

# INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY OF LOURDES RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Partington, Manchester

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106346

Headteacher: Mrs C Cainen

Lead inspector: Mr A Margerison

Dates of inspection: 5–7 July 2004

Inspection number: 265787

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3–11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	163
School address:	Lock Lane Partington Manchester Lancashire
Postcode:	M31 4PJ
Telephone number:	0161 775 2847
Fax number:	0161 912 5422
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms M Richards
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated on an estate of mainly housing association-owned housing in Partington, a large village on the outskirts of Manchester. The area is one of significant social and economic deprivation. It benefits from financial support from the Single Regeneration Budget and Sure Start. Although pupils' backgrounds vary, overall their socio-economic circumstances are low. In recent years the local authority has begun to refurbish parts of the estate, but local demographic trends are resulting in gradually falling rolls. Most of the pupils live in the immediate area. However, as the Catholic school for the surrounding area, it is a popular school and a few pupils are brought to the school by their parents from further afield. The school is smaller than most primary schools with 163 pupils on roll aged between three and 11 years including 29 children who attend the nursery, 16 of whom attend full-time. When children start school, their attainment varies from year to year, but overall it is low compared with that which is typical for their age. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, mainly for general learning difficulties, is above average. Two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The vast majority of pupils are of White-British origin with a very small number of pupils of black ethnic backgrounds. Few pupils have English as an additional language. Overall, the number of pupils who join and leave the school during the school year is broadly average. In recent years the school has had significant problems with staff turnover due to staff moving on to new posts and one long-standing unfilled vacancy initiated by staff illness which has mainly affected the youngest pupils in the school and the nursery. The school was awarded the School Achievement Award in 2002.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team		Subject responsibilities	
21666	Mr A Margerison	Lead inspector	English Foundation Stage Special educational needs English as an additional language
19436	Mr M O'Malley	Lay inspector	
18447	Mr R Cohen	Team inspector	Geography History
18370	Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School is a good school** that provides good value for money. From a low starting point when they begin in the nursery, pupils achieve well due to good teaching to reach above average standards by Year 6.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is well led by the headteacher who, together with governors and senior staff, has established a positive ethos in the school based on strong teamwork.
- Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features in the upper years of the school.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Although children achieve well in the Foundation Stage, the nursery and reception classes do not operate fully as a coherent unit in all areas of learning.
- Assessment information is not used consistently in the lower years of the school to ensure that activities in lessons always provide pupils of different abilities with enough opportunities to extend and use their basic skills in English and mathematics.
- There are very good procedures to ensure pupils' care and welfare.

Since the last inspection the school has improved well and most of the identified issues have been addressed effectively. Standards in Year 6, the quality of teaching and the role of subject leaders have all improved. However, there are still shortcomings in the way that assessment information is consistently used to influence teachers' short-term planning.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

From a low start when they join the nursery, **pupils achieve well** as they move through the school. In nursery and reception, children achieve very well to reach the expected early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development. In communication, language and literacy skills, mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, standards are below those expected, but from a low starting point children achieve well. Insufficient evidence was available to judge standards in their creative and physical development. In the 2003 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2, the school's results in reading and mathematics were well below average. However, pupils attained average standards in writing. Compared to similar schools, the results in reading were below average, average in mathematics and above average in writing. Inspection evidence shows that, although standards in Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. However, standards are improving, with pupils in Year 1 attaining standards broadly in line with those expected for their age. Test results for pupils at the end of Year 6 usually confirm that standards are at least average and often above average. For example, in 2001 the results in mathematics placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. They were well below average in 2003 because the cohort included a significant number

of pupils with special educational needs who nevertheless achieved well. Inspection evidence shows that, pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well. In English, pupils achieve well to reach above average standards and in mathematics, achievement is very good and standards are well above average. In science, achievement is good and standards are well above average. In information and communication technology, standards are broadly in line with those expected and they are good in history. Insufficient evidence was gathered to make secure judgements in any other subjects.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and behave well. Attendance in the last reporting year was very low. However, inspection evidence shows that it has improved significantly in the current year and few pupils miss significant amounts of school. Most are punctual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good.** Throughout the school teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and encourage them very effectively to take part in lessons. A significant strength of the good teaching in nursery and reception is the very strong emphasis staff place on developing children's personal skills and their basic skills in literacy and number. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 continue to place a high priority on developing pupils' basic reading, writing and numeracy skills so, by the end of Year 2, pupils are well equipped to build on their learning. As pupils move through the school, teachers provide an increasing range of very challenging activities for pupils to use these skills which leads to the good standards in Year 6. Assessment procedures are good and the information is used well to track the progress pupils make. However, there is no system in place to assess children's progress as they move through the nursery compatible with the national framework for children in reception. In addition, information is not used consistently across the school to ensure that activities in lessons always provide pupils of different abilities with enough opportunities to extend and use their skills.

The curriculum is good. However, teachers in nursery and reception do not plan together sufficiently to provide a coherent structure to the provision. Provision for pupils' personal, health and social education and for those with special educational needs is good. Pupils are very well cared for and there are very good procedures for involving them in the work of the school. The school has established good links with the community and other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The school is well led and managed. The headteacher leads the school well.** She is a very good role model for staff and pupils and has high aspirations for the school. Governors, along with all staff associated with the school, share the headteacher's vision. Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and fulfil their statutory duties well. Key staff make a good contribution to the school's development. Management is good and is based on the school's effective evaluation of its own performance. As a result, current priorities for development are well matched to the school's areas of weakness, with an appropriate emphasis on managing finances well in order to achieve the identified priorities against gradually falling rolls.

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

Parents have a very high opinion of the school and its work. The vast majority feel that their children enjoy school and make good progress due to good teaching. Pupils feel very positively about their school and enjoy taking part in lessons and activities.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Develop assessment and planning systems to ensure that the nursery and reception classes operate fully as a coherent unit in all areas of learning.

- Improve the consistency in teachers' use of assessment information to ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully challenged in all classes.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

From a low starting point when they begin in the nursery, pupils achieve well as they move through the school. As a result, standards in Year 6 are above those expected.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the nursery and reception achieve very well in their personal and social development.
- Pupils achieve well in English and very well in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well relative to their starting point.
- Pupils develop secure basic literacy, number and science skills in Years 1 and 2, but the proportion of pupils who reach the expected levels for their age is below average.

