

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST STEPHEN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Skipton

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121640

Headteacher: Mr P Thompson

Lead inspector: Mrs Lynne Read

Dates of inspection: 5–7 July 2004

Inspection number: 261712

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:	189
School address:	Gargrave Road Skipton North Yorkshire
Postcode:	BD23 1PJ
Telephone number:	01756 793787
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Peter Marshall

Date of previous inspection: 6 July 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Stephen's Catholic Primary is smaller than most schools, with 189 pupils on roll. It serves the parish of St Stephen's and Sacred Heart which cover a wide and diverse area of Skipton and surrounding locality. Housing is mixed. Overall, social and economic circumstances are average and children entering the reception class have a range of learning experiences and attainments that are average for the age group. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (17.5 per cent) is average; most of these have difficulties with learning and a few with behaviour. Two per cent of the school population has a statement of special educational needs and this matches the national average. Around five per cent of pupils claim their entitlement to free school meals, which is below average. Most pupils are of a white, British background. Some have Asian descent and there are a few Traveller children in school. There are no pupils who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Years 2 to 6 were preparing to move into the new premises to join the younger pupils the week after the inspection.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21199	L Read	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage
13459	E Mills	Lay inspector	
22482	B Potter	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Physical education
30559	J Taylor	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Music Special educational needs English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**St Stephen's is a very good school** and provides very good value for money.

Teaching is very good. Leadership and management are very good, and are firmly focused on high standards and ensuring that all pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Attainment is well above average in English, mathematics, science. It is above expectations in geography, history and physical education.
- Very good leadership and management drive the school forward successfully.
- Very good teaching is responsible for the very good learning.
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development, resulting in very good attitudes to learning, very good behaviour and very profitable relationships.
- There are very good links with parents who hold the school in very high regard.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is very thorough and the information is used very effectively in teachers' planning.
- The long-term targets for learning that teachers set in English and mathematics are not always translated into child-friendly language for the pupils.
- The targets on the individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs are sometimes vague and do not always provide a useful guide for teachers.

### Improvements

There have been very good improvements since the time of the previous inspection, especially in teaching, standards, planning, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and assessment. Issues relating to subject leadership have been fully addressed. The new school building, due to be fully occupied very shortly, provides a very good improvement in accommodation and resources, especially for ICT and library facilities.

### 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	B	A*	B
Mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A
Science	A	B	A	B

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

**Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.** Children enter the reception class with average levels of prior learning and receive a very good start to their education. By the end of the year their attainment in language, mathematical and personal development is above average and some is well above average. Attainment at Year 2 is well above both the national average and that for similar schools. It is in the top 5 per cent for mathematics. From this high point, the school continues to achieve above-average progress during Years 3 to 6, largely by promoting attainment at the higher levels. In the 2003 tests for Year 6, standards were so high in English and mathematics that they put the school in the top 5 per cent in the country. In science the attainment was well above average. The high results are

indicative of the school's consistent and very good performance. Work seen during lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' workbooks confirm that attainment for the current group of Year 6 pupils is well above average for all three subjects. Achievement is very good because pupils have very good teaching and they work very hard. Progress in mathematics is outstanding. This is because pupils learn varied strategies for calculations and they have quick and accurate recall of number facts. Throughout the school, pupils who have special educational needs, those from different ethnic groups and the Traveller pupils progress at a rate equal to the majority. By Year 6, attainment in history, geography and physical education is above expectations. It was not possible to make a judgement for music or art and design. Higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted or talented have additional challenges in their work and achieve very well.

Pupils' **spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very good**. As a result pupils have very high standards of behaviour, very positive attitudes and there are very good relationships. These factors underpin the very good learning seen. Attendance is very good; punctuality is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good** and has a direct impact on the very high standards achieved. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is meticulously planned to meet the specific learning needs of the age group. Throughout school, teachers present their pupils with interesting lessons, driven at a fast pace. Assessment information is used very well to set work at different levels of difficulty so that all pupils have the challenge or support that they need to learn effectively. Teachers are very skilled at identifying and meeting individual needs, even though the recorded targets are not always helpful. Teaching assistants are well informed and make a good contribution to learning.

Curriculum. There is a good, broad curriculum that successfully meets the needs and interests of the pupils. Practical activities such as those in art, design and technology have been somewhat limited in the old building due to lack of space. Very good enrichment for the curriculum is provided through visits and visitors. Accommodation and resources in the new building are good overall but there is a lack of space for the reception children in their present classroom.

Care and guidance are good overall. Pupils form trusting relationships with adults and say that they feel safe. Guidance in the Foundation Stage and for personal development is very good. In Years 1 to 6 pupils receive good feedback in lessons and through marking. Teachers set challenging targets for learning in English and mathematics but these are not always recorded for pupils as a point of reference. The school has very good systems to ensure the health, and safety and welfare of pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good** and sharply focused on high attainment. Governance is very good. The headteacher and staff monitor school performance rigorously and take appropriate action where needed. The subject managers are effective; their leadership is reflected in the above-average standards across many areas of the curriculum. Governors have a very good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and play a pivotal role in shaping the school's direction and development.

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

The results of the parents' questionnaires and the meeting show that parents have very good levels of confidence in the school. Pupils are proud of their school and they play a good, active role in school development through their elected council.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- \*Ensure that long-term targets in English and mathematics are shared with pupils so that they can take a greater responsibility for their own learning.
- \*Ensure that where pupils have individual education plans, the learning goals are precise, measurable and form a clear guide for teachers.

\*Both of these points had already been identified by the school as areas for development.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children in the reception class achieve very well. Standards seen in Year 6 are well above average for English, mathematics and science. Achievement is **very good** in these subjects throughout school.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of their time in the reception class, children's attainment exceeds expectations in personal development, language work and mathematical understanding.
- In the Year 2 class, attainment is well above average level in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- In addition to the core subjects, pupils' attainment by Year 6 in history, geography and physical education is higher than nationally expected.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well in relation to their starting points.
- Boys and girls, Traveller children, pupils from different ethnic groups and those capable of higher attainment, achieve equally well.
- Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is improving well. It is in line with expectations for Year 6 and is on track to be above average for Year 5.

#### Commentary

1. When children enter school, their learning experiences match those expected for the age group. They achieve very well in personal and social development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical understanding. By the time they move into Year 1 attainment in these three areas is above expectations and, for significant number of higher attaining children, it is well above. Of particular note is the very high standard of writing. Children communicate meaning effectively in written form and the higher attaining ones write a well-sequenced story with plausible spelling. In knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative and physical development children achieve well overall and their attainment is in line with expectations by the end of the reception year. There are strengths in pupils' abilities to ask questions, follow a line of enquiry and to investigate the world around them. These factors support later learning in science and mathematics very well indeed.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.7 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	16.7 (15.9)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	19.2 (16.1)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 25 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. When compared with schools nationally and to those in similar circumstances, the 2003 results at the end of Year 2 were well above average, and there was a high percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates

that, in the current Year 2, the high standards are maintained. The school has worked hard to improve skills in mathematics where standards dipped in 2002. The success of the work done can be seen in the results for 2003 which were in the top 5 per cent in the country.

