

INSPECTION REPORT

ST VINCENT'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mill Hill

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101334

Headteacher: Mrs M A O'Leary

Lead inspector: Mrs P Silcock

Dates of inspection: 24th – 26th November 2003

Inspection number: 257992

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:	299
School address:	The Ridgeway Mill Hill London
Postcode:	NW7 1EJ
Telephone number:	(0208) 959 3417
Fax number:	(0208) 906 9733
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Crowley
Date of previous inspection:	18 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Vincent's is bigger than other primary schools, with 299 pupils on roll, including 49 children in reception classes. Until December, 33 children with birthdays falling in the spring and summer terms attend part-time. Almost all have attended some form of pre-school before starting in reception, many at the pre-school unit separate from, but housed within, the school building. The full range of ability is present on entry but attainment is judged broadly in line with what can be expected at this age overall. There are more boys than girls, with gender imbalances in all year groups except Year 3. In order to accommodate the 1.5 form of entry stipulated by the local education authority, some classes are mixed age across two year groups. This is organised strictly according to birthdays. The school serves the Catholic parishes of Mill Hill and Edgware. It is popular and oversubscribed. It cannot cater for all the Catholic families who would like their children to be educated there. All pupils belong to the Catholic faith. Socially, culturally and in terms of the languages represented, the school is diverse. There is a high proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language (17.5 per cent) but none are at an early stage of learning English. The three main languages other than English are Yoruba, French and Portuguese. There is a small proportion of refugee/asylum seeker pupils, representing approximately one per cent of the school population. About six per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, although the school believes the actual figure is higher. At 16 per cent, the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. Approximately 3.6 per cent of pupils have a Statement of special need, well above this average. Needs identified range from difficulties with learning, visual impairment, physical difficulties and specified syndromes such as autism. Most pupils, however, have difficulties with speech or communication. Seven pupils joined the school other than at the usual time and 11 pupils left in the last full reporting year (representing 2.5 and 3.5 per cent of the school population respectively). The school identifies problems in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff fulfilling the necessary requirement of belonging to the Catholic faith.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21261	Pauline Silcock	Lead inspector	English, Art and design, History, Citizenship, English as an additional language
9499	Phiroze Daruwala	Lay inspector	
9974	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector	
16773	Raminder Arora	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, Science, Design and technology, Physical education
32257	Richard Chalkley	Team inspector	Mathematics, Information and communication technology, Geography, Music

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	7 - 11
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11 - 18
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	18 - 20
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	21 - 38
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	39

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Vincent's is a good school. It gives good value for money. The headteacher's good leadership, along with her high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement, set its 'tone'. A very good ethos is underpinned by Christian values realized through the Catholic faith.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's educational vision is rooted in valuing each individual's contribution to the school community.
- Pupils reach good standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6, though, at times, the more able are not challenged by tasks, as seen in science.
- Provision and standards in information and communication technology are strengths.
- Much teaching is of good or better quality. Pupils frequently do well relative to their abilities in subjects such as geography and history, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Further improvements in teaching are needed to bring all in line with best practice.
- The school knows provision in the Foundation Stage is uneven and sees the need to clarify its leadership and management.
- The school accepts the need to ensure all those with management responsibilities have clear remits.
- Across the age-range, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development, including relationships, are real strengths. Adults are good role models.
- Links with parents are very good. Parents think highly of the school.
- Staff members know pupils well and have a high regard for their care and welfare.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is strong.
- Governors have good expertise and work hard on the school's behalf. They know they must develop their monitoring roles.
- School improvement planning is difficult to examine in its present format.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since it was inspected in 1998 and improvements to accommodation and information and communication technology are very good. Dislocations caused by building works and moving to the new school clearly hampered progress in school improvements. Curriculum planning now follows the latest guidance. The senior management team has very recently been extended. This, together with provision for the Foundation Stage and school improvement planning, require further attention.

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*	C	C
mathematics	A	B	C	C
science	C	A	C	C

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

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards reached by 11 in the latest statutory tests are average in all subjects compared to all and similar schools' results, as seen in the table. The range of ability in Year 6 last year was significantly below the school's normal range. In the previous year, results were much better. In English, they were very high. Over time, pupils' results have been maintained at above the national average, with the exception of last year.

Most children in reception are set to reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning by the end of the reception year. They do particularly well in personal, social and emotional development and in

speaking and listening linked to their development in communication, language and literacy. Standards overall are average in this area, however, as they are in mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

Pupils achieve well. Standards in Year 2 are already broadly as expected in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils also have good skills in information and communication technology. They make good progress and reach good standards in these subjects by 11, although the more able are not always challenged by tasks, most notably in science. Evidence suggests these older pupils also do well in geography and history, reaching standards better than might be expected. Solo singing and clarinet playing in assembly, as well as singing by pupils across the age-range, was of high quality. Pupils reach good levels of competence in swimming by 11.

Pupils' personal development is very good, enhanced by very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although the latter is only satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are also very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good because much teaching is good, the ethos for learning is strong and staff pay good attention to pupils' care and welfare. This is an inclusive school. Pupils feel they matter and learn to work co-operatively. Good and better teaching is seen across the age-range (especially in Years 3 to 6) but, in a very small number of lessons, unsatisfactory teaching was seen in a reception class because of unclear planning and insufficiently challenging tasks. Good levels of support for pupils with special educational needs means these pupils make good progress and achieve well. Support for children in reception classes is not consistently available and, generally, staff are not trained for this work. The school fosters very good links with parents in ways supporting their children's education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is satisfactory. Its management and governance are sound. The headteacher's good leadership has steered the school successfully through a very difficult period since the last inspection. The school has recently widened the scope of its senior management team. It knows that all with management responsibilities need time to fulfil these and a clear remit. Governors are highly committed to the school and are proud of what it achieves. They see how their roles can be further developed, for example, in monitoring the school's work.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Almost all parents have very positive views. They hold the school in high esteem and see it as helping their children learn in ways that interest them. Pupils are mostly very happy at work and play. They take great pride in their school and often show pleasure in learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve provision in the Foundation Stage to ensure it is consistent across classes in all areas of learning outside as well as indoors, and that support staff are suitably trained;
- make the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage explicit in ways all understand;
- improve teaching to bring all in line with best practice;
- continue to develop the role of senior managers and make sure that all staff with management responsibilities can fulfil these;
- further develop the role of governors in relation to monitoring the school's work;

- include all aspects of the school's work in school improvement planning and make it more 'user friendly';
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- make sure all relevant information is included in the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve **satisfactorily** overall relative to their ability. They are set to reach the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning by the end of the reception year. In Years 1 to 6, pupils achieve well relative to their ability. They reach **good** standards in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology by 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the core subjects and information and communication technology, already reaching standards in line with expectations in Years 2 and 6. More able pupils do better, especially in Year 6.
- Children in the reception class make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and are already well on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals.
- Pupils from reception to Year 6 develop good speaking and listening skills. They are articulate when explaining their ideas and confident in their interactions with adults.
- More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in science. Across the ability range, pupils often complete the same worksheet. At times, this is also the case in mathematics.
- Pupils from reception to Year 6 achieve really well in assembly when singing accompanied by a keyboard and unaccompanied.

Commentary

1. The full range of ability is present when children start school in reception but they are mainly average, with immature personal and social skills. They make good progress in personal, social and emotional development because of strong teaching in this area, as in the development of speaking and listening, which receive good emphasis. Generally, progress in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development is satisfactory. Children should reach relevant goals in all these areas; the more able already reach some. Nevertheless, while children are prepared adequately for transfer to Year 1, the older and more able are not generally challenged to extend their learning and reach their full potential.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (16.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.7 (14.7)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.4 (16.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. As seen in the table, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen over a two-year period, particularly in writing and mathematics. In the latest tests, pupils reached well above the national average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. Over four years, results have been maintained above results nationally. Teachers assessed pupils as reaching broadly average standards in speaking and listening at the expected Level 2 and above average standards at the higher Level 3. This pattern is repeated in teachers' assessments of standards in science. Inspection evidence supports the good picture overall. Pupils achieve well relative to their differing abilities. This is shown by the standards already reached in Year 2 in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science, which are judged to be broadly in line with those expected at this age. More able pupils do better.

- Over time, and in line with national trends, girls do better than boys in reading and writing while boys outperform girls in mathematics. Inspection evidence did not reveal significant differences in boys' or girls' performance.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.1 (30.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.7 (28.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.8 (30.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 41 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The table shows 11-year-olds did not do as well as the previous year in the latest tests, though their results fall broadly in line with the average for all and similar schools. Evidence shows that a significant proportion of Year 6 pupils last year was on the Code of Practice register of special needs, including some with a Statement of special need. Over five years, with the exception of these latest results, pupils have maintained results above those gained nationally.
- In line with the national trend, girls did better than boys in English over three years. Girls also did rather better than boys in science, contrasting with the national trend, where boys and girls perform on a par. Also against the trend, boys and girls performed equally well in mathematics (boys usually do better). Inspection evidence, however, did not discern any gender difference in performance. It shows the picture for all pupils is positive with pupils achieving well relative to their differing abilities. For example, at this early point in the school year, pupils in Year 6 already reach standards broadly in line with expectations in all three subjects. More able pupils do better.
- Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills in all subjects as they move through the school. Teachers routinely involve them in discussion at the start of lessons, so they become used to speaking in front of others and are unafraid of expressing their views. Such skills are practised in whole-school settings such as assemblies and performances for special occasions, as at Christmas time in the church. Pupils also have good opportunities to write for different purposes, learning how to apply literacy skills purposefully. This is seen in written commentaries on art and design work in Year 4. Pupils of all ages read task instructions with understanding and enjoy sharing books with one another and with adults. By 11, even less able pupils tackle quite demanding texts keenly and enjoy reading. Across classes, pupils develop good skills in mental mathematics. They answer 'quick fire' questions with speed by 11. These older pupils also show a good grasp of the principles of a 'fair test' in science, although learning, here, is hampered because more able pupils are not always challenged to set out and test their own hypotheses. A scrutiny of work finds pupils across the age-range, regardless of ability, frequently complete the same worksheets in science. In mathematics, too, pupils sometimes do the same work.
- Pupils of all ages develop good computer skills through regular lessons in the computer suite. They can apply skills to other subjects, as when they make graphs to show findings in science. Although there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards in music at seven and 11, three Year 4 pupils showed exceptional ability when they each sang a verse of a hymn in assembly. Pupils from reception to Year 6 also sang hymns really well, both when accompanied by a keyboard and when unaccompanied. Older pupils also reached high standards on clarinet. There was insufficient evidence to make a firm judgement on standards in physical education but pupils show good levels of competence in swimming by Year 6 because of time given to this for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Evidence shows standards in art and design are broadly average in Years 2 and 6. Limited evidence suggests the picture for design and technology is similar in Year 2 but there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement for

older pupils. By 11, pupils already reach at least satisfactory standards in geography and history, with more able pupils doing better.