#### Commentary

1. Children start in the nursery with levels of skills that are low compared to those that are typical for their age. Very few have any extensive experience of education before coming to school and a significant proportion have immature speech and language skills. Once they have been settled into the nursery and learnt how to behave and to follow the routines of the class, children make increasingly good progress in developing their basic skills and, as a result, they achieve well overall. Teachers provide a range of activities that encourage independence, imaginative language development and social skills. As a result, by the end of the reception year, children achieve very well to reach the levels expected in their personal and social development. Children achieve well in their language, literacy and mathematical skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world but, due to their low starting point, standards by the end of reception are below those expected nationally. Insufficient evidence was gathered to evaluate standards in creative and physical development. Effective teaching, particularly in reception, develops children's early reading, writing and number skills well. Although most children know their letter sounds and names and count confidently, few learn to use these skills confidently to write simple sentences and do basic addition and subtraction sums. This means that teachers in Years 1 and 2 have to work hard to build up many pupils' basic skills to a level in which they are fully confident and proficient to tackle a broad range of activities.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.5 (15.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.7 (13.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.3 (16.8)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Due to the challenges faced by teachers in Years 1 and 2, results in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 have generally been well below average in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to all schools, although there have been slight fluctuations depending on the size and make-up of each year group including the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, the trend has been above the national pattern. Teachers place considerable emphasis on building on pupils' basic skills. The positive effect of this was reflected in the 2003 national test results when pupils' performance is compared to similar schools: an

average proportion of pupils reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics and more able pupils did well in writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence and the early indications from this year's national tests show that pupils have, overall, achieved satisfactorily, although standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this group includes an above proportion of pupils with significant special educational needs, only one of whom attained the expected levels in the tests. Although they have achieved well relative to their abilities, they have a significant effect on the overall results. All of those pupils who do not have identified special educational needs reached the expected levels.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.0 (27.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.4 (29.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	25.9 (28.3)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 27 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. The sterling work that teachers in Years 1 and 2 do to develop pupils' basic reading, writing and number skills means that the pupils are well prepared to really begin to make rapid gains in their ability to use these skills from Year 3 onwards. Inspection evidence shows that teachers capitalise on this well so that pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6. As a result, although the results in the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 6 were very disappointing, this was in dramatic contrast to most years when standards in English, mathematics and science have generally been at least in line with the national average. Last year's Year 6 cohort had a high proportion of pupils, particularly girls, with special educational needs and this had a negative effect on the overall results. Inspection evidence and early indications from this year's tests show that standards in the current Year 6 are much improved and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In English pupils have achieved well in Years 3 to 6 to reach above average standards. In mathematics pupils have achieved very well and standards are well above average, primarily due to the high proportion of more able pupils who are working at the higher than expected levels. In science, achievement is good and standards are well above average with a high proportion of pupils working at levels above those expected. In other subjects standards are above those expected in history and in line with those expected in information and communication technology. No other subjects were focuses for the inspection so insufficient evidence was collected to make secure judgements on standards or the quality of education.
4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. This is because they are provided with tasks well matched to their needs and the targets in their individual plans. They also benefit from effective support from teaching assistants and external agencies. For a similar reason, pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well. They are fully included in discussions in lessons by teachers' good use of questions which encourages them to use their spoken English in a broad range of settings.

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

Pupils' personal qualities are good. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. They have very positive attitudes to school and behave well. Pupils' punctuality is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between pupils are very good.

- The school has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour, teaches pupils the difference between right and wrong very well and, as a result, pupils behave well.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of their own cultural traditions, but their knowledge of the daily lives of other cultures that make up a significant part of British society lacks depth.
- The school's procedures to promote attendance are good. As a result, attendance in the current year is much improved on the previous full year.

### Commentary

5. From discussions with pupils, the pupils' questionnaire and according to parents, the vast majority of pupils are keen to attend school and most are punctual. The school has established good procedures to promote and encourage pupils to attend. For example, there are clear reward systems, certificates for good attendance and the school follows up any pupils who do not arrive at school soon after the start of the school day. The school has had significant 'teething problems' with its computerised registration system which resulted in some distortion of the overall figures for the reporting year 2002/3 reflected in the table below. These problems have now been sorted out and inspection evidence shows that the school's work and that of the local education authority officers have had a positive effect on a few parents who did not ensure their children attended school regularly enough. As a result, overall attendance is much improved for the current year and is close to the national average.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.1	School data	0.3
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.*

6. The Catholic ethos of the school is threaded throughout much of its work. It is reflected in the very strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' understanding of right and wrong and the very consistent expectations all staff have of pupils' behaviour. As a result, as pupils move through the school they become increasingly mature, responsible and very keen to learn. Behaviour overall is good, but a few younger pupils find behaving well difficult and they need regular gentle reminders about what is expected of them. The oldest pupils behave very well in all situations in school and set a very good example for younger ones. They take on responsibilities in classrooms, around the school and at lunchtimes willingly and exercise their duties with diligence and pride. The school does not tolerate pupils who persistently challenge or try to push the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, and the vast majority of pupils accept and conform to the rules of the school. This is reflected in the very small number of exclusions in the last year which involved one pupil.

### Exclusions

#### 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
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White – British	134	2	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0

7. Pupils develop very good attitudes to learning and school. The vast majority of parents report that their children enjoy school and that the school encourages them to work hard and to be responsible and mature. This begins in the nursery and reception classes where children achieve very well in this aspect of their learning and sets a very firm foundation for the very positive attitudes and good behaviour seen throughout the school. Through assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn to respect each other's feelings and values. As a result, relationships between pupils are very good, pupils are generally enthusiastic in lessons and they are keen to be involved in activities.
8. Pupils learn about their responsibilities as members of the school community and to each other. They willingly take on responsibilities that are given to them, such as the school council, and older pupils are involved in supervising younger pupils. They also learn about their own local heritage and culture. However, although pupils learn respect for all people and about different faiths and beliefs through religious education lessons, there are few other opportunities for them to learn about the daily lifestyles of people from the broad range of different cultures who make up modern British society. Consequently, they are not fully prepared for living in an integrated culturally diverse society.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education, founded on effective teaching, is good. The curriculum is good. The school places a very high priority on ensuring pupils' health, care and welfare and pupils are well supported. The school involves pupils very well in its work and has established good links with the community and other schools.

#### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour so most pupils behave well in lessons.
- Teachers place a very high priority on encouraging and involving all pupils in lessons.
- Teachers in nursery, reception, Years 1 and 2 place a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers in Years 3 to 6 develop pupils' ability to use and apply these skills well by providing increasingly challenging activities that demand greater independence and confidence.
- Assessment procedures are thorough in Years 1 to 6, but the information is not used consistently across the school to ensure that activities in lessons always provide pupils of different abilities with enough opportunities to extend and use their basic skills in English and mathematics.
- The systems in place to assess children's attainment when they join the nursery are not sufficiently linked to the national procedures for the Foundation Stage to enable teachers to track their progress into reception.