3. Pupils' spelling is largely accurate and they include detail in their well-punctuated sentences. In mathematics, pupils are confident in calculating mentally and have a secure understanding of shape, measures and in making graphs and charts. Skills of scientific enquiry and investigation are good. In ICT, pupils use the keyboard and the on-screen prompts efficiently when applying their skills across the full programme of study.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.1 (28.3)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	31.0 (30.2)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.6 (29.6)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in the 2003 tests was well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The very high standards attained in English and mathematics put the school in the top 5 per cent in the country. The comparison with similar schools is above average in English and science and well above in mathematics. With the very high attainment at Year 2, there is hardly any scope to improve the percentages of pupils attaining at the expected level so the teachers concentrate on improving attainment at the higher level. The success of their work is seen in the fact that 54 per cent of pupils attained the higher level 5 in 2003 and 64 per cent did so in mathematics and science. The school keeps very detailed records of pupils' attainment year on year and takes immediate action where the challenging targets are not met. This is the major factor that underpins the very good achievement. Evidence gathered from Year 6 during the inspection shows that standards for the present year group are well above average in all three subjects, with a high number of pupils working at the higher Level 5. Achievement is very good. Notable strengths were seen in skills of mathematical computation and in standards of writing. Last year's targets for the Year 6 pupils were broadly met, and in mathematics at Level 5 they were exceeded. The school is on track to achieve this year's targets, according to the detailed teacher assessments and records kept.
5. The school has a very effective system of setting learning targets year on year to guide teachers' planning. This ensures that pupils, including the higher attaining groups and those who are gifted or talented, achieve their potential. Boys and girls, pupils from the different ethnic groups and the Traveller children achieve equally well in their lessons. Test results show some slight differences between boys' and girls' results but there are imbalances of gender numbers in some year groups that can influence the statistics. In class, boys and girls do equally well because teachers find ways to engage both and choose topics to interest all.
6. Attainment in ICT is average by Year 6, and there have been very good improvements in the breadth of experiences across the programme of study since the inspection of 1998. The improved teaching, subject leadership and resources have all contributed to the better provision and attainment. Standards seen in Year 5 indicate that these pupils are

on track to achieve at an above-average level. Attainment in history and geography is above expectations, with major strengths in pupils' skills of historical enquiry, fieldwork and in mapping work. In physical education, attainment is also above average and learning is supported well by a good amount of competitions and clubs out of school hours. No overall judgements were made about attainment in music and art and design. Skills in English, mathematics and ICT are used very well to support learning in other subjects. The quality of writing across the curriculum is of an especially high standard.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Progress is measured as part of the school assessment procedures for all pupils and against the targets set in pupils' individual education plans. The advice of outside professionals is often sought in identifying targets for learning and developing strategies for teaching. This supports pupils' progress very well. The broad curriculum allows pupils to develop their creative, physical, thinking and practical skills, so that all have the opportunity to find their own talents.

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

The attitude of pupils to school and their behaviour are **very good** as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good attitudes of pupils ensure very good progress in their learning.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming and behave very well.
- Pupils work very hard and take great pride in their work.
- Relationships are very good; pupils have high respect for each other and their teachers.
- The school enables pupils to develop a wide range of social skills, prepares them well for life in a culturally diverse society and instils in them a strong moral code.

### **Commentary**

8. St Stephen's offers a very good environment for learning. It is a school in which welcome, care and hard work derive from the very strong Catholic ethos. The school's aims are successfully met on a day to day basis.
9. The children in the Foundation Stage develop very good attitudes to school. They are eager to learn and persevere patiently with their tasks. By the time they enter Year 1, they have exceeded the expected learning goals in personal education.
10. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes are consistently very good in Years 1 to 6 and only rarely do teachers find it necessary to correct inappropriate behaviour. When this happens it is done without confrontation and in a very supportive way. Pupils are taught the principles of right and wrong through the constant reinforcement of the code of conduct and class rules. They take responsibility for their own actions and are considerate of other people. Lessons are very orderly, with pupils listening carefully to their teachers and making very good and confident contributions to discussion. They move quickly and responsibly to their tasks, either working independently or in good collaboration with their class mates. The majority work very hard and the quality and the quantity of what they produce are of a consistently high standard. Visitors are made to

feel welcome by the polite and courteous manner in which they are greeted. Those pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and support assistants so that they gain in confidence and are fully involved in all activities. Pupils from the various ethnic groups and those from the Traveller families demonstrate the same very good attitudes and high levels of confidence.

#### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

#### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	150	4	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

11. There have been no exclusions in the present academic year. Where exclusions have occurred in the past, they have been fully considered in the best interests of all concerned and with the advice of the relevant specialist agencies.
12. The school council allows elected pupils from each year group to represent the views of their school friends and to shape the running of the school. This they do very well indeed. The older pupils are especially articulate in their expression of mature and responsible views and in their appreciation of other people's opinions. A 'buddy system' is in operation and is successful in ensuring that playtimes are enjoyed by all.
13. The parental responses show that parents value the school's commitment to developing their children's personal skills very highly. Virtually all agreed that the school helps their child to be mature and that pupils behave well. Views are well summed up by one parent's written comment, "Children's school days are happy and fulfilling".
14. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good and is a significant strength of the school. There are occasions for prayer and reflection at times before and at the end of school sessions. Strong links with the church enhance the provision for spirituality. This was seen in the weekly Mass in which pupils took a full and active part. They showed great reverence and those as young as Year 1 led the prayers confidently. Assemblies provide good occasions for spiritual, moral and social development. Teachers choose interesting stories to illustrate difficult concepts at an appropriate level of understanding. Pupils develop a strong commitment to charity work and are involved in several projects to help those less fortunate.
15. Both music and art make satisfactory contributions to the cultural development of pupils with opportunities to study the work of great artists and hear some of the work of composers from around the world and different times in history. A knowledge of local

history and world-wide cultural traditions is particularly well developed through topics in history and geography.

16. The school has very good links with the wider community which ensure that pupils meet people from a varied range of backgrounds. Multi-cultural awareness is a focus of planning and recent work has included the study of Indian dancing as well as visits to a mosque and a synagogue. This is very important in developing an awareness of the diverse nature of modern-day society and for encouraging respect for other faiths and beliefs.
17. The pupils' attendance is very good with no instances of unauthorised absences. Parents largely respect the school's request to avoid taking holidays during school terms and this helps to maintain the very high attendance figures. Rates of attendance are well monitored by the school and rewards given to encourage and maintain good practice. Pupils arrive on time, eager to start work.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.3	School data	0
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.*

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

There is a **very good** quality of education provided by the school and this is a major factor in the high standards attained.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching is **very good** in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6. There are **very good** processes in place for checking pupils' progress in English and mathematics and for setting challenging targets for future learning.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have a very good range of subject knowledge, including a very good understanding of the needs of the children in the Foundation Stage.
- The teachers' planning is very good and uses assessment information very well to set targets for pupils' learning, especially in English and mathematics. However, these targets are not always fully explained to pupils in Years 1 to 6 so that they can take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers use a very good range of strategies and resources to challenge, motivate and encourage pupils. They have very high expectations of endeavour and behaviour.
- Staff ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are fully involved in all lessons and receive the support that they need.