8. The new profiling system for children in the Foundation Stage has only recently been introduced in schools across the local education authority and the school cannot yet judge children's standards accurately.
9. The school has very good information from the local education authority about statutory test results at seven and 11. Together with information from optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 and teacher assessments on pupils' personal development and attitudes to learning, this is well used to discover how individuals and groups perform and where additional support needs targeting. This includes pupils identified as having special educational needs and those of minority ethnic origin, including pupils learning English as an additional language. Ambitious targets are set in light of assessment information. These were not quite achieved in the latest results for 11-year-olds, although the margin of error at the expected Level 4 represents only one pupil. Targets at the higher Level 5 in English were missed by a similarly small margin.
10. Standards in all subjects of the National Curriculum appear to have risen since the previous inspection, although the picture given then is not all that clear. Direct comparisons with previous findings in the Foundation Stage are not possible because the curriculum and criteria for assessing against the stepping stones for learning, and against the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year, are quite different.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and punctuality at the start of the school day are **good**. Their attitudes to school, behaviour and personal development are **very good**. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also **very good** overall. This is a similar picture to that given in the previous report, with improvements in punctuality and provision for spiritual and social development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school, adults are very good role models with high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Pupils are well behaved towards one another, towards staff and other adults in the school.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute towards good levels of achievement.
- While pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are real strengths, their cultural development is only satisfactory. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity of their own school community and that of the wider society.
- Pupils enjoy being given responsibilities which they take seriously. Year 6 pupils wear badges showing their special position as school leaders. They wear these with pride.
- Pupils show concern and consideration for others less fortunate than themselves.

Commentary

11. This is an area of considerable strength. Catholic principles of care, compassion and consideration for others are a basis for pupils' positive attitudes to others and to their strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils acquire distinctive personal qualities. Teachers and other staff are good role models, working co-operatively in classrooms and about the school, welcoming visitors and being constantly courteous in their daily personal relationships.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.5
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.

12. During the academic year 2002-2003, attendance was well above the national median. Parents are knowledgeable about school procedures in this matter and know the importance of making sure their children arrive promptly at the start of the day. Morning registration is a purposeful, peaceful time, as each pupil greets the class teacher in a friendly voice, settling quickly for the start of the day. Pupils show enthusiasm for learning and acquiring new skills. Most sustain concentration throughout a lesson so that classrooms stay orderly.
13. The self-discipline, positive demeanour and attitudes of pupils in and out of classrooms are marked strengths. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to work co-operatively. They play well together in the playground and in classrooms during 'wet' playtime. They are sociable in the dining room, enjoying one another's company as they eat lunch. Supervisors emphasise good discipline and help create a friendly atmosphere. No incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour were seen during the inspection. There were no exclusions in the relevant period prior to inspection.
14. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. For example, pupils from all classes take turns returning attendance registers to the school secretary. Year 6 pupils help set up the hall for assembly. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 act as reading partners for younger children in reception and Years 1 and 2. They also accompany these younger pupils into whole-school assemblies each week and sit with them to give needed help (perhaps by pointing to words on a hymn sheet). This helps give a calm, peaceful atmosphere to the school hall as the whole school community gathers to celebrate an important part of its life. In a reception class, older children takes turns to be leader for the day. Throughout the school, pupils show respect and care for resources such as books. They show concern for those less fortunate than themselves and give willingly to local and national charities (such as the Catholic charity 'Cafod') and to appeals on a favourite television programme.
15. Pupils are respectful and courteous to teachers and other adults. Year 6 pupils take it in turns to act as guides to prospective parents and visitors. In pairs (usually a girl and a boy), they explain how classes are organised and about the activities in lessons across the age-range, including those in the separate Pre-school Unit housed in the building. On different occasions, two inspectors were highly impressed by their escorts' confidence and courtesy in answering questions. Very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults emphasise the inclusive and caring ethos of the school. Pupils respond well to teachers' encouragement. They are very pleased at getting rewards such as points for good effort, both personal and academic. Year 6 pupils proudly wear badges showing their special positions as leaders. A variety of lunchtime and after school club activities provides good opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively together. Such activities help raise their self-esteem.
16. The school has a strong tradition of Christian values intrinsic to the Catholic faith. It provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, not only through direct teaching of important moral principles such as 'right' and 'wrong', but also through a range of activities linked to these. So, in the week before the inspection, Year 6 pupils made an overnight visit to a Pastoral Centre retreat where they could think about such things as friendship, trust and honesty, and the need to respect other viewpoints. Provision for pupils' cultural development, on the other hand, is generally only satisfactory, although it can be much better. For instance, in a whole-school assembly, the headteacher introduced the Hebrew greeting "Shalom", meaning "Peace", and talked about the Jewish custom of lighting candles on the menorah. She linked the Jewish festival of Chanukah to the Christian festival of

Christmas, explaining how Advent, so important to Christians as a time of waiting for the birth of Christ, has its roots in Judaism. However, apart from this, and one or two other links to art and design and music, pupils have few opportunities to learn about the contributions other cultures have made to our knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, studies of Victorian times do not include the contribution made to medicine during the Crimean War by the Black African American, Mary Seacole.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. This is due to good quality teaching and learning in many lessons and to the high levels of care and support for pupils throughout the school. Good provision, including visits to places of interest and the inviting of visitors into school, extends the curriculum, exciting pupils' interest and imaginations.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is **good** overall with strengths in Years 3 to 6. Assessment is also **good**, although procedures are not fully developed in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- From reception to Year 6, good or better teaching is seen, with a high incidence of such teaching in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching in reception classes is of variable quality with some unsatisfactory teaching seen.
- Teachers across the age-range make sure *all* pupils are included in classroom activities.
- Teaching skills are well matched to pupils' abilities when setting for mathematics in Years 3 to 6.
- Teachers' expertise is used to advantage to promote good learning in some subjects, as seen in music and physical education.
- In Years 1 to 6, assessment information is used effectively. Arrangements for the continuous assessment of children's progress in the Foundation Stage are not fully in place.

Commentary

17. The table below shows the quality of teaching across the school. In Years 1 and 2, no teaching is found less than satisfactory and a significant amount is good or better. This is true also for Years 3 to 6, where most teaching is actually good or better. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is more variable, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. The general picture is not dissimilar to that found at the previous inspection but teaching in reception classes is not so consistently good. Teaching was judged unsatisfactory where a lesson's purposes were not set out clearly and tasks not well matched to children's abilities. For example, in a literacy lesson in a reception class, all children were given the same work on the chosen letter of the alphabet. They were kept to teacher-directed tasks concerned with copying and colouring in a worksheet. In fact, quite a number could have gone beyond this. All teachers pay good attention to making sure all pupils are included in tasks, including those pupils identified as having special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	8 (21%)	14 (37%)	14 (37%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

18. Almost all parents expressed satisfaction with teaching. At the meeting prior to the inspection, they talked over their concerns about teachers coping with mixed-age classes in Years 1 to 6

and the range of ability this implies. Inspection evidence shows that teachers know their pupils well, so good account is taken of pupils' abilities in these classes across the age-range. Pupils talk positively about their learning and the way teachers and other adults help them. Such good attitudes prevail in all classrooms. Pupils usually enjoy their work, interacting with their peers and with adults in ways that make learning fun.

19. In reception classes, teachers meet weekly to share planning but this is not yet a strong feature of their work. Assessment procedures linked to the stepping stones for learning are also underdeveloped. In part, this is owing to local education authority systems linked to the profiling of children only recently being put in place. It is also owing to the still-developing nature of ongoing assessments meant to inform planning. There is more cohesion in planning for the younger children in each area of learning, especially at those times when children choose between indoor and outdoor activities. The school knows this aspect of its work needs further development.
20. Shared planning is consistently undertaken in Years 1 to 6 in ways helping teachers to evaluate work done and build on pupils' learning. Test and assessment information in English, mathematics and science is used well for planning, and systems for information and communication technology are beginning to be similarly helpful. Targets are set in English and mathematics, although these are not consistently found in pupils' books. Themes of work extend, helpfully, over a number of weeks in many non-core subjects, so teachers can plan to develop necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in the time available. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have benefited from building on art and design work on 'Journeys', enabling them to explore ideas through drawing before turning to computer images or paintings. Teachers place good emphasis on the need to take time for such work and have pride in the end result. This is also true of some teachers' marking although, more generally, marking is inconsistent in quality. Good instances of teachers setting homework linked to classroom work were seen, as in Year 6, when pupils researched a history theme in ways extending their knowledge.
21. In Years 1 to 6, teachers have a generally good command of subjects across the curriculum with good levels of expertise sometimes seen. They are knowledgeable about the literacy and numeracy strategies and plan well in light of these. Teaching skills are particularly well-matched to pupils' needs in the setting for mathematics in Years 3 to 6, where teaching is never less than good and is frequently very good. The school takes advantage of the flexibility allowed by additional teaching staff when setting. For example, it organises four ability groups across Year 4, rather than three, as in other years, because this cohort of pupils is known to have weaknesses. Where teachers admit to a lack of subject confidence (as in art and design in some instances) they work hard to make sure a lesson's content meets requirements and that they grasp key teaching and learning points, helped by published guidance. A strength of many lessons is the way teachers explain learning objectives and involve all pupils in discussion to make sure these are fully understood. In the better lessons, teachers keep a brisk pace and do not waste time once a point has been grasped. This was seen in a very good Year 3 mathematics lesson for more able pupils, who were soon instructed to progress to more challenging work. Frequently, the end of a lesson is used well to rehearse what has been learned, and to evaluate work. So, Year 5 and 6 pupils shared their writing as evacuees during World War II at the end of a history lesson. Teachers increasingly make effective use of information and communication technology, as seen in a geography lesson when a group of Year 6 pupils researched on the Internet. Teachers share expertise and work to their strengths: for example, a Year 5/6 teacher takes his own and a colleague's class for physical education while she takes history with both classes. A teacher's specialist music skills enhance learning across the age-range, as when pupils prepare for a solo performance or for whole-school singing in assembly.
22. Teachers in all classes pay good attention to the needs of pupils on the Code of Practice register of special needs, as set out in their individual education plans. They liaise with support staff to make sure a lesson's objectives are known, and planned targets are linked to learning.

Often, they monitor these pupils' progress directly to check what is understood or where difficulties lie, giving time to help a pupil where appropriate. Teachers also make good provision for pupils learning English as an additional language, although this has more to do with their good ability to assess learning needs than their understanding of how such pupils' English language skills are best developed. For instance, a Year 3 teacher rightly judged a pupil to have good potential writing abilities but was unclear about possible reasons underlying the pupil's difficulties with features of English grammar, such as those having to do with tense. The teacher's professional judgement helped her to understand that the pupil might be transferring knowledge of her first language to the learning of English rather than her finding it hard to pronounce words, as had been suggested.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is **satisfactory**. It is broad and balanced and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum in Years 1 to 6, meeting statutory requirements. There is **good** provision for enriching curricular opportunities inside and outside the classroom. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is also suitably broad but lacks balance, especially with regard to the use of the outdoor space. Accommodation is **good**. Resources are **satisfactory** with the exception of those for outdoor play in the Foundation Stage, which are limited.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is inclusive of *all* pupils.
- National literacy and numeracy strategies are planned effectively, although time given to these affects planning for other things, such as developing pupils' creative writing skills.
- Additional teaching staff means there is good flexibility in the setting of mathematics in Years 3 to 6.
- Provision for special educational needs is good. It includes good levels of support staff, so pupils on the Code of Practice register of special needs make good progress.
- Provision for information and communication technology has improved greatly since the previous inspection and is now a strength.
- Visits and visitors to school linked to classroom work, as well as activities outside lessons, enrich the curriculum to good effect.
- Joint planning across Years 1 to 6 ensures pupils of the same age receive the same curriculum. Such planning in the Foundation Stage is not so well established.
- Support staff are not always available in the Foundation Stage and the match of staff to the curriculum for these youngest children is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is greatly improved since the previous inspection and is now good, although there are insufficient 'extra' spaces.

