

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lydiate

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104936

Headteacher: Miss D Uriel

Lead inspector: Dr M J Bradshaw

Dates of inspection: 27th - 29th January 2004

Inspection number: 260728

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	199
School address:	Sandy Lane Lydiate Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L31 2LB
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K McGlone
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has 177 full-time pupils from reception to Year 6, and 25 children who attend the nursery part time in the mornings. The proportion of girls is about 54 per cent. The changes to the school's roll during the school year are low. Children enter nursery part time in September of the school year in which they are four, or earlier if space is available. They enter reception full time in the autumn term of the school year in which they are five. Attainment data show that the attainment of children joining the school in reception is about average, although it varies greatly from year to year. For instance, attainment on entry was lower for children who are in Year 2 this year, but higher for current reception children. All pupils are from a white ethnic background and there are no pupils who are at an early stage of acquiring English. About six per cent of full-time pupils claim free school meals, below the national average. The background of pupils is above average. About 12 per cent of pupils in Years 1 to 6 have been identified as having significant learning needs, including one pupil who has a statement of special educational needs. No children presently in nursery or reception have been identified as having special educational needs. The school was formed by the amalgamation of infant and junior schools in September 2000, and there has been no previous inspection of the primary school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
6169	Dr M J Bradshaw	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Physical education
19342	Mr T Heavey	Lay inspector	
20645	Ms R Webber	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language English Art and design Design and technology Music
30144	Mr E Hastings	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a very good quality education for its pupils and gives very good value for money. Children enter the school with broadly average attainment levels, although they vary from year to year. During their time in school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their standards are generally above average by the end of Year 6. The provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. Teaching is good, and the school is very well led and managed.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good, and she is well supported by all staff.
- Governance of the school is very good.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This, coupled with the good care, welfare and support given to pupils, helps to ensure attitudes and behaviour that are very good.
- The quality of the curriculum is very good, and especially strong for junior pupils.
- Teaching and learning are good, and help to ensure all pupils progress well.
- The good progress pupils make means that they achieve above average standards by Year 6.
- Very good links have been established with parents; those with the community and other schools are good.
- Assessment procedures are well developed and the information is used effectively.
- Provision for children in nursery and reception is very good, except for facilities in the outdoor area, which are not extensive enough.
- The curriculum in science is not organised to ensure that pupils' skills are developed systematically or that they are developed to the highest levels possible.
- Teaching assistants are not always used to best effect, especially in some junior classes.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

By the time pupils leave the school, **achievement is good**. Children in nursery and reception make good progress, and will reach, and in many cases exceed, the goals expected by the time they start Year 1. By Year 2, pupils usually attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment for those in Year 2 at present is not quite so good, but this reflects their below average attainment when they started school. Their achievement has been good. Good progress continues in the juniors, so that achievement is good by the time children leave the school. The A* results in English in 2002 and 2003 show that the school was in the top five per cent in the country. Standards in English remain well above average, while those in mathematics and science are above average. Pupils' scientific skills are not as strongly developed as their knowledge. The apparently disappointing results in mathematics and science compared with those of similar schools were because these children were recorded as having very high attainment at the end of Year 2 in their infant school. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make sufficient progress to ensure their attainment remains above average and, at the same time, they benefit from a rich curriculum, which ensures good

progress and mainly high standards in other subjects. In art and design, design and technology, history and music, attainment is above that expected in both Years 2 and 6; in other subjects, pupils reach the standards expected.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Reflection, both in assemblies and lessons, is consistently promoted to a high standard. The quality of the curriculum, particularly in the arts, helps to provide the excellent opportunities to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is good and this results in good learning in virtually all lessons. Teaching is consistently good, and examples of very good teaching are seen throughout the school. There is little difference in the teaching of different subjects. Lessons are well planned and pupils are engaged in the activities. Nursery nurses are especially effective in Nursery and Reception, but teaching assistants are not always used to best effect in the junior classes.

The school provides a very good curriculum, which is enriched by outstanding opportunities for extra-curricular activities in areas such as dance and music. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Procedures for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are good. Very good links have been established with the parents, and those with the community and other schools are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher's very good leadership and management have ensured the very effective amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. This has been achieved with the morale of staff being maintained at a high level during a period of significant change. The governing body is very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has provided exceptional support throughout the amalgamation and is actively involved in all aspects of school life. Statutory requirements are fully met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school. In particular, they think children like school and make good progress. They also think teaching is good and that the school is well led. Pupils are positive in their views of school, and older pupils comment on their increased responsibilities through initiatives such as the school council and working with young children.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- review the science curriculum, and its use to inform teaching, so that pupils' skills are consistently developed and extended to enable pupils to achieve high levels;
- ensure the development of the outdoor area, in line with the school's plans, for nursery and reception children so that it makes a greater contribution to all areas of learning, and extends in particular, physical development opportunities;
- improve the use of teaching assistants, particularly in junior classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement throughout the school is **good**. Children in nursery and reception are likely to **exceed** the goals expected. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve **well**, and attainment in Year 2 is about **average**, reflecting their below average attainment when they started school. **Good** progress continues in the juniors, and standards in English are **well above average**, and those in mathematics and science are currently **above average** in Year 6. In most other subjects, attainment is **above average** by Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in nursery and reception.
- Achievement in the infants is good, and Year 2 pupils' attainment is above the level expected in art and design, design and technology, history and music. Their attainment is above average in reading.
- Year 6 pupils' attainment is well above average in English, and above average in mathematics. High standards are evident in music, and generally above those expected in art and design and in design and technology.
- Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted or talented, achieve well.
- Although pupils' knowledge of science is above average, their skills of investigation are less well developed.

Commentary

1. In recent years, pupils' attainment has tended to be well above average in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2. The pattern was similar in July 2003, when results were above average in reading, and well above average in writing and mathematics. In English, mathematics and science by Year 6, results have fluctuated in recent years, but improved overall since 1999. This year, attainment is about average by Year 2 and above average by Year 6.

