help to gather ideas and views from the different classes to put before the council meeting. As a result of school council decisions, they now write, edit and publish their own newsletter which has been well received by pupils and parents. At a meeting during the inspection, members explained the issues arising from their class discussions. They considered the requests made in a very mature manner and were able to look at the issues from a view of safety, funding and the effects on other people. This work is helping to develop good habits of citizenship in the pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a strong partnership with parents who hold the school in **very high esteem**. **Good** links with the community and other schools extend pupils' experiences and promote achievement effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is welcoming, open to parents and keeps them well informed.
- Parents' support for their children's learning at home, and in ensuring regular attendance, supports learning very effectively.
- Parents and other members of the community provide good support for the school through the Parent, Teacher and Friends Association and by helping in classes.
- There are no regular, formal systems in place for consulting parents although views are gathered on an informal basis.
- The close partnership with the parish, the community and with other schools helps to enrich pupils' education.

Commentary

32. Parents value the school highly and appreciate the way in which teachers help their children to make very good progress, both academically and socially. The school keeps parents well informed about the curriculum and about their children's progress through a good range of printed information, two formal parents' evenings and good quality annual reports. Information sheets and the meetings held in the autumn term provide parents with information about the curriculum their children follow during the year so that they can provide support at home.
33. Parents agree that they feel comfortable in approaching the school and that they have good communication with teachers. However, there are no established, formal systems for actively consulting parents about their opinions. A quarter of parents who completed the inspection questionnaires confirmed this view. Nevertheless, governors are well aware of parents' views and their concerns regarding the mixed-age classes. They have provided some useful information and parents are able to express their opinions at the annual meeting. However, the measures have not been totally successful in explaining the rationale behind class organisation or in highlighting the success of the strategy. As a result, some misconceptions remain to be tackled.
34. A strength of the school is the support which parents provide both to the school and for their children's learning at home. This very good support significantly aids pupils' achievement. Parents are very interested in their children's education and provide good support for reading and other homework. Some parents and other family members provide useful help during the school day and parents also provide skilled and valuable help with after-school sessions, including the sports and the French clubs. There is a very active and successful Parents, Teachers and Friends Association which holds regular social and fund raising events. Members also seek out grant funding, where available; the new large toys for the reception class were purchased using this route.
35. Good links with the community, particularly the strong links with the parish, help to enrich pupils' education. Parents and members of the parish are invited to the regular masses held in school. The school choir gives concerts in the community and visitors come to talk to pupils about their work and experiences. Very good links with other schools also have a positive impact on achievement. For example, strong links with the language college, to which most pupils transfer, are responsible for the provision of French and German teaching as well as useful resources. Staff and governors also value their membership of the Catholic cluster of schools which enables them to share resources, the services of a technician and staff training.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good and management is **good**. Governors provide **good** support and fulfil their statutory duties well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is based firmly on high aspirations.
- There is very good team work and sharing of expertise.
- Management and leadership of the core subjects (English, mathematics, science) and ICT are very good.
- The school is in the process of re-developing systems to monitor the effectiveness of provision in the non-core subjects. At present, procedures vary in effectiveness and there is no consistency of approach.
- Day to day practice reflects the success of the school's commitment to ensuring that all pupils have full and equal access to all parts of school life.
- Governors have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a long-term view of development.
- Information gathered from the school's self evaluation programme is used effectively in school improvement planning.

Commentary

Leadership

36. The school very successfully lives out its mission statement on a day-to-day basis. Pupils know and recite the words of the statement that has been re-written in a child-friendly format. This ensures that everyone is working to the same goals and enhances the 'family feel' of the school. Staff and governors are committed to the ethos of the school; they strive for high achievement and provide a caring environment where all pupils, regardless of any special need they may have, are fully integrated into all activities. St Veronica's has a deservedly high reputation in the area. The headteacher is well regarded by parents and governors who value her hard work, approachability and commitment. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and a clear vision for future development. Staff are constantly looking for ways to improve and are highly successful in this respect. Test results over the last three years show attainment that is consistently well above average and, for this year, it is in the top 5 per cent of schools for mathematics and science. At the same time, leadership is successful in promoting an all-round education where creative, aesthetic and physical skills, together with modern foreign languages, are promoted in a balanced way. The Christian foundation of the school is reflected in the very good standards of pupils' personal development, their enjoyment of lessons and the very pleasant, welcoming environment.

Management

37. There is an effective cycle of self-evaluation at the school that includes a planned programme of classroom observations. Data from national and optional tests is analysed to see if there are any areas requiring further development. The detailed tracking and target setting system allows the headteacher to check that individuals, classes and year groups are making the expected progress and to check that good challenges are set for the higher attaining pupils. Records of attainment and progress are thorough and easy to follow for the core subjects. For the other subjects, however, it is difficult to track progress. This is because, although learning is checked regularly and the information is fed into planning the next lessons, there is no consistent method of recording attainment over time. This has implications for the monitoring and management of subjects and for checking the effectiveness of the longer-term planning.