Commentary

23. Curricular provision has improved since the last inspection, especially for information and communication technology. Literacy and numeracy planning follows national strategies securely. The school has opted to group pupils according to ability for mathematics in Years 3 to 6 to overcome difficulties presented by the National Numeracy Strategy. It is working on how to organise time to best advantage for literacy. For example, the need to improve pupils' creative writing is a priority for development and the demands of the 'literacy hour' are being reviewed in light of this. Planning in all other subjects is also secure, including in non-core subjects such as art and design, design and technology and music, where it was previously unsatisfactory. During the course of an academic year, requirements are met in line with the latest curriculum guidance the school has adopted. Time constraints still mean, however, that some subjects are 'pushed' to enable pupils to acquire necessary skills, knowledge and understanding as much as they might. This is particularly so for art and design and design and technology. Good links are made across subjects such as geography and history. Information and communication technology is used to promote learning in different subjects. This is being

further developed. Swimming is a strong feature of provision in physical education in Years 3 to 6.

24. Curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage is suitably linked to the latest guidance on the Early Learning Goals in the six areas of learning for children of reception age. However, provision is of variable quality between the two classes. Joint planning is at an early stage of development and does not, yet, ensure a balanced programme of activities in both classes, especially with regard to outdoor play. The range and quality of large and small outdoor equipment for developing pupils' physical skills outside are limited. In one class, a teacher works hard to provide parity between the indoor and outdoor curriculum across all areas of learning, as required. Such parity is lacking in the other class, where children commonly run around outside and enjoy opportunities to use the few wheeled toys but do not engage in activities linked to other areas of learning. The outside area is secure with plenty of space, shared with the adjacent pre-school unit. The school is seeking to improve the playground surface, where water collects in hollows when it rains. It also identifies the other deficiencies outlined and is working with a local education authority adviser to tackle them.
25. A strength of curricular planning in Years 1 to 6 is the way teachers work together within their 'cluster' year groups to ensure pupils of the same age receive the same curriculum. This also usefully helps teachers new to the school to understand this area of its work. Support staff are well deployed across classes. In particular, pupils on the Code of Practice register of special needs, including the significant number with a Statement of special need, get good support, helping them to participate fully in lessons. Teachers plan suitably for pupils with such needs in light of their individual education plans. The school also benefits from extra part-time teaching staff deployed for literacy and numeracy. Such staff are targeted to work with individuals and groups assessed as performing below expectations according to National Curriculum criteria for English and mathematics. Pupils are grouped in smaller sets for mathematics where suitable, as with lower ability pupils in Year 6. While teachers generally plan in ways benefiting all pupils, the more able are not always sufficiently challenged. For example, opportunities for pupils to devise their own experiments to test hypotheses in science were not seen in lessons or in a scrutiny of pupils' work.
26. In the Foundation Stage, support staff work well with children on planned activities where a teacher makes sure they know and understand the purposes of these. However, such support is not available for full-time children in the afternoons, which affects provision. For example, a small group was observed unsupervised in a classroom when the teacher watched the majority who chose to go outside. Neither do support staff have qualifications matched to the needs of young children, so partnership work between teachers and such staff in planning, organising and overseeing curricular provision is limited. The school knows it must promote training for Foundation Stage support staff. Indeed, a part-time member is currently undergoing such training.
27. The school has appropriate sex and relationships education and drug education policies. The range of learning opportunities offered outside lessons is good. It includes sporting activities such as football and netball. Most club activities for older pupils are well attended. Good use is made of the wider community to support teaching and learning. The school works regularly with the local police for programmes such as 'Stranger Danger' and 'Saying No'. Visitors enhance the curriculum in many fields. A good example is the visit from the local museum of a lady dressed as Florence Nightingale. Another visit is based on 'Seasonal Changes' from a local Environmental Centre. A nurse in uniform visited the reception class for younger children during the inspection, as part of their topic on babies. Educational visits are well linked to classroom work and make a good contribution to extending pupils' academic knowledge, as well as providing valuable social benefits.
28. The school's new accommodation is bright and airy, forming a very pleasing learning environment with a number of quality features. There is a fully networked information and communication technology suite, a good-sized hall and a newly acquired netball/tennis court.

Premises are maintained well and are basically safe for pupils and staff, who speak of the new building with pride and delight. However, space for group activities is limited. So, in some lessons, literacy and numeracy groups were taught at either end of a classroom, which was distracting. There are no separate changing facilities for older boys and girls for physical education.

29. Resources for information and communication technology are very good. They are good in English and mathematics. The school benefits from loan services for history, which enhances provision so pupils can handle artefacts linked to their theme of work. More generally, resources are satisfactory although, as noted, provision for outdoor play in reception classes is inadequate.
30. There are sufficient teachers to meet curricular demands with qualifications matched to the age-range taught. These include three overseas-trained teachers and a staff member with unqualified teacher status. Support staff levels are generally good, although weaknesses are identified in provision for the youngest children.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good** overall with some **very good** features. The advice and support given to pupils and monitoring of these are **very good**. The school involves pupils in its work and development **satisfactorily**. This is a similar picture to that given in the previous report with regard to the care and welfare of pupils. Provision with regard to matters of health and safety is greatly improved because of the move to new accommodation. The monitoring of pupils' progress has also improved markedly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong sense of community involving pupils, parents and staff pervades the school.
- Pupils make very good, trusting, relationships with adults.
- Teachers know pupils really well. They work hard to ensure academic and personal success, in line with pupils' abilities and attributes.
- The school uses systematic information it collects about pupils' personal development and academic performance to very good effect. However, it accepts it must improve information gathered about pupils with English as an additional language.
- The induction of children into the reception class is good. Arrangements for introducing pupils to their new classes across Years 1 to 6 each year are very good.
- Pupils help to make the rules for their class, and their views about school matters are valued. The school identifies a need to formalize procedures for consulting pupils.

Commentary

31. The school is a safe, secure and caring environment for all its pupils from the time children enter the reception class until they transfer to secondary schooling at 11. Teachers and other staff know pupils well. They are attentive in matters ensuring their health, safety and wellbeing. For example, pupils with medical conditions (such as a nut allergy) who may need emergency treatment are well known to all adults, as are the steps to be taken in the event of treatment being needed. There are very good procedures in place for child protection and staff is kept up-to-date about these.
32. Pupils know they are valued and that they matter. The school's teachings, underpinned by its positive ethos, instil a sense of fairness and justice, trust and friendship into staff and pupils. They know their concerns will be heard. Indeed, in their role as leaders, Year 6 pupils act as mediators in the playground when helping younger peers sort out the very occasional problem. They know they must listen to each point of view and help disputants to a satisfactory conclusion, because this is how adults mediate disputes. Because pupils in Years 1 to 6 are

regrouped into new classes each year, to accommodate mixed-age groupings, the school pays particular attention to induction procedures for all its pupils at the start of the autumn term. These are carefully structured so pupils can “bond” together in their new classes. For example, emphasis is placed on ‘circle time’, while making an agreed set of class rules receives special attention. When the school was preparing to move to its new accommodation two years ago, pupils were anxious about where they should report at the start of the ‘moving’ day. They admitted to a firm wish to gather in their old building, both to say ‘goodbye’ and because it was familiar and secure. Accordingly, the whole school went across the road to the new building in a long crocodile, older pupils holding the hand of a younger child. Thus it was established that older pupils accompany younger ones to the weekly whole-school assembly. The school sees the benefit of building on such good practice that also gives a formal structure to consulting with pupils. It proposes to set up a School Council.

33. The school is fully inclusive, making very good use of information collected systematically about pupils’ academic performance and personal development. This helps set groupings for mathematics (both within classes as well as across Years 3 to 6) and picks out areas for improvement in literacy work. It also enables teachers to pinpoint individuals whose learning or personal development are not progressing as expected, where closer monitoring might be needed. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is closely involved in monitoring. She keeps meticulous records of cases where further investigation is highlighted or particular needs identified. Her records include those for pupils with Statements of special need. Individual education plans for pupils on the Code of Practice register of special need are clearly and accessibly set out. They are readily to hand in classrooms. However, *all* pupils with identified learning needs are on the register and have such plans. This may not be appropriate for pupils with English as an additional language. The school is aware it has to extend its information gathering to these pupils to keep itself properly informed of the best means to support learning of those still developing English language skills.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school’s links with parents are **very good**. Its links with the local community, the pre-school unit housed within its building and with other schools are **good**. Provision in this aspect is similar to that previously reported, although the quality of information given to parents and links with the local community are improved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard. They believe it is well run and provides their children with a good education.
- Parents feel welcome in school. They say it has an ‘open door’ policy, ensuring teachers and the headteacher are available to hear parents’ concerns.
- Parents can help their children’s learning at home because they are told what is being taught in classrooms. A number give generously of their time to help in school.
- The school provides good information about its work, although some is missing from the school prospectus and from governors’ annual report to parents.
- Parents whose children have special educational needs speak very highly of the way their children are included in all school activities.
- A minority of parents sees the setting of homework as inconsistent. The school is aware of this and accepts it must review provision in light of comments.

Commentary

34. The school has a positive and purposeful partnership with parents and carers, who hold it in high esteem. They believe it provides a good education for their children and that they make good progress in their studies and personal development. They see the school as well managed, the quality of teaching as good and staff as having a high regard for children’s

wellbeing. Children are treated fairly and are well behaved. They are expected to work hard and frequently do well. There was little support for one view expressed at the pre-inspection meeting that parents are not really welcome in school and that it is hard getting to know how a child is progressing. On the contrary, they said the “open door” policy meant both headteacher and class teachers make themselves available to listen to any concerns about learning or behaviour. They point out that quite a few children travel by school bus and this makes it difficult for some parents to have easy contact with staff. Parents feel listened to and reassured that action is taken in response to complaints. Issues are resolved with consideration. Almost all said they feel able at home to play an important part in their children’s education. Those wishing to come in to school to help are also welcomed and a good number get regularly involved in this way. A committed group of parents organises fund raising social events through the ‘Friends of St Vincent’s’. Recently, the school put money towards the drainage of the football pitch and to improving its ground surface, and helped fund the computer suite and equipment, to the benefit of pupils and the appreciation of staff. Inspection findings support parents’ positive views.