### **Commentary**

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (7%)	15 (50%)	12 (40%)	1 (3%)	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. The teaching in the reception class is very good and, in one lesson, it was excellent. Consequently, children make very good progress. There is a very strong focus on teaching the early skills in personal development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical understanding. This prepares children very effectively for their National Curriculum studies. The very good attitudes that are established at this early stage are reflected all through school. Topics are carefully planned to introduce new knowledge and understanding and also to consolidate and enhance previous learning. This promotes very good progress across all areas of study and especially good attainment in writing. There is a very good emphasis on practical experience and there are many opportunities for pupils to try out their own ideas. Consequently, children learn how to solve problems and investigate; skills that they use to good advantage in their later science and mathematics lessons. Within the teaching of physical development, there is a good emphasis on promoting manipulative skills. As a result, pupils develop their hand-eye co-ordination well and learn to handle pencils and other small tools effectively. The teacher does all she can to overcome the lack of space in the current classroom by regularly changing activities and creating a very good balance of teaching and learning across the recommended areas of study. However, there is no permanent large equipment to promote children's physical skills such as climbing and balancing. The teaching assistant is well informed and provides very good support in this class.
19. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 are successful in developing a very solid foundation across all subjects with mostly very good teaching and learning seen in Year 2. In both classes, pupils learn to use a good range of reading strategies to help them tackle new texts and, in mathematics and science lessons, they try out different approaches to problem solving. Skills in ICT are soundly promoted. These strengths in teaching and learning prepare pupils very effectively for the more demanding curriculum in the junior classes.
20. There are many strengths in the teaching and learning for Years 3 to 6, with mainly very good lessons and one example of excellent practice seen in the two classes for the older pupils. Mathematics and science lessons throughout the juniors include a very good emphasis on exploration and experimentation. As a result, pupils become confident mathematicians and learn to think as scientists. They are encouraged to pose their own questions and to try out different approaches to their work. Consequently, they show very good levels of interest and perseverance. The promotion of writing skills is a major strength in the teaching.
21. Throughout school, teachers prepare and plan their lessons with great care and with constant reference to prior learning, thus ensuring that pupils have the challenge or support that they need to do their best. Teachers share the learning goal with the pupils at the beginning of each lesson and then review the success achieved at the end. They provide good feedback in lessons and through marking. Teachers make good use of pupils' very good writing skills to enhance and extend learning, especially in geography and history. Information and communication technology is used extensively across the curriculum and this allows pupils to consolidate effectively the skills that they learn. The

electronic whiteboard is used particularly well in Year 5 to demonstrate new learning in ICT or to project text, diagrams and pictures for class discussions. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and actively engaged in supporting learning. Homework is well used to extend what is learned in class. The projects set for Year 6 pupils help to develop their independent study skills effectively and to prepare them well for the type of assignments that they will have at their secondary schools.

22. The checking of pupils' learning is very good in English, mathematics and science, and tracking records show each pupil's progress year on year. These records provide the essential information for the setting of future targets and for teachers' planning. Assessments of learning in the other subjects are completed regularly and the information is used well to plan the next steps. However, the opportunities for involving pupils fully in the learning process are sometimes missed because the targets are not always shared with them.
23. There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Assessments, tracking and target setting have improved well in the key subjects and expectations of learning are very high. Teachers have a secure knowledge across all subjects of the curriculum. This helps them to bring lessons to life and to successfully motivate their pupils. Very good relationships exist in classes, and pupils rise to the high expectations because they trust their teachers and know that help is readily available if they need it. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 work at an exacting pace and enjoy the varied challenges that their teachers set for them.
24. The headteacher evaluates the success of planning and teaching and there is a good programme of training in place to enhance skills. In this small school, teachers pool their ideas and successes, and this is a good way of sharing good practice.
25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils with difficulties are fully included in all classroom activities by the adaptation of tasks and materials which will enable them to succeed. This reflects the strong commitment to inclusion that is shared by governors, managers and all staff. Pupils who require additional help are identified as soon as possible when they begin school. Teachers get to know their pupils very well and cater effectively for their needs, although some learning goals recorded in the education plans do not provide good guidance for teachers. This could pose a problem for new or temporary staff. The role of the support assistants within lessons is well planned and they make a good contribution to the teaching team. Teachers use skilful and targeted questioning to ensure that all pupils are getting the best from their lessons, thereby enabling them to make consistent gains in their learning.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a **good** curriculum that meets the needs of all groups of pupils. There is very good enrichment for learning. Taking into account the new building, the accommodation is good. Resources are satisfactory overall and good for ICT.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Strategies for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science are very effective.
- There have been very good improvements in the provision for ICT.
- Subjects are well planned and this provides good guidance for teachers.

- Visits to places of interest and visitors to school enhance the curriculum very well.
- This is an inclusive school that meets the needs of all pupils very well.
- The subjects of art and design and design and technology are soundly promoted but experiences have been limited because of the cramped conditions in the old building.

## Commentary

26. The National Curriculum is fully in place and all statutory requirements are met. The national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy have been successfully adapted to match the particular needs of the pupils, including those capable of higher attainment. Very good improvements in the provision for ICT mean that pupils experience a wide range of work across all elements of the recommended programme of study. All subjects have clear planning based on national guidance that is evaluated and adapted to meet the particular needs of the school. The links between subjects are strong and contribute to the high standards attained; skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are especially well applied. Links are planned through the skills and expertise of the teachers and the school recognises that they now need to be recorded within the schemes of work for future reference.
27. The effectiveness of the curriculum is monitored and developed according to the changing needs of the pupils, parents and community. There is detailed analysis of the test results to identify areas that need further development. Plans are then implemented to redress the balance. Teachers make good use of specialist advice through good links with the local authority's special educational needs support service and outreach teams, for example, the Travellers' support service. This helps them to devise a curriculum that supports all groups of pupils well and to ensure full access to all areas of school life. Most support is provided within the classroom although some pupils are withdrawn for short periods of time for specialist tuition. Where this happens, teachers ensure that they do not miss other subject lessons.
28. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular clubs. A dedicated staff and a group of volunteers lead a range of sporting activities including tag rugby, football, netball, rounders and cricket for older pupils, and younger pupils are able to join an aerobics club. There are many opportunities to visit places of interest and very good use is made of the local environment for practical study, especially in history and geography. The residential visit for older pupils enables them to experience a wide range of more adventurous activities, such as rock climbing or building shelters. There are many visitors to school, who share their skills and experience, for example a group of Zulu singers provided an interesting and new experience for the pupils. Teams from St Stephen's participate in sports with other local schools and there are strong links with the church and community. These opportunities successfully contribute to the social development of pupils and enrich their learning generally.
29. There is a good range of expertise among teachers and they take advantage of training opportunities where appropriate so that they keep up-to-date with the most recent initiatives in education. The support assistants are well trained and experienced. They work closely with teachers to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils have good access to the whole curriculum.
30. Years 2 to 6 will move into the new premises very shortly to join the younger pupils. Accommodation for Years 1 to 6 is good with provision for an information and



communication technology suite and a separate library. The spacious classrooms offer much better opportunities for practical work. Very small classrooms in the old building meant that it was difficult for teachers to offer pupils a good range of choice of materials when, for example, working on art projects. Although this subject, together with design and technology are soundly promoted, there is scope to enhance provision further with the improved accommodation. However, the present reception classroom is limited in space, especially when the outside area is out of use due to inclement weather. The external grounds have been developed to allow for a range of outdoor activities. All subjects are at least satisfactorily resourced and the range of equipment for ICT is good.

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

The school has **very good** procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils. It provides good support, advice and guidance for pupils overall and good opportunities for pupils to be involved in the running of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils receive good, oral feedback and advice from their teachers to help them make progress.
- Some pupils have written long-term targets so that they can take responsibility for their own learning in English and mathematics but this is not a consistent practice.
- The governors, managers and staff place a very strong emphasis on the welfare and care of pupils and have very good systems in place to support this.
- The very good relationships which exist throughout the school are instrumental in ensuring very effective care for pupils.
- Arrangements for children starting school are very good and pupils new to the school are helped to settle in very well.
- There are good measures in place to involve pupils in the school's work and development.

### **Commentary**

31. The school provides a very caring environment in which pupils feel safe and happy and which supports their learning very well. Parents are very appreciative of the care and concern shown by staff and know that the well-being of their children is seen as a priority. Very good procedures to support the health, safety and protection of pupils are in place and are very effectively managed by staff and governors. During the disruption caused by the recent building work, great care has been taken to make sure that pupils' safety was assured.
32. Pupils know that they are valued as individuals. As a result, pupils from all ethnic and religious groups and the Traveller children have good levels of self-esteem. Very good relationships permeate the school, helping pupils to have the confidence to ask for help when they need it. The head teacher and other members of staff have a thorough knowledge of pupils, their families and their personal circumstances. Parents are confident that staff are sensitive to the needs of pupils and are particularly appreciative of the support provided when families are experiencing difficulties. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are very pleased with the way in which the needs of their children are met and how well they integrate with their peers. In returned questionnaires, 100 per cent of pupils said that they knew who to go to if they had a problem, and discussions with pupils revealed that they feel safe in school.