38. Staff have regular performance reviews, through which a programme of training and development needs is established. Support staff and teachers are deployed effectively to meet

the specific needs of individual pupils and to maintain good provision for the children in the reception class. The experienced school administrator has a good deal of expertise and covers a varied range of duties to provide very good support. The accommodation and resources are used efficiently and best value is routinely sought. Taking into account the very good quality of education, the very high standards of attainment, the very good leadership, good management and costs that are around average, the school provides very good value for money.

Governance

39. Between them, the governors have a good range of expertise and experience that they use for the ultimate benefit of the pupils. They have a thorough and informed view of the school's strengths and areas for development; this represents a good improvement since the last inspection. Governors have a timetable of visits to classes and meetings with staff so that they keep abreast of educational developments and have a secure overview of the school's day-to-day work. They use funds very prudently to provide single-age tuition in the core subjects up to Year 4. However, it was evident at the parents' meeting that not all parents have a clear understanding of the measures taken, of the constraints of the school's budget or of the great success of mixed-age teaching in the school. Some further, informed communication could well help this situation. Governors are fully involved in the decision-making processes that lead to school improvement planning and regularly check on the success of the work covered. They keep a very close eye on attainment patterns and ask relevant questions. Budget decisions are largely based around the targets in the improvement plan and governors expect to see benefits in pupils' learning as a result of their spending allocations. They are keen to develop the reception classroom and have an outline building plan in place. They are currently seeking out avenues of grant funding to supply the money needed.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	277,891
Total expenditure	312,750
Expenditure per pupil	2,250

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	25,392
Balance carried forward to the next	9,178

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision for children in the Foundation Stage **is good**.

On entry to the mixed reception and Year 1 class, the attainment of the children is slightly above that normally seen for the age group. The provision supports children of all capabilities and backgrounds well and leads to good achievement. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection with more opportunities for children to actively engage in a range of activities. There is one remaining difficulty. The classroom is unavoidably used as a general thoroughfare and, as a result, there are interruptions as classes pass through on their way to the hall and there is a shortage of space. The teacher does all she can to minimise disruption and plans the full range of practical activities across the week. However, it means that children do not have the full range of choice all the time; for example, there is insufficient space to have physical and creative sessions together. Teaching is consistently good, adults have high expectations and effective use is made of assessment on entry to, and at the end of, the reception year.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures and practices help children to start school, adapt quickly and easily, and move on confidently to the next stage of their education.
- Adults are very good role models and the children feel valued, happy and confident.
- Daily routines show high expectations of children, within a framework of appropriate experiences and activities.
- Relationships are excellent and foster the spiritual, moral and emotional development of the children very well.

Commentary

40. This area of learning has a suitably high profile and children achieve very well. They settle quickly because of the school's very good induction procedures, which are appreciated by parents and carers. Children and staff clearly enjoy each other's company and the positive ethos supports children effectively and helps them to develop very good standards of behaviour. The adults are very effective in nurturing pupils' personal and social skills and generate a warm, secure atmosphere. As a result, the children feel valued and demonstrate good self-esteem and confidence. Children are well motivated, show good levels of concentration when engaged in their tasks and co-operate sensibly when sharing equipment. Most children are likely to exceed the expected learning for this area by the end of the reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication, language and literacy skills are put to very good use across many areas of learning.
- Very effective teaching and management results in very good progress and all children achieve very well.
- Children have good, incidental opportunities to develop their writing skills.

- Imaginative resources are used very effectively to promote speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

41. Very skilful teaching and the very good use of resources fire children's imagination and interest. Children make very good progress because of the varied and rich opportunities they are given to talk and listen, read and write throughout the day. Speaking and listening skills are taught very well through a wide variety of experiences such as singing, listening to stories and re-telling them. The children are encouraged to join in discussions and to express their views. The teacher emphasises and explains new vocabulary and expects that children will use the correct terms. Reading and writing skills develop very well because the teacher places considerable emphasis on the recognition of letter sounds and skills of blending and segmenting these sounds within words. Most make good attempts at early writing. Adults draw children's attention to the correct formation of letters and, consequently, many are developing very good pencil control. Children take books home regularly and share the stories with their parents and other adults. Indications are that most children are well on course to well exceed the expected levels in this area of learning by the end of the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical understanding is effectively promoted through many areas of learning.
- Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well.
- The computers are well used on a daily basis to enhance learning.
- Resources chosen for independent work are stimulating and motivate pupils effectively.