#### Commentary

9. Overall, teaching is good and leads to good learning which is a good improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory with ten per cent of lessons being unsatisfactory. Although there are areas for improving teaching further, there are consistent strengths that underpin the teaching throughout the school. As a testament to the effective work of the school leadership in developing the quality of teaching, most of the weaknesses identified in the teaching at the last inspection have been addressed well. Inspection evidence

from the observation of lessons, teachers' planning and assessment files and pupils' work, shows that several of these are now positive aspects of teaching. First and foremost is the insistence of all staff on high standards of behaviour. Teachers throughout the school are very consistent in their expectations of behaviour, giving very clear and explicit instructions so pupils thoroughly understand how they should behave and respond to adults and each other. As a result, most pupils' behaviour is good and lessons are very calm, organised and productive learning experiences. Secondly, all staff place a very strong emphasis on encouraging pupils and involving them in lessons through asking good open-ended questions. This leads to most lessons being brisk and pacey learning experiences for pupils.

10. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good, but is more focused in reception where the teacher uses the national assessment profile well to track the progress that children are making in the different areas of learning. In the nursery there is no similar procedure in place so it is more difficult for the teacher to establish children's starting points and to evaluate aspects of individual children's learning that need developing. Nevertheless, the teacher plans a sound range of activities that develops children's skills in all the areas of learning and she makes effective use of the support assistant to ensure that over a week all children have the same range of experiences. The main strength of the teaching in the nursery is the very good relationships between adults and children so that children achieve very well in their personal development and are well prepared to benefit from the more structured teaching in reception. In this class, the teacher achieves a good balance between formal whole-class activities and less directed activities that enable children to develop and explore their own skills through role play, activities outside on the climbing frame and with wheeled toys, and in the classroom with paint, clay and construction toys. Lessons in literacy and numeracy follow the pattern of the national guidance and provide children of all abilities with very good opportunities to develop their basic understanding of letters and numbers. Whole-class discussions are particularly effective, characterised by the very good relationships between the teacher and children. Follow-up activities are clearly varied to reflect the wide spectrum of abilities in the class, but the low level of children's personal skills when they join the school still affects their ability to work on their own. Because the teacher does not have additional support for much of the time, this limits her capacity to concentrate for extended periods with one group without having to help another group. This does have an effect on the pace of learning of a few pupils. On a few occasions opportunities to fully extend more able children's learning by giving them tasks to use their basic skills are missed.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	6	14	6	1	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

11. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 quite rightly concentrates very heavily on ensuring that pupils have secure skills to build on as they move through the school. However, on a few occasions, this is at the expense of fully extending more able pupils. Teachers' assessments in English and mathematics are very thorough and very detailed, but this information is not used consistently to plan activities that match the full range of abilities. The assessment information is used well to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and benefit from effective support from teaching assistants. However, more able pupils are not always fully challenged in a few lessons and planning does not always fully reflect the full range of abilities in the class. For example, worksheets have been used extensively in subjects such as history and geography that do not consistently meet the needs of all in the classes. In addition, the marking of pupils' work does not always fully exploit the opportunities it gives to engage pupils in dialogue and to note what they achieved and when. For example, the commercial mathematics scheme booklets, which are used to reinforce what pupils have learnt in other lessons, are not always dated or marked with more than a tick so it is difficult for teachers to

evaluate pupils' understanding or the progress they have made over time. In other subjects, marking does not always highlight errors in basic skills to help pupils improve further.

12. The strengths in the teaching are maintained in Years 3 to 6, but because pupils have been taught their basic skills well lower down the school, teachers are able to be more adventurous in the range of activities they plan. As a result, the pace of pupils' learning gradually accelerates as they move through the school and they become more independent and adept at applying their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to an increasing range of situations. This leads directly to the good standards of work seen in the upper years of the school. Pupils' good achievement is helped by the teachers' very good relationships with the pupils. This is reflected in the teachers' marking of work that, at its best, involves pupils in dialogue and clearly outlines how they can improve their work further. As a result, by Year 6, pupils are very capable learners and work on their own and in small groups very well. Teaching fully challenges pupils of all abilities and very effectively links together aspects of different subjects to put lessons into context rather than purely ensuring that pupils acquire an ever-increasing amount of unconnected knowledge. For example, in an excellent Year 6 literacy lesson, the expected outcome was for pupils to write poetry within a specific structure on their feelings and emotions generated by watching video clips of the Blitz linked to the current topic in history. By the end of the series of lessons, pupils were well on the way to producing some emotive and perceptive poems that were beginning to capture the intensity and trauma of the Blitz.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good. The opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good.
- Activities out of lessons give pupils good opportunities for them to extend their interests in sports, creative and performance arts.
- As yet there is no overview of the curriculum in the nursery and reception classes to ensure that all the areas of learning are developed systematically across the Foundation Stage.

### **Commentary**

13. The school places a clear emphasis on providing each pupil with the broad range of activities and experiences they need in order to succeed academically and personally. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has developed well and is continuing to evolve in response to areas of development identified by subject leaders' monitoring of their subjects. For example, in an effort to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, drama was recently reintroduced into class timetables. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively form the cornerstone of the curriculum for English and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, pupils have good opportunities to use and practise their literacy and ICT skills in other subjects, although opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are not consistently identified in teachers' planning. This is not as well developed lower down the school, where the use of commercial worksheets restricts the range of opportunities for pupils, particularly more able pupils, to express their own ideas and opinions in their own words. Children in the nursery and reception classes have good opportunities to develop their skills across all their areas of learning. However, until recently, staffing has been unsettled in these two classes and there was an extended period when the teacher in reception was supervising the work in the nursery which was mainly taught by a teaching assistant. Although topic themes are the same, for example this term's topic is journeys, the two teachers have not yet had the time to work together to establish an overview of the curriculum. As a result, the range of activities and experiences do not fully complement each other and make the best use of opportunities for the classes to work together or maximise the use of the skills of the teaching assistant.

14. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve well relative to their ability. There are clear procedures to identify pupils' needs and targets in pupils' plans clearly identify the skills that pupils need to develop, although the degree of pupils' involvement in setting and reviewing targets is limited. The main strength of the provision is the effective support pupils receive in lessons from teaching assistants. Teachers have a clear understanding of how they can be used in lessons and, in turn, the teaching assistants support pupils sensitively and skilfully. They achieve a good balance between

helping and guiding pupils. In whole-class discussions, they prompt pupils and help them be fully involved in lessons to the best of their ability. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the level of support provided by school staff was judged to be unsatisfactory.