Foundation Stage

2. Children who have just entered nursery have broadly average attainment, although it is weakest in some areas of personal development and English skills. Good provision ensures that nursery and reception children make good progress, and virtually all children will achieve, and many will exceed, the goals expected in most areas of learning. In physical development, progress is limited by the current lack of sufficient suitable outdoor resources.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.6 (18.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.0 (16.7)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.8 (20.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 22 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Recent results by Year 2 show that girls attain higher standards than boys in reading and writing, but the differences are similar to those seen nationally. In mathematics, except for in 2003 when girls achieved better than boys, there have been no significant differences. The

numbers of pupils involved make comparisons unreliable, and indications are that, for current pupils, the differences are not so marked. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve well. As a result, although Year 2 pupils' attainment when they started school was below average, standards in English and mathematics are about average. Reading standards are above average. In science, pupils' knowledge is good and they tackle problems with enthusiasm. In information and communication technology (ICT), good achievement results in attainment by Year 2 that is similar to that expected. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' displays and other work available demonstrate good achievement in art and design, design and technology, history and music. In each of these subjects, pupils' work is above the standard expected.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.0 (30.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.6 (29.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.4 (29.2)	28.6 (28.3)

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

4. Recent results by Year 6 show that boys tend to perform slightly better than girls in English, mathematics and science. The numbers of pupils involved is small and no significant differences are evident currently. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, attainment was very high in English, being in the top five per cent in the country. Results were above average in mathematics and science. Although rather erratic, the overall trend was similar to that seen nationally, maintaining the school's good results. When compared with schools whose pupils achieved similarly when they were in Year 2, the school's results do not appear exceptional. This is partly because these pupils were recorded as having very high attainment at the end of Year 2 in their infant school, and therefore they form part of a relatively small statistical group. In English, for instance, their progress appears only average compared with similar schools and yet their attainment is in the top five per cent nationally. The progress in both mathematics and science ensures attainment that is above average and, in addition, pupils in the junior classes benefit from a rich curriculum that promotes development across all areas very effectively. Recent results and the current situation indicate that pupils consistently achieve better in English than in mathematics and science. This is linked to teachers' enthusiasm for English and the extent to which English is consistently used across the curriculum. Attainment in English this year is well above average, and strong in all aspects of the subject. In mathematics, pupils develop good skills and their attainment is above average. Science knowledge is strong, but pupils' scientific skills are not developed to the same high standard. In ICT, pupils achieve well and their attainment by Year 6 reflects the standard expected. In Years 3 to 6, good achievement in music results in work that is well above that expected. In most other subjects, pupils achieve well and their attainment is especially good in art and design and design and technology.

5. The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs is good in relation to their prior attainment. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils in the school is very good. This is because the specific needs of this group of pupils are particularly well catered for through well-planned and suitably challenging work that results in pupils achieving high standards, particularly in subjects such as English and music. The school's success in meeting the demands of able children is reflected in the high proportion of pupils that achieve the higher Level 5 in English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils are **very good**. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **excellent**. Attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils very effectively through a wide range of well-planned activities across the curriculum and the provision for this area of learning is excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are very good.
- Behaviour is very good.
- Relationships are very good at all levels.

Commentary

6. Pupils across the school show very good levels of interest in lessons, they are eager to answer questions and show very good levels of sustained concentration when working independently or in groups. They are keen to take on responsibility and older pupils, particularly when helping to look after younger pupils in the playground and at lunchtimes, show high levels of concern and care for others. Pupils participate enthusiastically in all that the school has to offer, particularly in extra-curricular activities, and this plays a significant role in pupils' good achievement, particularly in music, dance and drama.
7. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and it is a notable strength of the school. The schools' Christian foundation permeates through all aspects of the school's work and this contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual and personal development and they soon develop a sense of respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. Spiritual development is not only strongly promoted in assemblies and religious education but also very effectively through other subjects such as personal and social education, music and art and design. Moral development is promoted very well through an effective and consistently applied behaviour policy. Consequently, pupils develop a good moral awareness and they can clearly distinguish right from wrong. It also features in assemblies, such as the thoughtful discussion about respecting and valuing each other's differences. The school does much to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem through the performing arts, which enables pupils to perform in front of others, and all adults provide positive role models for pupils who are made to feel valued. On a whole-school display on poetry writing, a special educational needs pupil's work is prominently displayed in order to develop this pupil's self-esteem and confidence.
8. The very good range of extra-curricular activities and the very good provision for the creative arts curriculum that the school offers its pupils contribute significantly to pupils' social and cultural development. The Irish band often performs at both national and local venues such as the Royal Festival Hall in London and at the Liverpool Festival of Music, Speech and Drama. Pupils' social and moral development is very well promoted through personal and social education lessons, and through a range of visits to different places of interest across the curriculum. Teachers also promote very effectively pupils' cultural development, including both western and non-western cultures, through other subjects such as art and design, English, history, religious education, geography and music.

Exclusions

9. Until recently, when one fixed-period exclusion took place, there had been no exclusions since the school's formation in September 2000. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and they form constructive relationships with others. Pupils, who have special educational needs, including those with behavioural difficulties, usually behave very well and have very good

attitudes to their learning. They show good levels of interest and perseverance in their work and these contribute well to the good achievement of this group of pupils.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – any other mixed background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
198	0	0
1	0	0

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

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.2
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

10. Attendance for the latest complete reporting year is satisfactory overall, being broadly in line with the national average. In the previous two years, attendance figures were above the national average. The school's procedures for promoting good attendance and for following up unexplained absences make a good contribution to raising standards in the school. The small number of parents who continue to remove their children from school for holidays during the school term, however, limits their effectiveness. Punctuality is good, and little time is lost between activities, ensuring a speedy start to lessons. The registration process complies fully with legal requirements.

Example of outstanding practice

The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Central to the school's success is the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These areas pervade all that the school does and, as a result, pupils respond in a very positive way. School assemblies provide a strong spiritual dimension, which extends far beyond the religious aspect of spirituality. Pupils reflect on the importance of valuing differences and the feelings of, for instance, those involved in 'The Holocaust'. Discussion activities also help pupils consider the importance of being able to express one's own opinion while at the same time recognising that other people can have a valid, but different, point of view. Pupils' experiences in nursery and reception contribute strongly to the school's success. There is a strong focus on personal development, with teachers developing the skills of sharing and listening and building on positive attitudes and behaviour. These pupils are introduced to the range of ethnic groups in Britain when they handle the various dolls or learn about different celebrations, such as Chinese New Year. They also listen to music and consider the work of artists such as Degas. Music, art and design and dance, including extra-curricular activities, have a strong influence throughout the rest of the school. The choir, Irish band and dance groups perform in public and contribute to everyone's awareness of the cultural heritage of many people in the area. This was exemplified well when the dance group performed 'A New Life', which told the story of Irish migrants to Liverpool following the potato famine.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** quality of education based on a **very good** curriculum, and **good** teaching and care for the pupils. Links with parents are **very good**, and those with the community and other schools are **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in nursery and reception, by both teachers and nursery nurses, is good.
- Teaching and learning are good in most subjects.
- Teaching is good for pupils with special educational needs and good attention is usually given to the needs of gifted and talented pupils.
- Assessment is good and the information used well to support pupils' learning; it is very good in nursery and reception.
- Teachers do not always give sufficient attention to the development of pupils' scientific skills.
- Teaching assistants are not always used to best effect, especially in the juniors.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very poor
0 (0.0)	7 (18.4)	21 (55.3)	10 (26.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	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 of lessons seen.

11. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during this inspection and about three-quarters of lessons featured good or better teaching. The work in pupils' books indicated generally good teaching, even in classes where some of the lessons seen were satisfactory. This is particularly true in English.
12. The quality of teaching in nursery and reception is good. As a result, children's learning is good. All members of staff give good attention to developing children's personal and social skills. As a result, children make especially good progress in this area. Some nursery children do not yet listen well or share tasks and materials with others unless constantly reminded. By reception, children's attention and ability to work co-operatively are much improved. The support provided by nursery nurses is very good. This is an important factor, especially in the nursery, where the good-quality teaching has been maintained during the regular teacher's absence on maternity leave. Planning is very thorough, and adults skilfully ensure very good links are established across the different areas of learning.
13. Teaching in the rest of the school is good overall, and never less than satisfactory. The headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher, who acts as a very good teaching role model, has successfully maintained teachers' morale during the period of amalgamation. This has ensured continuing good teaching and hence good progress by pupils. Teaching in virtually all subjects is good and this is evident both from teaching observed and the quality of pupils' work. Limited teaching was observed in physical education and that seen was satisfactory overall. Although teaching in science is good and builds well on teachers' knowledge, insufficient attention is given to the consistent teaching of the skills of scientific investigation. The curricular guidance in this area is not detailed enough and pupils do not reach the highest

possible standard by Year 6. Even where opportunities are available for pupils to explore organising and setting up investigations, the production of resources by teaching assistants limits learning. In virtually all lessons, teaching is well organised, planning is detailed and pace, challenge and high expectations are evident. These lead to good learning, which is further helped by the very positive attitudes that pupils bring to their lessons. In most subjects, teachers ensure that able pupils are challenged and this enables them to develop their wider skills, such as in the creative arts.

14. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils who have special educational needs is good overall. Teachers deploy support staff very effectively to give individual support for pupils with severe physical and learning difficulties in particular. In lessons, teachers plan work that is suitably modified to cater for the needs of pupils. The individual learning targets identified on individual education plans are appropriate and precise. They comprise suitably small steps in order for pupils to succeed and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In some lessons that were satisfactory, a weakness in teaching was that teaching assistants could have been used more effectively to support special educational needs pupils in the classroom, particularly in the juniors.
15. The quality of assessment and its use are good. The deputy headteacher has organised a range of procedures throughout the school and the degree of consistency is good, especially considering the process of amalgamation that has taken place. Throughout the school, marking is good and pupils are helped to know how they can improve. This is further enhanced by the developing use of self-assessment by pupils. Good and detailed comments help both the celebration of good work and give guidance on the next steps needed. Assessment in nursery and reception is particularly good. It covers each of the areas of learning and builds into a comprehensive picture of each child. It is used very well to guide planning, group children and to meet the needs of individuals. Good whole-school procedures for assessment and following pupils' progress are in place. As a result, the progress of each pupil is monitored carefully and variations in performance noted. The school uses a range of statutory, optional and end-of-unit assessment procedures. The systems are developed best in English and mathematics, but suitable systems are in use in all subjects. The information is used to set challenging targets. The school's own data, and the National Curriculum test results, led to the recent, and continuing, focus on improving mathematics. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good and the school effectively uses outside agencies to support the assessment of these pupils' needs.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. It is very broad and well balanced across all subjects and it fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned and a very good range of extra-curricular activities considerably enriches it.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- It is inclusive and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

16. The curriculum is well planned and suitably balanced in all subjects. A strength of the school's curricular provision is the wide range of well-planned extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school that greatly enrich and promote pupils' learning in many subjects. The school's involvement in the performing arts at both local and national levels contributes significantly to the achievement of pupils in music, physical education and English. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, the school also offers its pupils the opportunity to learn

Spanish. The extra-curricular opportunities to take part in sporting activities, music and the creative and performing arts are very good.

17. The curriculum for children in nursery and reception is rich and varied. Teachers ensure very good links are established between different areas. Currently, the outside area and resources available limit the opportunities that can be planned to extend children's physical development and associated personal and social development. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are firmly established. The science curriculum is satisfactory. The guidance used to develop pupils' scientific knowledge is well established and is generally successful in the gradual development and reinforcement of knowledge and understanding. There is less detailed guidance on the development of pupils' investigative skills and, as a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they might in this area. The school is fully committed to inclusion and it ensures all its pupils have equal access to the curriculum and all other activities that it provides. It prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education.
18. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school is very inclusive and the individual learning targets identified on individual education plans are suitably detailed and are used effectively by staff. The targets involve suitably small steps, and work is planned appropriately in order to cater for the specific needs of these pupils. All procedures recommended in the Code of Practice for special educational needs are fully in place and adhered to very closely by the school and this contributes significantly to the good provision for pupils with special educational needs. A feature of the school's curriculum is the range of opportunities for pupils to achieve well in most subjects. This results, for instance, in the high proportion of pupils attaining high standards in English. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is strong in the creative arts, particularly dance and music, where high standards are often seen.
19. A very effective programme of work has been implemented by the school in order to develop pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship and is a strength of the school. A school council and group time known as 'circle time' effectively support this aspect of the curriculum. Education on sex and relationships and alcohol and drugs misuse are also effectively included in this provision.
20. The school has a good number of teachers and this has helped to keep single-age classes, even though some are relatively small, and provide additional support for pupils in Year 6. For a variety of reasons, the school has had to use temporary or supply teachers in various classes. This has been managed well to minimise the disruption to pupils' education. There are sufficient members of support staff to aid pupils' learning, although they are not always used to best effect in the junior classes. Very good nursery nurses in nursery and reception make a significant contribution to the way children settle in to school and make good progress. Despite limited storage areas, accommodation is good and aids learning. Specialist rooms, such as the ICT suite and music rooms, are particularly useful. The school's grounds are extensive, but not yet developed to make best use of them. Good resources, such as in English, mathematics and ICT, aid learning. Resources in science, although adequate, do not help to challenge or extend pupils skills sufficiently.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **good** provision for the welfare, health, safety and personal security of its pupils. Adults in the school provide **good** levels of support, advice and guidance for those in their care, and make **good** arrangements to seek and act upon their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The careful and efficient arrangements for pupils' care, protection, health and safety create a secure and safe environment that provides strong support for pupils' education.

- The improving consultation with, and involvement of, pupils in school life make them feel valued because they know that their voices are heard.
- The partnership involving school, home and church gives added strength to the arrangements for pupils' support, advice and guidance.