Commentary

42. Adults make learning fun. They introduce lively mental warm-up games where children count, repeat jingles and enjoy number songs, such as 'Ten Currant Buns'. Children are successfully learning to use simple mathematical vocabulary and readily identify 'one more than'. Most can count up to ten and many to 20. They apply their skills well, for example they spotted the teacher's mistake as she counted biscuits. They are beginning, with the support of counting aids, to work out addition problems such as 6 and 2 - how many altogether? Jigsaws, construction bricks, and puzzles are used effectively to order numbers and encourage recognition of two and three-dimensional shapes. Computer programs are used well to reinforce learning. Most children are on course to exceed the goals expected of them well before the end of their time in the reception class.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages the children to ask relevant questions.
- There are good opportunities to design and make objects, using a variety of skills and techniques.
- Early skills in ICT are promoted well and children are confident in using computers.

Commentary

43. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well because they investigate for themselves and question why things happen. They are constantly encouraged to talk about their observations and to make sense of what they see. This is a very successful method of developing early scientific skills. For example, when baking their butterfly cakes, children learned about the purpose of a recipe, the importance of accurate measurement and observed what happened when ingredients were mixed and heated. Children talk knowledgeably about changes in their own lives, comparing themselves as babies, toddlers and at present. They use ICT well as they direct toys using a simple remote control. Many children are on course to exceed the expected levels for their age.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective, focused teaching of manipulative skills enables children to use tools very effectively for their age.
- Resources have improved for the development of children's physical skills.

Commentary

44. Observations made during lessons, at break and lunch times and in one physical activity session in the hall, indicated that children have confidence, good control and good body co-ordination. There is a strong focus on developing children's manipulative skills and control in small-scale movements, such as when handling pencils, paintbrushes, and scissors. The teaching in this area is very good and consequently, children show increasing dexterity. Most children are likely to exceed the expected goals in manipulative skills by the end of the reception year. The new, large-wheeled toys and climbing and balancing equipment provide opportunities for spontaneous outdoor play and good physical challenge. In terms of overall physical development, the children are on track to achieve the learning goals expected by the end of the reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy the opportunities they are given to explore different media and create different effects.
- There is a lack of space which means that opportunities for creative development do not form part of the continuous activities on offer for children.

Commentary

45. Children enjoy their singing and music making and join in activities with enthusiasm. They show their creative interpretation through their drama work and take part in school productions, showing a good level of confidence. Children have regular opportunities to explore and experiment using colour, texture, shape, form and space in two and three-dimensional artwork. They learn how to use tools very skilfully and correctly. As a result, they are able to paint, colour and model precisely to achieve their intended outcome. Opportunities for exploration, such as imaginative sand and water play, painting or using modelling materials are restricted because of the lack of space. There is no continuous 'wet area' and 'messy' activities have to be carefully planned to ensure the safety of people who use the class as a corridor. Nevertheless, the teacher takes great care to include a satisfactory range of activities over the term so that

children's learning is not impeded. Children are on course to attain the expected goals by the end of the reception year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good** and pupils **achieve very well**. Teaching is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing is well above average.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and deliver their lessons with flair.
- Pupils have individual targets that are based on careful assessments of work completed and this helps them to improve.
- There is good leadership for the subject.

Commentary

46. Results in English at the school are consistently high; in 2003 nearly 60 per cent of pupils achieved the higher level 5 in the subject. Standards seen in lessons and completed work are well above average by Year 6. This is a good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, especially in speaking and listening and reading for the younger age groups. The checking of pupils' progress has also improved very well through the regular reading and writing assessments and the careful tracking of performance year on year. The information gathered from this exercise is then very effectively used to set challenging targets for each pupil that drive learning forward at a very good rate.
47. There is a strong emphasis in Years 1 and 2 on teaching pupils to blend and segment letter sounds within words. This promotes very good progress in reading and spelling. In Year 1 pupils read a poem with great expression, focusing on the rhythm and rhyme and enjoying the author's word play. By Year 2 pupils read fluently, appreciate the humour in their story and alter their voices in creative ways when reading the words spoken by different characters. Their writing is well punctuated with the higher attaining pupils using speech marks and commas effectively. These are all indicators of above-average attainment. Year 6 pupils investigate classic poetry and come to a good appreciation of how poets manipulate language. Some very high standards were seen as higher attaining, older pupils wrote a further verse to the poem using the same pattern of rhyme and rhythm and incorporating assonance into their work. Pupils' spelling is very good because they use their knowledge of word origins, word roots and suffixes and prefixes to spell accurately. This was well illustrated during a geography lesson when one pupil worked out how to spell tributary by focusing on the root 'tribute' and adding the suffix 'ary'. The foreign language work also makes an impact here as pupils discover word origins in French and German.
48. Teaching is very good and is directly responsible for pupils' very good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and know how to inspire their pupils. They inject fun into learning through games and challenges. As a result, pupils become confident in standing 'on the hot spot' and are eager to 'beat the teacher'. Work is accurately matched to pupils' prior learning. This ensures that pupils in the single-age and mixed-age classes make equally good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported in whole class sessions so that they keep up with the fast pace. They have independent tasks that are carefully planned. As a result, they progress well and many attain the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6.
49. Teachers forge very good reading habits in their pupils. The reading books are of good quality and are carefully matched to the pupil's level of skill acquisition. Pupils' progress is measured not only in terms of how well they decode the print on the page, but also in their understanding of the plot and characters, and on their ability to use non-fiction material for research and independent