33. Staff in the Foundation Stage carry out visits to pre-school groups to meet their new intake. The programme for induction, both in reception and for pupils joining the school later, is very effective. Parents report that pupils new to the school make friends easily and gain confidence quickly. In returned questionnaires, 99 per cent agreed that arrangements for children to settle were good.
34. There is a very good system for checking progress in English and mathematics. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils and plan lessons accordingly. However, they do not consistently translate these targets into child-friendly language so that each pupil can be fully involved in planning their own improvements. Information from the tracking records is well used to organise 'booster' or 'catch-up groups' for pupils to make sure that everyone is achieving their best. In the other subjects, progress is checked regularly and the teachers use the information well in lesson planning.
35. Sensitive and firm management by experienced staff supports pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties very well. Those with learning difficulties benefit from working alongside their peer group with extra adult support. Teachers assess and monitor the progress of special educational needs pupils effectively through the regular review of individual education plans. Some targets on these plans, however, are not specific enough to be measured accurately in the reviews. Very good use is made of the expertise of visiting specialists such as those from the speech and language service or the occupational therapy unit. Help is also sought from representatives of the medical and social services when necessary. The school provides good support for Traveller children so that they progress as well as their peers.
36. The school council has representatives from each year group, including the reception class. Through their regular meetings with staff, they are actively involved in making suggestions for improvement and expressing the views of their friends. This provides a good voice for the pupils and also provides them with a sound awareness of citizenship.

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

Links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are highly satisfied with the work of the school and support their children's education very well.
- The school provides very good opportunities for the exchange of information between staff and parents.
- The strong partnership between the school and the church supports the personal development of pupils very well.
- Educational links with other schools are very effective in enhancing opportunities for pupils, particularly in physical education and modern foreign languages.

### **Commentary**

37. Parents hold the school in very high regard. They are extremely supportive and very few concerns were expressed, either through returned questionnaires or at the meeting, about any aspect of the school's work. Parents actively help in the education of their children by

offering their expertise in lessons, in extra-curricular activities, as well as by supporting at home with reading or homework. The Friends of St Stephen's Association raises substantial funds which are used well to provide additional resources. The school actively seeks the views of parents and acts upon them.

38. There is very good contact between staff and parents, both formally at consultation evenings and informally when teachers and other staff make themselves available before and after school. Open afternoons also provide a good opportunity for parents to see how and what their children are learning. Parents appreciate the open, welcoming atmosphere and also value the opportunities for communication which are provided in the home-school reading records. At the meeting, parents strongly agreed that any concerns are dealt with quickly and with sensitivity. The school provides parents with good opportunities to learn more about the curriculum and keeps them up to date about school issues in regular newsletters.
39. The school is very much part of the local community and links with the parish are very strong. Pupils regularly visit the church for Mass and to prepare for first holy communion and first confession. Even the youngest pupils take part in services, delivering readings and prayers. The school is well supported by the clergy. The partnership between the church, parents and staff underpins the work of the school and their shared values are reflected in the very good personal development of pupils.
40. There are very good links with other schools which not only help to smooth the transition to the next stage of education but also to broaden the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 undertake 'bridging projects' to help them cope with the secondary curriculum and the transfer of information between schools is good. One local secondary school has sports college status and staff have taken advantage of this to develop further their expertise in physical education. As a result, sports provision has been greatly enhanced. Pupils are now able to take part in a number of additional sporting activities including basketball, gymnastics and 6-a-side football. Through links with another secondary school, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the benefit of French lessons for one term per year which is a further enhancement to their experiences.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**. Governors provide **very good** support and fulfil their statutory duties very effectively.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the headteacher is based firmly on high aspirations and continuous improvement.
- There have been very good improvements in the leadership and management of the subjects since the inspection of 1998.
- Management and leadership of the Foundation Stage and English, mathematics, science and ICT are very good.
- The monitoring process for the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall but there is room for improvement in checking the clarity of targets within the individual education plans.
- Day-to-day practice reflects the success of the school's commitment to ensuring that all pupils have full and equal access to all parts of school life.

- Governors have a very good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and play an active role in shaping future developments.
- Information gathered from the school's self-evaluation programme is used very effectively in school improvement planning.

## Commentary

41. The school very successfully lives out its mission statement on a day-to-day basis. Staff and governors are committed to the ethos of the school; they strive for high achievement and provide a caring environment where all pupils, regardless of any special need they may have, are fully integrated into all activities. The headteacher is very well regarded by parents and governors, who value his hard work, approachability and commitment. Across the school, there is a strong sense of shared purpose and a clear vision for future development. Staff are constantly looking for ways to improve and work hard to this end. Leadership is successful in promoting an all-round education where creative, aesthetic and physical skills, together with the academic, are promoted in a balanced way. The Catholic foundation of the school is reflected in the very good standards of pupils' personal development, their enjoyment of lessons and the very pleasant, welcoming environment. The headteacher and his staff appreciate the main aids to learning in school; these include very supportive parents and a dedicated teaching staff. Problems or barriers are generally recognised quickly and tackled effectively. In the past, the lack of space for practical work in Years 2 to 6 has been a major barrier but this is no longer an issue with the transfer into the new building.
42. The very effective cycle of self-evaluation includes a planned programme of classroom observations. Data from national and optional tests is very thoroughly analysed to see if there are any areas that require further development. All the information is then fed into school improvement planning. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection. The detailed tracking and target-setting system allows the headteacher, subject managers and teachers to check that individuals, classes and year groups are making the expected progress, and to check that good challenges are set for the higher attaining pupils. Swift action is taken whenever a pupil's progress falls short of expectations. Staff investigate the reasons and provide appropriate support, either through specially targeted work or extra help in the classroom. This is one factor that underpins the high attainment. Records of attainment and progress are thorough and easy to follow. This enables managers to check effectively the quality of provision and attainment in their subjects.
43. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed effectively by the co-ordinators. However, there are inconsistencies in the writing and usefulness of the individual education plans. Some are very detailed and provide a good guide for teachers but others are vague and unhelpful. At present, this does not affect the quality of provision because the teachers are very skilled and know their pupils very well indeed. There could be an issue, however, for new or temporary staff. The governor with responsibility for this area is actively involved in the management and evaluation processes and provides good support.
44. Staff have regular performance reviews, through which a programme of training and development needs is established. This represents a good improvement since the previous report. A lot of work has been done to improve the leadership skills of the subject managers, including shared evaluation of work and lesson observations. The

headteacher is keen to maintain a good work-life balance for his staff. Changes are well thought out, fully discussed and introduced at a sensible pace that allows for problems to be tackled as they arise. As a result, the school is able to attract and retain staff of high quality who promote pupils' learning at a very good rate.