35. Almost all parents at the pre-inspection meeting *did* express concern about the mixed-age classes resulting from the 1.5 form of entry. They found it hard to understand why this matter is decided by the local education authority rather than by the school. They believe it is detrimental to learning. In fact, inspection evidence shows the school works successfully to organise classes to the benefit of all learners. Indeed, parents’ generally expressed views (as outlined above) do not altogether match their other concerns about how classes are organised. While most questionnaire responses about homework are positive, parents at the pre-inspection meeting largely agreed that it is inconsistently organised across the school. A homework diary, which is a kind of parent/partnership diary, and a spelling book for pupils, enables parents to support learning at home. Parents and teachers use these to communicate about individual pupils, although parents at the meeting said such practice was not common. Inspection evidence shows pupils’ homework diaries have regular entries setting out work to be done. However, the school sees it must review homework further in recognition of parents’ concerns, which it already knows about. A very small number of parents believe that more able children are not sufficiently challenged in the work set. In a few instances (notably in science), inspectors found pupils were set the same work regardless of ability and judged, at times, that this hampered the learning of the higher attaining. However, much more commonly, pupils across the ability range find activities both stimulating and challenging.
36. Overall, parents and carers receive good information about the work of the school through newsletters and meetings with teachers, both formal and informal. Experts invited to give talks are appreciated. This term, topics have dealt with parenting skills, progression from mental to written calculations in mathematics and the importance of the Foundation Stage. The school prospectus, however, does not meet all statutory requirements. It does not give required information about rates of attendance and unauthorised absence or about provision for special educational needs. These are also omitted from governors’ annual report to parents, together with information on financial matters and professional development training undertaken by staff. The school knew about these omissions, believing it complied with requirements. Annual reports to parents on their children’s progress give a brief account of achievement in National Curriculum subjects, suitably identifying targets for the following year in English, mathematics and science. Some parents have suggested reports do not give enough information (although at the pre-inspection meeting, this was not a concern) and the school is to modify them to provide more detail.
37. Parents with children identified as having special educational needs are pleased at the school’s provision. They see it as high quality, enabling their children to participate in all activities alongside their peers, whatever their problem. Evidence shows that parents are fully involved in all aspects of the school’s work in this regard. They are invited to attend review meetings and are kept informed of their children’s progress against the targets set.

38. There is a good liaison with the pre-school unit reception children attend before starting school and with schools receiving Year 6 pupils at the end of their time in St Vincent's. In developing the work of the Foundation Stage, the deputy head liaises regularly with the leader of the unit. There are good links with the local community. Visits to places of interest in the locality, and visitors with local expertise, enhance pupils' learning. A local Catholic Church priest, the police liaison officer and fire officer are all well known to the school. There are good working relationships with other Catholic schools as well as with non-Catholic secondary schools. Secondary school pupils come for their work experience to the reception classes. The school also has good links with three university departments of initial teacher training. A student teacher from the University of London Institute of Education was working in a Year 3 class during the inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is **satisfactory** with strengths seen in the leadership of the headteacher. Its governance and management are **sound**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is a good leader. She has successfully led the school through a period of great change.
- She delegates responsibility to staff in ways emphasising their capacity to make decisions about matters of importance to them.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage lack clarity.
- All staff and governors are determined to improve the school and build on its success.
- Although school improvement planning has improved, it is difficult to evaluate because it is not collected together in a 'user friendly' document covering all aspects of the school's work.
- Membership of the senior management team is now widened. The school knows it needs to make sure managers have clear briefs detailing their roles and responsibilities.
- Governors have good expertise. They are fully committed to the school and work hard on its behalf. They see the need to further develop their roles so as to monitor its work more closely.
- The school has a strong ethos based in a belief that each individual can contribute to its daily life and share in the enjoyment of learning.

Commentary

39. The headteacher is a good leader. She has steered the school through changes seen by staff, pupils, parents and governors as marking a momentous time in its 106-year history. The move two years ago heralded a challenging review of long held practices and customs as staff and pupils learned to live together under one roof. The headteacher sees this important process as complete. She holds to a clear educational vision for the direction of the school based on Christian principles underlying the Catholic faith. Of central importance is a belief in the value of each individual contribution to the school community. The headteacher sees it as vital that *all* pupils achieve to the best of their ability. She sets the goal of continuing to raise standards in all areas of the school's work. She and her deputy have a professional partnership rooted in a determination to take the school forward. Other senior managers, teaching, support staff and governors share the values and beliefs underpinning this determination. Parents believe the school is run well and that their children benefit from all aspects of its work. Inspection findings support their belief. Adults are good roles models for pupils, and the headteacher very much sets the tone here. Enjoyment of learning is central to the school's mission.
40. The successful realization of the headteacher's vision informs the ways adults and pupils participate in school life and take responsibility for aspects of its work. There is a strong 'team spirit'. For example, the oldest pupils are really good ambassadors in showing visitors round and talking knowledgeably and with pride about the school. All teaching staff manage budgets.

They each have a classroom budget, they work with colleagues in 'cluster year groups' to decide on spending for curriculum planning and, as subject leaders, they manage a budget for their subject responsibilities. Consequently, very good levels of commitment to making sure monies are spent wisely and to maximum effect are evident. However, the school recognizes that not all subject co-ordinators fulfil their duties to best effect since only some have non-contact time. The monitoring of classroom practices, at a relatively early stage of development at present, centre mainly on English and mathematics, although plans are in hand to include science and information and communication technology. The headteacher is committed to the professional development of all staff, who speak highly of opportunities both in and out of school to join training sessions. Support staff working with pupils having special educational needs talked enthusiastically about a substantial course they are attending in turns.

41. Good self-evaluation procedures enable the school to take informed decisions, as in implementing 'setting' for mathematics in Years 3 to 6. The need to improve provision in the Foundation Stage has also been identified by the headteacher and her deputy. Consequently, the deputy took over the reception class for new children from the start of this academic year in order to gain a better grasp of provision and promote developments through leading and managing these. She has made good progress in outlining future developments and begun to make some of these a practical reality. For example, she has improved the physical environment of classrooms and brought in Early Years expertise from the local education authority to give advice and support. However, planning currently set out for the foundation stage is not, yet, part of overall school improvement planning and does not consistently set criteria for success or show what action will be taken. A lack of clarity about who is in charge in the Foundation Stage is evident. The deputy headteacher sees her role as one of management of this development area but does not co-ordinate work since a class teacher is already well established in this role. The distinction being made is difficult to understand.
42. School improvement planning is satisfactory. It is better than at the last inspection because all areas of the school's work are now covered and, where planning is firmed up and agreed, it reflects a good picture of work done and future developments as well as of costs entailed. The headteacher has a good grasp of planning, which she can explain in detail, and governors are also knowledgeable. However, information is difficult to access. There is no 'user friendly' document for ease of evaluation. The school realises it should make sure that all improvement planning is in one document, in line with recommendations made in the previous report. This would include, for instance, planning for the Foundation Stage. The development plan for information and communication technology provides a very good exemplar.
43. The headteacher has already realised she must extend the senior management team so that it better represents all areas of the school's work and to ensure senior managers' roles and responsibilities are clear. To date, notwithstanding difficulties outlined above, the Foundation Stage is well represented by the deputy head. The importance accorded to special educational needs is also signalled by the co-ordinator being a senior manager. Indeed, the co-ordinator for special needs has a very good overview of provision and is meticulous at monitoring pupils' progress and keeping records up-to-date. She line-manages classroom support assistants who work with pupils on the Code of Practice register of special needs. The way she manages her responsibilities gives another good example of the headteacher's policy of delegation. She trusts staff to take on management tasks within their own areas.
44. A delay in implementing performance management is said to be owed to disruptions from building works. These caused severe dislocations for staff and pupils over a considerable period. As noted above, a 'settling in' time was thought necessary. Consequently, performance management has only very recently been implemented. The headteacher acknowledges delays are protracted but points out how improvements in light of procedures are now in place. For example, the management and leadership of special educational needs are judged good with real strengths evident. This is a more positive finding than previously.

45. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall although, as noted earlier, they do not fulfil all their statutory duties. The skills governors bring to the school and their commitment and hard work are real strengths. The chair of governors gives good support to the headteacher. More generally, governors are valued for their support, shown in their regular informal visits and the interest they take in school matters. They have developed their roles and responsibilities considerably since the previous inspection. They have formed committees with clear terms of reference. The building works has led to an increase in the number of governors, so the school benefits from this wider range of good expertise. Governors were diligent in overseeing all aspects of the works and the subsequent move, monitoring events daily. This was very demanding of time and energy, and is a continuing responsibility as 'snagging' problems with the building have to be dealt with. Governors were also energetic in raising funds towards the costs of the new school. The governing body is kept well informed of the school's activities through documents and reports from subject leaders, including discussions at meetings. It knows where the school's strengths and areas for improvement lie. Some governors also visit classrooms to observe work on occasion or talk to linked co-ordinators. For example, the governor who oversees provision for special educational needs has a very good grasp of the work done, owed partly to her informal visits. The more regular monitoring of teaching and learning, so they can be 'critical friends' to the headteacher and staff in matters such as development planning, is seen by governors as a way forward for them in further developing their roles. In some matters, concerning information given to parents, governors do not fully meet statutory requirements.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	919,441	Balance from previous year	28,939
Total expenditure	919,441	Balance carried forward to the next	51,836
Expenditure per pupil	3,092.50		

46. Governors have a good grasp of school policies underpinning its work. These are reviewed regularly and updated where necessary. All policies to do with equality of opportunity are in place, including a race equality policy, together with arrangements both for monitoring its impact and informing parents of findings. Governors also have a good knowledge of financial matters. They support the school in this with very good expertise. They questioned the headteacher closely about provision in mathematics when considering whether extra staff would give the flexibility sought by the school. The budget is set in accordance with statutory requirements and detailed information is given to the finance committee in order to ensure that responsible decisions are made. The chair of the committee visits school regularly to work with the headteacher and finance officer to monitor spending. Specific funds are used appropriately for their designated purposes. Governors agree funding in addition to that available for special educational needs in recognition of the demands made in this area. Day-to-day financial arrangements are very good and the school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily when securing contracts for work or supplies.
47. In light of good results reached in statutory tests at seven and 11, and pupils' good achievement in many subjects across the age-range, the good quality of much teaching and the very good ethos of the school informed by its Christian values, the school gives good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children are well on course to exceed relevant goals by the end of the reception year. They learn to respect each other, share resources and take turns and play together.
- Children achieve well because of consistently good teaching.
- Good relationships at all levels are to the fore and children feel secure and happy.
- Insufficient emphasis is placed on developing children's independence.

Commentary

48. Children enter school with immature personal and social skills. Yet they settle down quickly and feel both happy and secure. This includes those children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. This judgement marks good achievement of all children as well as skilful teaching. Adults are good role models for children, explaining clearly what is expected of them. Most are attentive and eager to learn because of a supportive atmosphere where each child feels very special. Most find it easy to conform to the high standards set by teachers and want to please them. They know routines well, settle to tasks with a minimum of fuss and behave sensibly. Diverse backgrounds with regard to ethnicity, culture and languages are represented in the reception classes, as in the wider school. Children work and play together in harmony.
49. Most children show developing confidence in trying out new activities. They are helped to form good relationships with others through many good opportunities for working in pairs or as part of a group. At times, though, adults tend to over-direct children so that opportunities to encourage initiative and independence are missed. This was noted in a music session, where the use of instruments was tightly structured. Children could not freely explore and use their imaginations to create their own sounds.
50. Teaching is good. Children are purposefully engaged. They show consideration and respect for property and for each other. They enjoy coming to school and take pride in their work.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults are frequently good role models in their use of language and the pleasure they show when sharing a story and talking about the pictures.
- Children often have good opportunities to learn new words during purposeful play because of the good attention paid to developing their speaking and listening skills.
- Children achieve well. Most are judged likely to reach the relevant Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year, with some doing better.
- Unsatisfactory teaching was seen when a lesson's purpose was unclear and children were not challenged by activities provided.