study. Teachers choose very interesting books from a wide range of authors in order to cover the interests of both boys and girls. There is an adequate selection of non-fiction material that is very well used, both in the library sessions and in class lessons. Year 3 pupils demonstrated their advanced reading skills by comparing and contrasting the myth of Pandora's Box as a narrative, a playscript and when written from the different character's points of view. By Year 6 the pupils are avid readers and teachers take great care in choosing good quality fiction material for their reading areas. The organised 'book swaps' are very much appreciated by pupils who enjoy the opportunity to extend their reading experiences.

50. Throughout school, teachers ensure that there is a very strong link between reading and writing. This provides ideas and a model for pupils' work whilst at the same time extending their experiences of fiction and non-fiction styles. Pupils are encouraged to 'have a go' at spellings or sentence construction using the wipe-off boards. They can then discuss and improve their work before committing it to paper. This leads to good editing and imaginative use of vocabulary and punctuation. Marking is a particularly strong feature with helpful comments that support pupils' own evaluation of their work and point out ways to improve. Homework is used well to extend work done in the classroom and is usually completed conscientiously. Parents are very supportive and the vast majority devote a good amount of time to hearing the younger children read at home. This makes a strong impact on learning.
51. Leadership is firmly focused on high standards. There is no complacency and staff are constantly seeking ways to improve further. The subject manager has a thorough overview of standards, teaching and learning and resources across the school. She provides useful support for colleagues. One teaching assistant has received the recommended training and runs a successful support programme for pupils who need extra help.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. This is excellent. Skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing are constantly extended and applied across the curriculum. There is a very strong emphasis on extending pupils' vocabulary in all lessons. For example, in an art and design lesson, pupils discussed the difference between 'contortion' and 'distortion' in relation to artistic style. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 write at length when recording their work, using an appropriate non-fiction style to match the subject matter. For example, pupils produce detailed recounts of their experiments in science. Those in Year 6 showed that they had a very good understanding of working conditions for Victorian children through their reports. The pupils' reading skills are put to good use as they research using books, source material and the Internet.

MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership gives a successful impetus to attainment throughout the school.
- Teaching is very effective in helping pupils make very good progress and to achieve very well.
- The use of additional staff to provide small, single age-group sessions for younger pupils is very successful.
- ICT is not used regularly in lessons.

Commentary

53. Standards of attainment are well above average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve very well and make very good progress. The school offers very good

support for pupils who are gifted and talented. Teachers are careful to provide extension work for those pupils to enable them to achieve their full potential.

54. Overall the quality of teaching is very good. In all lessons, teachers plan very well for pupils of all attainments and especially for pupils of different ages in the mixed-age classes. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have high expectations of standards of behaviour. They use their very good subject knowledge and questioning skills well to check pupils' understanding. In the Years 5 and 6 class, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject was so great that it fired all pupils with enthusiasm for the task. The classroom was a hive of activity with very good habits of work clearly established.
55. There are excellent relationships in classes so that all pupils feel involved in their lessons and are motivated to work. The management of lessons is excellent and pupils are kept on task throughout. Teachers bring pupils together at the end of lessons to review what has been learnt. They use this opportunity well to praise pupils' efforts and to celebrate their achievements.
56. Pupils throughout the school are very enthusiastic and keen to learn. They work very successfully in pairs and small groups on their investigations and problem solving exercises. This was particularly noticeable in the Year 3 group when pupils used computers to solve problems by organising simple data into lists and graphs. They gathered round the computers sensibly and were prepared to help each other when problems arose.
57. The subject is very well managed by a dedicated and effective co-ordinator. She brings a high level of skill to the subject, acts as an effective example to other teachers and closely monitors teaching and learning throughout the school. Resources are satisfactory, well stored and readily available in lessons.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Skills in mathematics are effectively applied across most areas of the curriculum. Time lines in history help pupils to sequence important events. Pupils read graphs and charts when researching topics and measure accurately when conducting science experiments. They use co-ordinates very effectively when engaged in mapping work. There are some examples of links with ICT but these are not fully exploited.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership and management.
- By the time they leave the school the pupils' attainment is well above average.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The school very effectively develops pupils' skills of scientific investigation and an understanding of scientific method.
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work.
- The quality of pupils' recorded work is very good.