45. Support staff and teachers are deployed effectively to meet the specific needs of individual pupils and to maintain very good provision for the children in the reception class. The school secretary has extensive expertise and experience, covering a varied range of duties to provide very good support. This is especially important in a school where the headteacher takes classes for a significant part of each week. The accommodation and resources are used efficiently and best value is routinely sought. A great deal of care and thought has gone into designing and equipping the new building to make sure that pupils have the best facilities possible within the budget allocation. Taking account of the very good quality of education, the very high standards of attainment, the very good leadership and management and costs that are around average, the school provides very good value for money.
46. Between them, the governors have a very good range of expertise and experience that they use for the ultimate benefit of the pupils. They have a thorough and informed view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are fully involved in the decision-making processes that lead to school improvement planning, and they regularly check on the success of the work covered. They keep a very close eye on attainment patterns and ask relevant questions. Budget decisions are largely based around the targets in the improvement plan, and governors expect to see benefits in pupils' learning as a result of their spending allocations. They have been instrumental in developing the new building and have provided very good support for the headteacher in areas such as safety and in checking the progress of the work.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	452,018	Balance from previous year	31,829
Total expenditure	452,244	Balance carried forward to the next	30,948
Expenditure per pupil	2,307		

47. The closing balance is around 7 per cent of expenditure. The governors have a detailed long-term projection for the school budget as roll numbers are set to fall. Some money is being held in reserve to lessen the impact of this situation in the near future. There are also some outstanding payments for the new building and resources.

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

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

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage of learning (the reception class) is very good.

Provision has improved further since the last inspection and achievement is very good. Children's progress is checked regularly so that they are constantly provided with new challenges. Records show that the prior learning of the children when they enter the reception class is average. There is a varied range of activities provided throughout the day, both inside and outside. These promote children's social, academic, imaginative and creative skills very successfully. As a result, children achieve very well and lay down very firm foundations for their later learning. There is a lack of space in the classroom which means that opportunities for physical or large scale activities are not available as a continuous choice activity. Nevertheless, best use is made of the outdoor area and physical skills are promoted well overall. There are plans in place to extend the classroom space in the near future.

There are very good arrangements to ensure that children settle into school with ease and good support as they move into formal education at Year 1. Systems ensure that they are well prepared for the new challenges that they meet. There are very good links with parents who are invited into school to learn about how children are taught. This enables the sharing of information and ensures that individual needs are very well met from the outset.

There is a busy, productive atmosphere that is conducive to learning and the displays of children's work celebrate achievements very well. Planning is thorough and is completed in partnership with the teaching assistant so that all staff are well briefed and know exactly the expected outcomes of each session. Both the teacher and the teaching assistant provide good intervention to support children's learning and lead very good guided sessions where new skills are taught. The teacher, who is also the leader for this phase of education, has a very good level of expertise in early learning. Leadership and management are very good and sharply focused on high standards of attainment and provision.

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

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

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

- Very good teaching and the caring ethos of the school promote personal development well.
- Children maintain attention, concentrate on their tasks and ask appropriate questions.
- Relationships are very good; children mix and play with confidence.
- Children are encouraged to be independent and care for themselves effectively.

#### **Commentary**

48. The quality of teaching in this area is of a very good standard and the vast majority exceed the learning expectations by the time they enter Year 1. Children are well aware of the adults' high expectations; as a result, they show very good behaviour and follow the simple rules. Staff act as positive role models and children copy them by showing care

and concern for others. Children make very good relationships, learning to share and to wait their turn. When getting ready for lunchtime, they readily help each other with clothing and in organising their belongings.

49. They enter school eagerly in the mornings, ready to take part in the varied activities set out for the day. There is very good promotion of children's self-esteem and, consequently, they are willing to 'have a go' at new activities because they trust their teacher. They are prepared to persevere with difficult tasks and show great pleasure when given praise. The good quality resources are well organised and children successfully tidy away. During the year, the teacher changes the labels from a picture format to actual words and children do very well in reading and working out what goes where.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children develop well as confident speakers by the end of the reception year and they listen attentively.
- They can identify and say sounds at the beginning, middle and ends of words.
- They enjoy sharing a book and they retell the story in the correct order.
- Writing skills are very well developed.
- Teaching is very good and all adults place a strong and suitable emphasis on this area of learning.

### **Commentary**

50. Achievement in speaking, listening, early reading and writing is very good. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children exceed the learning goals. Attainment, overall, is above expectations and well above for a significant percentage of higher-attaining children.
51. Children initiate conversation and are able to express themselves very effectively. They listen attentively to stories and join in enthusiastically with familiar refrains. Children recognise most letter sounds and spell words plausibly using this skill. They know a good number of common words on sight and spell these from memory. As a result, children's writing is easily understood. Some very high standards were seen as a higher-attaining group wrote their own stories using the theme of the Gingerbread Man but using a different setting, such as the sea or the jungle.
52. In an excellent lesson, children re-told a story using the puppet theatres and stick puppets that they had made. They used the language of the story and some interesting dramatic techniques to good effect and were working well within the programme of study normally expected of Years 1 and 2 pupils.
53. Teaching is very good. The varied and very well prepared activities encourage children to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Adults develop children's listening and speaking skills through constantly engaging them in conversation and challenging them to explain what they are doing and what they will do next. Great care is taken by staff, when directing their questions, to ensure that all children, including those with special

educational needs, are fully involved and that they have the time and support to express themselves clearly. Children have frequent opportunities to engage in role-play where they mimic adult language and behaviour. During the inspection, children played as passengers or stewards on the 'Reception Airline' flight to Spain. Familiar phrases such as "Would you like anything to eat Madam?" or "Would you like me to take care of your baby?" were often heard as they enacted the scenario.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are developing a very good grasp of mathematical language.
- They count accurately and recognise numerals.
- Children use their mathematical skills and knowledge in a range of problem-solving situations.
- Teaching is very good.

### **Commentary**

54. Children achieve very well. Most reach the expected learning outcomes by the end of the reception year and most exceed expectations. Overall, attainment is above average and it is well above for a significant percentage of children, especially in number work. Children show an interest in numbers; most can count to 20 and the higher attaining ones go beyond 50. They put numerals in the correct order and correctly identify missing numbers in a sequence. Children have a secure knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes and explain how many edges or corners each one has. A wide range of activities is used to extend counting skills. After calling the register, the teachers ask 'how many away?' and, with the class, work out how many are present.
55. This area is very well taught. The opportunities for children to count, sort, match and sequence enable very good development of their mathematical language and skills. Mathematical understanding is further developed through very well-chosen stories, songs, games and imaginative play. Those children who have special educational needs are very well supported. They have 'feely' numbers to run their fingers over and this helps them to remember the numeral and to write it accurately. Good use is also made of computers in order to reinforce children's counting and number recognition skills, and of exciting games to develop children's thinking. A very good range of practical activities allow children to explore all aspects of mathematical understanding, such as capacity (water and sand play), shape (construction and pattern work), and direction (the road mat and wheeled toys). This provides them, very effectively, with a secure foundation for their National Curriculum work when they move into Year 1.



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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning includes a very wide range of topics to promote children's understanding of the world around them.
- Children achieve well and attain the expected learning outcomes by the end of the reception class.
- Children are constantly encouraged to ask questions and to investigate and explore.
- There are very good opportunities to learn about, and to use, ICT.

### **Commentary**

56. Teaching is very good and topics are extremely well planned across many areas of learning. For example, in one very good lesson based on the theme of travel, the following activities were available to stimulate children's interest: choosing and packing clothes for a holiday; the travel agent's role play area; the Reception Airline and Airport role play area; collage work-choosing clothes for a warm holiday destination; investigating shells; wet sand sculpture; water play involving divers and shipwrecks; computer-aided drawing and painting; and making sandwiches for the beach. As a result, children's knowledge, understanding and skills were very effectively promoted across all areas of learning and much fun was had.
57. Good opportunities are provided for investigation. Adults are skilled at encouraging children to find answers to questions and gently prompt the direction of their investigations. Children are confident in using computers. They print out pages as they choose and are very confident in using the mouse and on-screen prompts to find their preferred program.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well and the majority attain the expected learning goals by the end of the reception year.
- Children have varied opportunities to use a wide range of tools, equipment and materials.
- The outside play area provides a good range of opportunities to develop physical skills.
- Teaching is good and adults encourage exercise and healthy eating.
- The present accommodation is limited in space and restricts the type of physical activity that can be offered on a continuous basis.