- The school/home reading system did not operate from the start of the year, although it is planned for the spring term.
- Few opportunities for children to write independently or to explore writing for different purposes were seen.

Commentary

51. Good emphasis is placed on developing children's speaking and listening skills. Instructions for activities are very practical. Demonstration and use of visual information enables all children, including those new to English, to understand what they have to do. Some good strategies, such as sharing favourite stories and talking about pictures, support children well in their early literacy development. This was noted in a very good lesson where the youngest children used puppets to tell their own version of the story, 'The Gingerbread Man'. In another group session, a classroom assistant supported children in making salt dough to good effect, talking about the activity in ways that drew attention to the properties of the dough. Adults help to develop children's ability to engage in conversation in the way they model talking to each other as well as to the children. They engage children profitably through questioning them in small groups or individually. They listen carefully to what children have to say, so the children learn new vocabulary and the right way to say something. Children are not inhibited in talking to each other or to adults as they work and show good gains in speaking and listening skills.
52. The quality of teaching varies from unsatisfactory to very good and is mainly satisfactory. At times, older children are insufficiently challenged by a lesson's content, as seen, for instance, when learning about alphabet sounds. Children of all abilities were asked to copy a picture from a book and instructed to colour it with care. They also copied words beginning with 'h', although they could supply their own examples of these. It was unclear why children's names were written for them when most are capable of writing their own names. Most can also link sounds with letters and form these letters correctly. Work shows older children write their names unaided and draw or paint with control to illustrate words beginning with a particular sound. Few instances were seen of children choosing writing activities and deciding what to write for themselves.
53. Children become familiar with a good range of stories and rhymes. The oldest can retell a favourite story with understanding and recognise a good number of simple everyday words, but skills do not appear to be practised regularly. The system of involving parents in exchanging books to share at home is not established from the start of the autumn term, although it is projected to be in place after the Christmas holiday.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children reach standards expected at this age and most are in line to achieve the relevant Early Learning Goals by their transfer to Year 1.
- Provision varies. There is a good range of well-planned practical opportunities aimed well at extending mathematical understanding in the class for the youngest children.
- There is insufficient challenge for the more able children.

Commentary

54. Teaching is consistently good for the younger children. They get good opportunities to explore concepts such as 'long', 'short', 'biggest' and 'smallest' practically. For example, activities involving different lengths of ribbons and shoes of different sizes are used to practise these concepts. Classroom assistants are well briefed to support small groups. They talk to

children purposefully as ribbons and shoes are sorted. Children learn to make simple comparisons correctly, using phrases such as 'bigger than' and 'smaller than'. In both classes, children match, sort and count using everyday objects. They know a repertoire of number rhymes and songs to help them learn to count sequentially, forwards and backwards. Some younger children can identify two-dimensional shapes such as circles and squares and count accurately beyond ten. Most can count reliably to ten and are adept at jig-saw puzzles.

55. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to good and is satisfactory overall, although teaching and learning objectives for older children are not always clear. Adults enable children to sustain interest in activities, but generally do not extend the more able through challenging tasks or probing questions in ways aimed at developing their mathematical abilities. A significant number of children start reception class with good mathematical skills relative to their abilities. Children gain understanding of capacity and weight from practical experiences with sand and water. Most can describe objects by shape, size, colour or quantity when working with construction equipment. A discussion with older children found them confident in solving simple problems involving the use of vocabulary such as 'add one more' or 'take one away', 'how many altogether?' and 'how many left?' They recognize numbers and can write them correctly.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of opportunities to explore the world around.
- Visitors with very different backgrounds and experience are invited to the school.
- Children have good opportunities to use computers in the computer suite.
- Adults tend to direct children's talk rather than allow discussions to develop of special interest to the children from their explorations.

Commentary

56. There are good opportunities for younger children to explore everyday objects in the home corner and play-kitchen. Children come to understand more about their immediate families and how they have grown from babies. These younger children listen to different sounds in the environment, collect leaves and made a habitat for a hedgehog. They learn about 'change' by watching a block of ice with a plastic creature inside melt. They find this process exciting. They also learn to make predictions and test their ideas. In a good lesson on making salt dough, they were actively engaged and supported so that they learned how to name ingredients and mix these, to observe change. There were missed opportunities, however, when the idea of change was not explained while the children kneaded the dough and watched what happened. The way adults encourage children's understanding during stimulating learning opportunities is good, as was observed in a computer lesson, where older children 'dressed the teddy' before saving and printing their work. Most children have developing computer skills and increasing control in the use of the mouse to move items on a screen. The younger children take part in role-play inside a class clinic, linked to the theme about growth from babyhood. They gain good support for their ideas through a visit to the class from a nurse, who talks about what she does.
57. In general, there is effective adult intervention in activities and encouragement for children to explore new ideas. Teaching varies from satisfactory to good. Children thoroughly enjoy working with sand and water and making models to develop cutting, joining and building skills. However, adults have a tendency to direct children's talk, rather than allowing them to talk freely about their experiences or ask questions to find out how things work.
58. Children are in line to reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave reception.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of outdoor activities is provided by one of the reception teachers.
- Teachers do not plan together for outdoor activities.
- Teaching of older children is unsatisfactory, and does not focus on their physical learning needs as well as those of younger children.

Commentary

59. Teaching is satisfactory overall, notwithstanding weaknesses identified above. Children have free access to an outside enclosed play area. The range of opportunities to develop skills in this area of learning are well planned for the younger children, though activities for older children are more limited. Members of staff do not yet plan and organise together for this area. Resources such as wheeled toys are also limited in range. Children enjoy free play on the fixed climbing frame and make good use of what is available. Support staff working outside show good understanding of how young children learn.
60. Most children are on course to attain the expected goals by the end of the reception year, but some lack of focus in teaching affects their physical development. Older children have regular opportunities to explore the larger space in the main school hall. Most are very capable and active. They are aware of space and show satisfactory co-ordination and control in movement. They are encouraged to undress independently, managing buckles and buttons and putting shoes on the correct feet. Most children have reasonable hand and eye co-ordination. They hold a pencil correctly, paint carefully with brushes and use tools, such as rolling pins and shape cutters, effectively. They are developing confidence in the use of scissors and joining materials with glue.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Role-play for younger reception children is well structured.
- A range of media from collage to play dough is explored.
- There is an inappropriate balance between teacher-directed and children's self-initiated activities.

Commentary

61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers provide sound opportunities for creativity. Children draw, paint and make collages. They experiment with paint and use their observations and imagination to create pleasing results. They are given opportunities to explore colour and texture, and work with a range of materials. Some examples of collage work by younger children are particularly good. Children sing and clap favourite songs and express enjoyment. In whole-school assemblies, they work hard to join in singing with the older children. Children in the reception class develop control of singing voices by singing their favourite songs enthusiastically, including 'The Grand Old Duke of York' and 'Jack and Jill'. Most know the words to the songs. They learn to sing fast and slow, high and low, and show obvious enjoyment. Children work hard at learning the words to hymns when singing in whole-school

assemblies alongside their older peers. However, at times, as noted above, children are restricted in their use of musical instruments. In structured music lessons, for example, they are not allowed to experiment as they might, to encourage creativity. Younger children, on the other hand, have good opportunities for imaginative role-play linked to themes of work. They also experiment with a range of musical instruments put outside for this purpose. Children are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning by the time they are ready to transfer to Year 1.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach good standards in all aspects of literacy by 11, although the school rightly identifies creative writing as in need of further development.
- Across Years 1 to 6, pupils develop confident speaking and listening skills. They use these for many purposes, including whole-school assemblies. By Year 6, they put forward articulate points of view and justify their thinking in the course of discussion.
- By Year 6, too, pupils talk with pleasure about stories they enjoy. They apply library skills when finding books in the library for researching topic themes.
- Teaching is frequently good or better although, at times, teachers structure lessons in ways preventing pupils from learning how to direct themselves when writing stories.
- A good emphasis is placed on correct spelling and on fluency in handwriting so that work is pleasing in appearance, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, although very good marking is seen in Year 3 and, especially, in Year 4.
- Good links are made with other subjects.

Commentary

62. Pupils in Year 2 reach standards broadly in line with those expected for their age in speaking and listening, reading and writing. At this early point in the school year, this good finding suggests standards similar to those recorded by the latest statutory tests for seven-year-olds. In Year 6, although standards are broadly average for pupils of this age, this is again commendable, given the time of year. Those of average ability already reach expected standards in reading and writing while the more able do better than this in some aspects of their work. Across the ability range, the oldest pupils frequently demonstrate better than expected standards in speaking and listening. Inspection evidence confirms the very positive picture most usually seen in statutory tests at 11, the exception being the latest test results. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, achieving in line with their ability. Those learning English as an additional language also make good progress and achieve on a par with their peers. This picture is similar to that of the previous inspection report. There is improvement in the way work is matched to the ability of more able pupils, who are judged suitably challenged.
63. More able pupils and those of average ability in Year 2 read fluently and with expression. To illustrate, a more able pupil talked confidently about her book, showing a mature understanding of how stories are structured. A pupil with English as an additional language finds reading demanding but has a good range of strategies for tackling unknown words and shows understanding of the story when talking about what happens. All pupils know how to find a book in the library using the reference system they are taught. Average and above average pupils in Year 6 read demanding texts very fluently and understand their plots. A very able pupil explained how she checks unknown words in the dictionary and records the spelling for use in

her own writing. A less able pupil finds reading hard but persists with a demanding text. His strategies for unknown words are effective and he can explain the 'story-so-far', helped by recall of class work, which he enjoys. In spite of difficulties, this pupil likes to read. The oldest pupils successfully exploit the school library for research purposes and know how it is organised. For example, they find books on their history topic (World War II) and make notes. The 'Buddy' system, whereby pupils in Years 5 and 6 classes partner children in reception and Years 1 and 2, sharing a book for weekly sessions, helps everyone to enjoy reading and develop literacy skills. At the meeting prior to inspection, parents said this practice was very worthwhile.