Commentary

59. Pupils develop a very good understanding of science as they move through the school. Standards of attainment are well above average. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Achievement and progress are very good because the school is very effective in building systematically on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. This is particularly evident

in the confidence with which pupils undertake investigations and the methods that they use to test assumptions and predictions. Pupils think for themselves, often discussing possibilities sensibly and considering alternatives in mature way. After completing the experiment, they record their findings and interpretations at some length, applying their literacy and numeracy skills very effectively.

60. Years 5 and 6 pupils worked in groups to investigate factors affecting the rate of evaporation. They discussed possible methods and outcomes at length before devising their plan of action and recording their predictions. Pupils focused on constructing a fair test and demonstrated that they had a secure grasp of variable factors that might affect the validity of the results. They worked extremely well together, receiving good support from the class teacher.
61. Very good teaching and learning ensure that pupils are enthusiastic about their work and learn well. Teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the differing needs of pupils in their classes. This is particularly so in the mixed-age classes. They give instructions clearly and use targeted questioning very well, making sure that pupils know what they are going to do. Pupils enjoy the subject and work hard because lessons are interesting. They respond well to the teachers' high expectations and the challenging activities presented to them.
62. The leadership and management of science are very good. The co-ordinator monitors the impact of teaching and learning across the school. Assessment is used well to track pupils' progress. Resources are satisfactory, well stored and carefully used by staff and pupils. There is very good attention to safety issues. The subject leader is aware of the need to use ICT facilities more to support pupils' learning in science lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**; there are several strengths and some areas for development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a good rise in standards since the previous inspection.
- Attainment is in line with expectations but is not as high as in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a sound knowledge of the subject.
- The subject manager provides very good leadership and is continuing to drive standards upwards.
- The attitudes of pupils are very good and they have a strong desire to learn.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use and apply their ICT skills when working on other subjects.

Commentary

63. Standards in all elements of ICT have improved well since the last inspection and facilities have been considerably upgraded. The school has a bank of computers so that specific ICT skills can be taught more efficiently and to allow more 'hands-on' time for pupils. The teachers are now following a structured scheme of planning which ensures the progressive development of pupils' skills as they move through the school. New software is in place to cover all elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study and teachers' confidence and knowledge has been extended through training courses. In the lessons and work seen, attainment meets national expectations for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. Standards are not as high as in the other key areas of English, mathematics and science and this is a key issue for the inspection. However, they are likely to rise further as the programme of regular lessons, upgraded resources and increased staff knowledge continue to make a positive impact on learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the

subject. When sharing computers, they take turns fairly and constructively point out errors or make suggestions for improvement.

64. Year 1 pupils choose to make their pictograms using ICT facilities because, they say, it is quicker than drawing and they can alter the order and presentation with the click of a mouse. This shows that they are comparing ICT and traditional methods of recording and making informed choices. By Year 2, the pupils have sound word-processing skills and use graphics programs creatively. In Years 3 to 6 pupils extend their skills to include the use of spreadsheets, to compose music, to create pictures in the style of famous artists and to present their work attractively. The Internet is used effectively for research, especially for the older pupils who are competent at narrowing their 'searches' and finding information quickly. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons. Because their work is suitably adapted or they are well supported, they achieve well alongside their classmates.
65. Teaching and learning are sound and often good. Teachers begin their lessons by revising previous work. They explain which new skills pupils will learn, thereby providing a clear focus and purpose for the lesson. Faster learning pupils are set higher challenges and allowed to explore the potential of the program in use. The teaching assistants have good subject knowledge and intervene sensitively to provide good support and to help pupils think things through for themselves. Teachers are making increasingly good use of the overhead projectors and lap-tops in classrooms to introduce new work and demonstrate processes. The digital camera is used well, especially in history and geography work.
66. Leadership of ICT is good; the subject manager drives the area forward with enthusiasm, keeping a close eye on teaching and learning and tackling issues quickly. Through a comprehensive programme of training, she ensures that teachers and teaching assistants have the skills and updates that they need and all resources are managed efficiently. Teachers have various methods of recording pupils' achievements and they use the assessments well in planning future work. There is no consistent tracking of progress over time, however and this reflects the quality of management information available in order to monitor the effectiveness of the provision. A considerable amount of funding has been allocated in recent years and good value is keenly sought. The subject provision is enriched through an after-school club that is well attended.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. Some use of ICT was seen across the curriculum, especially in terms of research, word processing and the use of graphics but there is room to extend this much further. The planning guidance for the subject indicates how particular skills may be linked with other units of study across the curriculum but teachers are not taking full advantage of the opportunities available at present. One problem is that the same quality of information is not entered on the plans for the other subjects, for example in history or geography and therefore the guidance is not as accessible as it could be. The school council members make good use of facilities in producing their termly newsletter and are often to be seen using the computers at break or lunch times.