Commentary

21. The school's managers take full advantage of their upgraded premises by maintaining high standards of health and safety. Regular tests of alarms and equipment, frequent rehearsal of evacuation procedures, training for all staff in child protection and rigorous attention to school security provide an atmosphere of security and wellbeing that makes pupils feel safe and well cared for. Teachers effectively monitor how well pupils with special educational needs are progressing towards meeting their individual learning targets and use assessments well to identify and plan work.
22. Representation on the school council, previously limited to older pupils, is soon to be extended to include younger members of the school community. Year-group representatives take their work seriously, consulting their peers widely before submitting proposals to the school council. Pupils are presently submitting suggestions for improvements to the school playground. The school's managers have already taken action to improve the toilet areas at the request of the school council. Such high levels of co-operation and trust between pupils and staff make all feel valued and respected as part of the school family, thus promoting confidence and commitment. Pupils responding to the survey acknowledge that the school takes good care of them. One pupil, however, who had taken a 'knock', did not really appreciate the reassurances of the dinner lady who repeatedly told him he would be fine, while all the time he knew he felt really sore! That was the only item he entered under the heading of 'Things you would like to change about your school'.
23. Arrangements for entry to the Foundation Stage and transfer to the main receiver school are conducted with great sensitivity, in order to minimise upset at these crucial points in children's lives. Membership of the school community completes a triangle of care for new pupils that already includes home and parish. As they progress through the school, they respond to the ethos of care by growing in confidence, self-esteem and learning respect for others. The school has an intimate knowledge of its pupils, both through its informal networks and relationships, and more formally through the well-developed tracking and monitoring procedures. In consequence, pupils are appropriately challenged and supported according to their needs, starting with the breakfast club in the morning, through the 'healthy eating' snacks and lunch, right up to the well supported after-school activities such as the very popular choir. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well provided for.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The **very good** links with parents, together with the **strong** links established with other schools and the community, have a significant bearing on the school's success in maintaining high educational standards in the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The information provided for parents by the school is of a very high quality, enabling parents to support at home what their children learn at school.
- Membership of the church/school community helps pupils to develop a care and concern for others in the wider community, thus promoting their own personal development.
- The good links with other schools and colleges help to enrich this school's curriculum.

Commentary

24. The great majority of parents feel very well informed about school matters, including their children's progress. They make special mention of the much-improved written annual reports, which now include areas for improvement, and of the reading diaries, which help them to support their children's learning. The lively monthly newsletter, the prospectus, and the governors' annual report keep parents very well informed about school activities, while the parents' evenings, the curricular workshops and the open-door policy provide ample opportunity for parents to consult with teachers. The school communicates and works very effectively with parents who have children with special educational needs. They are fully informed about their children's individual learning targets and pupils receive good levels of mutual support as a result. Many parents show their appreciation for the dedication of school staff by supporting the considerable fund-raising efforts of the Parent Teacher Association. For its part, the school readily acknowledges the good contribution made by parents in supporting their children's learning at home, and in being a main player in the life of the school.
25. St Gregory's school is a caring community. Its strong Christian caring ethos, echoed in its mission statement, is reflected both in the care that pupils receive and in the care and concern they show to the disadvantaged in society. Thus, they raise considerable sums of money for local, national and international charities such as Operation Christmas Child, Nugent Care Society, and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD). Involvement in such activities promotes within pupils a greater sense of citizenship and social responsibility as part of their personal development.
26. The school has established productive links with other schools and colleges, such as those in the Maghull and District Cluster of Schools, and Southport College. Benefits to the school include not only the fruitful exchange of ideas and good practice, but also the use of resources and personnel to enrich the educational experience of all pupils. The developing curricular provision for children in nursery and reception is benefiting from the links established with the Early Excellence Centre in Huddersfield and also from the introduction of home visits.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. The headteacher provides **very good** leadership. Governance is also **very good**. There is **good** leadership by the other key members of staff, and management overall is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's very good leadership has established a 'one school' culture.
- The governing body knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school very well.
- The school's senior managers and curricular leaders provide good leadership.
- The overall quality of management is good and ensures the effective running of the school.

Commentary

27. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and this has ensured the school has developed well since the amalgamation. She has a clear view of its development and has been successful in bringing about many improvements since her appointment just over three years ago. Primarily, she has built a team that has a shared commitment to school improvement, raising standards and building self-esteem in all staff and pupils through the valuing ethos of the school. She provides very clear educational direction and has gained the confidence of parents and governors.
28. The governors also have very clear aims for the future direction of the school. They accepted the challenge of the amalgamation, and made the astute appointment of the current headteacher. They share the headteacher's aspirations and work together in a spirit of mutually

supportive co-operation. Difficult decisions over sensitive staffing issues are not shied away from. Governors are involved in the development and monitoring of the school improvement plan, and all have subject links and are well briefed in their own subjects. This enables them to be particularly well placed to know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors effectively offer challenge to the school in the role of critical friend, and fulfil their responsibilities very well. Governors apply best value principles and always consider the school's best interests in the light of its financial position in all their dealings.

29. The senior staff and curricular leaders carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and ensure that the full range of curricular experiences is delivered. Planning is regularly monitored, and a programme of lesson observations is carried out each year. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator fully promotes equality of opportunity for pupils with special educational needs. She has a good overview of provision across the school and effectively monitors the quality of provision and is well supported in this by the school's link governor for special educational needs. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good and the area is very effectively managed. This has helped to ensure continued good provision and, hence, children's progresses, during a period in which temporary teachers have had to be employed in the nursery. Currently, the role of the deputy headteacher is not fully developed.
30. There is a strong commitment by the headteacher and staff to raise the standards of pupils' achievement through self-evaluation. The school has very good monitoring procedures in place to analyse performance data, and to assess the quality of teaching across the school by the headteacher and subject leaders. Effective target setting, linked to the school improvement plan and performance management, ensures that teachers and teaching assistants are able to address the school's current priorities of mathematics, ICT and writing. A good programme of professional development is ensuring that training needs in literacy and numeracy are met, and the school has links with the local beacon school for best practice to be shared. Teaching staff are deployed well according to their strengths and used effectively to ensure all needs are met.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	539,013	Balance from previous year	128,048
Total expenditure	545,769	Balance carried forward to the next	121,292
Expenditure per pupil	2,590		

31. The governors' finance committee is well briefed and involved in key spending decisions. It has considered the implications of the 20 per cent surplus held on the current budget. They decided to use it prudently over the next three years to act as a safety net against likely budget cuts linked to changes in the funding formula to be used by the local education authority and the possibility of further reductions in pupil numbers. This will enable them to maintain single-age classes and to earmark funding for further building work to improve the school's facilities. Taking pupils' good achievement into account and the expenditure per pupil, the school gives very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The school provides a **good** education for children in the Foundation Stage.