### **Commentary**

58. Children build with construction toys and modelling materials and are achieving well. They handle wheeled toys with increasing co-ordination for example, when driving the baggage handling trucks around the sharp bends of the 'airport path'. Most demonstrate good use of the space, increasing agility and an awareness of others. Children use a

good range of small equipment and are very confident in handling tools and objects. For example, they used scissors very effectively in the difficult task of cutting out the front of their puppet theatres. Children persevere and readily help one another under the watchful eye of staff.

59. Teaching in this area is very good. The teacher and teaching assistant encourage children to try new experiences, explicitly teaching safety rules when cutting or shaping. The outside area is well used for physical activity but there is no large activity equipment. In wet weather, the opportunities for physical activity are restricted due to lack of space within the classroom. The teacher does all she can to provide the necessary facilities but cannot do so on a continuous basis. There are plans to extend the teaching space for the children in the near future.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planned activities allow children to communicate their feelings and use their imaginations.
- Teaching is very good. Children have varied opportunities to explore shape, texture, colour and form.
- Children know songs and rhymes from memory and have a good awareness of rhythm.
- They experiment with adult language and actions as they work in the role-play area.

### **Commentary**

60. Children join in singing rhymes and songs from memory, demonstrating a good sense of rhythm. They use their imagination in their drawings and paintings, exploring use of paint, pencils, crayons and collage. The quality of role play is very good and the effective teacher interventions help children to develop their imagination well.
61. Teaching is very good. A wide variety of activities are provided for children to develop their imaginative skills including art, music, dance and imaginative play. Time is used well to enable children to explore, develop and finish their work to the best of their ability. Constant praise makes children aware that their efforts are highly valued and motivates them to work hard.

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

### **ENGLISH**

The provision for English is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are well above the national average.
- The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good.
- Literacy skills are used to very good effect in other subjects.

- There is very good leadership and management of the subject, including very good assessment and target setting systems.

## **Commentary**

62. Attainment levels in Year 2 are well above the national average in reading, writing, speaking and listening. In Year 6 attainment overall is well above the national average. The high standards and achievement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. During the past four years the results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 have remained at an above-average level.
63. The quality of teaching across the school is very good and teachers have high levels of expertise in the subject. They use questioning very effectively to constantly challenge pupils and to stimulate interest and increase motivation. Lessons take into account the needs of more able pupils and those with special educational needs. The high standard of teaching, combined with the pupils' very good attitudes and willingness to succeed, ensures that achievement for all pupils is very good. Marking is of high quality and provides useful information to help pupils succeed. Assessment and the analysis of results are used very well to identify areas for future development. Teachers set challenging long term targets for progress but these are not always shared with pupils. Learning is enhanced by informed support offered by teaching assistants and by the increasing use of information and communication technology.
64. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils are attaining standards in speaking and listening and in reading that are much higher than average. The pupils in Year 1 demonstrate very good skills in communication, language and literacy. They are able to ask pertinent questions; for example, they discuss why the 'shy fly' should want to stay in the tree. Pupils become confident communicators by the end of Year 2. They demonstrate good listening skills and respond eagerly to the teacher's questions. By Year 6 pupils participate confidently in discussions. For example, they engaged in a sensitive debate about how to cope with bullying.
65. Reading is promoted strongly in the school and pupils demonstrate a keen interest in books from an early stage. They are able to discuss confidently their preferences for certain authors and to justify their views. Even the younger pupils are aware of the structure of books and the roles of an author, illustrator and editor. Pupils persevere very well when, for instance, sounding out unfamiliar words and they make good use of the meaning of the text, picture cues and their knowledge of grammar when they are reading new texts. Pupils regularly take their reading books home. Parents provide good support and help to maintain a record of their reading through a home-school diary.
66. The high standards seen in writing across all age groups show that the action taken by the teachers to improve this area of literacy has been very successful. Pupils are able to write in both formal and informal styles and for a wide range of purposes, including letter and report writing. Of special note were the newspaper reports based on the story of Little Red Riding Hood and an informed discursive text about whether Skipton Market should be held every day. The presentation of work in all classes is very good. By Year 6 pupils write in a neat, fluent, joined style of which they are justly proud.
67. Those pupils who require additional support are given tasks adapted to match their needs and abilities, thus allowing them the opportunity to succeed and achieve well.

Support assistants provide good additional teaching and guidance to complement the work of the teacher. Pupils who achieve very well are provided with tasks that challenge them and enable them to attain higher levels.

68. The subject is led and managed very well. Assessment is very well organised and results are systematically analysed to identify areas for future improvement. This has been very effective in maintaining standards at their present levels. The subject leaders are keen advocates of the subject and are committed to developing the provision further. All staff endeavour to create a stimulating environment through displays of books and pupils' written work to encourage and stimulate learning.
69. Library provision in the new building is good with a purpose built area easily accessible to all. There is a wide range of reading material in school, both fiction and non-fiction. In addition, each classroom has access to a stock of books chosen specifically for the age group. Non-fiction books are classified, using a recognised system that is understood by the pupils. Overall, resources are good for the subject.

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

70. Throughout the school the pupils' literacy and language skills are constantly being very well applied and improved in other subjects. Pupils write about making pizza, toast and chocolate crispies as part of their science topic on healthy eating and others write about the Great Fire of London as part of their history studies. Information and communication technology is used well to enhance learning. Pupils word process their work and illustrate the books they write with digital photography. Overall, the promotion of language and literacy across the curriculum is very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good across the school.
- Pupils work hard and show very positive attitudes to mathematics.
- The subject is very well managed and led.
- The oral and mental start to each lesson is very successful in developing computational skills.
- Good use is made of mathematical knowledge and skills in other areas of the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

71. Standards achieved in national testing in 2003 were in the top 5 per cent in the country for both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher levels of attainment for both year groups was also very high.
72. The outcome of the inspection strongly affirms these results with the very high standards being seen in lessons and a scrutiny of books for the current pupils. Teaching and learning in mathematics are considerable strengths at St Stephen's. The high standards are the result of very good teaching and the very good attitudes. All groups of pupils work very hard and their achievement, including those with special educational needs, is very

good. Most impressive is the quality and quantity of work. A great deal of pride is clearly evident in the very good presentation.

73. Pupils in Year 2 clearly demonstrate confidence when they count backwards and forwards in 2's, 5's, and 10's. They have good understanding of the language of numeracy and use terminology appropriately. Pupils calculate rapidly and accurately. Their workbooks provide evidence of a very good and varied curriculum including number, measure and shape and space with examples of good challenge as they work on symmetry.
74. By the end of Year 6, pupils have at their disposal a very good range of strategies for calculating and very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics generally. They solve problems which involve several processes and are well able to think beyond the obvious. For example, the problem was to pay for an item costing 4 pence using only hypothetical 3p and 5p coins. Their solution was to tender  $2 \times 5p = 10p$  and have the change  $2 \times 3p = 6p$ . This was recorded as  $(5p + 5p) - (3p + 3p) = 4p$ . Skills across all the areas of study for mathematics are very well developed, including data handling and probability.
75. The quality of teaching is very good. Each lesson begins with an oral session that is much enjoyed. It is an opportunity for pupils to recall number facts and tables, learn new strategies, develop speed in computation and share their enthusiasm for learning. The whole staff work together very well as a team to plan a curriculum that is appropriate to individual needs. Pupils capable of higher attainment are given challenging work to stretch their learning and those who experience difficulty have the support they need to succeed. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make learning relevant to pupils' everyday lives. For example, Year 5 pupils were given work on the 24 hour clock related to a series of problems relating to a train timetable. Teachers have high expectations, especially of the older pupils' attainment, who consistently rise to meet the challenges.
76. There are increasing examples of the computer being used for teaching and learning and this is planned to develop further with the facilities of the new ICT suite. The interactive white board in Year 5 is used very effectively to try out different approaches and to demonstrate new work.
77. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The high standards have been maintained by constant monitoring of pupils' progress and the evaluation of results in order to identify specific areas for improvement. Assessment is very good and teachers can be seen to make daily assessments of their pupils' work. Target setting is very effective and teachers know exactly what they expect individuals to achieve. At present, this information is not shared sufficiently well with the pupils so that they can be full partners in the learning process.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

78. Mathematics is well used in the teaching and learning of other subjects. For instance, Year 2 pupils present their findings of their survey on transport in the form of a graph. In the Year 6 river study, pupils worked out the depth and velocity of the water at each side and the centre, also presenting their findings clearly in graph form. There are other instances, very often in science and design technology, in which pupils use finely

graduated measurements accurately.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high.
- Teaching is very good, its strength being its emphasis upon practical activities.
- The pupils are interested, well motivated and display very good attitudes.
- There are very good opportunities for both independent study and collaborative working.