64. Pupils in Year 2 use story conventions in their writing quite reasonably and can sequence events in simple sentences. More able pupils write fairly fluently, hinting at the good influence of familiar stories. These pupils mostly spell correctly. Others have a good knowledge of letter sounds and how to match these to the sounds in a word. Handwriting is inconsistent, although pupils write quite neatly on occasion, especially those of average or above average ability. By Year 6, pupils write at length for many purposes, during literacy lessons and for other subjects. More able pupils write in a lively way, thinking about the words they choose and how they might introduce an idea to get a required effect. Literary influences show as these pupils experiment with punctuation and descriptive passages. Pupils of average ability confidently re-tell a story, as with "The Prodigal Son" in religious studies. Such work is well done, being told from a personal viewpoint with attention given to vocabulary and how the story is structured. Writing stories in parts, over time, helps lower ability Year 6 pupils reach standards better than might be expected. This good strategy ensured very good results in a Year 4 class when pupils of all abilities wrote at length, producing better quality work than usual with this year group, where considerable weaknesses have been identified. As they move through Years 1 to 6, pupils acquire good spelling and handwriting skills. In Years 3 to 6, spelling is usually correct or at least shows a very good knowledge of spelling conventions. Pupils increasingly use dictionaries and thesauri to find alternative words. They learn a joined script and, by Year 6, are using ink pens confidently. Across the age-range, pupils word-process their work on computers.
65. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is usually good or better. Teachers plan lessons well, in line with guidance from the National Literacy Strategy. They are secure in their subject knowledge and enjoy literacy work, especially reading and exploring words imaginatively. This was seen, for instance, in a good Year 5 lesson on the poem "The Highwayman", when pupils of all abilities, in answer to a teacher's skilled questioning, showed a really good recall of words and images used by the poet. Better lessons have a good pace, and pupils' interest is sustained in a variety of ways. For instance, in a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils exchanged views with their 'talk partners' about the words used for two different forms of invitation. This helped everyone identify 'formal' and 'informal' language quickly. It consolidated prior learning to good effect, and the writing task was tackled efficiently. The school now places a greater emphasis on creative writing in response both to analyses of statutory test results and teachers' own assessments of where improvements might be made. It admits, however, that there is really insufficient time for pupils to concentrate on 'being a writer.' For example, a skilled Year 5 teacher did not have the time she would have liked to help pupils learn how to describe characters in a story. A tightly structured framework was handed out and pupils were set a time limit for the first task. This strategy prevented a more extensive exchange of ideas, time for independent thought and the possibility of changing ideas in the course of writing. The school is aware it could usefully review time given to literacy teaching in order to 'free up' time for these other activities. Literacy lessons are not less than an hour every day, even though work on reading is now undertaken separately.
66. Marking is inconsistent across classes. For example, it is very good in Years 3 and 4, with constructive comments about what has worked and where something needs improving. These comments appraise individual efforts very well, especially in Year 4. In Year 2, on the other hand, marking with a black felt-tip pen appears untidy. It is also heavy-handed in the frequency with which spelling and punctuation errors are picked out in each piece of work

without comment. Pupils' homework diaries show they do regular homework for literacy, with reading predominating for the youngest pupils, as might be expected. More complex demands are made as pupils move through the school.

67. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator is now in her second year of this work and has a good grasp of what happens in classrooms through her regular monitoring of teachers' planning and sampling of pupils' work. She analyses assessment and test data and monitors all pupils' progress in light of this. She works closely with the co-ordinator for special educational needs to help pupils assessed as below average who receive additional support. To date, she does not monitor teaching and learning in classrooms, but such monitoring is time-tabled for the spring term. The co-ordinator conducts audits of resources and is clear about where improvements can be made. For example, last year, after moving to the new premises, she made sure each class had sufficient 'book boxes' to give a better range of books for guided reading, as well as varying what was available for pupils each term. She has control of the subject budget and works to keep spending in line with this, although the headteacher gives very good support when additional resources are identified as a priority (for example, when improving resources for drama). The co-ordinator keeps up-to-date through good professional development opportunities arranged by the local education authority and has recently attended training on improving boys' performance and raising the achievement of boys of African-Caribbean origin. She has also researched these areas through educational websites. Findings from such sources are shared with staff during school In-service work, although such sharing has still to be done regarding the above instances.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

68. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills in all subjects. Lessons commonly include opportunities for pupils to recap learning, as seen to very good effect in a poetry lesson in a Year 1 and 2 class. Such work often shows how well pupils can express their ideas clearly. For example, in a Year 5 physical education lesson, pupils worked with partners to evaluate skills for controlling a ball on the strings of their racquets. Good understanding of key teaching points was evident when pupils explained what a partner did well or how they might improve. Year 4 pupils have written short paragraphs about their work on journeys in art and design, paying attention to spelling and punctuation as well as making their writing interesting to the reader. Year 6 pupils are efficient researchers when working on a history theme for classroom and homework. They use the Internet as well as book resources. Pupils also have access to computers for literacy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach good standards by Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils enjoy learning and achieve well relative to their ability.
- Teaching is mainly good or better.
- Teachers usually plan very well for different levels of ability although, at times, pupils of differing abilities are given the same work.
- The organisation of groups in Years 3 to 6 is effective.
- Leadership and management are good, although systems for monitoring teaching and learning are not yet firmly established.

Commentary

69. At this early point in the school year, most pupils in Years 2 and 6 already reach standards broadly in line with those expected for their ages, while the more able exceed these standards.

This good picture reflects the latest statutory test results at seven and those usually gained by pupils at 11 (the latest results are something of an anomaly, as discussed earlier). Pupils make good progress and achieve well, relative to their ability, including those with special educational needs. The latter benefit from good support. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress and achieve in line with their peers. These findings are similar to those of the previous report.

70. All Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of halves and quarters when working on fractions. They quickly hold up the correct fraction when answering a teacher's questions. They do 'quick fire' mental maths on addition and subtraction at speed, showing a good grasp of these number operations. By Year 6, pupils in a below average group recall previous learning to explain the relationship between metres, centimetres and millimetres in terms of fractions and their decimal equivalents. They make good progress consolidating and extending understanding as a result of a teacher's sharp focus on key teaching points and his good knowledge of pupils. He pushes thinking harder. For example, pupils recall that 1000 metres = one kilometre. They can work out that half a kilometre must be 500 metres. Soon, they correctly link tenths of a metre to their decimal or fraction notation and are confident about recording answers to worksheet questions. Their teacher checks progress to good effect and intervenes where a pupil appears hesitant or asks for help, maintaining their confidence overall. A classroom assistant helps pupils with identified learning needs to succeed.
71. In Years 3 to 6, groups are set according to ability. Generally, the more able in each year reach standards above those expected, as when Year 3 pupils interpret information from a pictogram and make a graph to illustrate data they are handling. They rise to the challenge of altering the scale of their graph when a teacher sees they are ready to move on. More able pupils in Year 4 reach only average standards when using metre and centimetre units of measurement. They are part of the cohort that did far less well than usual in 2002 statutory tests at seven and where subsequent assessments have found weaknesses. Yet pupils achieve well in the lesson relative to their ability, becoming more certain about recording measurements in decimal form, helped by working in pairs, the 'hands on' experience of practical activities and a teacher's clear explanations of tasks.
72. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is most frequently good. Teachers carefully plan lessons based on the National Numeracy Strategy. They meet pupils' learning needs well. This is especially true of lessons where questions are pitched in line with the differing abilities revealed in whole-class work. Analyses of pupils' books, on the other hand, show that the same work is sometimes given across ability levels. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to work together as well as independently. They plan 'extension' tasks to challenge the more able and arrange practical activities for those with learning difficulties. 'Mental maths' sessions at the start of lessons are usually well paced and challenging, helping set the pace for the rest of the lesson. The best lessons have very good pace and have a range of challenging activities to sustain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers explain new work clearly and assess pupils' understanding by skilled questioning. An example of this was observed in the very good Year 3 lesson outlined above, where time was used to best effect as a teacher judged pupils could usefully move on.
73. Leadership and management are good. The subject co-ordinator proposed grouping pupils in sets according to ability because of the breadth of abilities present in Years 5 and 6 in the academic year 2002-03, and the demands made by the National Numeracy Strategy. Setting was in place from January 2003. Its success, determined by pupils' and teachers' positive attitudes, led to extending such grouping across Years 3 to 6 from the start of this academic year. Given the unusually high number of pupils with special educational needs in the 2003 Year 6 cohort, the school also sees the latest statutory test results as indicating further success. Inspection evidence shows that all pupils work at a pace and level appropriate to their needs, affecting overall standards, though concerns are raised about the consistency with which work is planned to match differing levels of ability (already noted). The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and eager to find ways to raise standards. She

supports staff through training sessions and by monitoring their planning. Her knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject is strengthened by her observing classroom teaching and learning practices, although such monitoring is not consistently incorporated into her management role. She monitors test and assessment information regularly to check progress and to inform decisions about the grouping of pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Pupils use their knowledge of shape and their measuring skills in design and technology. In science, pupils use graphs and tables to record results of investigations. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a programmable robot to develop their skills in estimating and measuring, and those in Years 3 to 6 produce computer graphs and charts, using data handling programs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Years 2 and 6, pupils are already reaching expected standards at this early point of the school year.
- Pupils' enjoyment of science contributes to their personal development, especially in the area of health and safety.
- Most science lessons are practical and investigative.
- Evidence suggests that, at times, pupils do the same work from photocopied worksheets, which are relatively unchallenging; pupils are not stimulated to record independently.
- The co-ordinator knows the subject strength and where improvements are needed but does not yet monitor teaching and learning.

Commentary

75. Statutory test results vary year on year. The most recent statutory test results for Year 6 are lower than those for 2003, which reflects the school's evidence that these pupils were generally of lower ability than before. Nevertheless, pupils achieved around the national average, both at the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. Overall, teachers assessed Year 2 pupils as around the national average for seven-year-olds, although they were judged as reaching above average standards at Level 3. A scrutiny of pupils' work, observations in lessons, discussions with pupils and the school's records show that standards for present Years 2 and 6 pupils are already as expected at this early point in the school year. This good picture is similar to that at the last inspection.
76. Teaching varies from satisfactory to very good but is mainly satisfactory. The school analyses test and assessment data, and teachers have begun to use this information to address areas of weakness and improve provision. The better lessons are well organised with good practical experiences. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use different seeds in investigations, discovering that plants can grow on different surfaces. In Year 4, pupils develop the use of good scientific vocabulary, such as 'elasticity' and 'flexibility', when working on 'stretchy investigations'. They learn to collate and present their results in bar graphs. Pupils were given opportunities to use tights made out of different materials to test and make decisions for themselves. Nearly all applied their knowledge of a 'fair test' and achieved well. Years 5 and 6 pupils were guided well in a lesson about 'changing states' to investigate 'reversible' and 'irreversible' changes to different materials. They obtained evidence by careful observations and measurements. However, at times, teachers do not match the recording of work to differing levels of ability. This was seen in an otherwise good Year 4 lesson when all pupils completed the same worksheet. It was also seen when scrutinising Year 6 pupils' work.