15. The effective provision for pupils' personal, health and social education is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good personal development characterised by the very good relationships between pupils and adults. The school has implemented a whole-school scheme in the last two years to give more coherence and structure to the provision. Much of the work in these lessons is discussion-based and provides pupils with good opportunities to reflect upon issues related to sex, drugs and relationships, including their responsibilities as members of the school and local community. The co-ordinator for this area of the school's work has only been in post a short time, but has evaluated strengths in the provision and highlighted areas for further improvement that includes applying for the Healthy Schools Award.
16. Activities in lessons are enriched well by visits and visitors to school. For example, theatre groups have staged workshops for pupils and an artist in residence has worked with pupils across the school. There is a good range of activities after school for pupils in all years, including the nursery, to further their interests in sports, arts and music. As yet the school is in the early stages of identifying pupils who have particular gifts and talents and has few specific projects in place to develop their aptitudes, except through their own endeavours in after-school clubs.
17. The school building has suffered in recent years from a considerable degree of neglect. As a result, the fabric of the building has deteriorated, despite the best efforts of the caretaker and the cleaning staff to maintain the building to a high standard. They have not been helped by persistent vandalism, such as windows being shot at by airgun pellets in the evenings and at weekends. On a day-to-day basis, the staff are very successful and the school is a bright and attractive place for pupils to work. Recently, significant building works have been undertaken including replacing windows and refurbishing the nursery. Accommodation for children in reception and nursery is now good. The governors are very keen to continue this programme of improvement. For example, they have a detailed plan to further enhance the resources for ICT by extending the ICT suite into a 'spare' classroom created by the gradually falling rolls so that whole classes will be able to use the computers at the same time.

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

Provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Support and guidance for pupils are good. The school has very effective procedures to involve pupils in the work of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Arrangements for children starting in the nursery are very good.
- Because relationships between pupils and adults are very good, pupils feel comfortable in asking for help when they have a problem or are worried about anything.
- Pupils are provided with good support, advice and guidance by all staff.

- Pupils are very involved in the work of the school through the school council and the other opportunities for them to take responsibility across the school.
- Very effective day-to-day routines ensure pupils work in a safe environment.

### **Commentary**

18. Among parents, the very high standard of care and concern for pupils' welfare is seen as a significant strength of the school. Most parents feel that the school develops the 'whole person' well, based on the very good relationships between staff and pupils, staff knowing pupils well and, in nursery and reception, quickly getting to know the children. Inspection evidence supports their view. The school has established very comprehensive procedures to ensure pupils' safety and welfare, including risk assessment. All staff know and understand the procedures for child protection. The inspection team agree with parents who feel that procedures in the nursery to settle children into school are very good. Links with prospective parents are established well before their children start in school and the time children spend in school gradually increases. As a result, they are very well prepared to transfer to the reception class. From the very start, parents are welcome every morning to spend time with their children and reception and nursery children are encouraged to play together.
19. As pupils move through the school, teachers give increasingly constructive support to pupils to help them improve their academic work. For example, in Year 3, the teacher has involved pupils in setting and reviewing their own learning targets. In Year 6, pupils' books are frequently used as a basis for dialogue between the teacher and pupils on their work. However, the key factor that contributes to the effective support and guidance provided for pupils are the very good relationships that exist between pupils and adults. In lessons and around school, there is a very explicit mutual respect between staff and pupils. At lunchtimes, supervisors provide very effective levels of care for pupils. They do not patrol the playground, but organise games and comfort any pupils who are upset about anything. As a result, pupils have great confidence in the staff and know that if they have a problem they will be listened to and their concern taken seriously.
20. The school has improved the ways that pupils are able to contribute to its work considerably in recent years. Pupils almost universally agree that they are listened to and their views taken into account by the school leadership. Central to this is the school council which meets regularly and has representatives of all the classes in the school except the nursery. It has been instrumental in improving the facilities in the playground such as setting up a 'Friendship Corner' where pupils can go if they are feeling sad or lonely and someone will come up and talk to them. Its influence has also resulted in better resources for wet playtimes and improvements to the toilet facilities for older pupils. Representatives are elected from each class which helps develop pupils' understanding of their role as members or 'citizens' of the school community. There are also suggestion boxes in the corridors as another way of gathering ideas from pupils.

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

The school has established sound links with parents. Links with the community and with other schools are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are well informed about what is going on in school and they are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning.
- Arrangements to transfer pupils to secondary school are good.
- Many parents attend social events, but few help in school regularly or take an interest in events the school provides to increase their understanding of new approaches to teaching.
- The school is an important part of the local Catholic community.

## Commentary

21. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and completed the questionnaire were extremely complimentary about the efforts the school makes to keep them informed about the work of the school and the progress their children are making. The inspection team agrees with these views and that the school works very hard at involving parents in its work. The headteacher has a high profile in the playground and is readily accessible to parents. She is quick to pick up general concerns "at the school gates" and is always prepared to discuss specific areas of concern with parents. Communication with parents is good. They receive frequent letters and newsletters about what is being taught at the start of each term. Reports to parents clearly explain how well pupils are doing and there are two parents' evenings a year. However, parents say that teachers will arrange other dates if they can't make the scheduled meeting and that if they have any concerns they are picked up quickly and sorted out. Using a grant from the Single Regeneration Budget, a loan scheme of 'Story Boxes' has been established where parents can borrow books and other resources for them to use with their children at home. In many respects, parents are very supportive of the school and many parents attend social events and school productions, but despite the school's best efforts, few parents attend more formal events such as literacy workshops. Similarly, although parents are invited to review meetings for pupils with special educational needs, it is real struggle to get parents to attend on a regular basis.
22. According to parents, the school has always been an important part of the local Catholic community. The parish priest is a governor and celebrates Mass regularly in school for staff and pupils. However, in recent years it has begun to have an increasingly high profile in the local community and to recognise that its influence can be much wider than that and can help the local community improve the quality of life for everyone. For example, pupils in Year 3 have been involved in a topic in geography in which they looked at ways of improving the local environment. This included writing to the local council to express their opinions. In a further example, the local police have been into school to talk to pupils about what the role of the police is and together the school and the police have been working on developing pupils' pride in their community in an effort to reduce the amount of vandalism in the area. The school also makes good use of the local area and community in lessons through visits and visitors into school to show pupils what their community has to offer them. A good example of how the school has become much more outward looking is the fact that school activities are now publicised in the local paper and a few local organisations such as a private dance school are beginning to use the premises.
23. The good links with other schools were initially founded on those with the local Catholic secondary school which provides ICT technical support on a weekly basis. In addition, specialist sports coaches from local partnership schemes have led sessions in lacrosse and tennis in lessons and after school. Recently, links have expanded to include other primary schools. There are well established sporting links and staff have visited other schools to look at how they organise their teaching and to share ideas. However, the long-established links with the secondary schools are still at the heart of its work, particularly for preparing older pupils for transfer. Meetings are held for parents attended by senior managers from several of the secondary schools and, although there are no joint teaching or curriculum links, parents feel that pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and managed. Governance of the school is good. The headteacher's leadership of the school is effective and she is well supported by senior managers. The school is well managed so that it deals effectively with the potential barriers to learning such as those caused by the low standards of attainment when children join the nursery and gradually falling numbers of pupils.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has high aspirations for the school and has established effective monitoring systems to identify priorities and to evaluate the effect of initiatives on standards.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and play an important role in school development planning.
- Leadership is very committed to creating a school that meets the needs and aspirations of all those involved in the school.
- The role of subject leaders has developed well since the last inspection.