Most lessons observed focused on the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Information about children's attainment when they start school shows that it is broadly average. However, it varies from year to year; this year's reception class is above average, but pupils currently in Year 2 were below average when they started. Children's achievements are good because of the very well-planned curriculum and the good quality of teaching and learning overall. A nursery class was established when the infant and junior schools amalgamated. The nursery operates mornings only, and children usually start in the September of the school year in which they are four; they transfer to reception full time in the September of the year in which they are five. Most children in the reception class transferred from the school's nursery. Good links have been established with parents, including the introduction of home visits. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management for this stage of children's education. The Nursery has been successfully introduced, and has been supported well during the teacher's maternity leave. Nursery nurses make a valuable contribution to children's progress. Assessment procedures are very thorough and effective in securing good rates of progress by children.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children settle quickly into school and routines are well established.
- Children make good progress in developing very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Children are likely to exceed the expected goals by the end of reception.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

32. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The management of children's behaviour is very good. In both nursery and reception, adults create a warm, welcoming learning environment and insist on high standards of behaviour. Children in nursery are not always used to listening closely to an adult or other children, and about half do not yet co-operate well with others. The high expectations of the teacher and her assistant help children understand the importance of behaving well and considering others and, by reception, good progress has been made. Adults ensure a consistent message and focus on children's personal development in all activities. Children in both nursery and reception are given responsibility for their own actions and for learning independently for short periods of time, particularly at the start of each session. They are also responsible for registering themselves when they arrive. Children learn to relate to each other very well, talking in pairs about activities they are engaged in, playing together in groups with construction equipment and taking turns to speak and listen as part of a whole-class group. Children in nursery still find this latter exercise difficult but, by reception, it is well developed. The teachers and nursery nurses respect the children and value their contributions; they encourage children with questions and listen carefully to their replies. Very effective use is made of praise, particularly as the reasons for praise are emphasised. By reception, children maintain their concentration very well because the tasks are interesting and adults in the class support them very well. Children exceed the expectations for their age and their achievements are good. Children's individual needs are assessed promptly through home visits, discussions with parents and careful observations.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities are provided for children to speak and listen, and to develop early writing skills.
- Communication, language and literacy are used very well across the curriculum.
- A love of books and early reading skills are developed successfully.
- Children are on target to exceed the expected goals by the end of reception.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

33. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Children learn to listen well because the teachers choose stories to interest them. Adults engage them by encouraging children to join in and by asking questions about what has been read. Children in nursery are praised for listening well which is not a skill that is well developed for all children. In both nursery and reception, the teachers' high expectations of listening result in children quickly acquiring this skill. All children are encouraged to extend their speaking skills through a range of individual and group activities. Often, the final part a session is used to encourage individuals to explain what they have been doing to the whole class. All adults interact very well with children on an individual basis, extending their vocabulary and building their confidence and self-esteem. Adults are careful to involve all children, including those who are less forthcoming. Role-play is used very well to develop speaking and listening skills. In reception, adults join in with the activities associated with the 'St. Gregory's Clinic', involving children in the wide range of opportunities offered to develop language skills.
34. Throughout most lessons, there is a strong literacy content. Children's knowledge of letter sounds is extended well using stories and pictures. The letter 'Z' was the new one introduced, with children identifying features from a picture, such as zip, zebra crossing and zigzag, which began with the letter. Children also learnt how to write the letter. Books are shared extensively to support learning across a range of topics and the knowledge of sounds, and the acquisition of new words encouraged. Children are taught to handle books with care, value them and share their enjoyment. Good use is made of 'big books' so that all children in the class can enjoy them together. Children enjoy books, know the way pages are turned and know words have meaning. The most able children in reception read simple text and demonstrate an enthusiasm for their favourite books, such as 'Thomas the Tank Engine'. Early writing skills are especially well developed. There are many opportunities, in both nursery and reception, for mark making and, in reception, a group of children were taught very well to write a letter to parents inviting them to bring their children into the clinic for an injection. This work concentrated on children writing initial and final letters and sounds of the words involved.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievements are good and above expectations for their age.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

35. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Mathematical development is extended across the curriculum. In nursery, opportunities are taken so that children begin to recognise numbers when playing a board game and throwing dice. Puzzles develop colour knowledge and shape-matching skills well. In reception, children sing number songs to extend their understanding of numbers one to ten. The teacher's very effective use of the 'washing line' developed reception children's knowledge of the order of numbers, and those that were one more, one less or fitted into the gaps created. These children show their good security with numbers up to ten and, for about half the class, to 20. Good opportunities are available for children to develop an awareness of a range of flat shapes, and they name ones such as 'squares', 'triangles' and 'circles' correctly. As part of the role-play clinic, children buy items such as shampoo and talcum powder, and weigh babies using an accurate balance and record the measurements obtained.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development is **good**. Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's cultural development is promoted well.
- Children's skills when using computers are progressing well.
- With the exception of aspects of physical development, children are on target to exceed the expected goals by the end of reception.
- The outside area and resources are not yet sufficiently well established.

Commentary

36. These areas of learning were not a major focus during the inspection, but evidence available shows that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are provided with good opportunities to explore at first hand by handling various materials. Nursery children had heard the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' and worked well together to build houses made of straw, sticks and bricks to confirm which could be blown or knocked down easily. The role-play clinic emphasised aspects of growth and the need for proper health care. These activities also ensured children worked with dolls representing a range of ethnic backgrounds. Good opportunities are provided to explore the properties of sand, water and dough. Photographs of Barnaby Bear introduced children to positional language, such as 'inside', 'behind', and 'up'. Children draw simple maps of their journey to school, showing good observational skills, for instance a tree, my house and a roundabout. Children use the computer mouse with good accuracy to draw and colour pictures of Barnaby Bear. A visiting advanced skills teacher used questions and resources very effectively when working with individual children, so that they observed and drew their own faces on the computer. These activities made a positive contribution to the development of computer skills. In the role-play, children used the cash register and 'electronic' payment card correctly. The topic of 'celebrations' is used effectively in both nursery and reception to raise children's awareness of a range of cultures, such as Chinese New Year. By the start of Year 1, most children will exceed the goals expected.
37. The role-play in both nursery and reception makes a good contribution to children's creative development. Adults help significantly by becoming involved and suggesting activities to extend children's learning. Reception children had observed drawings and paintings by Edgar Degas. They drew their own figures by copying his style well, demonstrating their good observational skills.