77. The good management of pupils, use of resources and contributions from teaching assistants supporting groups for particular reasons, are good elements in teaching that help pupils to enjoy the subject. Pupils' attitudes to science and their behaviour are good. They work well together as groups and in pairs, collaborating on scientific observations or carrying out tests and experiments.
78. Evidence shows that pupils enjoy science and most do well in all lessons emphasising practical work. This is leading to an increase in pupils' enquiry skills in those lessons. However, too little emphasis is placed on pupils setting up their own experiments and investigating these. Most learn to present their findings systematically, but are not well guided on how to record their work efficiently and independently when they are given the same photocopied sheets to use for recording. This results in a lack of challenge for the higher attaining. More could be done to develop pupils' independent research skills and abilities, guiding them to seek patterns and evaluate results. Facts are often neatly copied rather than independently recorded as a result of an enquiry. However, the co-ordinator has initiated a 'snail investigation' involving the whole school, and there has been a good response to this. Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 have already submitted work. The deadline is December, when a prize will be given to pupils carrying out the most successful study. Pupils use computers to present data in the form of graphs, although technology was not seen in use during the inspection.
79. The co-ordinator provides good leadership. She is experienced and aware of future developments in the subject. She has gained good insight into what is needed to improve provision by sampling pupils' books from across Years 1 to 6. The 'snail investigation' she has initiated links well with home learning, for parents are being helped to understand scientific enquiry. She has worked with a local education authority Adviser to establish a scheme of work matched to the latest Qualification and Curriculum Authority guidance. Assessment systems devised by the local education authority are used by teachers to inform planning. Although not enough is yet done to monitor teaching and learning in classrooms, this is built into the school's planning for the coming year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach better than expected standards by seven and 11 years of age.
- Across the age-range, pupils do well relative to their ability.
- Resources are very good, with further improvements set out in an exemplary subject development plan.
- The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and well able to support colleagues. She takes training sessions to keep staff updated. She provides very good leadership and management.

Commentary

80. Pupils across the age-range achieve well relative to their abilities. This includes pupils identified as having special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Inspection evidence reveals standards reached in Years 2 and 6 are above average. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged average in Year 2 and below expectations for 11-year-olds in Year 6. Lesson observations, analyses of work, and discussions with pupils and the subject co-ordinator show pupils already reach expected standards, set out in National Curriculum criteria for each element to be taught.
81. In Year 2, pupils are able to change the type, size and colour of text and insert pictures into their work. They produce simple graphs, using appropriate software, and describe some of

the uses of information and communication technology in everyday life. They develop their knowledge and understanding of 'control' by programming electronic robots. By Year 6, pupils have developed good word-processing skills and use more complicated software to programme switches and change environmental conditions. Pupils were observed working out complex procedures to ring alarm bells and adjusting control switches to adapt to a range of temperatures and light. Across the age-range, pupils talk with assurance about what they do and can explain set tasks.

82. Only two lessons were observed, although classes were frequently seen using the centrally located computer suite. In the lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory in one and good in another. In the latter, a teacher set Year 6 pupils a challenging task that demanded their full concentration and some hard thinking in order for them to succeed. By the end of the lesson, *all* pupils were successful because the teacher established learning objectives through her very good questioning and by asking pupils to demonstrate key points. In addition, she monitored progress closely and intervened effectively to support pupils in difficulties. More able pupils were similarly deployed, reinforcing their own understanding of the task as they thought about helping a peer without doing the work set.
83. The new building is equipped with very good facilities. In order to maximise their use, the school sensibly waited until the move to the new accommodation for teachers to undertake training paid for by government funding. A technician is also in school for one day a week to help in some lessons. The computer suite is a high quality resource. Each class also has its own machine and laptop, and there is a machine in the library area adjacent to the computer suite. This is often used at lunchtimes when Year 6 pupils research topics they are engaged in. Provision has already been made to extend the use of interactive whiteboards. These good resources help to ensure that information and communication technology is used well throughout the school, so pupils build up knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Older pupils who do not have machines at home have access to the computer suite during some lunch times. They are helped, when necessary, by peers with a good grasp of the subject, who are 'on duty' for this purpose.
84. Leadership and management are very good because the co-ordinator is knowledgeable, confidently promoting the subject while supporting colleagues. She is an exemplary role model. She is eager to further enhance provision and has devised a very good improvement plan, setting out what has been achieved, where improvements can be made and the implications of these in terms of funding, personnel and time. She regularly attends local training sessions that have a good impact on teaching and learning throughout the school. The co-ordinator has recently introduced effective systems and procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. Monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons is to be undertaken later in the current school year.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. Displays of work in the computer suite and classrooms show that good links are made with other subjects. Pupils of all ages use a number of programs for art and design purposes. They wordprocess work done for literacy and use data handling programs for mathematics and science.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy lessons and talk enthusiastically about their learning, showing good recall of previous work.
- In the lessons seen, teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan effectively to help pupils build on prior learning, matched to their abilities.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology and good links are made with history.
- The co-ordinator does not have time designated to carry out her responsibilities.
- Good use is made of the immediate locality and visits to places further afield.

Commentary

86. Observation of part of a Year 6 lesson and discussion with pupils show they reach standards better than expected in work covered. In discussion, they recall previous Year 5 learning about major rivers in different countries. They can name these and say where they are to be found. They understand processes of evaporation and can explain the water cycle and how water evaporates from a river's surface. They have a good understanding of grid references. Pupils find current work on mountain ranges challenging since it involves identifying and marking specific places on copies of maps accurately. In a lesson observed, they succeeded because of a class teacher's well-aimed questions and demonstration, linking places on maps to where they can be found on a globe. In a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils reached expected standards when working with Ordnance Survey maps to find evidence explaining place names. They can explain that they are finding out about settlements and their development, making good links to history studies. They understand map symbols and enjoy learning about grid references and how to use these.
87. Teaching in the lessons seen was good. Teachers' planning built well on previous learning. In both classes, good use was made of information and communication technology. In the Year 3/4 class, a teacher used an interactive board to show photographs of the chosen map area. This helped pupils focus on the endings of place names as clues for their origins and aided their filling in of a spreadsheet with the correct co-ordinates to complete the task. Four Year 6 pupils researched the highest peak in the Urals on the Internet for their mountain studies. In both lessons, pupils were motivated through teachers' good questioning skills and ongoing assessment of progress. Everyone stayed on task and those needing support got timely help. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm transfers well to pupils, who clearly enjoy learning and talk enthusiastically about things they undertake.
88. Geography alternates with history for half-term periods. Good links between the two subjects mean that pupils can apply relevant skills, knowledge and understanding even when geography is not the main focus. For example, in a Year 2 classroom, seaside resorts found on a world map tied in with the history theme of 'then' and 'now' for the study of seaside resorts in 1910. The latest guidance informs planning over a two-year period so pupils in mixed-age classes do not repeat topics. Learning is enhanced by good use of the immediate locality and visits further afield. For example, the school used its rebuilding programme to explore relevant geography topics, such as the nature of the land and its changing use.
89. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable about her responsibilities but does not have time given specifically to these. She regularly monitors teachers' planning and keeps track of what is done in classrooms through checking displays of work. She does not, however, monitor classroom teaching and learning or sample work systematically. Resources are satisfactory. The co-ordinator manages the subject budget, auditing resources and consulting colleagues to identify 'gaps.' For example, she has bought good commercial materials to support planning and intends to buy more globes, atlases and maps to ensure they are kept updated. Since geography is not a priority, the sum allocated each year is relatively small.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Year 6, pupils reach at least expected standards for their age. Speaking and listening skills are sharpened through discussion and pupils learn to apply their writing skills to good effect.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop research skills, using print resources, artefacts and the Internet.
- Teachers plan lessons well and make good use of visits to places of interest, as well as visitors to classrooms, to bring history themes to life. They also make good links with other subjects, Poor quality photocopied materials are sometimes used, which do not really stimulate pupils or engage their interest fully.
- The co-ordinator does not have designated time for her responsibilities, especially geography.

Commentary

90. Parts of lessons were observed in a Year 2 and a Year 5/6 class. Standards reached by Year 2 pupils are judged in line with those expected at this age. A scrutiny of work and discussions with the oldest pupils about their studies and researches into the theme of World War II, suggests standards are at least in line with those expected of 11-year-olds. More able pupils do better. All pupils make good progress in understanding historical time through many activities linked to themes for each year group, including visits to places of interest and visitors to school. This is a more positive picture than that given in the previous inspection report.
91. Year 2 pupils explained 'then' and 'now' in relation to images of the seaside from 1910 and the present day. They knew that people dressed differently for swimming in the sea in 1910. They have learned about seaside piers and can explain what these are. All finished cutting out and sorting pictures into the correct column for 'then' and 'now' quite quickly, consolidating earlier learning in class discussion. However, photocopied images were not of good quality and the task did not involve most pupils fully. For example, they took insufficient care presenting their work, which was often untidy in appearance. A display of work on World War II in Years 5 and 6 classrooms shows pupils have covered a wide range of connected themes. They have studied the lives of leaders in each of the countries involved, including in all the European countries, Japan and the United States of America. They have learned about the evacuation of children from cities and the way day-to-day life (such as food rationing) was affected by the war. Good links are made to geography through map work. Year 6 pupils have made topic files for history homework. These show how the Internet as well as book sources are used for research. While it appears some research writing is copied rather than written in pupils' own terms, high levels of interest and a thorough grasp of themes covered are evident when talking to pupils. This also shows in writing stemming directly from classroom work. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson, pupils thought about being evacuees and wrote letters 'home'. The oldest had a very good capacity for empathising with war-time children and gave lively, well-informed pictures of life in the countryside, which they read aloud with good expression.
92. In the two lessons observed, teaching was either satisfactory or good. In the better lesson, a teacher had a pleasant working ethos and Year 5/6 pupils concentrated well on the task set, demonstrating good learning in what they produced. Displays and planning show teachers' secure subject knowledge. Literacy skills are to the fore in pupils' written work, especially in Years 3 to 6. Discussion is also important in lessons throughout Years 1 to 6, helping pupils with their speaking and listening to good effect. In Year 5 and 6 classes, the class reading book is linked to World War II and enjoyed by pupils, adding another dimension to their factual researches. Visitors from the local community are invited in to school to talk about their wartime experiences when they were children. Visits to museums are built in to planning as a matter of course. For example, during the inspection, Year 5 and 6 pupils looked forward to a visit to the Imperial War Museum in London.

93. History alternates with geography each half-term. Good links between the two mean pupils can apply skills from both subjects appropriately. Planning is in line with the latest guidance and units of work are suitably covered over a two-year cycle. Teachers get good support for planning each theme of work from commercial materials. They make very good use of artefacts loaned from the Schools' Library Service and from the London Museum for work on the Romans.
94. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. The deputy head has co-ordinated the subject until very recently and has a good grasp of provision. The newly appointed co-ordinator also manages geography, with which she is more familiar. She has a good insight into what is involved in leading and managing a subject. For example, she checks teachers' planning to make sure it covers agreed themes, sampling pupils' work and auditing resources to make sure these are sufficient. She is also knowledgeable about budget management, although funds are limited since history is not a priority subject. To date, the co-ordinator does not have non-contact time for monitoring so she deals with tasks such as looking at pupils' work on display in her own time. She does not observe teaching and learning in classrooms.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Within the time constraints imposed by timetabling, pupils work hard and achieve well. They enjoy their learning.
- Lessons are well planned as a series over a half-term period so themes of work are studied in depth. Good links are made with other subjects.
- Strengths in teaching are seen in Years 3 and 4.
- In some lessons, pupils have too little control over how they organise their work.