## Commentary

24. The headteacher has a clear vision and high aspirations for the school as an institution that reflects the diversity of its pupils' experiences, skills and attributes through all aspects of its work. In addition to her arrival at the school some eight terms ago, significant changes in staffing in the last two years - including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher this year and a long-standing vacancy for a nursery teacher - have made it difficult for her to establish a coherent direction to the school. However, she has been very well supported by the senior management team and governors. Together they have motivated and inspired all staff to share in their vision for the school and created a cohesive staff team based on sharing good practice and good teamwork. This includes all adults who work within the school and extends to pastoral, administrative, lunchtime and caretaking staff in addition to the academic teaching and support staff. Together they have created a school with a positive ethos, highly committed to meeting the needs of its pupils and well set to develop further. Parents also hold the headteacher in very high regard and believe the school is well run.
25. Despite the staffing turbulence since the last inspection, the school has responded well to all the key issues identified. Most of them related to aspects of the management of the school, including the effectiveness of governors, subject management and school improvement planning. The school has introduced comprehensive procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and these are beginning to have a positive effect. This is reflected in the improvement in teaching across the school, although as yet these procedures have not succeeded in clearly identifying why standards in Year 2 have not improved significantly since the last inspection. Leadership is very effective in English and good in science. These teachers are very good role models for the rest of the school through their own teaching and their management of their own areas. In other subjects, due to the changes in teaching staff in the last two years, a few of the current subject leaders and the special educational needs co-ordinator have been in post for only a short time. Nevertheless, they have developed a clear understanding of their wider role in school, form a strong team, support the headteacher well in the development of the school and have detailed action plans in place to develop their subjects. This is the result of the good opportunities all subject leaders have had to monitor the provision and the quality of teaching and standards in their subjects by observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and assessment data, and evaluating colleagues' planning.
26. The basis of the school's good improvement since the last inspection is the good self-evaluation procedures. As a result, the headteacher and senior managers have a good understanding of how effective the school is in the different aspects of its work and what it needs to develop further. They monitor and analyse pupils' academic performance in national and school tests well and use the information effectively to identify whole-school priorities for development. Performance management and professional development procedures for teachers are intrinsically linked to improving standards and the school development plan which clearly identifies school priorities with the measures by which success will be evaluated.
27. Governors are very supportive of the school and share the headteacher's vision for its future. They ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities well, including the effective promotion of the school's racial equality policy. They have an effective committee structure that enables them to monitor all aspects of the school's work, including teaching and learning and curriculum developments. In addition, several governors are regularly in school, visit classes on an informal basis and contribute well to the range of activities provided. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and make an important contribution to the formulation and evaluation of the school improvement plan. Several have been involved with the school for a long time and believe passionately in its role, not just as an academic institution, but as an important part of the local community. In this way they make a significant contribution to the cohesiveness and community ethos of the school.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	421141	Balance from previous year	6415
Total expenditure	442805	Balance carried forward to the next	-15249
Expenditure per pupil	2716		

28. The school's management of its finance is good. The governors and the headteacher have had a difficult task in maintaining the development of the school, particularly in improving the accommodation against uneven numbers of pupils in year groups and gradually falling rolls. However, they have managed to do this successfully. The over-spend in the last finance year was a strategic decision and will be completely eradicated in the present year because a teacher is emigrating in September and will not be replaced. The current budget indicates there will be a slight surplus at the end of this financial year.

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

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

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

29. Few children have extensive experience of any form of education before they start in the nursery. Assessments completed when children first start indicate that their attainment is low compared to that which is expected, particularly in their personal, language, literacy and mathematical skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world. All children achieve well as a result of good teaching. However, due to their low starting point, by the end of the reception year, overall standards are below those expected. The staff work well as a team to ensure that children settle well to their learning and that all have equal access to the range of experiences on offer. As a result, they achieve very well in their personal and social development to meet the expected levels. Provision for children who have special educational needs is good.
30. The Foundation Stage leader gives sound leadership to this aspect of the school. However, the school had a long-standing vacancy for a teacher in the nursery. This was only resolved half-way through this academic year. Consequently, although satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in developing the curriculum and assessment procedures in reception to match the most recent national guidance and the accommodation in the nursery has been improved, as yet, she has been unable to establish a fully coherent structure to the provision. For example, the two teachers have not had sufficient time to develop a detailed overview of the curriculum in the two classes to ensure that the topics and areas of work build children's skills in a systematic way. Although topics are similar, there are few occasions when the classes work together and they essentially operate as two separate classes. As a result, there are a few occasions when best use is not made of the skilled teaching assistant who works primarily in the nursery. However, the Foundation leader has a clear vision for the future, is fully aware of the importance of developing a coherent structure and has plans in place to do so.
31. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good, but is better in reception where teaching is more focused on ensuring that activities closely reflect the range of abilities in the class especially for those children with special educational needs. The reception teacher uses the national assessment profile well to track the progress that children are making in the different areas of learning. The lack of coherence across the Foundation Stage is exemplified by the fact that in the nursery there is no similar procedure in place so it is more difficult for the teacher to establish each child's starting point and to evaluate aspects of individual children's learning that need developing. Nevertheless, the teacher plans a sound range of activities that develop children's skills in all the areas of learning and she makes effective use of the support assistant to ensure that over a week all children have the same range of experiences. The main strength of the teaching in the nursery is the very good relationships between adults and children so they achieve very well in their personal development and are well prepared to benefit from the more structured teaching in the reception class. In this class, the teacher achieves a good balance between formal whole-class activities and less directed activities that enable the children to develop and explore their own skills.
32. It was not possible to see sufficient teaching in all of the areas of learning; therefore areas of learning relating to physical development and creative development were sampled. Teachers provide children with plenty of activities to practise and develop their physical skills. For example, they learn to use a range of small tools when they are handling modelling clay and also to use knives safely to prepare fruit. The outside play area is a major factor in helping children to achieve well in their **physical development**. It is well resourced with wheeled toys and a climbing frame. Children enjoy using this equipment and learn to pedal, push, climb and

balance. Children enjoy a range of activities including art, dance, music and imaginative play which all contribute well to their **creative development**. They learn a broad range of different art techniques and skills such as drawing, painting and collage. They use them to support their work in other areas of learning; for example, children made models of aeroplanes out of modelling clay as part of their topic on journeys whilst working in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between adults and children are very good.
- Very clear routines are understood by the children, enabling them to grow in confidence and become independent.