38. Inside the classrooms, there are many opportunities provided to develop children's manipulative skills. These include writing, drawing and colouring, handling puzzle pieces, assembling construction apparatus and using the computer mouse. The success of these activities is evident in the improvement seen, for instance, in children's colouring of pictures and figures they have drawn. Although physical education lessons using the hall are planned, it was not possible to observe one during the inspection. A small outdoor area adjacent to the reception classroom is being developed well to provide learning in all areas of the curriculum. A further enclosed area outside nursery is used for riding tricycles and using other wheeled toys, as well as, for instance, building activities. The area is currently rather bare. The space currently available is too limited and there is not enough equipment to extend children's physical development sufficiently, for instance for climbing, balancing and riding. The school is aware of the need to extend the opportunities for children in the outside areas.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils is good.
- Pupils attain high standards by the age of eleven.
- Teachers promote reading very effectively and standards in reading are particularly high across all age groups.
- The curriculum is very broad and well balanced across all areas and the subject is greatly enriched through extra-curricular activities.
- The leadership and management of English are very good.
- Teachers do not always deploy support staff sufficiently well to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

39. Pupils' achievement in English is good throughout the school and, by the age of eleven, they attain standards well above the national average. The results of the National Curriculum tests for pupils aged eleven since the year 2000 show that the high standards achieved by pupils have been maintained and are well above the national average. Results in the 2003 tests show a very high percentage of pupils attained at the higher Level 5. The results of the 2003 national tests for seven-year-olds show pupils reached standards above the national average in reading and well above the national average in writing. Inspection findings show that the current Year 2 pupils are overall in line with the national average although, in reading, pupils show above average standards for their age. This fall in standards can be attributed to the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in this particular group of pupils; however, the present Year 1 pupils show they are attaining standards in line with the school's trend of high achievement in both reading and writing. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good and in line with all other groups of pupils. Pupils' individual education plans have precise literacy targets and work is suitably planned for them.
40. Standards in speaking and listening are above average across the school. Teachers provide pupils with plenty of opportunities, such as paired discussion and drama, in order to develop their speaking and listening skills. In a Year 5 personal and social education lesson, the teacher very effectively challenged pupils to justify their opinions as to why they might not agree with another's point of view about banning smoking in public places. Teachers use questioning techniques very skilfully to challenge pupils to give extended answers and this contributes significantly to the good achievement of pupils. By the age of eleven, pupils express their views and opinions very clearly through extended speech. Pupils throughout the school listen to adults and each other very attentively and this supports their learning well in other subjects.

41. Standards in reading are well above average in both the infants and juniors. Teachers promote reading very well and, from an early age, pupils begin to acquire a love of books and reading. Home/school reading diaries are used very effectively by teachers to communicate with parents about how they can support their children's learning at home and as a means of monitoring pupils' progress. This contributes significantly to the very good achievement of pupils in reading. Pupils across the school read a wide range of books and, by the age of eleven, pupils are very confident, fluent and expressive readers.
42. Standards in writing are well above the national average by the age of eleven. Across the school, but particularly in the juniors, pupils achieve high standards. In Year 6, pupils' writing is often excellent for their age with good use of well-phrased, complex sentences to express what they mean and they use carefully-selected vocabulary in order to make their writing interesting to the reader. Pupils use a range of punctuation accurately and their knowledge of grammar is good. Pupils' spelling and handwriting skills are above average and their written work is well organised and presented in all subjects across the curriculum. The use of word processing supports the development of writing, and pupils use it to edit text.
43. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' curricular planning is good and this ensures that the English curriculum is broad and well balanced across all areas of the subject. The subject is also supported well through well-planned extra-curricular activities such as theatre visits. Skilful questioning techniques extend pupils' thinking well and effectively develop pupils' speaking skills. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which enables them to give clear explanations and teach key skills effectively. When there are shortcomings in teaching, support assistants are not used sufficiently well to assist pupils' learning, and guided writing is insufficiently structured to help learning.
44. The leadership and management of English are very good. Both statutory and non-statutory tests are analysed very carefully to identify areas of learning that need further development, and action planning for development is very appropriate and successful in raising standards in the subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

45. There are good cross-curricular links with other subjects in order to develop pupils' literacy skills. Teachers provide plenty of opportunity for pupils to write in different styles, at length and for different purposes across the curriculum and this contributes significantly to the good progress and achievement of pupils. In history, Year 6 pupils wrote letters home to illustrate child labour conditions in the Victorian era. In design and technology, pupils write detailed evaluations about the products that they make and, in science, they write about scientific investigations in an appropriate style and format. They also study texts about famous scientists, such as Jenner, and use the information to complete worksheets.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve above average standards by Year 6.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- All groups of pupils are well provided for in lessons.
- The additional strategies support the learning of the lower attaining pupils well.
- There is good subject leadership and management.

Commentary

46. By Year 6, pupils achieve above average standards and this is confirmed by evidence obtained during the inspection. Results have tended to fluctuate since the school opened. Although over time they are broadly in line with the national trend, the average of the last three years shows above average performance. By Year 2, from inspection evidence, attainment is in line with the national average. Although this is below the recent trend, it represents good progress for this group of pupils compared to their below average attainment levels on entry to the school.
47. By Year 6, pupils achieve well as the result of good teaching and good coverage of all areas of mathematics. They show a high level of competence in using the four rules of number and apply them accurately for problem solving. Good progress is made in all other areas of mathematics, and their work is generally neatly presented and set out carefully. All have individual targets so they know the areas they need to improve.
48. In Year 2, pupils make good progress in the development of numerical skills, and are secure with numbers to at least 100. They count on and back in twos, and double tens to 100. They are developing confidence in calculating the total of a number of given coins, and working out change using a variety of methods.
49. The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, and teachers provide a variety of interesting and imaginative activities to ensure pupils' learning, the consolidation of skills and to move learning on at a good pace. They make good provision for meeting the needs of all groups of pupils through their planning. The higher attaining pupils are provided with more challenging work to extend and develop their mathematical knowledge and skills to a good level. In all classes, this group is well catered for, provided with suitable resources to make their tasks interesting and make good progress as a result. The use of booster lessons is having a beneficial impact on the middle and lower attaining pupils in Year 6 on improving their level of achievement. The additional strategies provide good support for the lower attaining pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 through more accurately targeted work. Pupils with special educational needs receive a good level of support to enable them to achieve well against the targets on their individual education plans. The use of an ICT mathematics program supports their good progress through its systematic step-by-step structure. ICT is also used effectively across the school to support the development of mathematics skills through a good selection of software.
50. The subject leader is very experienced, and carries out regular monitoring activities to ensure good standards of teaching and learning are being achieved. She analyses performance data to ensure all areas are being adequately covered, and looks for any patterns of under-achievement, particularly when standards are fluctuating. A good programme of training in the delivery of the National Numeracy Strategy has been provided both for teachers and teaching assistants. Her leadership and management are good because she has a good overview of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. Although there is evidence of some use of mathematics in science and geography in data handling and measurement, the use of mathematics across the curriculum is only satisfactory because there are few planned opportunities to support the consistent development of mathematical skills. Even in science and geography, the extent to which numeracy skills are used is not as extensive as it could be, for instance there are few opportunities for pupils to use and compare data that are new to them and to make relevant deductions and generalisations.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**. Pupils in both Years 2 and 6 demonstrate attainment that is above average, but their investigative skills are not as well developed as their scientific knowledge.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in acquiring scientific knowledge.
- Pupils enjoy science and demonstrate very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The development of pupils' investigative skills does not have a high enough focus and the curriculum is not well planned to promote these.
- Teaching and learning are mostly good, but teaching assistants are not always used to best effect.
- The development of science in the school has been hampered by the absence, through illness, of the co-ordinator.