Commentary

95. By 11, pupils achieve broadly in line with expectations in two-dimensional work (such as drawing with a range of media). This marks an improvement on the previous inspection when standards were unsatisfactory. Portraits in charcoal and pastels by Year 2 pupils are also in line with standards expected at this age. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. Year 1 paintings on display show a confident use of large brushes and water-based paints to evoke autumn colours on trees. In the lessons seen in Years 3 to 6, *all* pupils participated fully in planned activities. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language made progress in line with their peers and achieved similarly. Pupils with learning needs were helped by good support from teachers and classroom assistants.
96. Year 6 pupils demonstrate a very good ability to discuss aspects of an artist's work when looking at a still life by Cezanne. Through a teacher's really skilled questioning, they learn about composition and what artists take into consideration when putting objects together. So, they come to realize how Cezanne thought about the colour and texture of objects as well as their form and how they related in height and distance. They also understand that the viewpoint he chose was of prime importance and includes the setting and source of light. Unprompted, a boy suggested the artist sought "a kind of balance" in arranging objects. However, follow-up work is restricted because the teacher has chosen the objects to be studied and controls their distribution to groups. Although groups negotiate some exchange, they are not altogether pleased at the results. The variety of materials they discovered was

important for Cezanne is not available for them to experiment with, and they see this. Charcoal and chalk drawings on display and work in sketchbooks show pupils apply themselves seriously to experiments with media. They have produced creditable studies of footwear from close observation after the style of Van Gogh's work on boots.

97. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good with strengths in Years 3 and 4. Partnership teaching in Year 4 is of high quality and considerably enhances pupils' learning. A classroom assistant supported her 'focus' pupils and, at times, monitored others' progress with real understanding of key teaching points. Pupils applied themselves keenly to the task of plotting their way to a local pond, using symbols to mark the route. They worked either in the computer suite with one teacher or with paint in the classroom with the other. All could explain how they had learned about using symbols for such purposes from paintings by Australian Aboriginal peoples. They had to think hard about whether they had visited a pond or a "local watering hole" as the starting point for practical work! They thoughtfully evaluated one another's work at the end of the lesson, showing a very good ability to do this constructively.
98. Planning is in line with the latest guidance, with all elements of the curriculum covered during the school year. To cope with time constraints, art and design alternates with design and technology for each half-term period. This restriction on how pupils build successively on important skills, knowledge and understanding has a 'knock on' effect on standards overall. Nevertheless, teachers' consistent attention to teaching and learning objectives, and the way these extend over a series of lessons, means pupils make the most of the time available and do well relative to their abilities. Good links are made with other subjects, as in the use by all year groups of computer packages for art and design and in the way literacy skills are applied to tasks (for example, when writing about their work). Also, in history, Year 3 and 4 pupils made Roman-style images to create mosaic patterns when learning about how the Romans lived.
99. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator monitors planning and surveys classroom work through a good scrutiny of walls and discussions with colleagues. She does not, however, observe teaching and learning during lessons and so has a limited understanding of where strengths lie or where improvement is needed. She controls the budget and spends according to priorities identified through auditing the subject and consulting with colleagues. Provision for art and design is considerably better than at the last inspection because of new accommodation, which means all classes have good access to sinks and running water. They also work in a pleasing learning environment.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn about the purposes of design, how to follow a plan and make calculated improvements to their finished product where needed.
- Tasks set and work produced by pupils are often too similar to each other.

Commentary

100. Only one lesson was seen. Teachers' plans were studied and discussions held with staff and pupils. Displays, photographs and a very small amount of completed work were scrutinised. Evidence shows that all aspects of design and technology, including food technology, are taught throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Standards reported at the last inspection were below expectations for both Years 2 and 6. In the good Year 2 lesson on designing and making a playground, pupils reached average standards. This, too, points to an improvement since the previous inspection. In this lesson, they not only

designed their own playgrounds but labelled their designs, chose from a range of materials what they needed, talked about the difficulties they faced and how to improve their products. Most designs, though, turned out to be very similar. Teachers plan their lessons together in year groups and this enables them to share ideas and expertise, ensuring children of the same age experience the same curriculum. Planning shows that pupils are expected to carefully evaluate their designs and materials and suggest improvements, with the result that they learn effectively from their mistakes. However, a sample of evaluations of slippers made by Year 6 revealed a lack of challenge since all pupils had used the same worksheet requiring one-word answers. Pupils enjoy opportunities for creative and practical work in design and technology projects.

101. The co-ordinator responsible for providing guidance to staff and raising the profile of the subject is currently on extended leave. The subject is planned over a two-year cycle in accordance with the latest guidance. Because it alternates with art and design over a half-term period, pupils' opportunities to develop related skills consistently are limited. However, all teachers try to make sure all elements of the subject are covered.

Music

Timetabling constraints meant that not many instances of music-making were seen. However, indications are that provision is at least **good** with some very strong features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In assembly, pupils from reception to Year 6 reach better than expected standards in singing when accompanied by keyboard playing and when singing unaccompanied.
- Solo singing in assembly is of exceptionally high standard.
- Older boys and girls also reach very good standards when playing the clarinet.
- The co-ordinator's expertise helps support class teachers when they take their own lessons.
- Pupils have good opportunities to explore all the elements of music and enjoy composing pieces for performing to their peers.

Commentary

102. In a good lesson in Year 4, pupils used tuned and untuned instruments to compose their own music. The lesson got off to a good start with pupils sat in a circle choosing a card with an adjective written on it. They then chose an instrument and played, guided by their adjective, showing secure understanding of how to illustrate the word through sound. Pupils listened attentively as a teacher next read a story about animals. They quickly divided into their groups when she had finished, showing very good understanding of how to compose a piece illustrating one of the animals in the story. They were helped by the teacher's questions that made sure they considered the kinds of sounds they might produce. Her questions also indicated elements, such as rhythm, to be taken into account. Pupils' choice of instruments was somewhat restricted since some were already put into a complete set. Nevertheless, the pupils worked hard and listened well to each other as they experimented to get their results. At the end, groups performed their compositions sensitively and gently, showing that a good deal of thought and care had gone into their work.
103. In addition to observing this lesson, a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator, work on display was scrutinised and singing and instrumental playing were heard in a whole-school assembly. Of particular note was the very high standard of six older pupils (boys and girls) who played clarinet alongside a teacher on keyboard to accompany a hymn. Pupils from reception to Year 6 sang from memory, keeping in time when accompanied. They also kept well in tune and sang well when unaccompanied with a really pleasing sound. Two girls and a boy from Year 4 each sang a solo verse from another hymn. Their voices had exceptional quality for their age. The school fosters pupils' singing, believing many have the capacity to reach a high

standard. Displays in classrooms and around the school show pupils learning to make their own notations of pieces they compose. They cover all subject elements as required.

104. The co-ordinator gives very good leadership and management, although she is in school for only part of the week. She has very good knowledge and expertise, believing in 'music made accessible for all'. She monitors teachers' planning to ensure it meets requirements. She does not, though, monitor teaching and learning. She leads training sessions for teachers so they gain confidence when taking their own classes, and has brought a local education authority advisor in to help establish monitoring. She arranges visits for pupils to professional concerts, presents school performances throughout the year and ensures, through regular analysis of planning, that pupils have very good opportunities to hear music of famous composers. A visiting specialist teaches instrumental work to those who opt for it (such as the clarinettists). Good links are made across subjects, as when pupils in Year 2 listened to music by Smetana in connection with art and design. Videos seen before the start of the inspection show that pupils are well used to school performances. For example, at Christmas, reception and Year 1 and 2 pupils perform a version of the Nativity story in church for parents. They are confident performers. This overall picture represents very good improvement since the previous inspection when standards and provision in music were judged unsatisfactory.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**, with strengths in provision for swimming.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 3-6 have good opportunities to develop their swimming skills.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy lessons in physical education.
- There is a good range of resources for indoors and outdoors.
- The new accommodation provides a number of good facilities for sports, including a new netball and tennis court.
- Pupils are not always offered appropriately challenging activities in some lessons.
- The subject is well led and managed by a knowledgeable co-ordinator.

Commentary

105. Three lessons were observed but none in Year 2 and Year 6 classes. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence for a judgement on standards. A scrutiny of teachers' planning and a discussion with staff and pupils shows that all elements of the curriculum are suitably planned. The school has adopted national guidance.
106. Teaching was satisfactory in two lessons. It was very good in a Year 5 lesson teaching the skills of fielding and striking. This lesson was well planned and structured, and the teacher demonstrated good knowledge of the subject, intervening to give pupils the right advice while they were working on the activity. His own demonstration was very good. Pupils worked hard to achieve the body positions needed to hold their racquets correctly to balance or hit a ball. Learning was further promoted when pupils worked with partners, evaluating each other's work, explaining what had and had not succeeded. Adults pay attention to issues of safety in all lessons and are mindful to include all pupils in every aspect. At times, though, high expectations and challenge are lost due to over-direction and restrictions by the teacher, as seen in an otherwise well conducted and stimulating dance lesson in Year 4. Teachers give pupils timely coaching points and most pupils remain alert and apply their skills well.
107. The school arranges regular swimming lessons at a nearby pool for all pupils in Years 3-6 and by Year 6 they all reach good levels of competence. The school participates in a local swimming gala held every year to celebrate successes in the skills and understanding of water safety. There are good opportunities for out of school activities in football, tennis and netball.

The school's new building has good sporting facilities, including two football pitches, and a tennis/netball court. This last facility is very new and the school is still experimenting with its use. Specialist coaches are invited into school to support the development of specific skills such as tennis. Pupils show great enthusiasm and interest in physical education. There is provision for both boys and girls to experience football and netball, although girls tend to opt for netball out of choice.

108. The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator with good expertise and understanding of where improvements in the subject need to be made, such as in gymnastic skills, though the school knows this is because staff needs relevant training. There is no formal monitoring of teaching, and no arrangements introduced yet to formally assess pupils' achievement and progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

109. Matters having to do with this aspect of learning permeate school life. Adults throughout the school exemplify good relationships in their dealings with one another as well as with pupils. All follow the headteacher's lead in setting high expectations of pupils' attitudes to school, their work and the way they behave towards others.
110. All classes have 'circle time' sessions. These are used well to promote knowledge and understanding of self and others, and to help pupils understand how to develop positive relationships. Evidence shows that special emphasis is given to these sessions at the start of each school year as important ways of helping pupils to settle into their new class. Pupils certainly have a very good capacity for listening to the views of peers and adults; they take these into account when putting forward their own ideas and arguments. This is seen in subjects across the curriculum and shows when talking to pupils informally, either in the course of lessons, in the dining room over lunch or at play. They like talking about what they do in school. They ask questions courteously, understanding how to take a reciprocal interest in the listener. The school successfully promotes pupils' self-esteem through direct teaching about how to speak up confidently in a group, to the class and also to a much bigger audience.
111. Year 6 pupils speak thoughtfully about their recent visit to a retreat. A classroom display shows they thought about questions such as "What is special about you?" "How should we treat others?" "What did we learn about ourselves?" Pupils found the visit to the retreat challenging and said they learned a lot about how friendships are built, the importance of trust and respect for others, and how best to work in partnership or as a member of a team. They saw the retreat as very worthwhile. This experience built on a previous one undertaken in Year 4, which they recalled clearly. An important part of the experience is seen to be the way it encourages pupils to think about spiritual matters, connected to their Catholic faith.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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