### **Commentary**

33. When children start in the nursery a significant number lack confidence and have no idea of the routines of school. However, due to very good teaching characterised by the very high and consistent expectations of adults and the very good relationships between adults and children, they quickly settle into routines and learn what is expected of them. As a result, most children become confident and they follow well-defined routines without difficulty. Parents were very complimentary of the procedures to settle children into school. All staff are very good role models for the children. They remind, encourage, model and reinforce how children should treat each other and behave. Staff use praise to good effect, raising children's confidence and self-esteem. As a result, children learn to value themselves and relate well to adults and to each other. As a result of their teachers' frequent comments of reinforcement, they learn to respect and celebrate the contributions of others. By the end of reception, children show interest and excitement, they initiate their own learning when opportunities are provided, they can sustain interest while working and playing and are capable of making choices and exercising independence. The positive classroom ethos supports and promotes the very good achievement of all children. As a result, although a few children need help to work on their own, by the end of reception most attain the national expectations in this area of learning.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well to develop a secure understanding of letter names and sounds.
- Class discussions in both classes provide children with good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- There are a few occasions when opportunities for older and more able children to use their basic literacy skills are missed.

### **Commentary**

34. Teaching and learning in this area of learning are good. In the nursery, the teacher begins to develop children's knowledge of letter shapes and sounds. Each session begins and ends with a whole-class discussion that develops children's spoken language well. There are regular opportunities to develop literacy skills: both formal activities, where the children work with the teacher or teaching assistant on a simple reading or writing task, and less directed

activities for children to learn how to hold a pencil correctly and 'pretend' to write. For example, during the inspection, the teacher had set up a travel agents as part of the 'Journeys' topic and children pretended to be on the telephone and took 'bookings'.

35. In reception, lessons in literacy follow the pattern of the national guidance and provide children of all abilities with very good opportunities to develop their basic understanding of letters. Whole-class discussions are particularly effective, characterised by very good relationships between the teacher and children. Follow-up activities are clearly varied to reflect the wide spectrum of abilities in the group, but the low level of children's personal skills when they join the school still affects their ability to work on their own. Because the teacher does not have additional support for much of the time, this limits her capacity to concentrate for extended periods with one group without having to help another group. This does have an effect on the pace of learning of a few pupils. It particularly affects the learning of the average attainers because the teacher has to concentrate on working with those with significant special educational needs. These children achieve well and also benefit from good support from external agencies. On a few occasions, opportunities to extend more able children's learning by giving them tasks to use their basic skills are missed. Nevertheless, from a low starting point, although most children do not reach the goals they are expected to, they achieve well.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a strong emphasis on the acquisition of number skills.
- Activities are well matched to children's needs.

### **Commentary**

36. Most children achieve well due to good teaching which has a consistently strong emphasis placed by teachers on the acquisition of number skills. In both classes, an interesting range of activities is used well to introduce mathematical ideas and to help children gain confidence with numbers. In the nursery, many of the activities are oral and practical, which make mathematics fun for young children. For example, children learn a lot from singing songs and from number rhymes. In reception, teaching is more structured and based on the national guidance for numeracy teaching with suitable adaptations to take into account the age of the children. The teacher places a very high priority on developing children's basic number knowledge so children are well prepared to move into more systematic teaching in Year 1. Whole-class activities are particularly effective. In each session, several different activities and games are used to reinforce children's understanding of number patterns and the relationships between numbers. These help children count up to and back from a given number confidently and, by the end of reception, a few children can do this while counting in twos. Most children have developed a basic understanding of adding numbers together, but few are confident at subtraction. Children with special educational needs try very hard and achieve well due to activities that are well matched to their needs. However, they are starting from a very low base and do not have secure understanding of numbers to 10 and need considerable help to combine two simple numbers together using objects. Daily routines such as changing the date help children learn to order the days of the week, to understand which comes before or after and to recognise two-digit numbers. Such mathematical activities, presented in a practical and lively way, hold children's interest and ensure that they achieve well, although the vast majority do not reach the goals set for children of this age.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given a good introduction to practical investigations.

#### Commentary

37. Teaching in this area of learning is good with much of the work based on discussion and practical activities. As a result, children achieve well and expand their knowledge of the local area and further afield. They also begin to develop secure ICT skills that, by the end of reception, are in line with those expected. This begins in the nursery where children are introduced to the idea of finding out things by predicting and then investigating what might happen. For example, during the inspection, the teacher worked with small groups of children in turn to investigate what happens when yoghurt is placed in the freezer. She used questions well to encourage children to think about what might happen to the yoghurt and to make predictions. Although children knew that it would change, not all had a secure understanding of the correct vocabulary and got mixed up between freezing and melting. This emphasis on discussion continues in reception, where sessions begin with a lively exchange between the teacher and children. She uses resources such as a large map of the world to develop children's understanding of where they live in relation to other places around the world where they have been on holiday. These discussions successfully develop children's understanding of how places are different from each other and their appreciation of distance and time. All children use the computer regularly and most are able to use the mouse to click and drag, or to draw simple shapes. Children learn about different ways of travelling around and have a secure understanding of which mode of transport is appropriate for different journeys.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

#### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as they move through the school to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Assessment procedures are very thorough and the information is used well to track the progress of pupils.
- The subject leader has been very proactive in improving standards and the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- Planning to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities is not fully consistent.

#### Commentary

38. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and, as result, standards in Year 6 are good. Standards in speaking and listening are very good and reflect the strong emphasis placed by all teachers on encouraging pupils to talk to each other and the effective use of whole-class discussions in lessons. Early indications from this year's national tests show that standards are above average which is a significant improvement on the results in 2003. Although, standards in

reading are good, the improvement is primarily due to the good standards of pupils' writing which reflect consistently good teaching in Years 3 to 6, the opportunities pupils have to use their skills in other subjects and the very effective teaching in Year 6.

39. Although the trend in the school's results in Year 2 over time is above the national pattern, standards in Year 2 are below average which mirrors the position at the last inspection. However, the subject leader has identified the staffing problems in the Foundation Stage as an important factor so that children have been starting in Year 1 with weak basic skills. The subject leader has implemented a number of initiatives, such as introducing drama to all class timetables, in a drive to improve standards but these, as yet, have had a limited effect on overall standards. However, pupils in Year 2 are good listeners and most are confident speakers.
40. Inspection evidence shows that pupils begin in Year 1 with standards that are below those expected due to their low starting point when they begin school in the nursery. This means that, although they have secure knowledge and understanding of letter names and sounds and are beginning to read simple words, most have specific weaknesses in their ability to use these skills and have not yet developed a secure understanding of basic grammar and punctuation. Overall, teaching is good and characterised by very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school and lessons are positive well-organised learning experiences. However, the emphasis in teaching changes through the school. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 concentrate very effectively on developing basic spelling, sentence construction and reading skills that the pupils require. In this aspect of their learning, pupils achieve well, the majority reach the basic expected level for their age. However, because of their low starting point, a below average proportion of pupils attain the higher than expected levels and as a result, standards are below average. In addition, there are examples where the concentration on basic skills is at the expense of giving higher attaining pupils sufficient opportunities to use and apply their skills. The whole-class discussions are effective, brisk and pacy and teachers maintain very thorough assessment records. However, the information is not always used effectively to provide activities in the parts of lessons when pupils are working in groups where higher attaining pupils could extend and develop their skills further. In addition, teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always highlight errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for by tasks that are clearly matched to their needs and they are well supported by the teaching assistants. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
41. In Years 3 to 6 teaching is good with similar strengths to that in Years 1 and 2, but because pupils have been taught the basics well, teachers are gradually able to introduce more adventurous activities that require pupils to use and apply their skills. Whole-class discussions are brisk and pupils develop a good understanding of how to interpret what they read and to write effectively in a broad range of styles. Follow-up activities are well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. In addition, pupils are encouraged to talk to each other and to work in groups and pairs which helps lower attaining pupils to learn from their peers. As a result, the pace of pupils' learning gradually accelerates as they move through the school which leads directly to the good standards in Year 6.
42. The subject leader gives very good leadership to the subject. Thorough her own teaching she is a very good role model to the rest of the school. Effective monitoring procedures have been introduced since the last inspection which include the analysis of assessment data, the observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work and planning. The feedback given to other staff has directly contributed to the improvement in teaching since the last inspection.