HUMANITIES

History

The provision for history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above those expected nationally.
- Pupils have good skills of historical enquiry and in interpreting a range of evidence.
- Pupils enjoy studying the past.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in history.

- There is no consistent format for recording pupils' achievement over time.

Commentary

68. A lesson for Years 2 and 3 was seen during the inspection. A wide range of other evidence was taken into consideration including displays around school, a good amount of completed work and discussions with pupils and teachers.
69. The high quality of work reflects pupils' good grasp of terminology, their ability in research and enquiry and their flexibility in using different styles of writing. In Year 1 pupils begin to appreciate changes over the passage of time. They compare and contrast differences between a baby, toddler and their own age group. This work is extended as pupils move up through the school so that by Year 4 pupils make a time line showing the various invaders and settlers that came to British shores. Topics such as 'the Vikings' or the 'Egyptians' are studied in depth and the work supports pupils' cultural development well as they recognise the legacy left by different peoples.
70. Taking into consideration the full range of evidence, teaching is good overall. It was very good in the lesson observed because the tasks allowed pupils the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills gained over several previous weeks. As they observed a series of photographs from Tutankhamun's tomb they deduced what the objects were, who might have owned them and how they might have been used. Standards of interpretation and enquiry were good and similar examples were seen in completed work from older classes. Pupils are enthusiastic about their history lessons and work very hard, often collaborating on a shared project.
71. As one of the non-core subjects, history is managed through a team approach and this new system is in the developmental stage. There has been some effective monitoring and evaluation of the provision in the past that have resulted in the writing of a detailed action plan. However, future arrangements for managing the subject are vague and, at the time of the inspection, there was no clear plan of who will check what and when. There is a good amount of teacher expertise in the subject and resources have been well chosen to cover the units of work. The subject is enriched by visits to places of interest and by the provision of an interesting range of books and artefacts for pupils to study. The checking of pupils' progress is satisfactory but there is no consistent method of recording the information for monitoring and management purposes.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above expectations by Year 6.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy geography.
- Mapping skills are especially well developed.
- The recording of pupils' attainment and progress is not in a consistent, easily accessible format.

Commentary

72. Although it was only possible to observe two lessons in geography, an analysis of pupils' work over the past year and on display provides evidence that pupils achieve well throughout school.
73. Pupils enjoy their geography lessons. Year 2 pupils study the local area and use maps, plans and aerial photographs to identify physical features. They investigate land use and how people

have changed the environment through their activities. The work is of a high quality and mapping skills are well developed. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 make good use of ICT to enhance their studies of a Caribbean island. They research tourism on the island and, using their well-developed understanding of environmental issues, they decide which activities may do harm. As they discussed the possible effects of bird watching, fishing or diving, it was obvious that they had a secure understanding of pollution and the delicate balance of nature. A very good lesson in Years 5 and 6 illustrated pupils' extensive knowledge of rivers. They confidently used geographical terms such as transportation, confluence or tributary. During the lesson, they worked at a fast pace to chart the course of a local river using aerial photographs, field sketches and an Ordnance Survey map. They noted how the river had influenced peoples lives, identifying industries or businesses that had relied on the water source and constructions such as bridges. Their mapping skills were advanced and they successfully used different sources of information to explain how places alongside the river had evolved.

74. Skills in literacy are very well applied in this subject. Pupils in Year 1 label different types of houses and older pupils write detailed explanations of the 'water cycle' or report on the effects of a tropical storm.
75. The curriculum concentrates effectively on the development of geographical skills. This has helped to improve standards which are now higher than at the previous inspection. Indications are that past management of the subject has been good since there are carefully chosen resources to cover the units of study and teachers are knowledgeable. A new system of team management is currently being introduced and future plans for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are not yet in place.
76. Pupils' progress is noted week by week and the information gathered is used effectively in planning the next lessons. There is no consistent format across the school for recording attainment at the end of each topic, although teachers do have an accurate view of the level of work completed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

During the three day inspection, there were insufficient opportunities to see work in all elements of art and design, design technology and music to make reliable, overall decisions about provision.

Art and Design

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have positive attitudes.
- A good scheme of work is in place to guide teachers' planning and ensure full coverage of all elements of the subject.
- Pupils have good opportunities to use a wide range of media.
- Pupils' progress is regularly checked but there is no consistent, school-wide system to show achievement over time.