Commentary

52. In the past four years, pupils' results in Year 6 have been mostly above average. The exception was in 2001 when they were below average. When compared with the results of schools with pupils of similar attainment at the end of Year 2, the results suggest that progress has not always been sufficient. However, this judgement is based on the very high standards achieved in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's assessments for pupils in Year 2 indicate broadly average attainment. Attainment currently is above average by Year 6, but with less high attainment in the skills of investigation than the acquisition of knowledge. A similar picture exists in Year 2, although there is more high attainment than the previous teacher assessments suggest.
53. Pupils are keen to learn about science and enjoy being involved in practical activities, such as when Year 2 pupils investigated electrical circuits and the role of switches in opening or closing a circuit. Higher attaining pupils rose to the challenge of trying to create a switch using a range of materials. The teaching within the lesson was very good, but its impact limited in part by the restricted range of switches that were available for pupils to use initially. In addition, the teacher's questions exposed a limited understanding of the materials being used and whether or not they conducted electricity. In this lesson, as in all the others seen, learning was aided by pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour. Teaching is good, and never less than satisfactory. In most teaching, pupils were engaged quickly, good reference was made to previous learning and questions were used well to encourage learning. In Year 6, for instance, these features helped pupils consider the rate at which sugar cubes dissolved in different temperatures of water. The lesson also demonstrated that, while pupils' knowledge was good, they were less sure about raising questions and planning investigations for themselves. The use of teaching assistants to produce materials and give out resources for practical work limits the learning opportunities offered to pupils. In pupils' written work, it was evident that careful thought is often given to adapting the ways pupils record their work. This helped to ensure those with special educational needs achieved well. The planning to develop pupils' scientific skills is not sufficiently well thought out to ensure the gradual development and use of them and, as a result, the oldest pupils do not reach as high a standard as evident in their knowledge. Assessment is well organised and used carefully to monitor pupils' progress. End-of-unit tests are used to good effect. The quality of marking is good and helpful. It praises pupils for good work and also raises questions or suggests further areas to improve.
54. The curriculum is planned using national guidance, but the detailed guidance given to teachers is not sufficient to ensure topics are always pitched at the correct level. In the Year 2 lesson, which was very well taught, the material was challenging, especially as not all pupils had a secure grounding in areas that should have been covered earlier. Insufficient guidance is available to ensure pupils' scientific skills are developed in a logical way, or to a consistently

high standard. Older pupils do not have the skills to raise a scientific question and then to plan a detailed investigation to answer the question. The range of resources available is only adequate, and does not extend pupils sufficiently. Literacy skills are often used very well as pupils write about scientific information they have found out or investigations they have been involved with. Another good example, the reading and summarising of information about Jenner and the discovery of the smallpox vaccine, helped raise pupils' awareness of cultural and historical aspects of science. Although there are some examples of mathematical and ICT skills being used to support science, they are not extensive enough. The recent absence of the co-ordinator due to illness has had an adverse effect on the development of science in the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**. Standards are in line with those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy the subject and achieve well.
- The computer suite and other resources support learning well.
- There is a good curriculum with well-planned links to other subjects.
- Teachers' confidence has grown and they deliver effective lessons.
- The subject leader provides good leadership and management.

Commentary

55. Pupils have regular access to the newly-installed computer suite. They benefit greatly from the good-quality resources made available to them, and show intense enjoyment using the systems for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. Good levels of achievement result from lessons because pupils are well motivated. By the end of Year 2, pupils produce effective and colourful designs in the style of Piet Mondrian, and enjoy the challenge of the use of some of the mathematics programs that ensure their numerical skills develop at a good pace. The use of word processing supports the development of writing, and pupils use it to edit text. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they develop their own multi-media presentations effectively, especially for the audience of the youngest pupils in school. They work well together in pairs to incorporate images, text and sound. Currently, they have few opportunities to use the Internet to carry out research other than to support work they do at home. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and progress well. This is helped by the relevant use of ICT to support these pupils' work in English and mathematics.
56. The subject leader has ensured that the required amount of training for teachers and teaching assistants has been completed. This, coupled with the high level of personal support she provides to colleagues, has ensured a strengthening of staff confidence to teach the subject. This has been evident in the good quality of teaching seen in lessons. Teachers have not baulked at tackling ambitious areas in order to extend pupils' learning and to provide them with valuable experiences. The subject leader has used the funding well to provide good-quality facilities and plans to build on these further in the future. The well-planned curriculum provides good opportunities for ICT to support other subjects. Assessment procedures are sound and are currently being reviewed and extended.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

57. The use of ICT across the curriculum is particularly good where it is planned, as evident in this term's focus on art and design. Mathematics is supported well, and the use in other areas is developing satisfactorily, such as opportunities to word process text and produce bar charts of scientific data. The use of the Internet to support learning in other subjects is restricted.

HUMANITIES

Geography

58. Geography was not a focus for inspection, but observation of pupils' work indicates that provision is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is based on the national guidelines. Standards are in line by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are provided with suitable experiences to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Writing opportunities are frequently provided to support learning. Recording data in tables and diagrams reinforces the development of pupils' understanding and links well with the use of mathematical skills.

History

Provision in history in Years 1 and 2 is **very good**. Some very good use of resources, visits, artefacts and role-play ensures pupils achieve very well in their development of knowledge and understanding of history. Insufficient evidence is available to make a firm judgement about provision in Years 3 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by Year 2.
- 'Hands-on' experiences enrich pupils' learning.
- Very good use is made of resources and visits.
- The quality of teaching is good.