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

43. Other subjects are used well in Years 3 to 6 to develop pupils' reading and writing skills, but this is less strong in Years 1 and 2. Although teachers are limited by the low level of pupils' skills, particularly when they move into Year 1, opportunities for pupils to record for themselves

in science and to write about what they are learning in history, for example, are missed. Too many tasks are based on worksheets and too few demand written answers in order to extend more able pupils. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn to use their literacy skills well to research topics in science, history and geography and to write about their own views and opinions.

44. **French** was not a focus for the inspection so insufficient evidence was gathered to make secure judgements on the quality of provision or standards. The headteacher feels that French lessons are very popular with pupils, that they expand pupils' horizons and support their speaking and listening skills. This view was supported by the after-school French Club. Twenty pupils from several year groups attended and thoroughly enjoyed singing songs and learning basic phrases. Due to effective teaching, pupils are developing confidence and good pronunciation. Overall, this session promoted pupils' personal development well and gave pupils with English as an additional language good opportunities to demonstrate their linguistic skills.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils attain high standards and achieve very well by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good overall.
- There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to plan for all ability groups.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average.

### **Commentary**

45. Standards seen in mathematics are well above average at the end of Year 6. This represents a very good improvement from the national tests results for 2003 when attainment for that cohort was low in comparison with schools nationally. Due to the quality of teaching seen, that untypical picture has been rectified and standards are again consistent with those in previous years. Analysis of the school's unvalidated data strongly suggests that Year 6 pupils achieve highly in relation to their prior attainment levels and against schools in a similar context.
46. Analysis of school data indicates that standards in the current Year 2 is likely to be similar to previous years. Nevertheless pupils make steady progress from first starting school, and when compared with similar schools their achievement is satisfactory overall.
47. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but stronger in Years 3 to 6 where there is some very good and outstanding teaching. Throughout the school, good learning is underpinned by the quality of relationships established. Teachers maintain high expectations and use praise and sanctions fairly. Pupils show respect for adults because they know that their contributions to lessons will be valued. At the beginning of one lesson, for example, the teacher asked to be reminded as to how points could be won. This gave pupils some 'ownership' of the reward system and proved to be very effective, resulting in pupils applying themselves very well and achieving well in that lesson. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This enables them to question pupils more incisively to assess their understanding. In most lessons pupils are challenged well because teachers plan opportunities for pupils of all ability levels in the class. Where teaching is most effective, teachers' on-going assessment clearly influences what pupils do next. A successful practical lesson about lines of symmetry, for example, resulted from the teacher's diagnosis of previous assessment tasks. Another lesson was abandoned completely when the teacher correctly judged that similar work had been

covered on a previous pre-secondary school visit so the planned tasks were not challenging

enough. However, such use of assessment is not consistent. It was clear in one lesson seen that work was not suitably matched to what a significant number of pupils needed to learn next.

48. Highly effective teaching and learning were seen in a lesson for pupils in Year 6. This was an investigation in which pupils had to apply their knowledge and understanding of prime numbers in order to solve number problems. By giving the letters in the alphabet corresponding numbers pupils had to solve problems such as 'find a word containing letter 'A' and the values of three prime numbers'. Problems increased in difficulty as the lesson progressed, as did the competitive spirit and enjoyment among the pupils. In that lesson the teacher's subject knowledge and assessment skills were crucial in ensuring that all pupils were fully equipped with the necessary knowledge and understanding to manage the task. Sometimes oral and mental work lacks pace and rigour with too little time spent questioning pupils to ensure they understand what is being taught and to consolidate their learning.
49. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements in standards at the end of Year 6. There are improved systems for tracking pupils' progress in mathematics through regular assessments. Data is used to predict pupils' likely attainment. The overall quality of teaching has improved. The issue of improved attainment by the end of Year 2 which was identified in the previous report has not yet been dealt with effectively. There are also gaps in the monitoring arrangements which mean that the complete overview of teaching and learning is not fully maintained.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

50. Pupils apply their mathematical skills satisfactorily in other subjects, though opportunities are not always identified in teachers' planning. Examples can be found in science where pupils explain their findings by using graphs. They use their knowledge of co-ordinates in some geography lessons. In a history lesson pupils in Year 6 studied data from earlier records to gain a comparative picture of the types of homes lived in between 1930 and 1970.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- By the end of Year 6 pupils attain high standards and achieve well.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The subject is led and managed well.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average.

### **Commentary**

51. Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved significantly. Work seen in pupils' books indicates standards well above expectations. Unvalidated national test data for the current year supports this judgement. With the exception of the untypically low standards seen in the 2003 national tests, there is a steadily rising trend in science standards since the previous inspection. Over time pupils achieve well because, as pupils move through the school, teachers gradually give pupils more opportunities to conduct investigations and experiments for themselves. In addition, their improving literacy skills enable them to become increasingly independent in research and in recording their work.
52. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 2 indicate attainment levels that are below those seen in other schools. The number of pupils who attain a higher than average level is well below the figure expected nationally. This is because pupils' ability to record investigations independently is inhibited by weak literacy skills. Given pupils' low baseline

when they first start school their achievement in science is satisfactory overall. Pupils do less well in their experimental and investigative science than in other areas such as materials and forces.

53. The quality of teaching and learning seen is good overall. In the lessons observed pupils were engaged well in investigations and activities which helped their learning. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, were introduced to the principle of filtration when they learned that solids can be separated by using a sieve. In a well prepared lesson, pupils in Year 1 enthusiastically tested different sources of 'light' and 'heavy' sounds. They applied mathematical skills well by recording their preferences on a bar chart. The lesson was managed well. Objectives were clear and shared with pupils so they knew what was expected of them, consequently they achieved well. Work in pupils' books is presented neatly, reflecting teachers' expectations and the good attitudes pupils have towards their work. A lesson in Year 2 engaged the pupils in drawing different species of plants and naming the parts. Although achievement was satisfactory the lesson lacked purposeful focused discussion to compare plants and improve scientific vocabulary and recording skills. In all lessons, a good working atmosphere is established. Relationships are very good and pupils work collaboratively and sensibly.
54. Leadership and management of science are good. The co-ordinator has a very clear overview of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. Standards are monitored through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books. New assessment procedures are ready to be introduced which will help with target-setting throughout the school. Since the previous inspection there have been good improvements in teaching and standards in Year 6. Issues still to be dealt with include improving standards by the end of Year 2 and making better use of assessment to inform planning for different ability groups.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good.
- There is good use of ICT skills in other subjects.
- Resources are limited and this has an impact on pupils' achievement.