### Commentary

79. Attainment in science is well above the national average by the end of both Years 2 and 6. This is a further improvement on the above-average standards found at the previous inspection. Attainment in the national tests for Year 6 pupils is consistently high.
80. From an early age pupils use the correct scientific vocabulary. In Year 1, work is well presented, clearly illustrated and correctly labelled. Pupils make simple statements and describe plants as different from other living things because 'they need soil and have roots'. By Year 2 pupils are carrying out simple investigations involving prediction, fair testing and drawing conclusions. For example, the higher attaining pupils test the speed of a toy car travelling down a ramp and conclude, 'We found out that the higher the ramp, the faster and further the car will go'. There are very good skills of investigation. Pupils examined the mini-beasts they had collected and recorded what they were like and where they were found. Some good use of mathematics was made when they used a tally system to count and classify the creatures.
81. By Year 6 the scientific principles of investigation are very well embedded. Pupils benefit from a varied and interesting curriculum which ensures their continued enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers encourage them to think and work 'as scientists', deciding on questions to ask, how they will find reliable evidence and how the findings will be recorded. Healthy living studies provide good cross-curricular links, for example with personal and social education and art and design. Careful application of mathematics skills ensures accuracy of measurement and calculation and the use of pupils' very good writing skills enhances the quality of recorded work.
82. Planning is very effective and ensures that work is well matched to different levels of prior learning ability; through this, the provision for those pupils with special educational needs is very good. At the same time, good challenge is given to the higher attaining pupils who are given a good degree of independence to devise their own methods for experimentation. Teachers encourage and facilitate collaborative working which is highly successful due to the very good relationships to be found in the school.
83. The curriculum for science is broad and balanced and meets all requirements of the National Curriculum. The school has a scheme of work which provides good guidance for teachers for the progressive development of the skills and concepts that pupils must develop over time.

84. Leadership and management are good. Some time ago, the school identified the need to bring science standards up to the very high level achieved in mathematics and, through careful analysis of the assessments and focused improvement planning, this has been achieved.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching is good and some is excellent.
- Resources, staff confidence and staff expertise have all improved well.
- There is good use of ICT in most subjects to support learning.
- The school has a good scheme of planning to guide its work.
- Standards are rising.

### **Commentary**

85. By Year 2, children have satisfactory skills in ICT and reach standards in line with expectations. They present their work using different font styles, size and colour and illustrate it using the tools of the paint program. They are able to combine graphics with text. Children are aware that computers offer a rich source of information and have a confident approach to their work. Year 6 pupils are achieving well. In the past, they have had a limited amount of 'hands-on' time with the computers to practise and consolidate their skills. Attainment is in line with expectations for this year group. Some higher standards were seen in Year 5 which is a promising indicator for the future. In an excellent lesson, these pupils worked on controlling and programming a traffic light sequence. They tackled problems intelligently and worked out solutions to some very challenging tasks. The work was more typical of that usually set for Year 6, showing that attainment in the subject is beginning to move towards the higher levels.
86. The school has had no ICT suite in the past, although this will be rectified from September. The suite in the new school building is very well equipped and much thought has gone into choosing hardware, deciding on cabling needs and ensuring that the server and Internet connections are good enough to support learning for at least the next few years. Teaching is good and expertise in the subject is much improved. Teachers find good ways to overcome the lack of 'hands-on' time for pupils. They use the classroom computers efficiently and take every opportunity to include ICT in lessons, allowing for good consolidation of the skills taught. A higher-than average amount of work is done off-computer to teach skills and basic knowledge, using some well chosen workbooks. In one lesson, the teacher used a dummy cardboard screen and command strips so that pupils could learn how to sequence a series of commands. This was an inspired and innovative way of working. The pupils made exceptional progress in learning the principles of control. They are now ready to apply their skills and take their learning further forward next year.

87. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their ICT lessons and work hard. There is very good collaboration and pupils readily share their expertise. Some older ones produce a regular newspaper in their own time on the computers. The quality of the layout and publishing is good and the attractive format encourages good sales across school.
88. Judgements at the time of the previous inspection found standards to be in line with expectations by Years 2 and 6 but pupils had a restricted range of experiences and resources were limited. The new subject manager is providing very good leadership and has been responsible for some very good improvements. Staff training has led to better levels of confidence. The thoughtful purchase of software means that ICT can be used extensively across other subjects and the manager has gone to great lengths to ensure the compatibility of computers and printers to avoid technical problems. Planning is thorough and provides a good guide for teachers. The school has everything in place to promote standards further including extra-curricular clubs, once the new suite is in operation.
89. The provision for pupils with special educational needs in this subject is good. Teachers pair pupils together carefully so that they receive support from friends as well as adults. This helps to ensure that they make equal progress to that of their classmates. Assessment is satisfactory and, with the further developments planned, is potentially good.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

90. Many lesson plans include activities for a group or individuals using the computer, often for word processing, presentation, data handling or research. The interactive whiteboard in Year 5 is effectively used, especially in whole-class introductions. It adds an extra dimension to learning and allows pupils to try out ideas, for example, when working on calculations. There is good use of the digital camera, especially in history and geography and in the reception class. The electronic microscope supports learning in science well, as does some sophisticated sensing material which is used to detect levels of sound or heat in experiments. Digital recorders and players, as well as electronic keyboards, enhance provision in music.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above expectations by the end of Year 6.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy geography.
- There are good opportunities for field work and practical study.

### **Commentary**



91. The lessons observed, together with an analysis of pupils' work completed over the past year and work on display, indicates that pupils achieve well throughout the school and attainment is above national expectations by the end of Year 6.
92. Teaching is good and is often based on practical investigation or survey. For example, Year 1 pupils study types of houses in their local area. Mapping skills are well developed starting with work on plans and routes in Years 1 and 2 and progressing to world maps and grid references in Year 6.
93. The programme of study includes a good emphasis on practical work in the local area. Year 5 pupils completed a survey about traffic in the high street and gathered the views of residents. Junior pupils are aware of the effects of waste and the benefits of recycling; this is helping to develop their skills of citizenship. Of particular note is the study of rivers carried out by the Year 6 class where skills in English, mathematics, science and ICT had been especially well applied. Pupils had measured the velocity of water in different places and presented their findings clearly on graphs, some of which were generated electronically. They had found and studied the habitats of insects and mini-beasts, recording the work through writing of a very high standard. Throughout school, pupils are keen to learn. The older ones had completed home-work assignments about mountain ranges. They had used a range of sources effectively and paid very good attention to the presentation of their topic books.
94. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Standards are higher than at the previous inspection for Year 2 and have been maintained at Year 6. There have been good improvements to the planning for the subject which now provides a clear guide for teachers.