Commentary

77. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on teaching because no lessons were seen for the younger age groups and there was not enough completed work available across all the programmes of study. However, it is clear from displays and completed work that children reach expected standards in art and design by the end of Years 2 and 6, and that they achieve satisfactorily. The portraits painted by children of all ages show satisfactory progression in the use of paint and in pupils' observational abilities. Older pupils use sketchbooks well to develop aspects of this work, experimenting thoughtfully with, for example, the shapes of noses, proportionality of the face and distorted and contorted expression. Throughout the school, there are pleasing displays that celebrate pupils' work, including a satisfactory range of media, such as

pencil, chalk, pastels, crayons and paint. Older pupils experiment with batik, when they decorate fabric with wax crayons and ink, to create attractive pictures and patterns. There is a good emphasis on studying a range of famous artists. Year 6 pupils successfully re-created the features of Van Gogh's self-portrait and those of Picasso's 'Weeping Woman', building up texture from pencil sketching to crayon application.

78. In the two lessons seen in Years 4, 5 and 6, the quality of teaching was good overall, with some very good features. The teachers had a good command of the subject. They prepared interesting activities, so that children enjoyed their work, thus enhancing their quality of learning.
79. There is a team approach to the management of the subject. The school has a good understanding of what is working well, for example the scheme of work and where there are weaknesses, for example in assessment. There has been a satisfactory degree of improvement since the previous inspection. The scheme of work gives detailed guidance and support on the knowledge, skills and techniques that pupils need to know. Resources are satisfactory and used well. Assessment procedures provide information for planning the next lessons but do not show how pupils progress over the longer term. The school has carried out an evaluation of the subject and identified strengths and weaknesses to form an action plan.

Design and Technology

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There have been good improvements in the subject.
- A good scheme of work is in place.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have very positive attitudes.

Commentary

80. Attainment in design and technology is satisfactory. This marks an improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' design and making skills were an issue. There have been good improvements in teachers' subject knowledge, planning and in the provision of adult support to supervise practical activities. Teachers follow the nationally recommended guidelines and planning clearly identifies what skills and knowledge pupils are to learn by the end of each unit of work.
81. In Years 1 and 2, children plan and make a range of products, including carefully constructed birthday cards and introducing the use of simple levers. Pupils in the junior classes gain a sound working knowledge of the designing, making and evaluation process. They use sketchbooks to design and record their ideas, for example when studying different types of chairs. Pupils make precise models of windmills and incorporate working mechanisms. They confidently disassemble items to find out how they work and to inspire their future designs. They enjoy food technology and successfully evaluate different kinds of bread in terms of texture, smell and taste. Overall, their experiences effectively range across the programmes of study.
82. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of what is working well in the subject, for example, the scheme of work, and where there are weaknesses, for example in the consistency of assessment. Concentrated blocks of time are allocated to the subject aimed at ensuring that pupils re-visit the subject on a regular and frequent basis. However, this timetable is not always implemented and there are sometimes long gaps which mean that the continuity of learning is affected. As part of the new team approach to management, staff have carried out an evaluation of the subject and identified where improvements are needed.

Music

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils enjoy singing and performing.
- The school's musical performances are of a high quality.
- There have been some good improvements in the subject.
- The recording of assessments are identified as an area for development.

Commentary

83. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection. It is not possible to make judgements about teaching overall since lessons did not cover all elements of the music curriculum. Evidence from planning, records and discussions with pupils indicate that attainment is broadly in line with expectations by Year 6. Pupils sing tunefully and with good diction and phrasing.

An example of an excellent lesson for Years 2 and 3

There was commanding delivery by the teacher that inspired the pupils to concentrate with avid interest. There was meticulous attention to detail that increased the demands on pupils' control of pitch, duration, dynamics, diction and phrasing. The teacher constantly assessed progress, maintaining the challenge and motivating pupils to achieve to the highest level of which they were capable. Pupils contributed a high level of creative effort, singing expressively a repertoire of songs in unison and two parts. Others in the class accompanied them very skilfully using untuned percussion instruments. Towards the end of the lesson, pupils worked on a rap that had been devised and written as part of their history work on the Egyptians. The final performance was remarkably professional, taking into consideration the range of skills required. Boys and girls performed enthusiastically, without any trace of self-consciousness, putting great expression and movement into the repeating phrase '*We are here in Egypt's desert land*'. At the end of this highly stimulating fifty-minute lesson, pupils were wanting more. (In the words of one pupil, 'Can we play more instruments now?')

84. Pupils across the school enjoy singing and listening to music, and practising musical instruments whether it is in lessons or in the extra tuition sessions provided. They are very enthusiastic and a group of Year 6 pupils sang impromptu, 'Shalom, My Friend', unaccompanied. The performance was expressive and tuneful. Assemblies give opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of music by different composers from around the world and from different times in history. As a result, they recognise works by Wagner and Vivaldi. Musical experiences are enriched as pupils take part in school performance such as Baboushka and are appreciated by all. The school choir participates in interschool musical events in nearby towns, which enhances their social skills. They practice every week at the after-school club which is a further indicator of their enthusiasm.