### **Commentary**

55. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly in line with expectations. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers have worked hard, with limited resources, to ensure pupils' skills keep pace with increasing expectation. Consequently pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school to reach standards by the end of Year 6 in line with those expected. Pupils develop a sound understanding of how to use spread sheets and data bases. They know how to access information from the internet and combine many ICT skills on animated PowerPoint presentations. Currently, because of technical difficulties, only pupils in Year 3 have been introduced to sending and receiving e-mail. The situation is due to be rectified with the opening of the ICT suite, pending the completion of building improvements now taking place.
56. Teachers have good subject knowledge, consequently skills are taught well. Pupils in Years 4 and 5, for example, learned how to use computers to program devices and control their movement. The teacher made good use of an interactive whiteboard to demonstrate. As a result pupils confidently applied and consolidated their new learning when working in pairs in the computer suite. The small groups able to use the suite at any one time benefited well from the skills and expertise of the teaching assistant who ensured that all pupils stayed on track. There is a good pace to learning because teachers make sure that available resources are

used well to engage pupils in activities. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress which involves pupils themselves in recording what they do.

57. There is satisfactory leadership and management of ICT. Standards have been maintained despite there having been some problems with resources. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements in teaching quality and in the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. National subject guidance is used well as a basis for planning so pupils learn skills more systematically. Areas for improvement recognised by the school include the development of learning opportunities through the more extensive use of e-mail and to make lessons more productive by improving pupils' keyboard skills.

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

58. Teachers make good use of ICT to support learning in many curriculum areas. In Year 1, mathematics, music, religious education, geography and literacy have all been augmented by the use of ICT. In Year 2 pupils use CD Rom following simple lines of enquiry to find scientific facts. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 distort images captured with a digital camera in order to create art work about 'dreams'. Pupils in Year 6 compose their own music on an electronic keyboard to add to their PowerPoint slide show about the moon landing.

### **HUMANITIES**

Insufficient evidence was gathered to make secure judgements on standards or the quality of provision in **geography**. Pupils' work was sampled and showed that pupils cover a broad range of topics that ensure they develop the full range of skills required by the National Curriculum. However, pupils are not consistently expected to use their literacy skills sufficiently in all classes and the over-use of worksheets limits the opportunities for more able pupils to extend their skills and understanding.

#### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

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

- Standards are below national expectations at the end of Year 2, but above those expected at the end of Year 6.
- Achievement is very good in Years 3 to 6, with a particularly high rate of achievement in the upper years of the school.
- Teaching is good overall, particularly in the upper school, where teachers expect pupils to work on their own and to use and apply their literacy skills.
- Leadership and management are good.

#### **Commentary**

59. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a developing sense of chronology and recognise the distinctions between the present day and the past in a range of social and economic habits such as the differences in children's toys. At the end of Year 6, pupils are able to work independently to interrogate, evaluate and record poignant details from complex data. For example, they use census data from the period 1930 -1970 to show effectively how British society across that period was influenced by a more accessible range of domestic appliances.

60. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well, although pupils achieve at a higher rate in the upper part of the school. This is because their literacy skills develop well as they move through the school and teachers use ICT effectively in the upper school, particularly, but not exclusively, in Year 6.
61. Teaching is good overall, though it is stronger in the upper part of the school, where it is characterised by opportunities for pupils to engage in independent learning and the pursuit of historical skills of enquiry rather than the acquisition of knowledge alone. Learning reflects teaching and is good overall. However, it is better when pupils are encouraged to engage in tasks which are challenging. In such lessons, pupils learn with sustained concentration and focus. Lower down the school, too much use is made of tasks that require pupils to complete a worksheet, irrespective of ability, and do not demand more able pupils to record their own ideas.
62. The co-ordinator has been particularly effective in developing highly organised resources. In addition, she tracks pupils' written work well and has established an effective process of monitoring classroom teaching that includes lesson observation, to ensure consistency of best practice in the subject across the school.
63. Visits out of school and visitors to school are used well to enhance pupils' interest. Artefacts are also plentiful and effectively used to stimulate pupils' involvement. There is a lack of appropriate reading texts for the younger pupils. There has been good improvement since the previous report, particularly in the effectiveness of teaching in the upper part of the school.

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

64. Work in **art** was sampled. Too little teaching was seen to judge overall provision but the standards seen in work displayed throughout the school meet expectations for the ages of pupils. Overall, standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Much of the art seen is linked well to other subjects. For example, in Year 2, an exciting collage built from a range of materials to add colour and texture captures scenes from the Fire of London well. This is in contrast to the more controlled and delicate brush work sensitively depicting poppy fields. Wall hangings inspired by the visiting artist Sophie Zadeh also provide an attractive display. Pupils were taught the skills of making the felt which was used to create underwater scenes. Skilful work by pupils in Years 4 and 5 in the style of French artist Paul Signac shows well developed 'pointillism' techniques. In the lesson observed, very good teaching resulted in pupils achieving very well in their use of chalk and charcoal to add light and tone to their pictures. Pupils are also accomplished at blending in order to produce different shades. There are some good examples of three-dimensional work in Year 6 in the papier-mâché Greek urns which pupils made during their recent history topic.
65. Not enough time was available to gather sufficient evidence for an overall judgement on **music** provision. However, pupils have opportunities to perform on percussion and keyboard. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were composing their own pieces to add to a PowerPoint presentation. There was a 'musical finale' to a history lesson in which pupils sang popular war-time songs. Singing was tuneful and pupils maintained the melody and rhythm well.
66. **Design and technology** and **physical education** were not focuses for the inspection and there was insufficient evidence available to make secure judgements on standards or the quality of teaching and learning.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHE)**

67. Not enough teaching sessions of PSHE were seen during the inspection to make secure judgements on the quality of teaching. However, discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator, together with the very good attitudes and good behaviour of pupils, indicate that the provision is effective in developing pupils' appreciation of their own strengths and that of their peers. The

very good relationships show that pupils develop a high respect for each other and very good social skills. The involvement of external specialists such as the school nurse ensures that pupils develop a secure understanding of issues surrounding sex and drugs. The school has introduced a whole-school scheme of work to give coherence and structure to the provision and the recently appointed subject leader has high aspirations for the future, including applying for the Healthy Schools Award.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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