## **History**

Provision for history is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching.
- Standards in Years 2 and 6 are above expectations.
- There is good emphasis on teaching the skills of enquiry and interpretation.
- Educational visits help bring the subject to life.
- Good links with literacy promote learning well.

## **Commentary**

95. The lesson observed, evidence from teachers' planning, an analysis of pupils' work and photographic evidence, plus discussions with staff and pupils, indicate that attainment is above expectations. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well. The learning of higher attaining pupils is often extended through more challenging tasks.
96. Teaching is good. Year 2 pupils find out about health care at the time of Florence Nightingale and compare the provision with hospitals today, coming to appreciate how life changes over time. They had used ICT and English skills very effectively to make their own books about the fire of London which were of an above-average standard.

97. During Years 3 to 6 pupils cover a very broad range of study with a strong emphasis on research and interpretation of evidence. They contrast rich and poor people at different times in history and find out the harsh reality of being 'in service' during Victorian times. Year 4 pupils had completed a local heritage study, taking full advantage of the rich history in the area. Through this work, they had investigated changes through Tudor and Victorian times to the present. Very good use was made of the digital camera to record observations of significant sites for further study in class. Very good use is made of pupils' English and ICT skills as they engage in research and record their findings to a high standard. The emphasis on practical investigation helps pupils to develop an interest in the subject, and many said how much they enjoyed history lessons.
98. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Resources have been improved recently through the acquisition of more artefacts. Standards are higher at Year 2 than at the previous inspection and have been maintained at Year 6. Planning for the subject is much improved to provide a broad and interesting curriculum.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

It was not possible to observe lessons covering the different aspects of art and design and music so, in these subjects, no overall judgements about provision and teaching have been made. Discussions were held with subject leaders and with pupils. The content and quality of pupils' work was also scrutinised.

From the analysis of displays and work in books in a range of subjects it is evident that pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills in observational drawing. Teachers have found it impossible to provide a wide range of materials and enough space so that pupils can choose, explore and experiment as recommended by the national guidelines. Nevertheless, the full programme of study has been delivered, although sometimes this has been in a prescriptive way. By Year 6, pupils are aware of the work of some famous artists, for example Picasso and Monet, and have had sound opportunities to study and copy their techniques. They have worked in two- and three-dimensions and learned to evaluate their compositions.

Music is played during assembly and in some lessons to create a calming atmosphere. Many pupils participate in instrumental tuition provided by the peripatetic music service. They are learning to play recorders, percussion, string instruments and keyboards to a level that is above average. Younger pupils beat in time to music and can reproduce similar rhythms using percussion instruments. Pupils in Year 2 talked about Vivaldi's music and those in Year 6 spoke knowledgeably about the work of Elgar. The choir contributes to church festivals and ceremonies, for example at Christmas and for the celebration of First Holy Communion. Pupils also have opportunities to enhance their performance skills in school presentations.

There is a policy and scheme of work for both subjects which follow the nationally accepted guidance. It is planned that, when the school has transferred to the new building, there will be opportunities for art and design to be further developed.

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design technology is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Projects are planned to develop skills in a systematic way.
- There is a good emphasis on the design and evaluation elements of the subject.
- Over-direction sometimes limits the creativity and imagination of pupils.

## **Commentary**

99. The lessons observed, together with scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. Planning is linked to the programme of work indicated by national guidelines and there are good links with other curriculum areas.
100. Linking with their history and mathematics work, Year 2 pupils studied buildings in the locality and identified repeat patterns in the architecture. They were then inspired to produce their own patterns and designs. There is a suitable emphasis on food technology. For example pupils in Year 3 tasted several types of bread and conducted a class survey to ascertain which was the most popular. The results were recorded on a computer database and a graph generated to display the findings. Here again, links with mathematics and ICT extended the learning for pupils.
101. Teachers work hard to make projects relevant and this motivates pupils well. Year 6 pupils teamed up with a nearby school to design, make and test lunch boxes. Filled with a 'healthy lunch' these were jointly evaluated with the other pupils in a very enjoyable session. The lack of space in classrooms limits the scope of lessons. Pupils do not have as wide a choice of materials as their teachers would like and little space to construct on a large scale. Sometimes skills are taught by following detailed instructions or using commercially produced kits and this limits creativity and ingenuity. Staff are aware of the issue and have plans to extend the range of resources and experiences once in the new building.
102. The quality of teaching seen was good and resources provided for pupils are of good quality. Computers are used to some extent, especially to research products and there are plans to use this facility more in planning designs.

## **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a good range of physical and sporting activities.
- Staff work hard to instil good habits of exercise in their pupils.
- The school has achieved its aim of improving experience and standards in physical education.

## Commentary

103. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 achieve levels of attainment above national expectations. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.
104. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well within a curriculum that is varied and provides a good balance of gymnastic, athletic, dance, sport and swimming activities. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils progressed very well in creating and performing dance movements. Another lesson for Year 5 clearly demonstrated pupils' skills of evaluating performance. They examined current practice of running and throwing and considering how their technique could be improved. This same focus was present in a Year 6 lesson when pupils worked to improve the distance covered by a chest throw.
105. Teaching is good and correctly emphasises warming up and cooling down activities. Lessons are planned to include sustained energetic activity over suitable periods of time and pupils are encouraged to note the effect of exercise on their bodies. Pupils readily accept critical appraisal and learn effectively from the example of others. Teachers make lessons enjoyable and this encourages effort and very good sportsmanship. Pupils know the importance of dressing correctly for physical activity and there is very good observance of safety factors.
106. There are regular periods of swimming and all pupils achieve the expected minimum standards of competence. Extra-curricular provision is very good and the school takes full part, often with success, in inter-school sporting events such as indoor athletics competitions, netball tournaments or swimming galas. Older pupils have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities such as rock climbing or orienteering.
107. Leadership and management of the subject are good; the manager ensures a good profile for the subject and is constantly looking for ways to extend pupils' experiences.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school makes **good** provision for the teaching of personal and social and health education and citizenship (PHSCE).

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships encourage pupils to discuss issues that worry them within a safe environment.
- Very good skills of discussion enable the exploration of sensitive issues.
- Personal development extends well beyond the dedicated lessons for PHSCE.
- Teaching and learning are of good quality.

## Commentary

108. Themes are taught in PHSCE lessons and are well integrated into other subject areas, such as science, geography or religious education. In food technology, pupils learn and follow hygiene rules and know the importance of clean hands. As part of their religious education lessons, pupils study different religions and cultures to help them prepare for life in a multi-cultural society. In geography, pupils learn about environmental

conservation issues, whilst in science they gain a good grounding in the delicate balance of nature and of the interdependence between living things. Work outside the classroom enriches provision. Pupils had visited the Crucial Crew caravan where they had learned about fire safety, recycling and drug abuse to name just a few topics covered. During a 'survival' session in the woods, pupils had worked out how to make a shelter and experienced the need for close collaboration in such circumstances.

109. The strong ethos of the school and the caring attitudes of adults are reflected in pupils' attitudes and they promote mutual respect effectively. This enables teachers to plan lessons around sensitive or contentious issues because they know that pupils listen attentively and show great respect for other people's views and opinions. There is a strong spiritual, social and moral element to lessons. In one very good session for the older pupils, they discussed their fears about moving onto their next schools. The teacher was very skilful in ensuring anonymity and this encouraged pupils to express their worries freely. These were then discussed by the whole class and, together, they explored how they might be overcome. This was a topical and useful lesson.
110. There are good opportunities for pupils of all ages to take responsibility, to act as monitors and to take initiative. Pupils recognise that rights carry responsibilities and consider carefully the effects of their actions on other people. They appreciate that others in the world may not be as fortunate as themselves and they are keen to support charities. The school's mission statement is lived out on a daily basis through this subject.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