85. Resources are satisfactory overall, but the school is aware that the few numbers of large untuned instruments means that pupils have limited opportunities to play them. The school has a good understanding of what is working well, for example the school's musical performances, and where there are weaknesses, for example in recording pupils' progress over time.

Physical Education

Provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and put a good degree of effort into their activities.
- Pupils' achievement and standards in swimming are good.
- The school is adopting a new method of leadership and management that has not yet had time to become effective.

Commentary

86. Standards of attainment overall are average. This is not quite as good as those recorded at the time of the previous inspection. All pupils achieve well across a varied range of activities and

develop good skills and understanding in dance, games and gymnastics. A structured scheme of planning guidance promotes continuity in learning and good experiences in all elements of the subject across the school. Records indicate that standards in swimming exceed national expectations with many pupils swimming long distances and being proficient in survival techniques. Several pupils take part enthusiastically in competitive swimming.

87. Pupils enjoy physical education. They are very keen to take part, get changed quickly and quietly and listen carefully to instructions. Pupils in all year groups know the importance of warming up and cooling down exercises in relation to muscle control, heartbeat and breathing. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 worked very well together on improving their hockey skills, making good use of space when controlling and passing the ball.
88. Teaching is good. Teachers and support staff offer good support to pupils. Pupils benefit from joining in competitive sports with other schools. The one-day visit to a local outdoor pursuits centre is valued by all pupils and enhances their outdoor and adventure skills.
89. Resources are satisfactory and well stored. The hall offers a good area for physical education. The large playing field was completely waterlogged during the inspection, due to problems with the drainage. Teachers use the hard surfaces appropriately to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement in the subject. At the time of the inspection the new system of leadership and management of physical education had not had sufficient time to become fully effective and arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision were not fully established. However, no major issues were identified which indicates that past management has been at least satisfactory.

Modern foreign languages - French, German and Spanish

90. The provision of French and German lessons comes through the school's good links with a receiving secondary school. At present, Year 5 pupils have one lesson of German per week and Year 6 have French. This is an enrichment to the curriculum that also gives pupils a head start for their modern foreign language work at secondary school. Pupils look forward eagerly to these lessons and during lunch they were eagerly awaiting the arrival of their teachers from the Secondary School.

German

91. The teacher had a very good rapport with the pupils and provided good challenge in the lesson seen. As part of their homework, they had written replies to their pen-friends in a German school. Their enthusiasm was obvious as they proudly handed in their completed letters. This work was above average for the age group since half was written in English and half in German. During the lesson, pupils listened attentively and worked very hard to keep up with the pace of learning. They spoke the language with confidence and engaged in a discussion about the weather. The quality of teaching was very good, with lots of praise and encouragement to motivate pupils and increase their confidence. Written work shows that pupils have covered topics such as months of the year, numbers and the names of everyday objects. Overall the attainment is above average.

French

92. The Year 6 pupils engaged in a lively discussion with the teacher, covering revision of the previous week's work on 'the body'. There was evidence of good learning over time as pupils named several parts of the body in articulate French. The teacher injected fun into the lesson by introducing a game of 'Beetle'. In order to win, pupils needed to recall and shout out the numbers quickly in French. They did this with confidence, including those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' attitude to the lessons was excellent. They tried hard to articulate the words accurately and maintained a very good pace to learning. A good quality of written work shows the

wide range of topics covered. These include: the weather, colours, the family and French rhymes such as Frere Jacques.

Spanish

93. A temporary teacher is currently teaching Spanish to the Year 4 pupils which is a further enrichment. They enjoy their lessons tremendously and are making good progress, especially in oral work. There is a strong emphasis on the cultural aspect as pupils learn about differences between Spain and Mexico and compare and contrast pronunciations in the two countries.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

94. The school makes very good provision for the teaching of personal and social education, health education and citizenship. There are dedicated lessons and aspects of the subject are interwoven into other subject areas. For example, pupils study conservation in geography, the importance of diet in science and the benefits of exercise in physical education.
95. There are very good arrangements for pupils to work collaboratively and to share equipment, one notable example being during ICT lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, acting as monitors, looking after younger children and raising monies for a range of causes. There are planned occasions, such as circle time, where pupils discuss social and moral issues, talk about feelings and consider dilemmas.
96. The school council is well organised and active; members deal effectively with issues raised by pupils and this extends their skills of citizenship. Everyone involved takes their responsibilities very seriously. During the inspection, members of the council asked if they could expand the reading buddies system to other age groups. This was a request from the class discussions and had arisen because all those involved had enjoyed the experiences so much.
97. There is a good emphasis on healthy eating initiatives and water is provided for pupils during the school day to keep them refreshed and ready to learn. The curriculum successfully covers important aspects of reproduction, growing up and relationships together with a programme to teach pupils about drugs awareness.

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	3
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	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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