Commentary

59. Only lessons in Years 1 and 2 were seen and, consequently, it is not possible to make a firm judgement on standards and teaching by Year 6. However, from an examination of their work, it would appear that pupils are achieving at least in line with the national average, and they are receiving an appropriately-planned curriculum.
60. By Year 2, pupils achieve above average standards because of the good quality of the teaching, and the way in which lessons are presented. The school places great emphasis on bringing history 'alive' through involving pupils in role-play activities such as Samuel Pepys' House in Year 2 and a Victorian washday in Year 1. Good partnership teaching ensures opportunities to participate are available for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, and reading, writing and drawing skills are developed well alongside these experiences. Pupils' confidence in their development of speaking skills in 'hot-seating' activities grows alongside their developing knowledge of history. These activities are enjoyable and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, participate with great enthusiasm and interest. The effective use of time lines ensures pupils develop a sense of chronology. Homework tasks are shared well with parents and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
61. The curriculum is well planned to provide interesting opportunities for all pupils throughout the school, including visits, to explore history at close quarters. This is undoubtedly a successful approach and enables pupils to attain high standards.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design and design and technology

Provision in the creative arts of art and design and design and technology is **very good**. The standards achieved by pupils across the school are **above those expected**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement in the creative arts is good.
- Standards in art and design and design and technology are above average throughout the school.
- There is very good curricular provision for the creative arts and this contributes significantly to the good achievement of pupils.

Commentary

62. The achievement of pupils across the school in both art and design and design and design technology is good. In art and design, no lessons were seen during the inspection. However, discussion with teachers and the scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning show standards are above expectations by the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils also attain standards that are above average by the end of the infants and juniors in design and technology.
63. Curricular planning and provision in art and design and design and technology are very good and contribute significantly to the good achievement of pupils in these subjects. In both subjects, all areas of learning are effectively taught through well-planned activities. In art and design, Year 5 pupils investigate how different types of drawing pencils can create different tones in shading and then go on to apply these drawing techniques skilfully while engaged in observational drawing of various fruits. In design and technology, pupils across the school make good-quality designs and plans of models and show good attainment in the finished products that they make. Year 2 pupils effectively incorporate a wind-up mechanism in their models to depict various themes such as Father Christmas climbing out of a chimney pot and a bucket being raised from a well, and Year 5 pupils skilfully make working stringed musical instruments such as guitars. From an early age, pupils learn to evaluate the products they make and suggest ways in which their models could be improved.
64. Too few lessons were seen during the inspection to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching in both subjects. However, in the one lesson seen in design and technology in the infants, the quality of teaching was good. Other inspection evidence, such as the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work and the above average standards achieved by pupils across the school, suggests that the quality of teaching in both subjects is at least good. Teachers use a good range of resources to support pupils' learning and this enables pupils to work with and experience a good range of materials in both subjects. The curriculum is very much enriched by extra-curricular activities and other well-planned activities such as theme weeks in which pupils are engaged in a range of relevant activities, which effectively develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in both subjects. In art and design, particularly, teachers use ICT programs well, such as 'Dazzle', to support pupils' learning in the subject. Assessment in art and design and design and technology is satisfactory. In design and technology, good use is made of pupils' evaluation and self-assessment of their own work.
65. The leadership and management of the subjects are very good. Both subjects have a high profile across the school because both subject leaders work very effectively as a team in order to develop and raise standards through well-planned activities and events.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**. Standards attained by many pupils are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils is good.
- Gifted, talented and higher attaining pupils particularly achieve very high standards.
- The curricular provision is very good and it is greatly enriched by extra-curricular activities that enable pupils to perform in a range of venues both locally and nationally.
- Resources for the subject are good and are used very effectively by teachers to enhance pupils' learning in the subject.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

66. Music has a very high profile across the school. The overall achievement of pupils across the school is good. The achievement of gifted, talented and higher attaining pupils is very good. Pupils achieve well in the subject because teachers have secure subject knowledge, which enables them to teach skills effectively. Extra-curricular activities, such as the Irish band and choir, contribute significantly to pupils' learning in the subject. Other well-planned events, such as the Irish band performing at the Royal Festival Hall in London and at local community events such as Maghull Farmers' Market, not only enhance and contribute to the good achievement of pupils in the subject but also support very effectively pupils' social and cultural development. The observation of pupils engaged in musical activities during the inspection, such as the Irish band and the choir, show that pupils are confident performers and can play musical instruments, such as the flute, with outstanding ability for their age. Across the school, standards in singing are above average.
67. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which enables them to teach specific skills well. The subject is well planned and teachers use resources, including the use of peripatetic teachers and a well-equipped music room, very well to support pupils' learning in the subject. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and the co-ordinator works very effectively within a creative arts team of co-ordinators in order to promote the subject across the school.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular activities make a positive contribution to physical education.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but pupils are not always attentive enough.

Commentary

68. Physical education was not a major focus during the inspection, but two lessons were observed in Years 3 and 4. Pupils have access to the full physical education curriculum. Extra-curricular activities for junior pupils contribute well to the development of pupils' skills. The dance performances of Year 6 were outstanding. Good equality of opportunity is provided through clubs, such as a games club and both girls' and boys' football. Satisfactory teaching helps pupils develop a range of gymnastic skills, such as balances and rolls. Performance of pupils in Year 4 is at the standard expected. In both lessons observed, the initial activities were well organised, clearly explained and pupils were involved well. Subsequent work, involving mats, was not so successful. In both lessons, as soon as mats were put out, pupils sat or lay on them while the teachers were talking or other pupils were performing. Some pupils became inattentive and did not gain as much as they could have from the activities. There was also a tendency to fiddle with the corners of the mats, again leading to inattention. Teachers often made good use of pupils' demonstrations to highlight good elements, but not enough guidance

was always given to improve performance, such as where rolls were being performed without control.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's ethos and thought given to personal development have a very positive impact.
- The school council introduces pupils to aspects of citizenship.
- There are regular opportunities to discuss personal and social issues in 'circle time'.
- Visits by members of the community, including members of the police force, fire brigade and the medical profession, have a positive impact.
- Sex education and education about the misuse of drugs are included in the science curriculum, together with additional provision in Year 6.

Commentary

69. The approach that the school takes is very good because it encompasses a very inclusive view of the subject. Personal development is integral to all that the school does, and this leads to the very positive attitudes that pupils show. Assemblies are very effective at engaging pupils and making them reflect on aspects of social development. A very good demonstration, using Teddy Bears, helped pupils consider how everyone is different and that differences should be recognised, valued and celebrated. This concept had been introduced previously by reference to 'The Holocaust'. The headteacher takes each class for 'circle time discussions', which strongly promote personal education. In a very good lesson observed, Year 5 pupils explored the importance of expressing an opinion and that people can have different points of view. A school council has been established and this involves pupils in decision making and working together for the benefit of everyone in the school. It is currently composed of only junior pupils, but it is intended to extend it to younger pupils. Members of the community, such as the police, fire brigade and the medical profession, contribute well to aspects of pupils' personal, social and health education. Issues such as sex education and drugs misuse are usually explored with relevant parts of the science National Curriculum programme. Pupils are given responsibility for tasks around the school, and they take these seriously. Year 6 pupils are very positive about the 'buddy system', which sees them helping reception children.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	N/A
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	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	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

